

KEEPING LENT.

GIRLS, how are you going to keep Lent?" inquired Mrs. Knight, looking down the long table at the bright young girl faces turned toward her.

Study hour was over, and, before going upstairs for their evening's dance and frolic in the gymnasium, the girls had gathered for a few moments around the long table in the school parlor in case Mrs. Knight had anything to say to them—a gentle word of warning to the noisy girls, to suggest a new play, praises for the day's good lessons, or only sometimes a cheerful "good-night," and "God have all my dear girls in His safe keeping this night."

"Anything that Mrs. Knight said was worth coming to listen to, even if it was a scolding," the girls used to exclaim enthusiastically sometimes. So to night, as usual, the quiet girls were getting out their story books and fancy work, and the lively girls, on the wing, as it were, had settled down for a moment on their way upstairs.

"How are you going to keep Lent, dears?" Mrs. Knight inquired again, as the girls hesitated, looked at one another, and each one waited for the one next her to speak.

"Surely that isn't a hard question to answer," she went on, as no one spoke.

"I'm—I'm going without butter," said little Eva Ransome, timidly, at last.

"And I am going to try hard not to get a black mark all this six weeks," said Georgie Lee.

Some of the older girls were going to speak, and the whole school would speedily have known who it was that was going without sugar and which without desserts, when Mrs. Knight spoke again, stroking little Eva's colored curls, just the color of the butter she loved so well.

That isn't exactly what I mean, dear. Denying the appetite is an excellent thing, but not enough self-denial, nor the most useful, nor the most useful one for us to practice as a Lenten penance. *Doing* is a great deal more useful, a much better work in the world than *doing without*. What good work are you girls going to do for your Lord and Master this Lent?

The girls hadn't thought of that; they wiggled about a little, looked at the corners of their aprons and their finger nails, but no one seemed to find an answer, until May Braddon, one of the "old girls," as the little ones called her, said:

"I'm sure I don't know what we are going to do, unless *you* have a plan for us, Mrs. Knight."

"What a wise girl!" said Mrs. Knight shaking her head laughingly at the pretty speaker. "What makes you think so?"

"Because you have ever so many letters in your hand, and you look as if you wanted to tell us something," was the merry answer, upon

which, without waiting to be told, all the girls sat down about the long table, not without stray glances at the long clock in the corner, where the minute hand was so rapidly creeping towards the half-hour, while Mrs. Knight, seated herself at the head of the table, opened the letters—there were four or five of them—and read them all aloud.

They all told the same story of hunger and want; of threadbare, tattered clothing and shoeless feet that cold winter weather; of so many little children suffering for the want of these things in the east, west, north, and south of this great land—little Indian children starving on the plains, and the little street wanderers in the great cities; there seemed to be no end to them or their needs.

Even the most restless girl among the forty around the long table had forgotten to watch the clock long before Mrs. Knight had finished her last letter, and when she had folded it, pushed it into its envelope, and glanced around again, there were only very sober faces and sober eyes to meet her glance.

"What do you think, girls?" she inquired. "Do you see any opportunity of helping to lighten a little, a very little even, of that misery?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered May, when the girls had pushed and whispered her into the place of spokeswoman for them all. "We might save up our money this Lent, and, instead of buying candy and things, send it to some of these poor people. But," sorrowfully, "that would be very little."

"Don't forget the widow's mite, dear," said Mrs. Knight, cheerfully. "Well, is that enough?"

"Do you think we ought to *sew* for them?" inquired May, who used a needle about as well as she might have used a crowbar under the same circumstances, and who, consequently, hated to sew.

"Yes, I think you might," was the brisk answer, "and that is exactly my idea of what you should busy yourselves about this Lent. An hour each day will do wonders in six weeks in the sewing line. Now, what hour of the day will you give up to it?"

"I'd just as lief give up the walking hour," said lazy Nan Rogers.

"I might give up my practising hour. I know mother wouldn't care when it is to help poor children," said Annie Ford, whose music was her daily trial, to be cried or stormed, or stamped over, just whatever mood she happened to be in.

Nearly every girl had a different suggestion to offer, and though Mrs. Knight shook her head, now laughingly, now soberly, at them all, no one happened to think of that very cherished hour so rapidly slipping away, until May burst out suddenly with: