

Mary Lizzie's Charity

It all happened through the fault of the clerks in the railroad office; Mary Lizzie was sure of that. If they had not teased her, she never would have seen the president of the North Mountain Railroad Company, and of course she would never have insulted him. But now she was disgraced, and was being sent, in charge of the messenger from the railroad office, to Mr. Parker, the pastor of the mission church where she attended Sunday school.

The messenger was doing his best to impress upon her that she might be thankful she was not on her way to the police station instead. She did not believe a word he was saying, but she would have gentle preferred being sent to jail to being sent to the minister's. She did not know much about ministers, while she knew a great deal about policemen.

She would have darted away from the messenger if he had been older; but he was little more than a boy, and she knew he could catch her, and she wanted no more tales to be told to Mr. Parker.

For some minutes after the messenger had arrived with her at Mr. Parker's she cried so that, although she tried to talk, the minister had no notion what had happened. When he had dismissed the messenger and had comforted her, he asked her to begin again at the beginning and tell him everything.

"You see, it was about Mr. Wicks," said Mary Lizzie. "The doctor says he'll die if he don't get out of the city."

"Yes, I know all about Mr. Wicks," said the minister, groaning inwardly. He had exhausted both the resources and the patience of every charitable supporter of the mission on such cases as that of Mr. Wicks.

"I went out collecting for Mr. Wicks, so's he could go to the country. I was doing beautiful while I stuck to the telegrams. I wish I'd never gone to the old railroad office!" she said, beginning to cry again. "We had it all fixed so nice! Miss Royal was going to take me in with her, and our folks was going to take the two youngest of the Wicks boys; then the oldest was going in with the Letfish family. Of course Janet would have to go with her father to take care of him."

The minister explained gently to Mary Lizzie that it would take a great deal more money to send even Mr. Wicks and Janet to the country than the amount she showed him tied in the corner of her handkerchief. "But tell me what you did at the railroad office," he said.

"It was their dinner hour, I guess, when I got there, for the men were having a daisy time. They were just mean to me, that's what they were! It was my fault, I suppose; but they egged me on, and I sassed 'em back. They wouldn't give me a cent—only one man who gave me that quarter; that was the most I got. All the rest said they was just starting to Bar Arbor or Tucksido on their vacations. They asked me how it come I wasn't spending the summer with the Vanderbilts, and when I wouldn't answer 'em they called me the Duchess of Cady Street."

Mary Lizzie stopped, wrapped her hands nervously in her faded skirt, and went on:

"That made me mad, and I told 'em I was no Dutchman than they was. While I was sassing 'em, they all went to work pretty quick. A little, low, fat man had come in, but I didn't see him first. When they wouldn't answer me any more, I turned to leave, and run plump into him. 'Barret,' he says, as sharp as could be, 'what's all this mean?' 'I just come in, sir,' says the man. But it wasn't true, for he was one of the worst of all to tease me. 'I'll tell you what,' says I, and then I told him what I was collecting for, and they hadn't but one give anything."

"Who was the man who came in?"

"Why, Colonel Bair."

"You don't mean you asked Colonel Bair to contribute for Mr. Wicks?" exclaimed the minister, remembering vividly a certain experience of his own with Colonel Bair, at the end of which he found himself in the corridor of the great office building feeling that he had done a disgraceful deed in asking assistance for a sick man.

"Yes, I did; but I didn't know it was Colonel Bair when I asked him."

"Can you remember every word you said, and all that he said?"

"I told him that Mr. Wicks had been the driver for some rich man for a long while, and now he was sick, and the man was so mean he wouldn't help him a bit."

"Didn't you know that Mr. Wicks was Colonel Bair's driver until he was taken sick?"

"No; was he? I thought Colonel Bair acted pretty mad! He squirmed round in his chair and said who sent

me there? And I said nobody. And he said wasn't I lying, and looked at me real sharp, and I said no, I was straight. And I told him I made the plan all up myself.

"Then he said, supposing the man had good wages all these years, and hadn't saved anything, was the railroad company a charity organization? And I said I didn't know what the railroad company was, but the man had buried his wife, and his daughter, my age, had to keep house for him, and he was sick now for fourteen months, and the family earning next to nothing, and they couldn't help themselves. And I told him how we was going to fix it to take care of the children so Janet and her father could go to the country, and wouldn't he please help?"

"And he said, why didn't the churches tend to such things? And I told him about the nurse's fund and the free kindergarten, and how Doctor Creigan went to see the sick people that was too poor to pay, and all the rest you did for the people here at the church. I told him I knewed if you could you'd send Mr. Wicks, but you just couldn't, 'cause I knowed you'd paid for Mrs. Homer yourself. I know you did, Mr. Parker, for she said she'd just bet you did."

