

noded to Miss Evans in a satisfied manner, and Miss Evans responded with a smile.

'Right!' she said. 'Pass up, Lydia Frances.' And Lydia Frances passed behind her discomfited companions to the head of the row.

The lesson proceeded. Question after question went down the row to be referred finally to Lydia Frances. She stood up as stiff as a grenadier, a little spot of red in either cheek, her eyes fixed upon a stain on the wall behind Miss Evans's head.

Thomas Henry, who was dividing his attention between a slateful of examples and the history lessons, could not refrain from a gratified snort, which he tried to cover by a very loud cough and a dive under his desk for an imaginary pencil, as Miss Evans dismissed the class with, 'Very well indeed, Lydia Frances! The same lesson for to-morrow, "to be learned" by the other members.'

Then Mr. Howe whispered to Miss Evans, the two conversed in low tones for a minute or two; and both looked at Lydia Frances.

Of course it was not in human nature that the other girls should witness all this without a feeling of jealous resentment, though they knew that no one was blameworthy but themselves. Still, there was a coolness during the noon recess that was quite apparent to Lydia Frances, who, not a little indignant thereat, withdrew with Susie Ogden to the shade of the elm-tree, where the two ate their dinner together. Susie was a staunch admirer of Lydia Frances, probably for the reason that she herself was a very indifferent scholar.

'I never see anybody like you, Lydia Frances,' she said, as they talked between mouthfuls. 'I'd been frightened to death to said a word before Mr. Howe!'

'You wouldn't been frightened if you'd had your lesson,' replied Lydia Frances.

'Well, but I wouldn't had the lesson any more'n the others. I don't see how 'tis you always remembers things.'

'O, I have a little trick about learnin' history,' responded Lydia Frances, not a little pleased by her friend's admiration, which was in comforting contrast to the angry pique of the other girls. 'When I have a long answer, like that 'bout the model constitution, you know, that has lots of things in it to remember, I pick out a word to remember each of them by. There's "worship" that means 'bout their goin' to church. There's "tax"; that's 'bout votin' and things. There's "trade"; that's 'bout every child learnin' to work. And there's "prison"; that's 'bout how they punished the bad ones. Then I say 'em over to myself—"worship," "tax," "trade," "prison"—"worship," "tax," "trade," "prison"—till I know "them"; and it isn't much trouble to learn the rest.'

'And don't you forget the words in the class?'

'Mercy, no. I can't help rememberin'. I was sayin' it over in my head to-day before it came to me,—"worship," "tax," "trade," "prison,"—and I just knew I knew it!'

Susie sighed in her inability to understand the wisdom of her companion. 'It sounded splendid!' she said enthusiastically.

As soon as she was separated from Lydia Frances, who had run off to have a game of ball with some of the smaller children, Susie Ogden took occasion to repeat the story of her friend's 'trick' to the first girl with whom she spoke. Thence it was passed on from one to another, and before the bell rang, every scholar in the third class in United States history had been made acquainted with the way in which Lydia Frances Allbright had achieved her conquest in the morning.

Everybody knows how swiftly a story flies when once it is given wings. A suspicion of something wrong connected with it does not lessen its speed, and that suspicion is not seldom fed by a personal feeling against the principal actor in the drama. The feeling in this case, of course, was supplied by the mortification of the girls whom Lydia Frances had supplanted. The suspicion was furnished by the word 'trick.'

So, when school was dismissed for the afternoon, and Lydia Frances was passing out of the yard with her bag of books, she was encountered by the aforesaid group of girls, each of whom was ready with a sharp word and a sharper look of denunciation.

'Any one could get up to the head by playin' tricks,' said Mabel Seymour.

'Yes, indeed!' said Fannie Sykes, who always echoed Mabel.

'I wouldn't have believed it!' said Flora May Jenkins virtuously.

Lydia Frances' steps had been arrested by these remarks, which were deliberately aimed at her.

'And, if that's the way you've got up in all the classes, the places don't belong to you, Lydia Frances Allbright,' said Mabel again. 'We know all about your "trick," and it's—its perfectly "dishonest" to play tricks!'

'I say it is not!' replied Lydia Frances, planting herself sturdily, and facing her accusers.

'It is, too!' they cried in chorus.

'It isn't, either!'

'It's taking advantage of us!' protested Mabel.

Lydia Frances could not meet this charge, and as the girls drew closely together and whispered, she flushed hotly. Then, summoning all her courage, she flashed out, 'The way I've got up in the classes 's been by knowin' my lessons better'n the rest of you!' and she ran swiftly by them and out on the road toward home.

At the supper-table that evening, when Thomas Henry began to recount the incident of the morning between bites of hot buttered biscuit, Lydia Frances sent him an imploring glance and a protesting 'Don't, Tom!'

'What is it?' questioned Aunt Susan, who had caught enough to know that the story concerned her favorite niece. Thus encouraged, Thomas Henry went on at considerable length, giving a faithful representation of the other girls' chagrin and of the complimentary way in which Miss Evans had spoken and Mr. Howe had smiled.

'Well done, little girl!' said Mr. Allbright, stroking Lydia Frances' hair, while her mother and Aunt Susan exchanged knowing looks of pride across the table. Lydia Frances' successes at school were a constant source of satisfaction to her family, and this was by no means the first time when she had received the united congratulations of the home circle. To-night, however, they did not make her as happy as usual, and she was very glad when the pushing back of chairs allowed her to escape.

