

An Epworth Leaguer's Vacation.

(By Mary E. Sherwood, in 'Onward'.)

'Well, what do you say, wife, is it to be yes or no? The answer should go to-day; and we have no reason to put them off.' So saying, Farmer Clegg leaned back in his chair apparently well satisfied with the dinner he had just eaten.

'Well, I don't know what to say about letting those city folks come here to board for the summer,' was the answer. 'It will make no end of work, and I suppose, as we will have the greater share of the work, the girls and I ought to decide the question.'

'Oh, let them come,' said both Nettie and Jean together, and Nettie added, 'We don't mind the work, if only we can please them. I do hope they won't be "stuck up." I like fresh faces, and I hope they will let us be kind to them.'

'If you want my advice, though you don't ask for it, I would say not to let them come here with their city airs, looking down on us, and at the same time expecting us to wait on them hand and foot.' This last came from Tom, who, as he spoke, rose from the table, showing himself to be a tall, fine-looking fellow of about twenty-one. His contact with city folks had evidently not been of the pleasantest, judging from his talk.

'Oh, come now, Tom,' said Jean, 'you don't mean all that. If you don't like them you can keep out of their road.'

'Well, wife, decide quickly. I'll go and hitch up and take the letter down to the post-office.'

'Very well,' was the answer, 'seeing the girls are willing, though I am sorry Tom sees it in such an ill light, we will let the two girls come here for the summer months. We will try and look after their comfort. They will have to look after their own pleasure.'

'All right, wife, it won't hurt us for one summer. Nettie, get the letter ready, that's a girl. I'll go and hitch up.'

The farm of 'Squire Clegg,' as he was known for miles around, was one of the finest in that section of the country. Just now it presented a beautiful sight. As far as the eye could see was greeted with green fields and leafy trees. A broad river ran through the farm, and the large evergreen trees which grew on its banks suggested pleasant retreats on warm summer days. No wonder Mr. Bond had selected it as the summer home for his two daughters, when business summoned him for three months to England. He had had occasion to call on Squire Clegg on business the year before, and was much taken with the place. When suddenly summoned to England, his pleasant visit to 'Sunnyside' the year before decided him to ask permission to place his daughters there during his absence. He would have liked to take them to England with him, but the delicate health of the younger prevented him from doing what he thought would be too much for her strength. The arrival of a letter from Squire Clegg, stating that they would be pleased to have the girls come for the summer, delighted him, and set his mind very much at ease.

After the despatch of Nettie's letter all was bustle in the Clegg household. To be sure, it was only late in June, and the semi-annual house-cleaning had taken place in May, but the house had to undergo a fresh inspection. Tom growled at the extra work that was occasioned, saying that before summer was over they would all be

worn out. But no one heeded him; they were too busy preparing, as Tom said, 'enough eatables for a whole regiment.'

However, the eventful day at last arrives, and Nettie, as she takes a last look at the rooms allotted to the girls, hopes they will not be disappointed or expect grander surroundings. 'Oh, I hope they will be nice,' she adds as she closes the door. 'I am tired of this humdrum life. I am glad we are going to have a change, something to wake us up.'

Do not think, my readers, that Nettie is discontented with her daily life, for, as her mother would fondly tell you, 'She is a good daughter, and though she does pine for new scenes and new faces, I never hear her complain of the dullness of her life.'

The arrival of the guests and their pleasant greeting soon set every one at their ease. Nettie and Jean were grieved to find Nellie, the younger one, so pale and delicate, and at their mother's suggestion she was at once taken upstairs and told to rest on the old-fashioned couch by the window. From here she could catch a glimpse of the garden and, farther off, of the shining surface of the river.

Clara was a striking contrast to her sister, for she appeared the very picture of health. Her delight over the supper—but shall I describe one of our country suppers? Snowy bread and light, flaky biscuits, golden butter, broiled ham and chickens, ripe, red strawberries, with real cream to eat them with, to say nothing of tea and coffee such as one seldom gets. Even Nellie was persuaded to eat the best meal, as Clara said, that she had eaten for weeks. Her pale cheeks grew quite rosy as she told of the beautiful view she had seen from the window while she rested. Even Tom, who had put in an appearance at supper time, was won over by her smiles, and he went so far as to promise her a row on the river as soon as she was rested.

