

A Lesson in Love.

'I can't go to school for six weeks!' Ethel had come into the room and thrown herself on a couch in a perfect abandon of despair.

'Oh, my dear?' Mother turned toward her with a face deep concern. 'You have been—'

'Yes, I've been to see the doctor. My knee has been aching worse and worse since I had that fall on the ice, and he says that unless I give it a season of absolute rest, I may be lame for life.'

Mother exclaimed in dismay.

'Yes, he did. If 'twas anything less than that, I'd brave it out till the end of school. But he said it gravely, and it frightens me. I don't dare to keep on. But, mother, it will lose me my chance of the month at the Exposition next summer, for that is to be given to the one who passes with the highest marks.'

'But, dear, you can study at home.'

'Yes, mother, but not with the same advantages as going into the class. And some of us are so even in our marks that the difference would be enough to spoil my chance.'

'I'm sorry for you, my daughter. If I could order it differently for you, I would, but seeing that a wiser one than I has ordered it we must try to believe it right.'

Ethel made an impatient movement. She was not ready to see any right about it, and her mother wisely said no more.

'I wouldn't mind it half so much,' the young girl began again, after a long silence, 'if it were not that my dropping out would throw it right into the hands of that Carter girl.'

'Who is she?'

'Oh, she's a girl who hasn't been at school very long. They've moved here lately, I believe. None of us girls like her. She dresses better than most of us, and I guess she's as proud as a peacock, for she never comes to see one of us and never asks to her house. She and I are the ones most likely to get the prize, and I hate to have her get it. But I can't help myself.'

To please her mother, Ethel kept at her studies, but in a half-hearted way, refusing all the time to believe that she could do such work as would enable her to resume her place in school with any hope of winning the coveted prize.

She lay one day, thinking over all it was to her—not only the reward, but all the delights leading up to it, the weeks of study made pleasant by intercourse with friends equally interested with herself, the excitement of the closing days, the public exercises, the lights, the music, and the appreciative audience. These last she might hope to enjoy, but not with the gratification of success and the accompanying applause.

'Miss Carter wishes to see you.'

Ethel's mother ushered in a tall girl, shy and constrained, but with a tone and manner which showed her undoubtedly a lady.

'Good afternoon,' said Ethel, much surprised by the unexpected visit and a little confused by the remembrance of having shown scant courtesy to the stranger.

'How are you to-day?' asked Janet Carter. 'I heard you were kept in by a hurt.'

'Yes,' said Ethel, with a rueful shake of the head.

'Too bad, just at such a time. I know you were working so hard for the prize.'

There was something very winning in the tone of quiet, sincere sympathy. Ethel's

feeling had been one of antagonism to the girl who, by reason of her own misfortune, would probably occupy the place which she coveted, but now she found herself pouring out her burden of woe—the weariness of the long hours, her discouraged attempts at keeping up her studies, her disappointment at losing the prize for which she had worked so hard.

'That is what I came to talk about,' said Janet. 'I believe you might win it.'

'Why—why—' Ethel gazed at her in amazement. 'I thought you were trying for it yourself, and that you were sure of getting it—especially now that I am out of the way.'

'I am not trying for it,' said Janet. 'And I came to see if I could not help you to it.'

'But why don't you want it?'

'Never mind,' said the other. 'I like to stand well in school, but I could not go to the Exposition if I had the chance.'

'But—why do you want to put it in my way, more than any of the others?'

'Oh, because you are having a hard time of it, I guess,' said Janet, with a smile. 'I have had some trouble myself, and some shut-up times, so I know what it is. Now to business. I can get out for a little while every day, but scarcely ever in the evening. If I come to you and go over the lesson with you, giving all the points we gather in the class, don't you think you'd have courage to go on?'

'But I don't see,' replied Ethel, conscience-smitten with the thought of kindness she might have shown and had not, 'why you want to do all this for me when—when—'

'We're poor creatures if we can't do something for each other, are we not? I'll come about this time to-morrow if you'll let me.'

