

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

(From Cumberland Presbyterian.)

Eva Wilson was an exceedingly willful child. Her mother had recognized the fact when she was a baby in her crib, and had tried her best to rear the little girl that her strong will might be developed into an unswerving purpose to choose the good and do the right; but as an only girl, with two doting elder brothers, the tendency was a leaning toward selfishness; and the mother though not without sympathy from her husband, often thought her efforts almost futile.

As the years sped by Eva began developing from careless, romping girlhood to budding womanhood, and her father and brothers took greater pride in her than ever.

It was then that her willfulness took the turn that many young girls are apt to take—a reckless feeling that "I will choose whom I want for my closest friends, and will not let any one dictate to me in this respect."

Well for Eva that her mother's experience and strong character had made her the mother she was, so that by infinite tact, patience, and love, she was able to hold her daughter near her heart. Only occasionally was her mother obliged to rely on the last resort, and that when every effort failed; but to Eva's credit she submitted, though with ill grace to her mother's. "I am sorry that you cannot see it as I do, my dear, so the only safe way is to be resigned to mother's judgment, for you know that she has at heart your welfare only."

The first time a direct clash of wills came was after the mother thought it wise to allow Eva to follow her own determined insistence upon a certain point. The effect had not been gratifying, and therefore disappointed Mrs. Wilson, so that she had deemed it necessary to stand firm.

"Must I give up, mother? You know it will kill me," was the rebellious query.

"I know it will be the healthiest thing that you ever did," was the quiet reply; and she added, "I have tried to show you a better way, but as you will not come to my point of view, you must trust me, dear, and do what mother is certain is right."

Eva's bright eyes looked straight into her mother's, hoping to see some sign of wavering, but there was none, and she submitted.

But a certain pettish resentment lingered in her heart the rest of the day. Her mother saw it with her own heart aching. At night she came into the bedroom of her daughter as soon as the light was out. She sat down by her bed, and in a gentle tone said, "Mother has come to say a word to you, dear."

There was no reply, no movement. Eva's face was toward the wall.

Her mother arose, and placing her hand upon the girl's head, murmured lovingly, "Good-night, my daughter; the day has been a hard one for you, and mother is sorry." A tear dropped on Eva's cheek.

At once impulsive arms flung themselves around mother's neck, while Eva sobbed, "O mother, you're so good, and I'm so horribly wicked. It's been an awful day, and I've made it so for you, too. O mother, I will try to be a better girl, but it seems as if I could not."

Mother held her close while her own tears mingled with those of her wayward daughter; but she felt that her prayer was to be answered, and though the fight would be a hard one, eventually Eva was to conquer the enemy.

When she retired to her own room something of the day's trials she was

obliged to explain to her husband, who saw traces of tears on her pale face.

"O Herbert," she said, "If I can only live to see Eva a self-controlled woman, I shall be happy; but my faith is very strong that she will win whether I live or not. No, Herbert, do not stop me. Let me talk now, for I may never have another good opportunity."

They sat together on the bedside; and for many years after the husband could feel the pressure of that faithful hand, see again the light in her clear eyes, and hear the ring of the earnest tones as she spoke; and right loyally did he carry out her plan when, in a few months, the disease they had feared, carried this noble woman to her grave.

"When I am gone, husband, fit up my room here for Eva—oh, not immediately, dear, for she could not bear it, perhaps; but in a few months, when she returns from one of her little visits to her cousin, or on some other occasion, as you think best. Fit up the room prettily in white and deep red, as she likes it, with some of my favorite books, and my chair. Put her pictures and books there, too, also my inlaid table and tea rose; so you see, the room will look quite fresh and new, yet there will be little things to remind her. I'm sure she will be pleased, and it will help her—there's the point. It will be a constant help to the poor little girlie, who has so much to overcome. And, Herbert, no matter what she does, be patient, and show her that you love her. Let her see that always."

It was, indeed, the last long talk on this subject, and after the plan had been carried out, the father watched with tender care, but with a feeling of helplessness before the aggressive, determined willfulness of his daughter, especially in the matter of some of her associates, who were careless and worldly.

