

don't care to be any different—he don't. I always tell him so.'

Millie fidgeted again. There was something she wanted to say—if she could only find out what it was.

'A good thing for you two I ain't different,' came from the fireside figure. 'I'm something for you to talk about, anyway. And it gives you a chance of showing how good you are, ma'am, you know.'

Something like a chuckle accompanied Dick's return to the contemplation of the fire.

'Shocking!' said Mrs. Merton severely. Then, feeling that the interview had reached its natural term, and that any prolongation of it would only serve to impair its effect, she rose to go. 'I shall come and see you again soon, Mrs. Ross,' she observed. 'Perhaps I shall find you alone next time.'

Dick Ross did not appear to feel the striking of the shaft against his armor, but Millie looked troubled. She took a step towards the fireplace, but, remembering her mother, drew back.

'I'd rather you found me alone, ma'am,' rejoined Mrs. Ross, in a tone of voice quite unnecessarily loud if its object were to reach only Mrs. Merton's ears. But that lady, with Mrs. Ross for escort, was now descending the stairs; and perhaps the words were destined to travel back into the room where Dick remained. 'I'd always rather be alone, I can tell you. He's no company, and never will be.'

And again little Millie had a sense of trouble which ended through the homeward walk—and after.

But Mrs. Merton felt entirely content as she entered that visit in her book of good deeds.

In the afternoon, without any distinct purpose in regard to what she meant to do when her destination should be reached, Millie found herself making her way back to the poor house at which her mother and she had made their morning call. The wife was out, and the man unchanged from his morning's position or mood. The sound of Millie's entrance drew his eyes to the door, and, although the eyes showed no encouragement of further proceedings, they were too dull to show hostility—whereat Millie began to take heart. She was about to step forward, when Dick observed gruffly but not angrily,

'Well, missie?'

Millie checked at the words. Then, imperious necessity constraining her to say something, she ventured timidly, but without making any advance:

'I've come back.'

It sounded rather silly she fancied, as soon as the words had started towards Dick.

'So I see.'

The subsequent pause gave opportunity for a mutual gaze. Since Dick Ross showed no sign of becoming wroth Millie presently ventured again.

'I suppose you're a very bad man, aren't you?' she remarked hesitatingly.

'H'm—I s'pose I am. They all say so, anyway.'

Followed another pause, which Millie ended with the remark:

'Well, but why don't you be good?'

'Didn't you hear what your mother said this morning?' Dick answered, with a touch of asperity. 'She's made up her mind pretty straight that I ain't going to be any different. And she—with a jerk of the head towards the door—says the same thing. Why should I disappoint 'em?'

It was a difficult question for Millie, wherefore she proceeded to assist the process of thought by drawing up one foot and balancing herself on the other.

'When I've done anything wrong—' she began.

'You just go and tell your mother, and it's all right, I expect. That's different, you see.'

'Well—yes—at least—I tell father I'm sorry, generally,' corrected Millie's desire for accuracy.

'Ah! you see I ain't got one. I've only got her to tell—with a second jerk of the head toward the door—and she'd only say she knows all about it already.'

'Oh! but you have,' answered Millie, feeling that the ground had suddenly become solid beneath her feet, and that she could therefore go forward bravely. 'There's God, you know—you've forgotten.'

'God!' laughed Dick. 'I don't fancy He'd own me for a son, missie.'

'I'm quite sure He would—quite sure,' rejoined Millie, earnestly and hastily, correcting the astounding heresy into which the other had fallen. She had not supposed that such ideas existed anywhere in the world. 'And He'd help you to be better, too.'

Dick Ross stared into the fire. He suddenly felt, as Millie set her thought before him, that an old friend, whom he had not seen for years and whom he had well-nigh forgotten, was looking him in the face.

'P'raps He might think there was still a chance for me,' he muttered, to himself rather than to the little girl. 'I don't know, I'm sure.'

'Of course He would,' came the confident theologian's reply. Waiting a little while, Millie added wistfully, 'Won't you see what He says, Mr. Ross?'

Dick turned towards her, pondering.

'P'raps I will,' he answered slowly. 'I won't promise—but p'raps I will. And I thank you, missie.'

To depart seemed now the proper course, and she moved slowly to the door.

'Well, I must go,' she said. 'Goodbye, Mr. Ross.'

'Good-bye, missie,' Ross replied in a voice no one had heard for many a day. 'And I'll be glad if you'll come again.'

