

A vague feeling of uneasiness took possession of Muriel as she walked on. How odd that her father should be sick, and she not know it; but she winced as she remembered that she had been too much engrossed lately by her own feelings of discontent to notice other people. She heard her mother remonstrating with her father for working so hard, for going so early to the office and remaining so late, and had heard him say that as he now could not keep a clerk he was obliged to do so. How queerly Dr. Brown had looked at her. As she thought of it her uneasiness increased. All thought of the errand upon which she had come out passed from her mind. A church clock striking five reminded her that the afternoon was waning, and a sudden thought came to her. She would go to her father's office and walk home with him.

Muriel found her father busy over a lot of papers. He looked up in surprise as she entered.

'Are you soon going home, father? I am going to wait for you.'

Mr. Leslie looked pleased. 'Oh, are you? That is nice. I'll just finish this and come. Go in the other room and wait for me.'

From the little inner room Muriel had a good view of her father. She noticed for the first time how pale and worn he was. There were heavy lines in his face, and a gleam of white hair around his temples. The latter gave her a little shock. Those had come lately.

The office was close and stuffy. It was no wonder, she thought, that he looked pale, confined as he was there so many hours a day. A great wave of shame swept over her as she thought of her bitter discontent of the past weeks—and she had passed the time comfortably in their great, airy house and shady garden, with no more serious care than that of finding means of amusement. From the crowd of thoughts that surged through Muriel's mind during that half hour spent in waiting for her father was born a firm resolution. Nothing could induce her to leave home. This was followed by another which she decided to carry out at once. What a selfish girl she had been!

Mr. Leslie agreed with Muriel that to walk home would be pleasanter than to take the crowded trolley car. They strolled along in leisurely fashion.

'Father,' said Muriel, presently, 'can't I come down to the office with you every day and help you? I'm sure that I could soon learn to do things, and you know that we had a course of bookkeeping at school this year.'

'Help me—why, my dear—' began Mr. Leslie in surprise.

Muriel put her hand on his arm. 'Yes, you must have me for your clerk,' she said, gaily.

'My dear, are you in earnest?'

'Of course I am. Why, it will be lots of fun. Of course, I'll make mistakes at first, but I will try so hard to do things right. Then you will not need to stay so late or go so early.'

Mr. Leslie gave Muriel a look that made her feel very happy, though he said gravely, 'My dear, you could not stand it—the close office in this warm weather, and—'

Muriel interrupted him quickly. 'Now, father, you mustn't make another objection. I am going to try, and I know that I shall do splendidly. And just think what fine times we shall have going down together in the morning, going out to

lunch, and then coming home in the evening. And as for standing it—just look at me. You know that I am never sick.'

At that moment Muriel was certainly the picture of health, her cheeks a glowing pink, her blue eyes shining. Mr. Leslie had never been prouder of his pretty daughter than at that moment. He gave the hand on his arm a tender pressure.

'Well, dear, you may try.'

They walked on in happy silence until, just as they were near home, Muriel said hesitatingly, 'Father, don't you feel well? I met Dr. Brown to-day, and he asked me how you were, and—' Her voice faltered, and the tears came into her eyes.

Her father gave her a quick look. 'Why, my dear little girl! I'm sorry that Brown said anything to worry you. I was a little tired, and it was so warm. I feel better, and I shall soon be all right, now that you are going to lighten my work so much.' Then after a silence he said gravely:

'Muriel, you must not say anything about it to your mother, for it would worry her.'

Muriel wrote to her cousins that evening, inclosing their cheque, and gratefully declining their invitation. It was not for many months after that her parents knew of her having received it.

### Bob's Gymnasium Ticket.

'Mother, can't I buy a ticket to the gymnasium for this summer?' asked Rob Royse, twisting the door-knob and looking at her anxiously.

'How much does it cost?'

'Four dollars; but that includes baths and—and just lots of things.'

'Could your little brother go in on your ticket?'

