

"Kate," said Hannah, re-entering her door, "I want you to make yourself as agreeable as you can, to one of my guests especially."

"The lady who was in the asylum?"

"Yes, there is nothing easier than for such a person to get behind a stone wall of her own building and to say there is no sun at all or she would see it shine. Stone walls are cold, Kate, and so will be any one behind them, yet all the same we know that the sun does shine, so it must be our neighbourly work to keep Mrs. Ferris in the warmth and light."

"What a nice little sermon directly applied! I will do my best. At what hour does the party begin?"

"Oh, any time that anybody is moved to come. I told Hope Hopkins to be here early. She is almost the only young girl you will be likely to care for."

"Very well, and now let us go about making the cake, for I want to help," said Kate, whereupon they retired to the kitchen, where Hannah presided happily over the various rites. In the early afternoon Kate, buried in a big chair, gave herself to reading "Romola." One slept and the other read, for the time forgetful of guests, until at last Katharine, looking off her book, was startled to see a young lady seated near her, knitting at her ease. She was extremely fair, with almond-coloured eyes and red-gold hair—not rough, but fine and silky, coiled loosely back from a head as perfect as a Greek statue's. She made one think of honey, of amber beads, of everything warm, sweet, and light-holding, this country minister's daughter, who was a downright, sensible, unromantic girl, given of necessity to much dish-washing, bread-making, and stocking-darning.

"I thought it was a pity to make you remember that you were not in Italy, and 'Romola' is vastly superior to me."

"That remains to be seen, Miss Hopkins—for I am sure it is Miss Hopkins who has come in like a sunbeam," said Katharine, longing to touch the beautiful hair.

"Oh, no, I came in a pair of new shoes a size too large for me, but all that our 'store' afforded. Shopping can never get to be a fine art in Cairnes."

"You have a great many things to select from, I am sure, and time to learn all about them. I told Cousin Hannah I was certain that I recognized two candy hearts, some purple calico, and an accordion that I left behind me years ago."

Hope was making some playful reply

when Miss Goddard came in and asked what news she heard from her father.

"He is well, and enjoying every moment, but what are we going to do for a minister? The one who agreed to come while father is away has written to say that the death of a brother has changed all his plans, and made it impossible for him to keep his engagement. Do you think——"

There was a shadow in the door, a solid body bounced tumultuously over the threshold, scattered three kittens, scared and squealing, then, after just missing utter downfall, recovered balance, and Mrs. Ostrander, panting, laughing, and brilliant in cherry ribbons, begged pardon for her hasty entrance. She "was not looking for kittens on the door-mat."

Again the subject of a minister was taken up, and Maria was all excitement.

"There must be somebody to preach next Sunday, for if there is not, the people who drive in two and three miles to church will be provoked, and stay away the Sundays following. Miss Goddard, you might write a sermon and let Mr. Ferris read it!"

Miss Hannah declined with thanks, and proposed that Maria enter the ministry herself. Not at all dismayed, she insisted that she knew what could be done then: there were excellent Sunday readings in the religious papers—yes, and occasionally sermons. Selections of this kind would do admirably. Then having disposed of that matter, Mrs. Ostrander asked: "Is Mrs. Ferris coming to tea?"

"She gave me reason to think that she would come," replied Hannah, "and I urged her not to wait until her husband was ready. Mr. Ostrander will be here?"

"O yes, after his work is done."

Hannah, going to her west window, looked down the road, and saw Mrs. Ferris lingering at her own door, as if in uncertainty. Its nature Hannah divined but dimly. She was so ready to stretch out strong hands to Mary, so conscious that

"'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,
But to support him after,"—

that it seemed to her the other woman's heart must know hers to be sympathetic. Did Mary know? Well, she half-apprehended and half-resented that which she felt in the air, as if it had been patronage. At noon, when she told of Miss Goddard's visit, and saw John's approval, she had longed to say that she would not visit anywhere. Not quite yielding to that