This made Millie's heart rejoice, so that there was a smile on her face as, emerging from the room, she found herself face to face with the returning Mrs. Ross. And the recollection of Dick's final words saved her from feeling disconcerted at Mrs. Ross's surprised stare.

'I just wanted to say something to Mr. Ross,' Millie explained lightly; 'so of course I had to come back. You don't mind, do you?'

'I don't mind, miss, if you wanted to come. But I'm sure I don't know what you could wish to say to the likes of him.'

'Oh! I wanted to tell him that I was sure God would help him to be good. I didn't like—this morning—you know—' then embarrassment rose to flood, and Millie came to an abrupt halt.

Mrs. Ross smiled with something of grimness.

'I've given up troubling about it, miss. And I just let him be. Mornings I open my eyes, and nights I shut 'em, and I just let him be.'

Millie's imperfectly controlled fancy instituted a parallel immediately.

'That's just like my big dolly,' she exclaimed incautiously. 'She opens and shuts her eyes, but you can't get anything else out of her!'

Here Millie came suddenly back to the realities of the situation, and, fearing that she had been rude, hastened to make amends. 'But you're not really like my dolly, you know. I didn't mean that, of course. So that—'

'So that I oughtn't to leave my husband to himself,' Mrs. Ross finished for her. 'Well, p'raps not.'

'Well, he might be better if you didn't,' Millie hazarded. She was quite willing to adopt the idea with which Mrs. Ross had credited her, although it had taken her by surprise. It seemed somehow to take the impropriety from that sentence about the doll. 'Don't you think he might?'

'I'm sure I can't tell.' Mrs. Ross's voice sank low as she spoke, and the movement of her hands betrayed something of inward unrest. 'I'm sure I can't tell, miss,' she repeated. Somehow it haunted her to think that she had been living after the manner of Millie's big doll.

'Good-bye,' said Millie, quickly, after a moment's survey of the other's face.

She made full confession in response to the inquiries of her parents, but showed no regret, although her mother called by the name of naughtiness what Millie herself felt to have been distinctly good.

'You see, after Church yesterday—' she commenced in her own defence. But the child's mind realized that these grown people could not be made to see any connection between the sermon of yesterday and her escapade of to-day. She tried another tack.

'I fancy you'd forgotten something when you were talking to Mr. Ross this morning, mother, you know. So I thought I'd—'

But again the waters were too deep, and Millie gave up the effort to make her hearers understand.

Mrs. Merton sat with a touch of new thoughtfulness upon her. And Mr. Merton, who was not so far from comprehension as Millie supposed, looked with a curious smile at his wife. Then, with a smile of a different order, he dropped his glance upon the eyes of his little girl.

'So you thought you'd go and say it for your mother, did you, my dear?' he said. 'Well, you gave us a bit of a fright, you know. But you're a good little girl, all the same.'

From which rather inconsistent utterance Millie extracted the good and cast the bad away, and so rested content.

Mrs. Ross had entered her room, after Millie's departure, and, going up to her husband, had laid her hand on his. He looked on the hand with surprise—then put his own other hand upon the one his wife had given. There had been no such contact between them for long.

'Dick, won't you have another try?'

He waited a moment. Then he said, with an assumption of lightness which betrayed itself for the assumption it was, 'P'raps I will. I'm not sure that it wouldn't be some good, after all. And if God helps, then—'

Natures are not changed at once, even under the magic of an angel in the guise of a little child. But three natures were never quite the same when that afternoon had passed. For such things as these, thrown into the history of a soul, are like bread cast upon the waters, to be found after many days.

What the Father Liked.

The Cincinnati 'Enquirer' relates this incident in the life of Bishop William Burt:

A preacher complimented Dr. Burt one day on his good disposition.

'You never growl about anything,' he said. 'No matter what kind of a meal is set before you, you eat it cheerfully. If you are feeling poorly you conceal it. How do you manage to acquire such a fine habit of good-humored tolerance and resignation?'

'Maybe the remark of a child I once overheard helped me to learn to complain and grumble as little as possible,' said Dr. Burt. 'While I was studying at Wilbraham Academy I spent a few days with this child's father, a good man but a chronic growler. We were all sitting in the parlor one night, when the question of food arose. The child, a little girl, told cleverly what each member of the household liked best. Finally it came to the father's turn to be described as to his favorite dish.

"And what do I like, Nancy?" he said laughingly.

"You," said the little girl, slowly—"well, you like most anything we haven't got."

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