

❖ ❖ The Story Page ❖ ❖

The Imp of The Wheel.

"And you really will not go?"

The words were courteous enough, but Jack's tone held a touch of contemptuous impatience that made Helena answer stiffly and very decidedly:

"No, I will not go!"

She looked unusually pretty with her cheeks so flushed and with her head at that defiant poise. It suddenly occurred to the young medical student that his pretty girl cousin was not exactly the proper person to quarrel with, especially as they were both away from home, and, in a measure, dependent upon each other's society! He reminded himself, also, that he was three years older than she, and much clearer-headed, of course; and as for the absurd notion that occupied her brain at present—well, why, was a woman's inalienable right.

"My dear child, you don't need to be so loftily heroic," he remarked with a laugh, which Helena mentally characterized as more exasperating than his previous show of temper. "You are not holding a warrant for your execution in your hand, nor a cheerful summons to appear before the Inquisition; it is only a simple invitation to a riding party."

"Then, if it is so simple a matter, why may I not decide it as I please?" she retorted. "Why do you urge me to go against my will?"

"Because I believe you are refusing against your will and against your common sense, too. Just look at it, Helena. You own a wheel, you ride well, and are fond of the exercise. You always enjoy our little excursions, and wish we could have more. Yesterday you were wishing we were not so busy with our studies, and had time to go far enough for a good breath of country air. Today I bring you an invitation to go for a day's outing with half a dozen pleasant people whom you have met, and like—just a fifteen mile ride, a dinner in the country, and back in the cool of the day—and you act as if I had proposed your joining in a burglary."

"But Jack—it's Sunday!"

"Exactly, or we wouldn't have time to go. You needn't be so fierce about it."

Her face softened. After all, he had only intended bringing her a pleasure, and her manner must have seemed ungracious.

"I didn't mean to be 'fierce,' as you call it. Really I think it was not so much with you that I was waging combat, Jack, as with—the imp of the wheel!" She hesitated a little over the last words, though she spoke them with a laugh.

"The imp of the wheel?" Jack repeated wonderingly.

"Yes; it's a quotation from Uncle Roger. I had wanted my bicycle so long, you know, but as it was rather an expensive luxury, I didn't believe father would feel that he could afford it. So, when he gave me one, it was a surprise, and I was so delighted that I had to exhibit my treasure to all our kith and kin. I rode up to Uncle Roger's, of course, and the old gentleman seemed wonderfully interested—just as he always is in every thing that pleases us, bless his dear old heart! He examined it, praised it, watched me ride it, and then he said:

"Well, it looks nice, and I might think it good, wholesome exercise, just as you say, if 'tweren't that I'm afraid of the things."

"O they are safe enough," I said. "There are very few accidents if one is careful." But he shook his head.

"Tain't that I mean, child; it's the imp in 'em that I'm afraid of. They look nice and innocent; but there's an imp hid in 'em somewhere, for I've watched him work. I've seen so many of our young folks that have begun to ride 'em—good, right-minded young folks, always in the habit of going to church and Sunday school—and in a little while the imp of the wheel has changed all their notions about such things. Before they got their wheels they wouldn't have thought of going off on a Sunday excursion anywhere; they wouldn't have dreamed of doing it any more than I would. But afterwards they began to think it wasn't any more harm to ride a little way on Sunday than to walk, and then, of course, it wasn't any worse to ride two miles than one. Then what was the harm of several riding off somewhere together? And so, before anybody knew how the change came about, they had dropped out of any regular place in the church and school, and were spending the day a-pleasuring here and there. I tell you, little girl, there is an imp in the wheel, and he's doing a deal of bad work these days in teaching our young folks to be Sabbath-breakers."

"I promised him that the imp should be exorcised from my wheel, Jack, and I mean to keep my promise. I can't go tomorrow."

"O, well, if you feel that way about it, there is nothing more to be said."

And Jack took his leave rather coldly.

Helena went back to her room with tears in her eyes. How she had bungled everything just when she meant to do right! If Jack were vexed and left her to herself,

she should miss him sorely, for he had been like a brother to her while she was here among strangers. But that would not be the worst of it; she was sure he needed her quite as much, and she had so wanted to help him. She remembered Aunt Ruth's parting words: "I shall feel so much safer and happier about Jack when you are near him, dear." And now she had made him think her puritanical and disobliging. Had she thrown away her influence foolishly?