The first week passed swiftly away. The girls were delighted with the picturesque scenery as well as with the kindness of all in the house. Accustomed all their lives to the confinement of city life, the free country life took their fancy, and was attested to by the many hours they spent out of doors.

Sunday morning, their first Sunday in the country, dawned bright and clear. The country church was situated on a corner of Squire Clegg's farm, so all were able to walk. Even Nellie, who had not attended church for weeks, declared herself able to go. They both enjoyed the service very much, for they both were true Christian girls.

Coming home Clara went on with Nettie, while Nellie followed more leisurely with Jean. The girls' conversation naturally turned upon church matters.

'I did not hear your pastor, or our pastor, I should say, announce for an Epworth League meeting this week, Nettie,' said Clara.

'Epworth League, what's that?' asked Nettie in surprise.

'Why, Nettie,' answered Clara, 'did you never hear of the Epworth League?'

'Well, now,' said Nettie, 'I believe I have seen that name in some of our church papers, but I never took much notice of it. Tell me about it, will you?'

'It would take me a long time to explain it,' was the pleasant rejoinder. 'Suppose this afternoon we four go down to the river's bank and sit under the trees, and I will tell you all about it.'

'That will be fine,' said Nettie, and she hurried in to prepare the dinner, saying softly to herself, 'Oh, I am so glad we let her come.'

Dinner over, armed with shawls and pillows for the comfort of Nellie, they all set out for the riverside. Nellie had suggested inviting Tom, and he was easily persuaded to join the party.

So, under the trees that afternoon the story of the Epworth League was clearly explained. Its origin, its growth, its progress were clearly set forth by Clara, who proved herself to be a good supporter of the cause. Questions and answers flowed freely.

'How nice it would be if we could have an Epworth League here in connection with our church,' said Nellie. 'We have no young people's meeting. I do not see why we cannot have a League like you describe here.'

'So you can with a little work,' said Clara. 'Judging from the number of young people whom I saw at church this morning you ought to have a good many members.'

'Will you help us organize one while you are here, Miss Bond?' said practical Tom.

'Certainly I will,' answered Clara, 'but we will have to ask permission of our pastor first, and if he is agreeable, we will then need to send away for pledge cards and constitutions.'

'The first difficulty is soon overcome, then,' said Tom. 'I heard the minister tell father he would be in to supper on his way back to service this evening. I declare that looks like him now turning in at the gate.'

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated, and Tom's surmise proved to be correct. Nettie proposed going to the house to talk the matter over with him.

'Have I ever heard of an Epworth League? Is that what you say, Miss Nettie?' said Mr. Barton to her eager question. 'Why, yes, I have. At our last appointment, a year ago, we had a flourishing Epworth League Society. I have been thinking lately of starting one here. What do you all think?'

'Miss Bond has been telling us all about the Epworth League,' said Nettie. 'We all think we ought to have one here. I think it will give us some work to do in the church.'

'You are right there, Miss Nettie,' said Mr. Barton, 'you cannot have a good society unless you are willing to work. If you will give us your assistance, Miss Bond, while you are here, I will announce to-night for a meeting of all the young people in the church for next Friday evening. That will give us plenty of time to get supplies here.'

When the girls had gone off to attend to their evening duties, Mr. Barton had a long talk with Clara on Epworth League work. He found she could give him much useful information on the method of conducting meetings. He judged her to be a very superior girl, one who would be willing to lend a hand in helping on the Master's work wherever she might be placed. He judged her to be a true Epworth Leaguer, in that she did not rest in the Master's work while enjoying a vacation. Her presence at Squire Clegg's farm had been the means of starting an Epworth League which would in all probability change the social life of the young people especially.

The meeting was announced and proved a success, both in numbers and enthusiasm. Some had heard of an Epworth League, others had not. Forty-eight names were