

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

A HASTY JUDGMENT.

(By Sydney Dayre.)

"How well your plants look," said Esther Ward, one of Janet's friends, coming up on the porch, where she was seated with her aunt, to look at them. "How is your double crimson geranium getting along?"

"I haven't one of those, Lou. I've been wishing for one."

"You haven't one? Why, I am surprised."

"What is there surprising about that?" "One day, about two weeks ago, I went in to Miss Vale's"—

"Yes, she has a beautiful one. She promised to slip one for me."

"Exactly. She did."

"I hadn't heard of it."

"That is the part of it that surprises me. Emily Garde was there, and Miss Vale gave her a double white one. And she asked her if she would bring to you, as she doesn't often see you; that is, Miss Vale doesn't—a geranium—that lovely dark crimson. It was in a little pot, growing nicely, and just promising a blossom."

"I have never seen it," said Janet.

"Looks queer, doesn't it? Well, goodbye."

Janet turned to her aunt with a flushed face.

"Did you hear that aunt Rachel?"

"I heard that Emily had not yet given you the geranium. She is out of town, isn't she?"

"Yes, for nearly two weeks. But, auntie, there's more about it. The day before she went away she brought me this white geranium, telling me that it was from Miss Vale."

"That is a little strange. How do you account for it?"

"There is only one way to account for it. What can there be to it except that she wanted the crimson geranium and—kept it, putting this white one off on me?"

"I don't think I would fully conclude that until you saw Emily."

"But, Aunt Rachel," said Janet, with a flush of anger deepening on her face, "what difference can that make, if Esther tells a straight story, and there is no reason to suppose that she does not? How mean and deceitful of her. I am going to write and tell her what I think of her."

"I wouldn't, dear."

"Why not? She deserves it."

"Be sure she does first. And even when you are sure, be careful what you write. Angry words spoken are bad enough, but written ones are worse, for they remain and bear their ugly witness against you long after your anger is over."

"I shall not get over it. I believed in her. I didn't think she was capable of doing a mean thing. I don't often see Miss Vale, now that she is no longer our teacher, and Emily thought she could keep it among her plants and on one would ever know. Well, I've done with her."

In her anger, as she bent over her stand of plants, their loveliness made no appeal to her. A tuft of white blossoms smiled up at her, and it was all she could do to avoid crushing it with a cruel hand. But she restrained the hateful impulse and turned away.

"I had a friend," began Aunt Rachel. "And did she ever treat you as mine was treated me?"

"No, but there was a time when I was very angry with her."

"And did you get over it? I know I never shall."

Aunt Rachel was silent for a few moments, then went on:

"I suffered through it far more than

you will be likely to suffer through yours."

"Oh, I'm not going to let it make me suffer," said Janet. "I shall just let her know when she comes home that I have had enough of her."

"When my dearest girl friend and I went to the same school, we lived in the suburbs of a city. To go into it by train was a great treat, and one that came to us but rarely. But when a married sister of Jessie's moved into the city, the dear girl was full of talk about the lovely times it would mean for us two. So one morning she came to me for a plan to spend the next day in town. We were to go in by an early train, visit art galleries, and everything else delightful that came our way."

"Be sure you're in good time," was her parting injunction. I obeyed it, expecting to be met at the station by Jessie's bright face.

"But she was not there, and I waited, at first tranquilly, then, as the train time quickly came, in nervous impatience. You may imagine the feelings with which I saw the train draw up."

"I waited a little while, still expecting her, and ready with my reproaches for her lateness. At length I went home, my heart raging with such anger and disappointment as I do not like to remember."

"It always seems to me," after a short pause, she went on contemplatively, "that we can not allow a storm of evil feeling to have its hateful way in our hearts and be ever quite the same. We can repent and resolve against sinning again, but the sneering, scorching flame must leave its result."

"It was a long way to Jessie's, but I would not have gone to her if it had been close by. There could be no extenuation for the way in which she had treated me. If she could not come she might have sent me word."

"I went home and wrote a letter—wrote to my dearest friend an outpour of the anger which filled my heart. I sent it, and then, in a multitude of new interests which crowded on me, it almost passed from my mind."