It was a lonely and homesick girl who was dressing for church the next morning when a maid brought her a message:

"Ver cousin's in the parlor, ma'am, awaiting to go to church with ye."

Sure enough there was Jack; a trifle kinder in a manner than usual, perhaps; but making no illusion to yesterday's talk until she ventured to ask:

"Did I spoil your day's pleasure for you?"

"O I'd have enjoyed the day's trip, I suppose," he answered carelessly; but I could hardly go off and leave you with a battle with imps, dragons and nobody knows what darkness on your hands."

She had to be content with that for a time; but a few weeks later she heard him quietly decline a similar invitation for himself.

"No, thank you; not today. A wheel is all right for recreation, you know; but one has to draw the line somewhere, or it will run into dissipation and desecration. I draw mine at Sunday excursions."—Forward.

A Text With No Water In It.

BY ANNIE A. PRESTON.

"Mrs. Jenkins' brother is comin' on Saturday to stay over Sunday on his way to New York State," said Mary Jewett, a beautiful young woman of twenty, coming in from a call upon a sick neighbor. "He's a minister, you know, and Mrs. Jewett says he'll preach in the school-house if we wanter have him."

"We'd a orter wanter hev 'im," said Grandpa Jewett from his splint armchair in the corner of the huge fireplace, "but I've a-heard tell as he's a Baptist."

"I've heard so too," said grandma who was winding indigo blue woolen yarn from off the square body of a "swift," "but Miss Jenkins says he's gifted, an' will preach right off from any text anybody will give 'im—"

"That so?" interrupted grandpa; "then ask him ter preach, by all manner er means, an' I'll give 'im a text that hain't no water in it; you see if I don't."

"I'll bet my best cow that granther'll give 'im a stick-er," said Cap'n Burdick when he heard the news that was being noised about by every tongue, as such news was one hundred years ago in any country community.

"I do no how many'll come in stiff January weather an' deep snow," said Mrs. Jenkins, as she and her brother set out on Sunday morning, "but with no meet-in'-house in ten mile folks oughter be thankful ter hear the gospel, and they say old Granther Jewett has picked out a text for ye with no water into it."

"Must have had to go outside the Bible for it," laughed the preacher, "but I guess everybody wants to know and hear for themselves, for there seems to be quite a gathering."

"Wall, I should say so; everybody an' his neighbor, an' the house is chock full, even to the entry an' the wood-closet, an' more a-cumin'!"

The "floor" was filled with children sitting in front of the roaring chimney fire upon round sticks and blocks of wood, their red cheeks resembling rows of baldwin apples, as they entered and the minister mounted the high desk and asked for his text.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," said Father Jewett from the "back seat."

"Phil. 2: 12-21," said the preacher; "and this is the connection," and he repeated the verses preceding. Then he began his discourse.

He preached from the text both morning and afternoon, saying not one word of baptism, but that there was water in the text the tearful eyes of his audience bore testimony. In leaving them he said, "I will stay over another Sunday with you on my return from New York state in March. Meantime read the New Testament faithfully."

Among those who followed this advice was Mary Jewett. She had experienced a thorough spiritual awakening, and one day as her grandfather was talking of the stress laid upon obedience by the preacher she said, "I wish he would preach next time from 'Follow me.'"

"That text has water in it," said the old man. "No one can follow Jesus without going down into Jordan, but I wasn't brought up to think that way. I should like to hear him set it out though."

So when the preacher came again, during an extremely cold snap in March, that was the text given for the day.

At the close of the morning services testimonies were called for, and Mary Jewett said:

"Since you was here first I have read my Testament through three times, and I am confident I can get no nearer Jesus until I am baptized."

"The pond is near; what hinders?" asked Cap'n Burdick, who was an unbeliever.

"Nothing, only that a path may be cut in the ice," was the reply.

"I will do that," said the man roughly, not believing that she was in earnest; but the beautiful young woman, the minister, and the whole congregation followed him to the pond.

