

A FANCY IN TRIOLETS.



THE SPIRIT OF TRUE SERVICE.

The superintendent was standing at his desk, and his hand was stretched out ready to strike the bell, for it was time to call the school together for the closing exercises; but just then he happened to glance at Miss Howard, and the appealing look on that lady's face made him pause and then postpone the signal nearly five minutes. He saw that the young women in Miss Howard's class were bending forward and listening intently to one of their number, and fearing that an interruption at that moment might be very detrimental to the religious interests of one or two souls there, he waited until the speaker had finished, and Miss Howard's eye had assured him that he might safely call the school to order.

Miss Howard believed in the practical application of each lesson, and one characteristic of the hour was the illustration of the principal point by a story or incident read or told by some member of the class, or, rarely, a bit of her own experience.

On this particular Sunday the lesson was on "The Spirit of True Service," and could you and I have been there, we should have heard the following story. Marion Elston had been chosen by Miss Howard for this day, and with a shy but very earnest look on her sweet face she began without delay as soon as asked.

"I shall have to talk very fast because my story is pretty long and I want you to hear it all, so will you please be timekeeper, Miss Howard?"

"Maud Easton was a young woman who had been well educated. She had studied in the best schools near her home, and then had been through the four years' course at an Eastern college. When she came back to her home again she was very eager to try to support herself, but her father was quite wealthy and preferred that she should stay at home and help her mother with the other children, for Ben, a lively lad of fifteen, Ward, who emulated him as far as was possible to a thirteen-year-old, and womanly little Effie, nearly twelve, all needed more care than their mother could well give them.

"Maud was a Christian and meant to be obedient, but her father's plan was decidedly disappointing to her ambitious spirit. She would have been greatly discontented had it not occurred to her that her father and mother certainly would not forbid her to do church work; so she went into it with all her might. She joined societies until she belonged to thirteen; she was the most faithful attendant at all the meetings; plans for new work received her most enthusiastic support; and, in short, after she had been at home eighteen months she was so busy with all this outside work that the family saw very little of her. Her parents said nothing, but waited for a chance to remonstrate. Both feared she needed rest, but hesitated to give her a second disappointment.

"One evening late in November she came home with a very tired look, but when her mother spoke of it, she said she thought it would be gone in the morning.

The mother, however, found her utterly exhausted after a sleepless night, the result of a terrible headache. The physician was called at once, and after a keen look at her flushed face and dull eyes he warned her mother that a severe illness might follow, though he hoped to ward it off. For four or five days she was unconscious, and if she spoke at all it was to inquire about some detail of a fair which she had been planning. At last she came to herself again, but it was pitiful to see how weak she had grown. Two or three weeks of good care gave her a little strength, and when a month had gone by she was able to sit up for a few minutes. But I didn't mean to tell you about that, but about her thoughts.

"When she got strength enough to begin to think—oh, how rebellious she was! To be taken away from her work when she was so anxious to carry it on and finish it; to lie there scarcely able to move sometimes and think and think of all the things she had planned to do; and to know that they had to be given up, or that some one else was doing them, not half so well as she could she was sure—it was hard. Often the feelings of anger and rebellion would grow till at last bitter tears came to her relief, and only the sleep of exhaustion could really calm her unhappy spirit.

"After many weeks she was able to go down-stairs, and with the return of strength

I.

"Who saw a sunbeam pass this way?
A little shape of dancing light
With golden locks and cheek like May?
Who saw a sunbeam pass this way,
As bright as dawn, as glad as day,
In little gown of snowy white?
Who saw a sunbeam pass this way,
A little shape of dancing light?"

and the change of surroundings her heart grew a little more reconciled. She began to get acquainted with the family whom she had scarcely seen for six years. She admired Ben's activity and manly spirit, and grew very fond of Ward, whose gentle attentions to his mother and Effie were unusual in such a boy. Little Effie she took so much into her heart that the little maid's love and confidence were completely won.

"For some time Maud had been noticing Effie's constantly sunshiny face and unceasing helpfulness, and as she was one day lying on the couch in the sitting room watching the last glow of the early spring sunset fade out of the sky, Effie danced into the room. Catching sight of Maud's pale face on the cushions she flew over to give her a hug and a kiss. Maud held her close for a minute, then she asked,

"Effie, can you stop long enough to tell me what makes you do so much for the rest of us?"

"In a somewhat surprised tone Effie replied, 'Why, I love you all, you know, and besides I am trying to be like Christ, and he was everybody's servant, so I thought I ought to be.'

"And with another kiss and caress off she went to be 'papa's comforter,' stopping on her way to help Ward find his books and Ben control his temper.

"A few minutes later, as Maud was thinking over Effie's answer, her mother came in, and in reply to Maud's question as to the meaning of her sigh, explained that it was a sigh of thankfulness. 'Hannah is such a good servant,' she added, 'she always does things as I prefer, not in her own way, and she obeys so promptly and willingly that it is a pleasure to watch her. I never had such a servant before, and I am so grateful. She has been such a help while you have been sick.'

All that evening Maud's thoughts were busy, and when she fell asleep after a short but earnest prayer, there was a peace in her heart which she had not known for years.