'Oh, Mother,' said Ethel to her mother after her visitor had gone, 'to think of her doing such a thing when I don't deserve it of her. She's a stranger, and she always looked as if she had something hard to bear, but I never tried to make friends with her, just because I have so many friends and didn't need her. Now that I do need her, she comes to me.'

'It is the true spirit of Christ, dear. I have heard something about Janet and can guess that she has indeed a heavy burden to bear. Her mother is an invalid and her mind is also a little affected—enough to make her very unreasonable and hard to get along with, poor thing. She clings to her daughter, and Janet can never go out evenings or have any company at home.'

'And I never tried to give her any little lift in the bearing of her burden! Oh, mother, I am ashamed of myself!'

With the kind assistance of her new friend, Ethel worked for the prize and won it. Janet was present at the closing exercises, and as Ethel turned from all other affectionate congratulations to meet her glance, full of the light of warm sympathy, her heart glowed with a feeling which had never before found place there.

'I believe—I do believe that there is a gladness in being purely unselfish that we never find in anything else.'

And that sweet lesson, taken well to heart, well repaid many weeks of monotony and suffering.—Sydney Dayre, in 'Sabbath School Visitor.'

A Strange Compact.

One day two college classmates were talking jokingly about death and the inevitable tombstone inscriptions that they thought too often misrepresent character. They considered themselves quite the equals in good

morals of the best men with whom they were acquainted, and as deserving of laudatory epitaphs as the silent men whose virtues in life are proclaimed in our graveyards.

'I am willing to stand by anything I say or do in this life, and hereafter, as well,' said the younger of the two. 'I am sure I am as good as the average man, to say the least.'

'That, I think, is beyond dispute,' answered his friend. 'Our lives and words show what we are to-day. The future will also show what we are then. But I've been thinking while we have been laughing, and am inclined to make a suggestion. It is this: suppose we make an agreement—that is, if you are willing to stand by your words—that it is our wish that the last sentences we utter in life shall be the epitaphs to be placed upon our tombstones.'

'Agreed!' cried the other, hastily and almost without thought, and they at once drew up their agreement in legal style.

Years passed. The two men drifted apart. Their strange compact lost its significance, and was almost forgotten.

One day the elder of the two took up a paper and read the announcement of the death of his friend. Then he remembered the contract. He found the agreement, put it into his pocket, and took the train for the place of his friend's death.

He found that the dead man had been a widower for some years. The visitor was cordially received at the house of mourning by an only child, a son just growing into manhood.

'Do you know what your father's last words were?' asked the newcomer.

'No, sir; he died suddenly of apoplexy, in his store.'

The friend went to the store. There he put the same question. An embarrassed silence answered him. He insisted on a reply, stating that he had good reasons for making the request. The head clerk then took him apart and explained:

'Your friend died in his office in a fit of anger. He was unfortunately given to violent attacks of temper, and I suppose at this time it was the rush of blood to the head that carried him off. He had just received a letter, stating that a customer had failed who was owing us a large bill. This made him furious, and he began to curse. I hesitate to repeat them, sir, but if you feel that you must insist upon it, his last words were—'

The white-haired man whispered a blasphemous sentence in the shocked ears of his listener. To have engraved it upon a tombstone would have blasted the dead man's name with absolute dishonor.

Very greatly moved, the visitor took the agreement from his pocket, and with trembling fingers tore it into tiny bits, and put them into the fire. Under these circumstances it was impossible for him to carry that declaration to the house of mourning.

He buried his friend. Then he went home. The moral shock he had received and the thoughts that followed gave life a serious meaning to him. Death now took upon itself the office of a judge. It assumed control of his thoughts, and caused him resolutely to set a guard upon his lips.

Weeks passed. His self-restraint ripened into habit, and took on a higher moral purpose. New views came to him of God and of his own relations to men. His words ere long became the expression of reverent sentiment, and his character assumed unconsciously the attitude of sincere, upright living. Changed, enlightened, purified, he had entered a higher plane of life. Could words from the dying lips of such a man shock the living and bring dishonor to the dead?—Youth's Companion.