"And he said, why didn't I ask somebody else? And I said there wasn't any use to ask the 'Old Mogul.' And he said, did I know who he was? and I said no. And he kind o' smiled as if he was proud to hear me say that, and said, why wasn't it no use to ask the Old Mogul? and I said everybody said he never give money to anybody. And he said didn't everybody say the Old Mogul was too smart to be taken in? and I said no; they said he was too stingy. And I thought some of the men in the outside office would fall off their chairs; but nobody looked round."

"What did he say to that?" asked the minister, smiling.

"He looked awful black, and growled out, 'They do, eh? Say I'm an old skinkint, I reckon! Who said that?' And I was awful scared, for then I knowed he was the Old Mogul. And I says, slowly, 'Why, everybody says so.'"

"He kind o' sunk down in his chair for a minute, and then he grabbed up his pen and scratched away in a little book as if he was going to carve the paper up. Then he called out, 'Barret, look in the directory and find where the Rev. Mr. Parker lives, and take this child to him.' And he tore off the letter as if he was tearing a piece of cloth, and gave it to me and says, 'Take that to Mr. Parker, and if what you say is true, all right; but if you've been collecting money under false premises, I'll have you sent to the house of correction.'"

As she finished her story Mary Lizzie produced the letter, much crumpled and soiled from contact with her tear-dampened handkerchief. Mr. Parker glanced at it, and then looked up in amazement.

"Don't you know what a check is?" he asked.

"Yes, I've checked packages when I was a cash at the Bee Hive. But that isn't a check."

"Mary, Colonel Bair has put into my hands as a trustee enough money to send Mr. Wicks and the whole family to the country for the whole summer, and something more besides!"

Two weeks later it was Miss Ann Royal's turn to draw her breath with a quick gasp of wonder over a letter that came to her, just as Janet Wicks had done over the same sort of letter that came to her. The minister's wife had written it, so that Miss Ann might not be humiliated by receiving what she would have called charity. This was the letter:

My Dear Miss Ann: Will you not allow me to reach out into our friendship far enough to offer you the enclosed? It is not my money that I am sending you; it has been allowed already by having been given to the King, and I am only passing it on to you.

I know you need rest from the hard work which you have done so bravely for all these years. Just drop everything, and go to your old home in the country for as long a time as you can. I am not going to sign my name to this; only let me say that I am one who loves you and one who is, like yourself,

A Daughter of the King.

"It's more than you deserve, Ann Royal," she said to herself, as she wiped her eyes. Miss Ann had lived so much alone that she often held animated conversations with herself.

"Here only last week," she went on, "you were grumbling because you had to work such long hours, when you knew it was a blessing that the daylight lasts so long now that you

needn't buy any oil. And now you are a regular aristocrat, going off for a long vacation. But, Ann Royal, she shook herself sharply erect as she spoke, "You wouldn't think of going off to enjoy that money all alone, would you? Go straight to Mary Lizzie Moore's and divide up with her. Let her go to the country, too."

Mary Lizzie sat blissfully smoothing out the crisp bills which lay in her lap after Miss Ann had gone back to her own room.

"Catch me going to the country!" she said. "Why, I'd die of loneliness! I'm going to get a lovely new dress, I am; one like they have in the show-window at the Bee Hive. I'm going down to the beach. I'll catch onto a different excursion every day. I'll go to the merry-go-round every night, and I'll ride all the time. And I'll go to the bicycle railroad, and the crystal maze, and the roller toboggan slide. I'll have ice-cream for breakfast and for every other meal."

"Why, Mary, I thought you were going off for a vacation!" Mr. Parker exclaimed, a week later, when Mary Lizzie, in the same faded dress she had worn on the day of her visit to Colonel Bair, came into his library.

"I did go down to Light House Point with the Third Ward Tigers on Monday," she said.

"I think I could find you a pleasanter company than that," Mr. Parker began.

"Oh, the crowd was all right. One of the men swum out in the surf till they thought he'd drown; and there was some men on the boat that's going to vote the other ticket, and they almost had a fight. McMullin's Independent Club is going down to-morrow."

It was evident that Mary Lizzie was not seeking advice on the question of excursions.

"Say, Mr. Parker," she broke out, "can't there be something done for that baby of Mrs. Fogle's?"

"Why, I thought it was well again! Hasn't Doctor Creigan been attending it?"

"It was better till the hot weather come back last week, and now it's worse'n ever. I just believe it'll die, like all the rest! It cries 'most all the time. Monday the last thing I heard when I went down the hall was its poor, little, weak cry. I couldn't get it out of my ears all day. I heard it all the time the orchestra was playing on the boat, and at the beach I could hear it like it was out in the waves. It's crying now. I can't have a vacation if that baby's going to die! See?"

"But it ain't going to die!" she added, fiercely, "not if I can help it. I've brought you the money Miss Ann Royal give me—what's left. I wish I hadn't spent some of it. They took the dress back, 'cause I used to work in the store. There is twenty-two dollars and thirteen cents. Won't that do some good?"

