

ELIZABETH BARTON'S PEACE.

AN EASTER STORY.

BY ELLA S. ATKINSON.

WE sat around the grate one night at Easter-tide—four of us. We talked of the pain that eats the happiness out of so many hearts; of the abiding peace of the few. Then Alice looked up at Elizabeth Barton.

"You have peace written all over your face," the young girl cried.

We followed her gaze, and surely it was there. Such a strong calm, such sweetness and gravity, seldom comes except when a great old age and well-borne sorrow have mellowed the soul and softened the features. But Elizabeth was not old—forty by the book, thirty if you trusted your eyes alone.

"Tell us how it came there—the peace," cried Alice, for our Alice was ever impetuous.

"Do," someone else said; "it will be an Easter sermonette, with 'peace on earth' for the text."

And Elizabeth began: "Years ago when the snowy blossoms of the cherry had glorified all the gaunt gray trees in an old-fashioned country garden, a young girl sat up in the branches of the one next the house. Three branches curved up from a strong upright one and formed a seat; another made a foot stool. The blooms were in their prime, and the wind coaxed a fresh odor from them that, partly sweet, had yet a tang of bitterness in it. The sunshine fell across the pages of the book the girl held in her lap, and the white flowers swaying above mottled it with flickering shadows. She had forgotten the tale she had been reading. Her eyes rested on a patch of red brick wall that flamed through the twigs. It was the farm house where she lived and to-day she loathed even the sight of its well-made bricks. Her eyes swelled with feeling and grew moist. Her bosom fell and rose with passionate breathing. Her fingers wound and unwound about the branches, which much handling had made shiny and red-brown instead of misty gray.

"Her life was so narrow, she thought, and she longed to get away from it all. She wanted to live in great cities, to move among crowds, to travel in other lands. People in books always did. There was no use reading. She envied the very fictitious people who moved through the written pages. These things passed through the girl's mind, and she kept leaning her head on her book and blistering the pages with tears because her little world was so narrow and her poor little soul so starved. Time passed, and the girl grew querulous. She fretted at the bonds that held her to the old farm house, with its heavy, dark furniture, its few books, and its meager living won by hard toil. The discontent blurred her brain. She could no longer give herself over to the spell of the outdoor world, which she had loved so well. It was all tinged with the shadow of her disappointment.

"One day a change came. The mainspring of a life snapped in a darkened room in the old brick house. Then the girl was free to wander at her will. Her purse was filled with the wealth that the dead hands had relinquished to her. Then she traveled,—here and there, year after year, until one day she thought of the old home and the cherry trees in the garden. She returned. Still she had no happiness. Money became a care. She grew suspicious of those about her.

Attentions of mere kindness became to her only bids for financial recognition. 'There is nothing in the mere "having" of things,' she said one day. 'One must themselves "be" something. To be famous—that is the end of life.'

"There was a sharp turn in her manner of living. She toiled early and late at her chosen work—toiled as if she were winning her bread by it, laying to one side all other pleasure, sacrificing every other wish. And the reward came. The world saw her success and congratulated itself for having declared for it. People said one to the other, 'I told you so; I said she had it in her,' and they smiled and bowed, while she smiled back and pretended to be happy.

"Then love came into her life. She tasted the dear delights of wifedom and motherhood. She idolized her husband and little child, but it was selfish love she gave them, and true peace had not yet come into her life."

There was a long pause. Alice had grown strangely silent. Elizabeth's face was whiter than usual, and a shadow, borne of recollections, darkened it a little. Presently she went on: "Then sorrow came to her. She laid her baby under the grass, out there on the hill, and her husband came back from a terrible illness—blind. She gave up her life to him, led him by the hand, tended him as if he were a little child, read to him, played for him, soothed him on his bad days, and forsook her acquaintances, her friends, her chosen work to minister to him. Then, little girl,"—and she stooped to pass her hand over Alice's bent head—"then the peace came.

"The restlessness had gone out of her life. There was no burning to have or to be, only to do for others something to make life's way the easier."

