

near the table knitting. "I do wish Jabez wouldn't speak that way!"

Aunt Mary, a visitor from the West, pushed her chair with an impatient movement further from the fire, frowning a little; but Bertha, Farmer Macy's only daughter, a girl of sixteen, looked from her father to Robert, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes full of tears.

"I didn't say I would flog you!" said the farmer harshly. "I said you deserved to be flogged for your carelessness, and so you do. Ever since that money was left to you, you've seemed to want to go your own way."

"I will go my own way, too!" muttered the boy between his teeth. Bertha's quick ear caught the words, and she ventured to speak.

"Father, Robert didn't lock the barn, because John told him not to, till he came home."

"Oh, John told him not to, did he? How long since John took it upon himself to issue his orders? I think I am the one to be obeyed on these premises," was the quick rejoinder, and then the girl was silenced. "I suppose John told him not to put up the rails, also?" the farmer added, as if unwilling to end the controversy.

"John said nothing to me about that; I simply forgot it," said Robert, sullenly.

"Of course you forgot it! You're always forgetting! If rubber could be tied on to your memory to stretch it a little, it would be better for you. I don't forget; if I did, I wonder where you would be?"

Aunt Mary looked at her brother over her spectacles. Her usually mild face quivered with excitement.

"Brother!" she said, in a tone of dismay.

"Of course you'd take sides against me! The boy has always been excused. His mother made a fool of him, and his sister ditto. By and by, I shan't be allowed to speak in my own house."

Robert threw down the book which he had taken up again with an angry gesture, and stalked out of the room. He was a tall, good-looking boy of eighteen, large of his age, and clumsy in his movements. The farmer made as if he would call him back, but settled himself in his chair again, and frowned.

"The fact is, since his uncle left him that five thousand dollars," said Farmer Macy, "the boy hasn't been worth his salt to me!"

"Oh father, you—"

"Silence!" said the old man, testily. "I tell you he is doing nothing but longing for the time when he is twenty-one, and can put his hands on that money. Castle-building and reading, that's what he gives his time to, and me slaving like a dog!"

"It's a great pity," said Aunt Mary, and she spoke in her slow, sweet way, so that one could hardly imagine there was the least touch of sarcasm in what she said, "that George didn't leave the money to you!"

"Eh, you think so, do you?" said the farmer, his heavy features lighting up. "Look what I could ha' done with five thousand dollars—and the place needing improvement so much! Yes, even one thousand would set me up! And to think of all that money lying idle, for Robert to come into, and spend as he pleases. He'll go off as soon as he gets it."

"That depends upon how you treat him, my son," said Grandma Macy, looking up and resting her needles.

"Treat him!" said the farmer looking forward, glaring at them all. "Don't I give him a roof and clothes and food? Would you have me knuckle to the boy, to my own son, because he is coming into possession of a little paltry money? A pretty father I should be!"

Grandma Macy's needles clicked on, and Aunt Mary looked thoughtfully at the fire. The old-fashioned clock that had ticked in its ancient corner for over seventy years struck nine.

Bertha had slipped out of the room, gone through the kitchen, and up the back stairs. The wind was rising, and the rain, which had just begun to fall, drove heavily against the window-panes on the upper landing. The girl moved swiftly down the narrow passage in the dark, toward a door at the further end, through the keyhole of which there came a faint light. Here she stopped and tried the latch of the door. It did not let her in.

"Robert!" she cried. "Robert!"

"What is it, Bertha? I can't come down again, and—I'd rather be alone."

"But I want to speak to you. O Robert, won't you let me in?"

"It's no use; I won't come down."

"No, you needn't; nobody has sent for you. I—I just wanted to see you!"

"Well, here I am," and the door opened, suddenly, so that the girl who was leaning against it almost fell into the room. She recovered herself, however, and stood there looking at her brother with pitiful eyes.

"I wish I knew what to do," she said, and ended with a long-drawn sigh.