'No, of course not, but—'

'Then I am sure we can't afford it, Rob,' she said, firmly.

'But, mother, I need it so! I'm all stooped over and weak-armed, and thin as a rail,' he pleaded.

Mrs. Royse sighed, for what Rob said was true, and her great anxiety was to see her two boys grow strong and straight; still, they could hardly afford the four dollars just now, and she could not give to one and not to the other. So she answered, quietly:

'Alden needs it too, dear,' adding after a pause, 'I wonder if we could not have a gymnasium of our own?'

'If we had a big barn like Skillman's we could, but we can't stand up in our coalshed!'

'What about the back yard—an out-door gymnasium?'

'That big, old, bare lot!' he exclaimed.

'Yes; it needs to be big and bare, and the high fence around it is just the thing. The apple tree will make a fine hold for our swinging ropes, and we can easily fix up the place for basket ball, horizontal bars and all those things.'

'And we'll have swinging ladders,' put in Rob, suddenly all enthusiasm, 'and Dollard Wright has a pair of saw-horses he'll give us. Say, mother, wouldn't it be nice to have Dollard in our gym?'

Mrs. Royse looked dubious. 'We don't want a crowd of boys here—it would soon give us trouble; but three would make it nicer than two, so if you promise to ask no one else you may have him in it.'

'And between us we have money enough to buy our Indian clubs right off. Mayn't I go over and tell him about it?'

Away he bounded, leaving his mother smiling over her work and planning eagerly how to transform the ugly back yard into a first-class gymnasium.

'I'll make them a floor mat by sewing together those two old mattresses in the attic and covering them with denim. It can be kept in the lattice porch at night. The best thing about the plan is that the boys are developing their muscles and they are in the open air at the same time, and are happy at home where I can be with them. Maybe I will get a little physical culture myself!' laughed the wise little woman, patting the finished sewing as if it had originated the idea.

That night the charter members of the Royse gymnasium held a caucus, as Rob called it, in the family sitting-room, and the most enthusiastic member of all was Mr. Royse himself.

'The first thing we must do will be to rake and clean the yard till it looks like new,' he said, with a boyish laugh. 'Then I'll see that the ropes are up good and strong, while you boys fix the other what-you-may-call-'ems. If a punching bag doesn't cost too much we will have one in the corner.'

This was greeted with cheers, Dollard exclaiming, 'O let me buy that! Father was going to give me a gym ticket and I'll just take the four dollars to get apparatus. Isn't it lucky that school is out next week?'

'And that to-morrow's Saturday!' added Alden.

'We can invent so many nice games with the apparatus,' Dollard said, thoughtfully.

'I know one already,' cried Alden, 'It's to put a tin can—an opened one, you know—on the end of a pole, and see how many times you can throw it up and catch it on the pole again. It takes lots of practice!'

The older boys smiled somewhat contemptuously over this, but Mrs. Royse hastened to declare that it would be fine training for the muscles of the back. Although they tried it next day 'simply for Alden's sake,' Rob and Dollard got plenty of fun out of the tin cans during that jolly summer.

Indeed, the whole gymnasium was a grand success. To be sure, no grass grew in the Royse's back yard that year; but there are many things better than grass or even a pretty lawn. The boys, who spent hours and hours there, developed some respectably big muscles, and became very skilful in their games. And since there were only three of them and it takes four to play most games, Mrs. Royse was often coaxed to leave her work and join them.

When she declared she was 'getting more physical culture than the housework could stand,' the boys resolved to help. They washed dishes, made beds, swept rooms, and, in fact, as Dollard said, they 'turned girl' so that she could turn boy when the work was done.

'We're a Mutual Aid Society,' she explained to Mr. Royse, while Alden whispered, confidentially: 'Do you know, father, I never used to love mother as much as I do now. She's so jolly and always plays so fair!'

When fall came Mrs. Wright kindly offered the use of her big attic for the winter, and here, though somewhat hampered by low rafters, the boys continued their muscle training.

'Are you satisfied with your summer's