

## The Story Page

### Mother's Birthday Gift.

"I have never had anything like that in all my life. Whatever is given me is something I can use about the house," thought Mrs. Winship, as she hurried to the kitchen where a kettle of vegetables was boiling over. "Sometimes it's a set of knives and forks, then again some table linen. I've had a gasoline stove, a dozen dining room chairs, a wash machine, some window shades, and my last birthday gift was a churn."

"I suppose they think such things as father and the boys gave Millie aren't adapted to me!"

She held up her hard, rough hands, and tried to imagine how a fine opal like the ring Millie had just received as a birthday gift would look on the work-worn fingers.

"You would look rather out of place," she mused, "perhaps a little bit ashamed with a ring."

Millie, who had just entered the kitchen, held the ring to the sun, which shining through the window scattered little flashes of color about her hand.

"Isn't it a beauty, mother? Father and the boys are so good to me! I wish your birthday came on the same day as mine instead of three weeks later. We could compare our gifts and rejoice together. See how it sparkles!"

"Yes, dear!" with just the faintest sigh in the mother's tone.

"What do you think they are going to give you? I'm going to put my money with theirs," and Millie looked up expectantly into Mrs. Winship's face. "You can't guess, but it's something nice!"

"Father asked me only yesterday what you needed, and I mentioned ever so many things! There's a new parlor lamp—we can hardly go any longer without one. Then the stair carpet is worn almost threadbare! I also suggested a new pump. You had complained that the old one was so hard to bring water with. And a clotheshorse, for the one we have is such a rickety affair; it hardly stood up while I was hanging the last ironing on it. Now which would you like best?"

"They are all very useful," replied Mrs. Winship. "I don't know as there is any choice."

Millie turned and glanced suspiciously at her mother. The way in which she spoke didn't seem quite natural, or was it because she was tired! "Nother does have too much to do," thought Millie as she hurried to show her new gift to Helen Kimball, who was just going by. "I believe we'd better get the pump for it would so lighten her work! Father would as soon get that as one of the others, I am sure!"

Mr. Hiram Winship had been an unusually prosperous farmer. His acres had increased as the years came and went, until the original farm, "was almost squeezed to death in the middle of so many addition," as he facetiously expressed it.

The dowry Sarah Hobart had brought to her husband had gone to stock the place and buy some improved farm machinery.

"I'll get an engagement ring soon's we are on our feet," Hiram declared before they were married, but the once slender finger had grown red and big jointed, and the ring had not been bought. Hiram had forgotten all about it long ago.

The afternoon following Millie's birthday she drew the strings of her sunhat about her neck, and started for the meadow with a berry basket. She stopped before she reached the gate.

"I mustn't wear you; you might get lost," she said to the handsome birthday ring, and slipping it off, she ran back upstairs to her room. "I guess you'll be safer there," she said, laying the opal on the velvet pin cushion and hurrying back to her basket.

Some time later, Mrs. Winship stood before the bureau in her daughter's room, holding the ring in her hands.

She didn't hear Millie's step on the stair, nor did she notice her daughter's form in the door.

"Even though I'm growing old, I like pretty things! I haven't had a very large share; perhaps that is why I wish they knew, and would give me just one little thing for my very own. Not something for the house like—"

Millie heard no more. She crept softly away from

the open door and down the narrow stairs.

"Pump clotheshorse! Mother mine, we never thought else we'd never have been so cruel! We've just given you the things we needed ourselves and called them presents. Mother, why didn't you tell us how selfish we were? You've never even whispered a protest!"

"Have you decided, daughter which we'd better get—the pump or one of the other things?" asked Mr. Winship.

It was after the supper dishes had been put away, and Millie had found her father on the cool veranda. She could hear her mother in the warm kitchen sprinkling the clothes for the morrow's ironing.

"Yes father, the other things," and while she spoke it low, that her mother might not hear, there was an anxious determination in her voice that caused her father to look up with inquisitive surprise.

"Not all—clotheshorse, lamp and carpet?" he asked, with a smile on his sunburnt face.

"No, father; let me whisper."

When the dual conference was over, there was a light in Mr. Winship's eyes of regret and resolve.

He sealed the contract with a bargain squeeze of Millie's hand.

"We'll get the rest, too; the pump and 'the other things,'" he declared.

"They seem to have a good deal of mystery about getting my birthday present," thought Mrs. Winship, a fortnight later. "It may be over the make of the pump or the color of the lamp shade. But there I must be grateful; a spirit like this isn't becoming to a woman of my age."

The Tuesday before her birthday, the hardware man from the village drove into the Winship yard.

"It's a pump!" exclaimed Mrs. Winship, as though she had half expected it, there was a trace of disappointment in her voice.

On the morning of her birthday, Millie took her mother's hand, and started toward the stairs. "Shut your eyes and come with us," said she.

"But the present isn't up there!" remonstrated the little woman positively.

"Who said so?"

"It couldn't be—a pump; besides, I've seen it."