Alice was weeping. No one spoke for a moment, and then the philosopher cleared his throat and began in that hard dry voice which is only a cover for emotion: "But if you—that is, she—had never gone away from the farm house; if the restlessness had no chance to feed itself to death on activity, if—if—all the rest had not happened?"

He trod clumsily over the trouble, unwilling to hurt, yet possessed by the philosophy of it all.

"I scarcely know," Elizabeth said wearily, "but, oh surely—surely it could have come otherwise. It was so much to pay even for peace."

"Still, I cannot see," began the philosopher, but she stopped him with an uplifted finger.

"There comes my husband," she said, softly, and she rose to lead him in.

No one else had heard the halting steps, the fumbling of the fingers for the door that was always in the dark.

"We were talking of peace, dear," she began, as she helped him into a low chair, "the peace of Easter-tide—how it comes and what it is."

"Yes, yes," he mumbled, mechanically; and then he laughed a little. There was a vacant look on his face, and his lips parted and drooped.

She had not told us all. The illness which had taken his sight, had also clouded his brain. He was an imbecile.

STAMP DEPARTMENT.

In the year 1875 the Dominion Government issued special stamps for registered matter only. There were three values, all similar in design, engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Co. The registration fee was: To foreign countries, 8 cents; to United States, 5 cents; throughout Canada, 2 cents. In 1878 the 8-cent value was withdrawn from circulation, and in 1889 the 2-cent also was withdrawn. The registration fee now is 5 cents to any part of Canada, United States, or to any foreign land.

Many dealers have noticed that collecting among boys is on the decrease, and credit the decline to the high price many stamps command, preventing the juvenile completing his sets. Collecting among men and women is increasing at such a rate that in time it will be an adult pastime. But the dealers realize that the boys and girls are not to be neglected, and, like good business men, are casting about for some way whereby to present the fascination of stamp collecting in an alluring light to the juvenile mind. Many schemes have been suggested, and put aside, but two seem to have attracted some attention. One is for the dealers to combine and give away free a few million of the common stamps done up in packets of 50 or more. This a good idea, but how to do it is another trouble. One party suggests advertising the fact in the daily papers, but this is too expensive. Another proposes giving the stamps to some large tobacco firm to give away with their "brain killers." This last idea is ridiculous on its face, and why wide-awake dealers would even consider it, it is strange. In the first place it would advertise the tobacco firm at the dealer's expense; second, people would associate stamps and cigarettes, and condemn the former as they do the latter; third, boys who would buy cigarettes would not make good collectors, or, to speak short, their collecting would do them no good, as observation shows that a boy or girl collectors eager to spend every cent on their stamps.

The entire set of East India stamps are now sincharged "British East Africa" in three lines.

The British Protectorate of Zanzibar has entered the postal union, and a temporary issue of stamps has been made by sincharging the full set of East India stamps.

Previous to 1887 the postal service of Honduras was in a very disorganized condition, and the transmission of mails for the interior was neither regular nor certain. Since that year great improvements have been made, and the service is now surprisingly prompt and regular, considering the lack of good roads, and the fact that the mails are carried by couriers on foot. These men make astonishing trips over mountain trails and swollen rivers, climbing steep hills and fording streams with heavy mail bags on their shoulders, yet generally outstripping mounted travelers and arriving safely at their destination. In Canada all letters addressed to Government or sent out by them are carried free, but in Honduras the bishop and all postmasters receive correspondence addressed to them free of charge.

POSTAGE STAMPS

Brazil, 15 var., 25c; Portugal, 13 var., 15c; Mexico, 15 var., 25c; Serbia, 14 var., 30c; Canada, 20 var., 25c; Newfoundland, 5 var., 10c; Great Britain (jubilee set), 12 var., 8c; pac' 't 10 foreign post cards, 25c; 15 rare issues, India, Egypt, etc., 50c; 50 postage stamps, 10c; stamp album, holds 2,500 stamps, illustrat'd, 25c; Corea, 3 var., 10c; Japan, 10 var., 10c; Samoa, 8 var., 15c. Price list



rec. Old stamps bought, WM. R. ADAMS, 7 Ann St., Toronto, Canada.

