

sleeves wistfully, as if trying to people them with small round arms. "Yes, Sylvy," she went on again steadily, "you didn't know you came of a washerwoman race, did you? But they really were too long, hard years back there when I was glad to earn a little money by washing people's clothes. I've always remembered women who work hard for a living since then. You don't forget when you have been right there yourself."

The clock ticked off another round of minutes before Polly, the queen of the Good-for-Naughts, got to her feet and made her speech.

"Girls, listen!" she said earnestly. "Something's just come over me, and it's time it came over you. I was never ashamed before, but I am now,—I mean, of being a Good-for-Naught. It seems dreadful, when you come to think of—of women—who work—hard—and—their little dead babies—we, sitting here playing foolish games and being idle and good-for-nothing, and they—oh, girls—working on just the same while their hearts are aching! It makes me ashamed—I never was before."

It was Sylvy who spoke next. "Girls," she said, "shall we get flowers to—to go with Aunt Margaret's little dress?"

The girls bowed gravely. And so it came about that a poor woman's heavy heart was eased of a little of its pain by a cluster of sweet, white rosebuds to lay on her baby's breast. And so, too, it came about that a bevy of thoughtless girls came into their heritage of sweet womanliness.

HOW IT CLEARED OFF.

Such a time! And to think it all "came out of a clear sky!" as Aunt Esther would say. A minute before Meg and Kathie had been cozily chattering, with their arms round each other. Then came the thunder-shower that bade fair to settle down into steady raining.

Aunt Esther happened to be in the other room, and this is what she heard. Meg began:

"It's in Webster Under-the-bridge." "Webster On-the-bridge, you mean," Kathie interposed, briskly.

"Under-the-bridge." "On-the-bridge." "Kath'rine Trundy, I guess I know! My father's a minister!"

"Meg'ret Merriweather, my father's a bridgemaker, an' I guess I know—so there!"

This was too much for Meg for a minute, but she recovered presently.

"I don't care, it's Webster Under-the-bridge. My brother's in college, and I guess he knows!"

"Poh! If I had a brother I guess he'd know enough to know it's Webster On-the-bridge!"

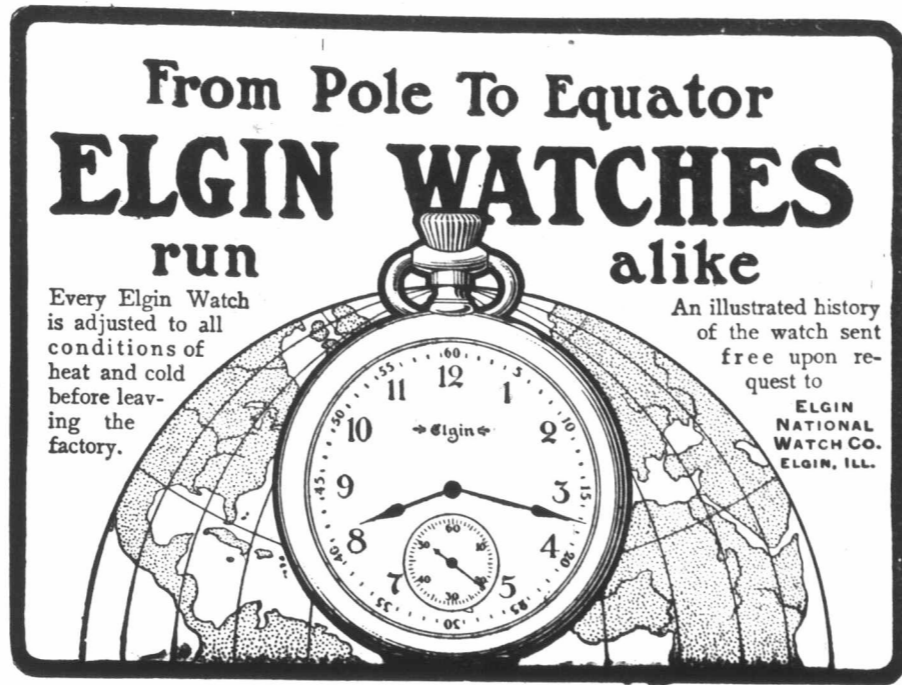
"Tisn't!"

"Tis, too!"

"Kath'rine Trundy, I don't s'pose my mother'd want me to play with such a nignoramus! Here's your coral ring."

"Here's yours."

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The exchange was made stiffly. Both little girls held their heads very high and looked dignifiedly hostile. The little red spots in their round cheeks flickered. Their bright eyes snapped.

"Wait!" Aunt Esther called, just as they were parting "forever."

She took them each by the hand and led them into the library, up to the dictionary stand. Then she pointed to the big title-word.

"U-n-a-b-r-i-d-g-e-d," she spelled, distinctly and slowly.

"Oh, my!" breathed Meg, ruefully. "We didn't both of us know!"

"No, we didn't," Kathie admitted. And when they went out again their arms were clasped, and the little coral rings had gone visiting again.

JACK AND THE CHICKENS.

Jack was a beautiful Irish setter that was devoted to his little mistress, Mary. He had one very bad habit: He would kill chickens. The ranchmen all around threatened to shoot Jack if they caught him, and Mary was much distressed.

One rainy day in the early spring a farm hand brought into the house a number of dear little chickens, just out of the shell, and placed them on the hearth before the fire. The tiny fluffy waifs were chilled through and through, and their little legs were icy cold. Mary, like the good little housewife she was, suddenly conceived the brilliant idea of filling a

basket with raw cotton, so as to make the small strangers a nice comfortable bed, and, without thought of leaving them alone, started briskly up-stairs to the garret, and soon returned with a hamper padded with warm, white cotton. Imagine her horror, however, when, upon entering the room, she discovered Jack lying lazily in front of the fire, and not a chicken in sight.

The little girl was sick with fright, for she knew they had been hatched from very expensive eggs of a particular breed, and that her father would scold her for her carelessness. "Jack," she cried severely, "what have you done with those chickens?" Jack merely wagged his tail and looked at her with one ear cocked. Mary slowly approached the culprit,



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with a deep frown on her face, and continued:

"If you have eaten those chickens your master will have to shoot you."

At this terrible threat the dog only wagged his tail all the harder and cocked both ears. Just then came a faint "Peep, peep!" from somewhere near the fire, and the dog looked knowing.

And where do you suppose those baby chickens were hiding? Between the setter's two great forepaws, and all up under his soft, silky hair. When his mistress had left the room Jack evidently thought they needed care, and considered it his duty to play nurse during her absence, so he had stretched himself in front of the fire and gathered the wee fluffy-balls together under his warm fur, and now and again a tiny yellow head was thrust forth for a minute, to be withdrawn and tucked out of sight. Mary concluded that the basket was not needed just then, and put it aside.

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