All the next day the trouble haunted her. The girls continued to hold aloof, and every time she saw two of them talking together she fancied that they were discussing her. She had 'taken advantage,' Mabel Seymour had said. Well, that she could not deny. Was it wrong? Perhaps it would not have been, she thought, if she had told the others about it, and had thus helped them to an easier mastery of their lessons.

Her Sunday school teacher, only a few weeks before, had emphasized the duty of helping those not as strong as ourselves. Lydia Frances well remembered the golden text of that day, 'In honor preferring one another.' It had made a deep impression on her mind, for the teacher had faithfully tried to set before her class of little ones the beauty of unselfish regard for others. Lydia Frances was conscientious and imaginative, and much that fell unheeded on the ears of the other children made a deep impression upon her, and was pondered in secret for many a day afterward. She could not help feeling rebuked by this text, as it repeated itself over and over in her mind. Clearly, she had not 'preferred.' She had thought most of herself.

But dishonest? For Mabel had said that it was dishonest to play tricks. Was it? Some tricks, of course. But hers?

The question seemed to be answered for her when on the second day she overheard part of a conversation between two farmers on her way to school. They had evidently been discussing the business dealing of a third man, just as Lydia Frances was passing: 'I don't like the looks of it. He may not be dishonest, but he is certainly—'

'Tricky, eh?' questioned the second man with a laugh.

'Yes, yes!' returned the first. 'Decidedly so. Yes, that's the word. Tricky. Get up!' This last to his horse, which soon took him out of sight.

'Oh, dear!' Lydia Frances sighed, as she went on her way. 'It makes me feel dreadful! I don't suppose it was bad!' And she winked hard to keep back the tears that would start in spite of her.

But as she proceeded, deep in thought and in dejection, she made up her mind what to do. She would go straight to Miss Evans at recess, and tell her all. It was a great resolution for a little ten-year-old girl to form, for she knew that Miss Evans regarded her with favor, and she could but be sure that the story she had to tell would lessen her in her teacher's estimation. But her decision was matured. Come what would, she would put an end to the wretchedness she was now suffering.

Perhaps it would not be necessary to call her act a 'trick,' since people seemed to think that so bad. What should she say? O, she would say that she had 'taken advantage.' That was what Mabel had charged. She thought, as she said it over that it was not more easy to say. Poor Lydia Frances felt an aching lump in her throat as she realized that, put it any way she might, it altered the thing itself not a whit.

When she rushed into the schoolroom, after about five minutes of the recess had passed, she was almost overcome to find Mr. Howe again present, and she would have retreated, had not Miss Evans seen her and inquired whether she wanted anything.

'I—I wanted—to tell you,' going slowly forward, 'that I—I—took advantage Tuesday, and—that—that is the way'—here the brave little voice faltered, and first one brown fist and then the other went up to wipe away the tears that would flow, but she went on, 'that is the way I got up to the head of the class.'

'You "took advantage,"' said Miss Evans, quite mystified. 'I don't understand you, Lydia Frances. You did not look into your book?'

'O, no, ma'am, I didn't!' eagerly.

'I was sure you did not,' replied Miss Evans warmly. 'But what, then?'

'Oh! Must she use that horrible word? There seemed indeed, no other way. 'I played a trick,' she said in a low voice, with burning cheeks.

'A trick?' And what was the trick?'

Lydia Frances sobbed and choked. It was so dreadful, the pain in her throat, and the beating in her head, that she half believed she was dying.

'Perhaps you would rather tell me after school,' said Miss Evans kindly, for she loved the child, and had never found any occasion for blame in her.

'Oh, no!' exclaimed Lydia Frances. 'I will tell you now! And, sure that, if she waited, she should lose the courage she now possessed, she told the whole—her method of learning her lessons, involving the short cut that she employed to assist her memory.'

'Is that all?' said Miss Evans, when she had finished.

'Yes'm,' and then Lydia Frances was surprised to hear a great shout of laughter from Mr. Howe, and to feel herself lifted by his strong arms and placed in a chair by his side.

'You're all right, little girl. Don't cry!' he said. Then to Miss Evans: 'Where did she learn that? From you?'

'Not from me,' replied the teacher. 'As I told you the other day, the child is a born scholar. She is full of original ideas.'

'Why! You've done nothing to feel bad about,' said Mr. Howe, patting Lydia Frances's shoulder. 'You've simply invented a mnemonic method of studying history. You don't know what that means, do you?'

'No, sir,' answered Lydia Frances.

'But I want to know, Lydia Frances,' said Miss Evans, 'what led you to think that your trick was wrong. Did any one try to make you think so?'

'Yes'm. They said it was dishonest. They said that I took advantage of them.'

'Who said so?' persisted Miss Evans, as Mr. Howe repeated, 'Took advantage!' under his breath, and laughed again.

Lydia Frances hesitated. She bore no malice against her tormentors, and, now, that her agony was over, she was more than willing to forget their accusing words. Seeing her hesitate, Mr. Howe said to Miss Evans, between whom and himself there seemed to be somewhat more than the usual measure of confidence between teacher and superintendent: 'Never mind, if she would rather not say. I'll make this all right. Just ring the bell, please.'

As he walked to the window with his hands behind him, Miss Evans beckoned Lydia Frances into the entry, where she bathed the child's