

Around the Hearth

By JENNIE ALLEN MOORE.

"The day is cold, and dark, and dreary,
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.
"My life is cold, and dark, and dreary,
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,

But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.
"Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary."
—Longfellow.

ONE RAINY DAY.

It was a holiday, too, that rainy day. The verses above may indicate a heavy subject, but such is not my intention. Remembering that this page will be read in the heat of July days, I forbear to take the serious side of this beautiful poem, believing that light reading is more befitting for warm weather. There is enough rain in our lives these awful war times, and anything that can divert our minds for even a brief spell is a redress to be appreciated.

There is a whole page in the poem alone, but it carries its own interpretation, so we will allow it to stand on its own merit. I would recommend to every one who reads it that it be memorized, and many times repeated until its philosophy and its optimism sink into and permeate the very

existence, and until the heart can issue the command of the last verse with an authority that will not be gainsaid.

There was an excursion on that holiday—that day of promise—as the sun shone forth in warmth and splendor. The train trip was eighteen miles, and we were to have a long day at the beautiful park. It was to last from eleven in the morning when we were scheduled to arrive there, until eight in the evening, the time we were due to leave for home. My friend and I packed dainty lunches, and prepared for a splendid day's outing.

The train stopped at the little station, and we alighted on the platform. But at that moment an umbrella shot up, another and yet another. We turned our gaze skyward, and there was no mistaking that the protection

sought was not from the sun which had accompanied us all the way, but the rain. The big drops splashed on the dusty white boards to the discomfort of seven coach-loads of pleasure seekers.

Little groups had quickly formed and hurried away believing it to be but a passing shower. We lingered around the small depot, then decided to sit down inside. There a pleasant surprise awaited us in the form of a very intimate acquaintance, who had with her a sister from the far West, whom she brought to see our celebrated Falls.

Presently she whispered to me—"Say, let's double up for the day! We've a mighty fine lunch with us."

I assured her we also had a "dandy," and so we decided to spend the day together, but at that time we

did not dream of sticking quite so closely to each other.

The rain continued to fall, and soon those who had wandered away returned. The coaches had been left standing unlocked upon the track, else whither could such a crowd have found shelter from the elements? People were climbing back in, and we four concluded that the cushioned seats there were more desirable than the narrow bench upon which we sat, so we followed the rest, and procured two seats *vis-a-vis*, and awaited developments.

As baskets and boxes were being opened all around us, and appetizing contents distributed, we of course, also felt the pangs of hunger.

We *must* have tea, one of our number proclaimed, or *she* for one, would have a splitting headache. She was accordingly deputed to set forth on an expedition to obtain "the cup that cheers but not inebriates," and returned with such a strong decoction that a very tiny sip at a time sufficed for me—just sufficient to ward off the headache that had been predicted as inevitable, but—"Saints preserve us!"

We certainly did justice to the contents of the boxes, as each one must needs taste every variety of sandwich and cake, all of which proved a delightful diversion while it lasted.

But everything comes to an end, and soon we were all packed up trig and neat once more, crumbs shaken off our laps, the inner woman more that satisfied, and we consulted once more the weather. The result was not encouraging, and on this occasion our hearts did not beat in response to—

"How beautiful is the rain!

After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane
How beautiful is the rain!"

Fortunately I had taken my knitting along, so proceeded to fill in the time until the shower(?) should subside. And as we calmly waited, we talked—what else could we do? Our remarks were principally upon the weather probabilities, and the possibilities of walking through wet grass, even should the rain cease.

But there was no sign of it ceasing, and the steady drip, drip, seemed to disperse any hope of "A brighter day a-coming by-and-by!" So we kept on talking.

We discussed the war and food conservation, the fuel question, votes for women, (one of our number was an ardent suffragist), and told about our lads overseas. We exchanged ideas on many subjects, on house-cleaning, on raising children without spoiling them, (as we had been brought up) on managing husbands, and—

Presto! The scene was changed. The sun shone forth in all his glory. Imagine how swiftly those coaches were emptied. Our guest *must* see the Falls. And she did. But old Sol retreated once more behind a cloud evidently more in sympathy with—

"In the country on every side
Where far and wide
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide
Stretched the plain,
To the dry grass, and drier grain
How welcome is the rain!"

In half an hour we had resumed our places, and our knitting—and incidentally our talking. Say, reader, did you ever have to keep on talking when you felt you would like absolute silence?

We were denied our customary afternoon rest—the quiet hour that "knits up the tangled threads," and affords refreshment—and would gladly have refrained from talking for a time. But there seemed no way of escape, the confusion was too general, so don't you see we just *had* to talk? There was nothing else to do, and there were still five hours of the nine to spend.

There is a common saying—"Oh, talk is cheap!" It was that day, and it was plentiful. And time was likewise plentiful—a very rare occurrence in the lives of four busy women, whose leisure hours are few.

Let's talk about *talk* for a time. It is a talent with some. Others acquire it. I was a very silent child, and had to cultivate the habit of talking when I began to teach school. My first year was not a success, simply because I hated the constant talk of explanation. When I realized that it meant my vocational equipment, I soon learned to improve my "stock-in-trade," so to speak. And the habit grew, to be sure.

(Continued on page 49.)



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