"After that she grew better much more rapidly. Every one noticed how bright and happy she seemed, and one day when the doctor sent her away to have a little change of air, they were all surprised to find how much they missed her. For she had begun to do little things here and there for them all, but her ministrations were so

quiet that they had not noticed them, nor appreciated their number.

"At the end of the summer Maud came back to her home quite well once more, and ready for any work her Master might see fit to send her."

Here the look of dawning intelligence on the faces of her class-mates made her blush vividly as she added, so sweetly and earnestly that they were all greatly impressed, the words for which Miss Howard had so effectually interceded,—

"Girls, Maud's real name was Marion Elston, and it is my own experience I have been telling you. I was that self-willed, ambitious, impatient girl; but God was too kind to let me go on in that way, so he tried to teach me better. For a long time I was wickedly rebellious, but at last I saw and understood what he was so lovingly trying to show me, and now I have learned a lesson which with his help I shall never forget. An ambitious, self-willed, proud spirit can never render acceptable service. Whether we serve man or God, we must be humble, self-oblivious, obedient, not doing the thing we prefer, nor doing it in our way, but doing what our Master gives us in his way so far as we can. And when we love Christ so much that we want to do only what he gives us, and in his way, then our service is the most perfect we can give. I want to say just this more, that the spirit of true service to everybody is love, a love so strong that it will forget itself and its own preferences in its earnest desires and longings to do for another what he wishes or needs; and the greater the love the more perfect the service. O girls! if you only knew how happy this spirit of true service of Christ makes me, you would all want it.

It was a strange coincidence that the superintendent read Miss Waring's beautiful hymn, 'Father, I know that all my life,' dwelling with peculiar emphasis on the last two lines,—

More careful, not to serve thee much,
But to please thee perfectly."

—and adding in a solemn tone two verses from the Bible: "Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether

II.

"We saw no shape of light astray;
A small cloud flew across the plain,
With sombre hair and dress of gray!
We saw no shape of light astray,
But sombre mist and dark array!"

"Why, that's my sunbeam, drenched in rain!"

"We saw no shape of light astray,
A small cloud flew across the plain!"
—Selected.

of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" and "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

After Sunday-school we might have seen Miss Howard thanking the superintendent with tears in her eyes, and if we had been near enough we might have overheard:—

"And your words following Marion's story, made such an impression on my girls that two of them decided at once to serve Christ."—Exchange.

THE NURSERY PSALM.

BY JENNIE FOWLER WILLING.

One of the English ladies who went to the Crimea with Florence Nightingale found in a Scutari hospital a Highlander near death, and yet hard against God. She spoke to him but he would make no answer. He even drew the sheet up over his head to keep her from speaking to him again. The next time she went through that ward he saw her coming toward his cot, and he covered his face again. Seating herself beside the bed, she began to repeat, in a low, kind voice, the Nursery Psalm:

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green. He leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

She noticed that, before the psalm was

finished, his hand went up to his eyes under the sheet. The next time she came, he was quite ready to listen to what she had to say of Jesus and his love. He gave his heart to the Lord, and five days later he died in great peace.

The Nursery Psalm was used to touch a chord that was not quite paralyzed by his bitter enmity against God. It was "mony a weary mile" from his mother's knee in the Highland cottage, where, with her loving hand on his bonny, bright head, she had taught him the dear old psalm, to the Crimean hospital, where, a rough, hardened soldier, he lay dying; yet the mother's love, like Christ's tenderness, reached all the way, and drew him back to God.

Let us fill the minds of our children with Bible truth. Let us teach them to repeat our hymns. It will be laying up for them a store of good things against the famine years that may come. It will stand them in good stead in their hours of sore need.

They may not understand the great truths that they mouth with difficulty,—and who of us at our best can ever fathom the depths of meaning?—yet the memory of the "huge tenderness" of home and mother, which they comprehended no more than they did God's kindness, will "put full sense" into the homely words, making them

"Manna to the hungry soul,
And, to the weary, rest."

This teaching will be a thousand thousand times better pabulum upon which to feed those whom we would have grow to become muscular Christians, than the trashy, empty stories with which nursery books are usually full. Candies may quiet the clamor a little while; but the glucose and *terra alba* with which they are adulterated ruin the child's digestion, destroy his appetite for better food, and undermine his health. They who have the responsibility of launching upon life those who are to bear their name, and represent them before the world in the years to come, ought to ponder well these truths, seeking divine wisdom, and obeying carefully the command of God: "Teach them diligently to your children." Sunday-school teachers are good in their way, and worthy of all honor; but they cannot fill a parent's place, or do a parent's duty.

If your child were going into danger, where you could not take care of him, you might quilt gold-pieces into the lining of his garment, that he might not be without the means of support in shipwreck and among strangers. While we may, let us see to it that our children are thoroughly furnished with the word of God.—*Sunday-School Times*.

THE HEARTH FIRE.

If the world seems cold to you,
Kindle fires to warm it;
Let their comfort hide from view
Winters that deform it.
Hearts as frozen as your own
To that radiance gather,
You will soon forget to moan,
"Ah, the cheerless weather!"

—Lucy Larcom.