"I know what to do!" was the boy's rejoinder, and he set his mouth sternly, so that there was in his face a curious resemblance to the old man down stairs.

"You won't do anything wrong, Robert, I know you won't!" she said, clasping her hands. "I'm sure father means to do everything for the best. Try not to mind!"

"I do try, I have tried, but it's no use. Think I can't see? Father is mad because that money is coming to me, instead of him. I wish Uncle George had never left it to me; I could have got along without it. It only makes me wretched all the time, the way father treats me, and I'm tired of it."

"But, dear Robert, every one sees—I mean," she added, checking herself—"you have grandma and me, who love you dearly! Don't that make up to you for these little crosses? Father, though he is so rough, loves you very dearly; he is proud of you, but something has made him irritable of late, and—"

"Yes, ever since Uncle George died and left me that money," said Robert.

"And you know he has been making improvements on the farm. Perhaps he has got into debt."

"Well, that's not my fault," said Robert. "I believe in my soul you wish that money had gone to him or you."

"O Robert!"

"Forgive me, Bertha! I know how girls feel about such things, and it's only natural that you should want to help father; but I tell you candidly, if I had the money to-morrow, I wouldn't lay out a cent on this miserable old place. I hate it, and I'm tired of being treated like a child of five years' old! All my faults and errors talked over, no matter who is by! I'm not going to stand it any longer. If he can't be reasonable, he must get some one else besides me to vent his spite on."

"O Robert, what are you saying?"

"Just what I mean. I won't stand it! It's bad enough to be cooped up in this old country place, and then to be tyrannized over from morning till night! What good does it do? I can't touch the money till I'm of age, even if I felt like giving it all to him."

"If you won't mind it, dear, I'll do everything I can to make you happy."

"You're awfully kind, Bertha, and you do all you can now, but don't you suppose I see how uncomfortable he makes you all feel on my account? Come, you're shivering with the cold. Take my candle and go to bed; I've got another, and we'll talk it all over some other time."

Reluctantly Bertha obeyed, waiting only to kiss her brother good-night. When she reached her room she blew out the candle, folded a wrapper about her, and sat down in the little splint rocker, to think.

She felt as keenly as Robert did, her father's injustice, but what could she do? She had no mother to go to, and her grandmother was too loyal to her son to blame him in words. She could not talk to her father; he would have turned upon her as he had before, with the bitter taunt that she encouraged her brother in his idleness, and excused all his shortcomings.

The clock struck eleven and found her still sitting up, trying to solve this problem, how to keep her brother from any rash act that he would regret in after life. Straining her ears to listen, she thought she heard the creaking of a door.

It rained hard now. She could see the tops of the trees moving in the wind, dark as it was.

A sudden terror seized her. That certainly was not the rain nor the wind, but the familiar clank of the heavy chain against the front door. She ran to her brother's room, her heart beating heavily, called him, but no answer came. Gropping her way to the bed, she felt over it, Robert was not there—the bed had not been touched.

She could have screamed from terror, but she had learned, long before this, to master her impulses, and she crept down stairs, to find the front door unfastened. Unheeding rain and wind, she ran out in the darkness to the gate, which was also unfastened. Watch, the dog, was gone—he must have followed his young master.

As loudly as she dared, she called her brother's name, and then, sure that he was by this time out of hearing, she ran back to the house, found a shawl in the hall-closet, and left the house, shutting the door behind her, softly.

The next train was due at half-past eleven o'clock.

Robert must be waiting at the little station in the woods, half a mile away. The rain beat heavily, the wind blew so fiercely that she caught her breath with difficulty. . . . The path was hard to keep. Occasionally she staggered in among the thick bushes on either side the narrow foot-way, and once something bounded across the road, but before she could give way to fright, she felt the cold nose of Watch against her hand.

"O Watch, where is Robert? Carry me to him!" she cried, somewhat reassured now that she had a protector. Presently she stumbled against the platform of the little station, that rose like a huge, black shadow before her.

"Robert! Robert! It is I, Bertha; are you here? O Robert, don't leave me!"