It was so cold that the water skimmed over as soon as it was cleared of ice, and as the candidate came up out of the water the ice froze in a crown of stars all about the border of her close hood, that sparkled like a crown of gold in the bright noonday sun as the minister sang, in a voice like a bugle call:

"Christians, if your hearts be warm

Ice and snow will do no harm.

Jesus, whom the Jews despised,

In the Jordan was baptized.

"Follow me!" he calls today;

"I am the Life, the Truth, the Way!"

That was the beginning of the Baptist church in that community, that for a century has been a power for good and is so still.

Grandpa Jewett and all the family were baptized, with many others, soon after, who said, that, although the preacher did not mention baptism in that first sermon, they knew he was a Baptist, and felt in their hearts that there was no other true obedience.

Mary Jewett's great granddaughter tells this story with love and pride. The mantle of consecration has fallen upon her, and she wonders that any seeker for salvation can evade the true path where our Saviour's footsteps are still leading all who believe through the baptismal waters.—Morning Star.

The Telephone a Teacher.

BY HELENA H. THOMAS.

Thoughts along this line suggested themselves after a visit from two of my wee friends, whose mothers are not only cultured women, but painstaking parents. I am inclined to think, however, that they would have seen themselves in a new light had they sat where I sat, and listened to what fell from the lips of their carefully reared children yesterday.

By way of explanation, allow me to first state, dear reader, that having no little sunbeams in our home, I dearly love to borrow the children of my more fortunate friends, and also that my guests feel such freedom under our roof that they play as unconcernedly as if "all by their own selves." Consequently, after wearying of other amusements, Susie said:

"Now let's play the library is your house an' the back parlor mine, an' then we'll play we're talking through a telephone."

This met with the approval of her playmate, and an instant later the "make-believe" telephone began, each child assuming her mother's tone and manner. So Susie, "cause I thought of it first," after a great ado about getting the number wanted, and scolding the "Central" for being so "horrid slow," began as follows:

"Is that you, Mrs. Palmer?"

"Why, yes; how do you do?"

"Oh, we're having a perfectly dreadful time!" was the doleful answer. "My cook's gone an' left us. The horrid thing got mad 'cause I give her fits for making bread that wasn't fit for pigs to eat. Then my second girl is crosser'n a bear 'cause she had so much to do, an'—an' I'm pretty near dead!"

Here Beatrice evidently wishing to outdo this tale of woe, without stopping to express any sympathy, assumed a tragic air, and made answer:

"I'm in a perfectly dreadful fix, too! Ralph got the—the amonia, an' Mary's coming down with something—I wouldn't wonder if 'twas smallpox! We've got two nurses, an' my goodness, we're in for it!"

"Oh, dear, it's dreadful! But, say, have you heard the latest news?"

"No. 'What is it?'"

"Well, Mr. Jones has skipped."

"My, my! That's perfectly terrible! I'm dying to hear all about it, an' so I'll run right over."

I am well aware that the foregoing loses force in the telling; still, I will make one more effort to prove that the telephone is a teacher before I close:

"Now, let's play you're the grocer an' I'm mamma," said Beatrice—whose mother, by the way, has little control over the "unruly member," which resulted in:

"Again you've sent me some horrid butter, an' I want you to know, sir, that you'll never see another dollar of my money!"

"Why—why—I'm very sorry," was the meek rejoinder, which gained forth the spiteful retort:

"Sorry because you're found out, that's all. But I

want nothing you sent me soap-grease. Here the painfully re house, and But could and distort encircling had worked why I am mold the eration.

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There gr den, a row feet high, inches acro One mor stopped an The tallest of an apple cheerful to see you so night. W early, and and all the bean famil "We be Sunflower the Creator "Yes," "Well, according Seeing h "How can some that He gave only obey high, but told to do and helped "Lookin Brother Su green, yell of our cou I like you sweet peas half so sho He was answered lovely Chr God make delicate sh we don't c Already an our faces, will be hea their want bowing ou and is usin "That's stopped an you are qu Brother "Didn't y and hasn' doing one God day a Said I, "Oh, y light shin nights." Just the shook ha their face and I loo in your co "Yea," there who pea; we s may take "Thank Benjamin

"Rob," to pronoun "Don't "Poo! h sure to get "Ha, ha found it o word in th "Incom "No, si between th

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