

For Girls and Boys.

WHO STOLE THE THIMBLE!

BY ROSE HARTWICK THORPE

"Pet Hopkins, I'll thank you for my thimble." The little girl spoke in an angry, commanding voice, and a dark scowl marred her usually bright face.

Pet Hopkins looked up quickly from her sewing, with a surprised wonder deepening in her blue eyes. She was plainly dressed, so plainly, in fact, that she reminded one of a little woodland violet in a garden of brilliant flowers, for the dainty misses about her were all dressed handsomely, and chattered merrily with each other, while Pet sat by herself at one side of the room, and scarcely lifted her earnest eyes from the seam she was sewing. She usually came early and took her seat before the rest arrived, remaining in her quiet little corner until her companions had all departed. Once, when Miss Alice asked her why she always remained sitting while the other children were present, she answered, while a flush crept over her sensitive face, and a mist of tears filled her eyes.

"My old dress don't look so shabby when I'm sitting down, and they can't see where my stockings are darned.

Miss Alice respected the child's desire to attract as little attention as possible after that, for her own experience had taught her the pains of poverty.

This was how the little class came to be formed: The benevolent mammas of the village discovered in Alice Hartman a worthy young lady struggling with poverty, utterly alone in the world, and without health or strength to endure hard labor. They wisely concluded that it would be kinder to provide her with easy employment than to present her with money. Upon holding a consultation they decided that she must have a sewing class of little girls, to meet for an hour every afternoon in her own tidy, little parlor. Each of the mammas present was able to contribute to the class one little pupil, and some two. When they came to discuss the matter more fully, they were amazed at the general ignorance of their children in this particular branch. The little ones could read and write quite nicely. The most of them could dance very gracefully; some of them could sing and play easy accompaniments on the piano, but not one of them could use a thimble.

And so the class began with a dozen little girls, each carrying a tiny work-basket containing wee scissors, needle-pad, patch-work, and dainty silver thimble. Pet's mother was very poor, but was quite desirous that her little girl should learn to sew, and as she had no time to teach her, she made arrangements to do Miss Alice's washing if she would allow Pet to join the class.

When Miss Alice asked the class which finger should wear the thimble, there was an omnious silence, broken at last by a little girl timidly suggesting her thumb.

"You all have thimbles, have you not?" asked Miss Alice, and instantly half a dozen bright, new thimbles, were triumphantly disclosed to view.

"Now," said Miss Alice, smiling, "you may each place your thimble on the finger where you think it will do the most service."

Then, as she glanced down the class, she asked May Anson why she placed her thimble on her little finger.

"Cause it's most out of the way there," answered the child.

"And you, Pet, where is your thimble?"

"I haven't got any thimble to put at all," answered Pet, shrinking farther back into the corner.

It was at the beginning of the third lesson, and Miss Alice was in the next room when Delia Eller spoke up sharply:

"Pet Hopkins, I'll thank you for my thimble."

Pet looked up in surprise, but as she had no idea where the young lady's thimble was, she did not hand it to her. All the girls in the room looked at Pet expectantly, some of them quite severely.

"Don't you intend to hand me my thimble, Pet Hopkins?" exclaimed Delia in a louder key, her face flushing up with anger.

"I don't know where it is," said Pet, meekly.

"She don't know where it is! Just hear the bold, little thief, girls. There she sits with my pretty silver thimble on her finger, and says she don't know where it is! You all heard her say that she hadn't a thimble, didn't you?"

"Yes, we did," answered the children, clustering about poor, bewildered Pet.

"Well," continued Delia, "if her mother had bought her one

since, do you think she would have bought a silver one? Washer-women don't have more money then they know how to spend. If you didn't steal my thimble, Pet Hopkins," she continued, "you'd just as soon I'd look at it close and see if it is like mine."

"It was mamma's when she was a little girl," faltered Pet.

"A likely story," sneered Delia. "Why didn't you bring it before? Let me see it."

"It was mislaid, and mamma just found it this morning," answered Pet, as she slipped the thimble from her finger and handed it to Delia.

"Oh, what awful stories you do tell, Pet Hopkins," said Delia, as she examined the thimble. "This is my very thimble; I know it by the little vine about it."

She calmly placed it on her finger as she spoke, and walked to her seat with a very injured air, while the other little girls clustered about her, and talked very excitedly about the forlorn child in the corner.

"I think we ought to tell Miss Alice," said one, decidedly. "She ought to know what kind of girls she has in her class."

"No," said Delia, reflectively. "I'm willing to forgive her as long as I've got my thimble back."

"But she may take other thimbles."

"I guess that this lesson will be sufficient," said Delia, loud enough for Pet to hear.

When Miss Alice entered the rooms she discovered that something had occurred to disturb the children, but as none of them brought complaints to her she forebore questioning them.

Poor little Pet was obliged to sew her seam over twice that afternoon, because the tears blinded her so she could scarcely see where to put her needle.

"I wouldn't care so much, mamma," she said, as she laid her head on her mother's loving breast, and sobbed out her grief, "only it was your thimble, when you was a little girl, and I meant to be so careful of it. I wonder if it was a punishment 'cause I was so proud of having a real silver thimble, like the rest!"

When Delia reached home that night she, too, told her mother all about the lost thimble.

"It is very strange," said Mrs. Eller, when Delia had finished. "I always supposed that Pet was one of the most honest little girls in town. Let me see your thimble, Delia."

Delia opened the work-basket, and handed the thimble to her mother.

"Why, Delia," exclaimed Mrs. Eller, the moment she had taken the thimble, "this is not your thimble. Oh, my child, what have you done? You have been the thief, after all."

"I surely thought it was mine," sobbed Delia, 'cause mine wasn't in my work-basket, and, anyhow, Pet must must have stolen it, for her mother couldn't afford to get a silver thimble for her."

"My child," said Mrs. Eller, solemnly, "you have made yourself and poor little Pet a great deal of trouble by your hasty conclusion. It is just possible that you may have slipped your thimble in your pocket."

"Oh, no, I didn't," said Delia, decidedly. "I always put it in my basket."

She slipped her hand into her pocket as she spoke, and an exceedingly foolish look spread over her face as she drew forth and displayed the missing thimble.

"Oh, mamma!" she sobbed, "what shall I do?"

"There is only one thing for you to do, my dear. You must take Pet's thimble to her to-morrow, and ask her forgiveness before the whole class."

"I will, mamma," answered the little girl, humbly. "Do you know, mamma, she never told Miss Alice a word about it. She just let me keep the thimble when I said it was mine, and sat there, looking so sorry all the afternoon."

The next afternoon Delia told the whole story about the thimble before the class, and Miss Alice listened in great surprise.

"I stole your thimble, Pet," said Delia, standing humbly before Pet. "I am so sorry. I wish you could forgive me but I don't see how you can."

And Pet without a thought of the eyes that were on her, or her shabby clothes, just put her arms around Delia's neck and the two little girls sobbed together, and though the other little girls could not have told what they were crying for, they all joined in the chorus, while Miss Alice slyly wiped her own eyes.—*The Interior.*

What is it to be wise?

'Tis but to know how little can be known,
To see all others' faults, and feel our own.—*Pope.*