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**ELSIE LOCKWOOD'S PICNIC
BASKET.**

There was a clamorous protesting on the grounds of the "Beechnut" school-house, which not only threatened the peace of mind of the neighbourhood, but brought Miss Wilmot, the teacher, to the open window for investigation.

"Girls," she called quickly, but with a gentleness that made them ever responsive to her rebuke. "Girls," she repeated, "what is the question of the hour? I shall certainly have to request you to retire to farther quarters."

"I beg your pardon, dear Miss Wilmot." It was Elsie Lockwood who spoke.

"And I and I and I," followed in succession.

"Miss Wilmot, Elsie says she cannot go to our picnic, because—"

"Don't," whispered one of the older girls. "She's so sensitive."

"I do not see how I can," faltered Elsie, her face flushing with embarrassment.

"I am sorry, but I must not think of going." Elsie's voice had a note of pleading as well as decision, which made further discussion unkind.

Two by two the girls went down the gravel-walk, homeward bound. All but Elsie, who made the excuse; she wanted to speak with Miss Wilmot. And she really did. However, she found her teacher engrossed with her papers, so that Elsie did not want to disturb her; therefore, she crept from the door unobserved. She went behind the school-house, throwing herself at the foot of a maple tree to think.

"No, I will not let mamma dear know that there is to be a picnic at the close of school. It will not be necessary. It is all she can do to pay rent and buy the food we need for ourselves. I would not go to a picnic unless I could take a basket like the other girls. I hope the girls don't think me stubborn. It is not that; it is pride, I admit, but it is the kind born of self-respect."

Elsie sighed, tears rolling down her cheek. "Oh, it is hard to be poor and proud, too," she sobbed aloud. "Dear, tired little mother, you shall never know your Elsie had to stay home and that she cared so much about it." Thus she sobbed in whispers, alone with her little heart, trying so hard to be brave.

"What's that? I thought I heard a sob," Miss Wilmot mused, as she locked the schoolhouse door. "Yes, there it is again."

"Why, Elsie, child, is it you?" Elsie looked up, startled, her cheeks flushing with shame that she was discovered.

"Is it the picnic?" questioned Miss Wilmot, softly. Elsie nodded assent. I don't mind telling you that I cannot go to the picnic without a basket."

"I understand," was all her teacher said, taking Elsie's hand caressingly into her own. She already knew what a hard-working woman Mrs. Lockwood was, and what a struggle she had to live. "Yes, dear I understand," she replied to Elsie's repeated sob. "But you must go with us; we cannot get along without you." Elsie pressed her teacher's hand.

"There, that makes me feel better,"

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trying to smile. "I won't cry any more, for my eyes will be red, and mamma will question me. She must not know anything about it. It grieves her to see me unhappy. It is so much to me to know that you and the girls care. It won't be near as hard to stay at home." Elsie's face shone with happy appreciation.

"I have it," exclaimed Miss Wilmot. And then she made a suggestion to Elsie that made her dance for very gladness.

"Oh, Miss Wilmot! who would have thought of such a thing but your own dear self? And will it really count?" she cried with excited happiness, urged by hope.

"Surely," answered her teacher. Then, mentally, Elsie's basket began to fill.

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"Won't the girls be surprised to see me. Not one of them shall know the contents of my basket till the time comes. Mamma will be so glad to know I have something of my very own to take. For, of course, I shall tell her now."

"It is nearly six o'clock," Miss Wil-

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5 KING EAST.

mot noted, looking at her watch. "We must be going."

"I must have a basket with a cover,"

Elsie said to her mother, as they went in search for one after supper. The basket was found, and, if not filled, contained many a good thing. It was a long evening for a little girl of twelve years to wait, with anticipation of her first picnic, the following morning. But bedtime came; so did the morning, flooded with sunshine. "I must be up good and early so as to help mamma before I go." At the same moment Elsie jumped out of bed and dressed herself carefully neat.

"Good-bye, mamma, dear," she called, as she closed the garden gate.

"Elsie Lockwood is here," sang more

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