

Ruth Peyton's Lesson.

(By Emma Churchman Hewitt, in 'Forward')

Ruth Peyton stood in the middle of the room, her bright eyes taking in every detail, and trying to discover if anything were lacking.

"If Cousin Felicia doesn't like it I can't help it," she said, at last. "It's a pretty room, anyway!"

It was, indeed, a pretty room, this simple apartment with its pretty chintz hangings. Thin curtains at the windows and pretty checked matting upon the floor made it look invitingly cool on this warm June day. Ruth turned away, and closing the door behind her, went downstairs and out of doors humming a gay little tune. But when she had reached her favorite haunt, a low branch in the old apple-tree back of the house, her tune changed to a sharp, impatient sigh.

"I can't imagine what Cousin Felicia can possibly want to come here for and shut herself up in the country—a girl with money and everything else at her command. If I

"How lovely, how restful!" murmured the guest as she entered the pretty little room of which Ruth threw open the door, her heart filled with a mixture of pride and misgiving. She need have felt no misgiving. The expression of Felicia's face was enough even had she said no appreciative word.

"You are very tired, Cousin Felicia, aren't you?"

"Indeed I am. I have been on the railway trains so much lately. It seems so good to be at home," and her eyes filled with tears for a moment.

"I'm glad you feel at home, Cousin Felicia. You couldn't have said anything more beautiful than that," replied Ruth, softly. "We always want everyone who comes to feel at home."

Though there was a difference of five years in the ages of Felicia and Ruth, Felicia being the elder, they soon became fast friends, Ruth was very busy in helping her mother with the endless routine of work always to

One of the results of all this thought came to light soon.

"Auntie Peyton," said Felicia, one day when Ruth was out of the room, "I want a companion. I've been alone so much, I'm tired of it. Now may I not have Ruth this summer, if I hire a maid to take her place with you?"

She made her proposition as easily and naturally as if she had not known what a boon it would be to both mother and daughter to have someone to take the heavier work off their shoulders.

"You see," she went on rapidly, so as to prevent Mrs. Peyton from making any demur, "I do not care for a salaried companion, and yet I must have someone. There is some writing I must do before long and I feel sure that Ruth could help me better than a stranger." I want to take long rambles, too, over these beautiful old woods and around the meadows, and I don't want to go alone. And there are some books I want to read, and I shall not enjoy them at all if I must read them alone. Do say 'yes,' Auntie Peyton!"

Mrs. Peyton was tempted to demur because she knew that the offer was made more perhaps for Ruth's sake than for Felicia's own. But she was overruled, and when Ruth came back into the room she found that a long, beautiful summer, a summer never to be forgotten, had begun for her in the most unexpected way.

Day by day the programme was carried out. The girls wandered over the fields and through the woods, or sat under the trees and read. It was noticeable, however, that Ruth always did the reading, Felicia gently correcting or explaining as they went along, and sitting meanwhile with her hands idly folded in her lap. Mrs. Peyton, too, (a luxury she had not permitted herself for years), sat listening while she did the family mending.

Ruth was studying Felicia all these days; but Felicia was studying Ruth far more deeply. One day, as they sat beneath a tree, resting from their walk, a silence fell between them. Felicia sat looking away toward the hills, and Ruth sat looking at Felicia.

"And what is it, little Ruth?" said the latter, turning quickly toward the young girl. Ruth blushed at having been caught in her scrutiny, but Felicia went on kindly—

"You are puzzled about me. I think I know why. You do not altogether approve of me—do you, Ruth?"

Ruth hesitated a moment, and then flung reticence to the winds.

"Oh, Cousin Felicia! I want to do so many things and I cannot! I have longed so to prepare myself for missionary work! I know it is in me. I want to make a name in the world."

"A name in the world, little Ruth?" questioned Cousin Felicia. "Is that the true missionary spirit? Those who do missionary work far oftener die in unknown graves than live to see their names inscribed on the roll of fame. Did you only want to do the Master's work that the world might point its finger at you and say, 'There is Ruth Peyton, noted for her work in the missionary field?' Ah, my dear! you must start again, with a different motive."

The girl crimsoned.

"I have expressed myself badly, Cousin Felicia. I meant I wanted to do brave and noble things, I wanted to make sacrifices and do something really worth while—to go to foreign lands and do real work—to spend myself and to be spent in the cause. But I



"WHAT IS IT, LITTLE RUTH," ASKED FELICIA.

had it— She left her sentence unfinished as she looked down the road.

"There she comes now!" she exclaimed, jumping down from her perch. And in the excitement of welcome, her discontent was forgotten for the moment.

The 'Cousin Felicia' for whom Ruth Peyton had been so eagerly preparing was in reality no relation whatever to the young girl, but was the daughter of an old school friend of her mother's. Though Mrs. Peyton had never seen Felicia's mother since they were at school together (and had never seen the girl herself at all), the two had corresponded regularly until Mrs. Rayburn's death, five years ago.

Felicia had since lost her father also, and had come East this year, for the first time in her life, to spend some months with her father's sister, and she had proposed coming to pass her summer with 'Auntie Peyton,' a request which you may be sure was not denied.

be found in a farm household (for the Peytons were in exceedingly straitened circumstances), so she had not much time for entertaining her visitor, but Felicia did not seem to mind being left alone.

She seemed quite content to sit out under the trees with her hands folded in her lap, apparently looking at nothing. Her whole attitude was that of extreme idleness, and after a few days Ruth began to feel a vague disappointment about her. This was perhaps accentuated by the fact that she herself was obliged to be so busy when she was longing to read, and there was Felicia, with nothing under the sun to do, taking no advantage of her opportunities. How could she be so idle!

But Felicia was not so idle as Ruth imagined. She was thinking of a great deal in those days, and was studying Ruth's character in a way which would have astonished that young woman could she have known it.