"Poor child!" he would say to himself, "her life is too lonely, I fear. She seeks gay society in order to drown her grief for her mother. If only one of the boys could bring his wife and live with us. If it could be brought about, with their help, I might be able to break up Eva's growing favor for young Larcomb. I would not mind if he were worthy of my daughter, but I know he can never make her happy. She is perfectly aware of my disapprobation, but it seems to have no effect. Oh, that her mother were here to manage this affair!"

It was a very busy day with Eva. Almost as soon as her father had gone to his office she had locked herself in her room. She had taken down clothes from the closet, brushed and packed them into her trunk; bureau drawers and boxes had been emptied into the same trunk; books and pictures also had found a resting place in the same receptacle.

"I'd like to take this," she said as she took up one of her mother's books, and sat down to rest a moment. Thoughtfully she let the leaves slip through her fingers. "Hold fast the good; define it well." It was a marked passage with define underlined. She shut the book decidedly and laid it down. She took up another. Here also were passages marked. One caught her eyes, "Study yourselves, and most of all note well wherein kind nature mean you to excel." "Pshaw!" she murmured smiling, "I guess 'kind nature' did not mean for me to excel in any way unless in loving Myron Larcomb. I'm sure I do love him; but I've wondered sometimes if he really loves me as well as I do him. It would be awful if he didn't."

She looked around the pretty room. "You've been a dear little room," she

sighed. "It's been almost as if mother were here sometimes. How lovely it would be if mother had lived. How she would help me plan about everything. I should not be going off this way if mother were here; but father has taken such an unaccountable dislike to Myron. Poor papa, he will miss me, I suppose. He will come into this room and miss mother and me together. I hate to wound him, but he would not consent to our marriage; and it would be worse to go against his consent if he knew about it; so Myron and I have agreed that this is the best way. Oh, I wish I had a sister to stay with dear papa."

The clock struck the half-hour. Eva jumped to her feet. "Half-past one," she exclaimed. "I am to be at Royer's store at three. She began to comb her hair, musing the while, "I hope nothing will happen to disarrange our plans. But what can? It is not an unusual thing for me to go there, so if I meet any friends I can do something to get rid of them. No one can think anything when Myron comes by and looks in. I shall be at the ribbon counter near the door, and shall not just to let him know I see him; then he will walk on slowly, and I shall follow at a distance. We will meet at the minister's, and around the corner from there will have the hack in waiting. It will take us to the rear entrance of the depot. The entire plan is sufficiently elastic to be changed, if necessary, in order to hoodwink any meddlesome person."

She was nearly ready, but her teeth were fairly chattering with nervousness. She jabbed her hatpins into her head several times, and tore her veil while adjusting it. "See here!" she finally cried, with a stamp of her foot, "You've got to stop this, Eva Wilson—it won't do!" She sat down for a moment to steady herself, and putting her hand over her eyes she held it there, not allowing herself to look again around the room she was leaving forever.

She suddenly remembered that she was sitting in her mother's chair, and quickly changed to another. After a very short rest she put out her other hand, and actually felt her way into the hall.

"Howdy, Miss Eva!" was the pleasant greeting of a young saleswoman as Eva entered the store. Eva was a constant and good customer. "I was thinking about you yesterday, and wishing you would come in and see the beautiful new plaids we have just got in. They would suit you, I'm sure."

"Thank you, Miss Mattie—another time. To-day I want some ribbon."

"All right," replied the clerk graciously. "Will you have the usual colors—for your neck, is it, or—"

Eva was not answering; and for an instant the clerk looked sharply into her pale face, and all at once noticed her nervous glances toward the door, and her abstracted air.

"Have you the right time?" asked Eva suddenly. "I—I think my watch may be wrong."

"Oh, yes—standard time. It is now exactly eleven minutes to three."

By a strong effort Eva controlled herself and bought the ribbon; then she waited. Another purchaser claimed Miss Mattie's attention for a couple of minutes; then she again turned to Eva: "Do come and see these plaids. They are only two counters back, and you can still watch the door—for a friend!"

Eva took no notice of the question, though the clerk's keen observation startled her; and she yielded, casually looking at, but extravagantly admiring the new goods.

A well-known form was sauntering past the entrance. At sight of it Eva's