

Another Chance

(By Sally Campbell, in 'The Wellspring'.)

It was raining; not in a soft, inconspicuous way, but in angry gusts. And night was coming on.

'Blindman's holiday!' cried Augusta Lawton, pushing her books away from her and rising to her feet, with a yawn. 'And a deluge! I am going visiting before the bogies get me.'

She ran along the corridor to the room at the end and knocked.

'Come in,' said a lazy voice. 'Who is it? Anybody that has to have the best place?'

'I leave that to your conscience.'

'Sit down anywhere,' said Judy McArthur, not budging from the divan, 'and save me from the blues. Did you ever know a horrid afternoon?'

'Judy,' said Augusta, taking a chair beside her, 'you may as well wake up at once. I came on business.'

'An afternoon tea?' inquired Judy. 'Or a new waist?'

'Don't be frivolous. Who do you suppose was with me at Aunt Howard's over Sunday?'

'Who was?'

'Miss Roberta Stone, our beloved professor.'

'Oh, you poor thing!' cried Judy. 'While I was rejoicing that we didn't have her it never occurred to me that you did. That is the worst of her sort, they always have to be somewhere.'

'Aunt Howard loves her, dearly,' said Augusta.

Judy turned round on her cushions and stared.

'What for?' she asked.

'Because once, four or five years ago, when Aunt Howard was ill and alone in strange lodgings abroad, Roberta Stone found her out and devoted herself to her. She gave her hours of time and the loveliest attentions, was a sunbeam and a cordial and all those things, and it was not until long afterwards that Aunt Howard heard that she was working like a slave the whole time to fit herself to teach. It was just at the beginning of Mr. Stone's troubles and nobody knew. Aunt Howard thought that Roberta was a lily of the field. She says that it was fine proof of a strong, unspoiled, unselfish nature.'

'Are you sure,' said Judy, slowly, 'that we are speaking of the same person?'

'We are. And Aunt Howard is a very wise woman.'

'What was she like?'

'Roberta? She was nice; thoroughly, painfully nice. I felt like Guy Fawkes.'

'Did she not indulge in her peculiar vein of humor?'

'Never once.'

'Nor ever in outright spitefulness?'

'No.'

'Well, it is very extraordinary,' said Judy.

'When Mr. Stone died,' said Augusta, 'they were wretchedly poor. Roberta has supported the family, ever since. Her mother is a frail breath of a woman, and her little sister is lame. They have nobody but Roberta, and they both think that nobody else is so clever or so good. I also feel like Herod the Great.'

'My dear Augusta,' said Judy, sitting up straight and speaking with vigor, 'I know just what you are going to say, and you needn't talk to me. No matter how harrowing a tale it is, it doesn't change the fact that two or three hundred girls a year ought not to have their education ruined (one branch

of it at least) by bad teaching. Roberta Stone can't teach.'

'She has the best kind of a diploma,' ventured Augusta.

'And the worst kind of results. She may be a prodigy, but she is not an instructor. How much Greek have you learned this year, —I mean, that you have not learned in spite of her?'

Augusta sighed.

'The greatest good of the greatest number has to be considered,' Judy went on. 'It is very sad indeed about the lame child and the breath of a mother, but there are a great many mysterious and tragic things in life. What is the use of being a college junior if you can't be logical and dispassionate? Her



SOMEONE KNOCKED AT THE DOOR.

class is bedlam; nobody can recite to her. She snaps off every idea you ever had on the subject. I feel it more on account of Amy Coulter.'

'Amy Coulter!' repeated Augusta, with a laugh. 'You can't blame Miss Stone that Amy doesn't excel.'

'Yes, I can. Amy and I were in the mountains together this summer. I gave her the greatest amount of good advice, and I was beginning to hope that she would take some of it. You know Greek is her nearest approach to a strong point. She actually learned her lessons for a week or two, when we first came back, but Miss Stone very effectually put a stop to it. Miss Stone ought to go. We are doing exactly right to try to get rid of her. There! "dixi,"' and Judy fell back in her old comfortable place.

'Well, then, let me,' said Augusta. 'I have been considering Miss Stone since I was with her for two days and especially since Aunt Howard talked about her. Let's put a s'posin' case! Suppose that Roberta Stone, for all her brains and resolutions, is shy; that, when she was first put face to face with a crowd of girls not much younger than she, she was terribly frightened and tried to cover it up by—by—'

'Easy satire,' suggested Judy. 'She cer-

tainly covered it up; she never has seemed fluttered nor timid.'

'And suppose,' Augusta went on, 'that, having made an unfortunate beginning, she hasn't been able to retrieve herself. You know how natural that is. You know such mistakes are made. And if it is a mistake, if Roberta Stone, besides being uncommonly brilliant, has it in her to teach under favorable auspices, wouldn't it be worth while to give her another chance—for the greatest good of the greatest number, not to speak of the good of poor Mrs. Stone and Lorraine?'

On this same rainy afternoon, while the two girls talked, in the room above their heads another girl was sitting alone. There was a letter open on the table before her written in a round, unformed hand.

'Mother and I,' the letter said, 'are just hungry to see you. It's too bad for other people to have you when we want you so much. Of course they like it because you are so nice; but you're nicer to us than to anybody.'

The little childish sentences hurt Roberta, cruelly. Her face was white and drawn; she pushed the paper from her with a sudden motion.

'If it were only true! If I could only make it true! But I can't. A hundred times I have determined to be "nice" and have always failed. I never knew before I came here what it was to feel so cold and hard and irritable. It settles down on me like a fog and I can't shake it off. What I mean originally to be the most innocent speeches in the world, by the time they get to my lips are hateful, nagging sarcasms.'

She went and stood by the window and looked out at the gloomy prospect.

'It is hard for one's peace of mind in any case to be unlovely. But when there are helpless ones—'

She stopped. She would not say it.

'I am so tired!' she cried, sinking down on the floor with her head on the window ledge. 'Oh, I am so tired!'

The room was dark now. Any sounds in the house were lost in the dash of the rain outside. Roberta grew quieter.

Presently it seemed to her that she felt her mother's touch on her forehead and heard her motherly voice saying, as it had indeed said many times, 'God bless you! He does bless you, dear, in letting you be his kind providence to Lorraine and me.'

'Oh, God,' prayed Roberta, 'don't take my blessing away from me! Help me!'

Downstairs, Judy and Augusta were bringing their conference to a close.

'I thought for once,' said Judy, 'that my array of arguments was invincible, that I could cry "Duty" just as loud as you could. And now see me weakly planning with all my might to do the very thing I meant not to do.'

'We have had new light,' said Augusta. 'What is the use of being college juniors if we can't be candid enough to change our opinions upon just cause?'

Some one knocked at the door and opened it, simultaneously. It was Amy Coulter.

'What are you two doing?' she asked. Then catching sight of a photograph on the table she picked it up and looked at it. 'What a lovely child! Who is it?'

'Lorraine Stone,' said Judy.

'Stone? No relation, I hope, of the charming Roberta.'

'Her sister.'

'Poor little thing! It must be that that makes her so wistful and pathetic.'

'Not at all. She considers Roberta a paragon.'