"The pump! Sarah please don't mention it!" and over the face of Hiram Winship passed an expression of pain and shame.

"You'll have to guess again, mother," and Charles and Harold gently lifted Mrs. Winship, and carried her to the stairway.

"Hiram! Children!" In those two words was the pent-up gratitude of twenty years.

There on the bed was a beautifully bound copy of the "Noble Women of the Present Day" from Charles; a work basket lined with silk and fitted with sewing implements of steel and silver, from Millie; some creamy lace from Harold; a lovely wrap and such a beautiful shimmering silk dress pattern, from Hiram.

"And here, Sally," said her husband, calling her by an almost forgotten name, "here is your engagement ring," and he lovingly, though a trifle clumsily perhaps, forced a solid gold band over her enlarged finger joints.

"It's from us all, and is our pledge never to forget what we owe to our dear little mother."

"There, my dear wife, you know—I have no words to express it!"—The Lutheran.

### Clipper and Snip.

BY MRS. F. M. HOWARD.

There was grief in the office, for Gypsy was dead, and four little motherless dog babies whined feebly as they strove in vain to find food.

Gypsy was the office dog, and every man there loved her, she was so intelligent and good. "I wouldn't have taken fifty dollars for her," said Mr. Lane, her owner, sorrowfully. "She was a pure blooded terrier, and quicker than greased lightning in the matter of rats."

"The pups will die," said the clerk. "It seems a pity to lose so fine a breed."

"I'll take 'em," said the office boy drawing near, broom in hand.

"If I'll raise 'em, will you gim me one?"

"Of course I will, Jim, and if you can't raise but one even, it is yours, unless you want to sell it to me. They'll die as they are, and I do not know of any dog nursery to put them in."

"What on earth have you got there, Jimmie?" cried Mrs. Scott as her boy came in with a capful of squirming, whining puppies scarcely larger than new-born kittens. She was a kind-hearted woman and tender of all helpless, needy things whether human or animal, and she hardly waited to hear Jimmie's story of the value and virtue of the little mother of the orphans before she had milk on to warm, and a nest preparing to receive them.

Poor little creatures, they were thoroughly chilled and almost starved, and one of them died before a way was found to get the milk down their throats, and two of the others were very weak, but one was still strong and Jimmie had great hopes of him. He was a patient nurse and, aided by his mother, the orphans received every attention.

A bottle was prepared as for other babies, with a quill run through the cork, and the puppy, for the weak ones died in the night, soon learned to take the warm milk, and to cry for one when hungry. Jimmie kept him in a little basket at the head of his bed, and toward morning the puppy would waken him, crying with cold and hunger. The boy kept the bottle of milk warm under his pillow, and after feeding it the tiny fellow would curl up in Jimmie's warm hands, boy and dog sleeping together till morning.

Such care brought with it a great deal of love, and the little dog grew dearer to his little master every day. He was a perfect copy of his lamented mother and Mr. Lane would gladly have bought him when he became old enough to care for himself, but Jimmie could not bear to give up his pet.

"Whenever you want twenty-five dollars more than you want a dog, come to me," Mr. Lane said, after Clipper had paid a visit to the office, where Jimmie had proudly shown off his cute tricks and bright ways. He was then about ten inches long, with such tiny legs, bright eyes and eagerly wagging bit of a tail that he seemed to be in a twinkle of motion all the time.

Mrs. Scott had taken a kitten to raise about the same time that Clipper came, and the two were great friends. It was amusing to see them play. One favorite game was around a hassock which usually stood near Mrs. Scott's chair. Snip, the kitten, would seat herself on it, and Clipper would race madly around it, barking in the most terrifying way Snip watching every motion with keen interest, until Clipper in some unguarded moment would catch her by the tail and whisk her off in a jiffy, when lo, Clipper would be sitting on the hassock, a doggyish smile on his face, and Snip would circle round and round until her chance came to jump up and push him off. Time after time they would repeat the play, until they were tired out and ready for a nap together.

At night Mrs. Scott had been puzzled at hearing queer sounds in the kitchen where they slept, and one night when the moonlight made the room almost as light as day, she went out to see what had wakened her at one o'clock in the morning. There were Snip and Clipper running races across the floor tails up and running for dear life side by side, bumping their silly little heads against the wall when they reached it, then turning about and racing the other way.

It was very comical, and for several nights Mrs. Scott was awakened at the same hour to hear little heads thumping against the wall, eight little scurrying feet dashing across the kitchen floor.

One night Clipper did his friends a real service—a number of houses had been entered by burglars, and on this night Mrs. Scott was alone with the pets, and the men probably knew it for they came up boldly, and were half way through a window when Clipper's sharp little bark became a very fury of angry noise, and jumping up he caught the burglar's leg in his sharp little teeth, worrying it as he would a rat. Nip, nip, nip he went, dodging the blows and kicks and taking a fresh hold between his shrill barks until the neighbors were aroused and help was coming.