"Are you crazy, Bertha? and such a thing as this! You will get your death—how dared you come through these woods?"

"I came after you. Robert, you must go back—you must! It's awfully selfish in you to run off, and father will be broken-hearted if you do. Can't you bear as much as I can? and I only a girl! See, I am wet through and through, and cold and frightened, but I won't mind it if you'll only come home. If you go, I'll stay out in the storm all night. How can I go back and tell them you stole out of the house like a thief, at midnight? If you must go, Robert, go in the face of the day and of everybody. It would kill me to hear people say you had run away. O Robert, think, it will be disgrace for all of us—shame, misery and disgrace."

"I tell you I can't bear it!" he said, and stamped on the loose boards of the platform. "I might as well go now as any time."

"No, not now, for my sake—wait at least till—I talk to father. What would mother say, Robert? If she sees us now—"

—she broke down utterly, sobbing as her heart would break. "Come on—I'll go back," said Robert, sullenly. "Here, Watch!" the dog came bounding to his side. "Stop crying, Bertha—poor little thing, how you shiver! There! there!" he said, softening, as he put his arm about her, "we'll go on the run, to keep you from getting cold—but, mind, I don't promise I'll stay—only I won't go this time."

It was a week after Robert's attempt to leave home, and Bertha was very sick. The fright and exposure of that terrible night had brought on a fever.

"I can't think how the child took such a cold," said Aunt Mary, as she came into the living-room one morning. "From the day she had that miserable chill she has been growing steadily worse. I'm worried about her, and so is the doctor. The poor child in her delirium imagines Robert is going away."

Grandma Macy let her knitting fall into her lap, folded her hands and looked sorrowfully into the fire.

"It's two years this month since her mother died," she said softly. "Where's Robert?"

"Up stairs, with her—you can hardly get him out of the room. The boy is very fond of her. It is for her sake, I fancy, that he didn't leave home months ago." Aunt Mary little knew how nearly she had hit the truth.

Day after day dragged on and the fever did its work. Robert hardly gave himself time to eat, so anxious was he to be by his sister's bedside. He grew haggard, watching night and day—reproaching himself constantly.

"You'll stay now, won't you, Robert?" she said, feebly, one day. "You won't leave the old home—you won't leave father alone? Father will be different when I—am gone."

"When you are gone—O Bertha!" said the boy, brokenly. "Do as I did, when you begged me down there in the old depot, stay for my sake."

"If I could, dear—but it isn't as I say—and—I want you to promise me never to leave poor father—and when the money comes—help him all you can, will you?"

"I'll do everything you ask me," sobbed the boy. "I'll give him all the money. I don't want it—without you."

"Don't you think," said Grandma Macy, very softly, to Aunt Mary, one day, "that there's a great change come over Jabez? He hasn't spoken a cross word to Robert since our little girl came down stairs. And the boy seems like another person—as willing and chipper about his work as can be."

And Robert was saying to Bertha, who sat, white as a lily, in her little splint rocker, by the window:

"I don't care how hard I work now, and I've told father he shall have enough of my money to make all the improvements he wants to. I shall never make a farmer, he sees that now, but I'll find something more to my liking. I have been idle and careless, and probably the money did have something to do with it, but I've changed all that."

"I made up my mind to it when I thought we were going to lose you. O Bertha, if you had died I should never have forgiven myself!"—*Youth's Companion*.

Music.

As promised our readers at the beginning of the year, we herewith publish a piece of music—a beautiful little organ voluntary, and will in a future issue print still another, provided our readers manifest a sufficient interest in the present selection to warrant us in going to the expense of publishing a second one. The Voluntary has a charming melody, very sweet and pretty, for a parlor organ; or a piano either, for that matter.

If the melody be taken up by a violin as a solo with the organ or piano as an accompaniment, it will be especially pleasing.

If you enjoy this musical selection, you will confer a favor by writing us and telling us so, and will also encourage us to further effort in this line.