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"Fine! You may be the hope of the family yet. I believe you know more than I do, after a whole year of selling groceries."

It was James who made this generous remark, and Bertha smiled and then said quite gravely:

"But that isn't all I've learned."

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"Well, dear," said the mother, "tell us the whole story. What other fine bit of knowledge have you stored away?"

"I've learned something about the art of rebuke."

"The art of rebuke?"

Everybody wonderingly repeated the words, and Bert said solemnly, "Well, I never knew there was any fine art about blaming people."

"You'd think there was, if you had worked for a whole month in Miss Todd's Store," Bertha said enthusiastically.

And then, of course, she told the whole story.

"Miss Todd hardly ever blamed any of us, unless she first praised us a little, and one day when I plucked up courage enough to ask her how this was, she said, 'No one who doesn't deal largely in honest praise is fit to rebuke.' And even when she just couldn't praise some of our work, she reproved us so beautifully that there wasn't a bit of sting left. And so, along with a lot of other useful things, I couldn't very well help

learning something of what I call the art of rebuke."

A great silence fell upon the heels of this final bit of Bertha's business report, and then Mother Norris said quietly:

"I wouldn't wonder, dear, if this was really the best part of your month at business. To learn the art of rebuke is surely to master one of life's rarest, finest lessons."—Rose E. Wakefield, in *Girls' Companion*.

THE FLOWERS THAT CAME IN TIME.

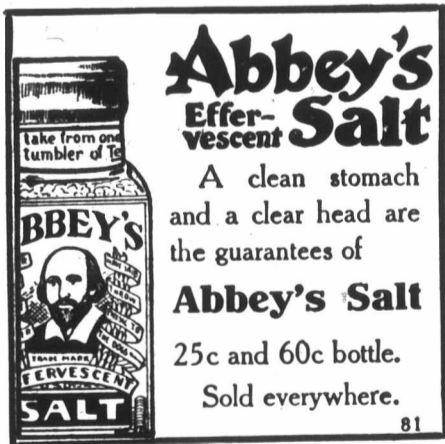
A vigorous knocking! Then the kitchen door pushed open, to disclose Mary, my washerwoman.

"I can't come to wash to-morrow. I've got to go to a funeral:—my chum's little girl, little Lena."

A big, raw-boned, carrot-haired Irishwoman is Mary; yet with gentleness of heart as genuine as the roughness of her hands she told the story of little Lena and the flowers. Lena's way in life had not lain along flower-bordered paths. Flowers did not belong to life at all in her experience. What belonged to life was work; work, and want and worry and—worse things. Yet, by a merciful provision, the hands and heart of Lena, that had cracked and bled at first in the struggle with work,—and the worse things,—grew hard and callous after a while, and did not feel the hurt so much.

There was no father now. There had been once,—a father who had lived violently, till he died violently. After that happened, life became less cruel for Lena and her mother and the little boys; but it was still hard, harsh, bare.

Lena's mother, with Mary, her chum, scrubbed buildings in the city parks. That meant thirteen hours a day away from home. "It's a good thing I've got somebody to leave with the little boys while I'm away," said Lena's mother. "Lena's a big girl now,—eleven, goin' on twelve,—plenty big enough to see to cookin' for the boys, and 'tend to the house and the work, and to have my coffee ready when I get home. And she



So busy Lena, in the one basement room that was "home" for four, cooked meals on the little low-gasoline stove; made the two beds, did dishes, and swept and scrubbed the "house." Washdays she got up early, so that she could have the clothes on the line in the basement by the time she went to school.



Monday night it happened. Almost seven o'clock it was, time for mother to come; and her pot of coffee boiled fast and furiously over the gasoline. Somehow, as Lena whisked about in that crowded room, a flame from the low little stove leaped out and snatched the hem of her calico, and Lena, flames streaming high over her head, rushed screaming into the windy street.

Poor little burned shoulders! Poor little back and limbs! She could lie only on her hands and face; and she had lain so, not daring the agony of moving, from Monday night till Sunday. "Great exhaustion," the doctor said, "from shock and pain." The little thread of life seemed ready to part.

Sunday afternoon the school teacher came carrying a message. Not words,—and for that the school teacher was thankful. Words forsook her utterly at the piteous little sight. The school teacher's message was flowers—a bunch of pinks was all; but such flowers Lena had never touched nor thought to touch. "The little girls in your class sent them," the teacher succeeded in saying.

The weary, weary little face, lying sideways on the coarse sheet, took on a look of scared wonder:

"For me—" in a sobbing whisper, "those flowers for me,—now?"

For answer the teacher laid the pinks beside the wondering, frightened face.

One hand,—what a little, little hand, to be so cracked and callous—ventured forth to clasp the flowers. Over her anguished eyes she spread their fresh coolness; across her rigid lips she laid their sweetness, to breathe it in, and in. Then again little Lena questioned tremblingly,

"For me,—for me,—now?"

The teacher bent close to hear the next weak words:

"I didn't think such nice flowers could be for me,—now,—because"—for a little space there was an aching silence; then the pitiful, pain-broken little voice poured out its quivering protest against the way of the world that waits, when it has sweetness to send. "I thought,—oh! I thought,—I thought you'd got to be dead before anybody'd ever send you any flowers."

She grew quiet soon, and lay still, her fingers clinging, clinging to the precious flowers. Glad content smoothed out the pain-wrinkles from her brow and face.

"Ain't it nice!" breathed little Lena. "Ain't it nice that you don't have to wait till you're dead to have somebody send you flowers?"

A happy shining was in the eyes that had been so hot and anguished. Then the lids drooped, drooped, closed over the shining, and shut it in safely forever as she passed from pain into peace.—S. S. Times.

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