"All the summer my father had been cherishing a plan of taking us for a month's outing in the mountains. Opportunity for his getting away suddenly offered, and after hurried preparations, we left home the next day. At the last I begged one of my school friends to write me. But we were moving from one pleasant place to another, and her first letter missed and never found me. Her second I opened with a little sniff of anger for her neglect. I read it and felt my heart beat slower."

"What was it, Aunt Rachel?"

"She referred to a former letter, saying something like this: 'As I told you before of Jessie's sudden seizure two weeks ago, and how bad it was, you will not be much surprised to hear that they have given up all hope for her life.'"

"Oh, Aunt Rachel!"

"There was more to it, speaking of the brain fever which was sapping the dear young life of her mother's despair, etc."

"Well, well, Janet, you may imagine how I felt. In the shadow of the terrible facts, how small, how contemptible seemed the ugly feeling based on the disappointment of a day. We had no more letters, going from place to place; I, with a heavy cloud on my heart. I had lost my best friend, but the worst bitterness did not lie in that. I had been indulging to the full my anger against her while she had been suffering—dying!"

"Oh, dear!" Janet gave a little sign.

"As I thought."

"Oh?" said Janet, with an inquiring smile, as she went on:

"As we drove from the station the carriage would pass by Jessie's home. I had turned away my head in a paroxysm of misery when I heard a cry of delight from my younger sister."

"Why—there's Jessie!"

"There she was, sure enough, sitting at a window in an invalid chair, pale and thin, but turning her dear face toward us with a smile of greeting. Before long she was able to see me and tell me of her sudden seizure the morning on which I had been looking for her at the station. She had sent me a message, which some one had neglected to deliver. So that was the grievance I had been nursing."

"You wrote a letter?"

"It was some time before my mind was at rest about that letter. My very heart shrank as I thought of the bitter words in it. Surely, if Jessie had read it she never could forgive me. Her mother gave it to me one day."

"I opened it to see if it was anything of importance, as Jessie could not. There might be a great deal said about it, dear child," she added, with an affectionate smile, "but I think you have read the lesson for yourself. Jessie does not know of it; how I always loved that sweet woman."

"There's Emily Garde," said Janet, as again, after tea, she sat on the porch. "And—she's coming in. I didn't think she'd have the face to." Emily it was, however, and a very bright face and lively greeting which brought. She removed a paper which surrounded two flower pots.

"Oh!" exclaimed Janet in the delight of a true flower. "That's a—a—"

"Calceolaria. One of the finest new varieties. I brought it home with me as a peace-maker."

"A peace-maker?"

"Yes, although I don't know that I needed to, for you didn't really know you had a grudge against me," Janet colored a little. "But I must tell you my story. Just before I went away, I was at Miss Vale's one day, and she gave me a little crimson geranium for you. Well, on the way home I dropped it. It was smashed to pieces. I felt dreadfully, and didn't want you to see it until mother had tried her hand on nursing it right again. It looks about as well as before now. In the meantime, I brought you the white geranium as a sort of salve to my conscience for not honestly telling you. And I didn't tell any lie, for I said it was from Miss Vale, which was the truth. So here is the crimson geranium, and I hope I may have the comfort of feeling as though I had made up for things."

Janet affectionately patted her friend's shoulder, giving her aunt at the same time a beaming glance.

"I don't think it needed any making up."

Then with a smile, as she took in more fully the glorious tinting of the calceolaria,

"Oh, Emily, don't you want to smash a few more of my plants?"

My mind was ruffled with small cares to-day,

And I said pettish words, and did not keep
Long-suffering patience well; and now
how deep

My trouble for this sin! In vain I weep
For foolish words I never can unsay.

Yet I shall learn at last; though I neglect,
Day after day, to seek my help from
Thee,

Oh, aid me, that I always recollect
This gentleheartedness; and, oh, correct
Whatever else of sin Thou seest in me!

—Henry Septimus Sutton.

The hand of the poor is the purse of
God.—Du Vair.