"Mary, you dear girl, it will do some good! I am sure we'll get more money, if you can give like this! But you've been planning to do so many things with this money; can you give them up?"

"I reckon I can give 'em up better'n the baby can. See? Besides, I've got to get that crying out of my ears, or I'll be nervous prostrated."

Three weeks later, when Doctor Creigan and Mr. Parker were visiting the Sanitarium, as they had come to call the little colony of sick babies and children at the old Royal farmhouse, Colonel Bair's private car ran on the switch to wait for the passing of a freight train. Mr. Parker persuaded him to come up to the porch, where it was cooler, and to see the crowd of convalescent children. He took but languid interest, however, until Mr. Parker asked him whether he had ever made a better investment.

"What have I to do with this?" he asked.

"Not everything, but the principal subscription is yours."

"How's that? I thought I gave that money to the girl for my man, Wicks."

"So you did, and the doctor and I gave him one hundred and fifty dollars of it at once, to come up here and camp out. They are on that high ground. He sent back fifty dollars because they didn't need so much. We gave that to Ann Royal, a woman who was working herself to death in the city, to come back where she was born for a rest. She divided her gift with the same little girl who came to see you. The girl gave practically all her share to get the first of these sick babies out of the heat of the tenement. We took some other money that was given us afterward to buy milk, ice and other supplies. We are paying the Wicks family, who rented the farm, and paying Miss Ann Royal, too, for the work they do in caring for these children, out of the other hundred you gave for Wicks."

"You don't mean that you have supported a family, given a poor woman a vacation, and brought all this mob of young ones out here on that two hundred and fifty dollars?"

"That and a very little more."

"Mr. Parker, you ought to have been a railroad man. If I had got hold of you before you went to preaching, I could have trained you so there wouldn't have been a sharper superintendent in the State."

"The doctor had as much to do with it as I had, and the girl had more to do with getting it started than either of us."

"Where is that little hustler of a girl who got the money in the first place? Isn't she going to have any of the fun? I call that shabby! Bring her up here and make some sort of place for her. I don't know but I'll have to make a railroad man of her. But anyway, we'll establish a vacation fund, and you may call it for the Old Mogul, if you like. Only keep the farm house filled with babies all summer long, and have that girl here to help take care of them. There's that freight whistling."—Youth's Companion.

A Philosophic Problem.

A Virginia member of Congress used many years ago to tell a story which may have been intended as a parable for politicians who approach questions from the wrong side. It is still capable of performing, that office, not only for politicians, but for others.

The proprietor of a tan yard built a stand on one of the main streets of a Virginia town, for the purpose of selling leather and buying raw hides.

When he had completed the buying, he considered for a long time what sort of sign to put up to attract attention to the new establishment. Finally a happy thought struck him. He bored an auger hole through the door post and stuck a calf's tail into it with the tufted end outside.

After a while he saw a solemn-faced man standing near the door looking at the sign, his eyes in a round, meditative stare behind his spectacles. The tanner watched him a minute, then stepped out and addressed him.

"Good morning, sir!" he said. "Morning!" said the other, without taking his eyes off the sign.

"Want to buy leather?" asked the tanner.

"No."

"Got any hides to sell?"

"No."

"Are you a farmer?"

"No."

"Merchant?"

"No."

"Lawyer?"

"No."

"Doctor?"

"No."

"What are you, then?"

"I'm a philosopher. I've been standing here for an hour trying to figure out how that calf got through that auger hole."

Lucy's Petticoat.

The resourcefulness of Southern women during the civil war is well known, and has been illustrated by many incidents. One of their hardest problems was to procure clothing, not only for themselves, but for their servants. A correspondent of the Washington Post tells how one woman overcame the difficulty.

I remember that one winter my Aunt Nancy, then very old, who was a most excellent woman and very kind to her servants, had prepared for all but Lucy, her own maid. Winter was at hand, and every available thing had been used for piecing together, patching, padding and remodeling, but still Luck lacked a petticoat.

Aunt Nancy had a piece of a Yankee tent which had been picked up on the line of march after the soldiers had passed, and she scanned it well, but it seemed to promise little in the way of a warm petticoat for Lucy.

Aunt Nancy did not study long over the problem, however, for she was a woman of inventive mind. Noting Lucy's heavy shock of wool, she straightway sheared her head, and calling up several other servants who had good crops of wool, she sheared them also, telling them it would be good for them to keep their heads cool.

She took this wool, carded it and made battens, as they do with cotton for padding quilts, and quilted it into the remnant of the Yankee tent, which had been washed and made clean and soft.

Lucy wore the warmest of petticoats that winter, and she carried it away with her when she went into freedom.

"Poo!" said Daisy, scornfully. "The idea of your being afraid of a poor old house dog! Why, he eats out of my hand!" "I don't doubt it," replied Burroughs, dubiously, "but what I am afraid of is that he may take a notion to eat out of my leg."—Smart Set.

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