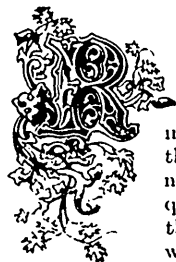


A "SUNDAY FANATIC."

BY FANSY.



RENIE'S gray eyes wore a troubled look, and as she turned her face toward the window and tried to peer into the starless darkness while the train dashed on, she could not keep her sensitive lips from quivering. She was not more than sixteen or seventeen; she was gowned in the quietest of traveling suits, and carried on her lap a small, neat case, that might have been a new-fashioned traveling case, only that she took such special care of it.

Seated beside her was a young man of perhaps nineteen. Even a casual observer would have decided at once that they were brother and sister; but the anxious look on the girl's face was intensified into gloom, tinged with vexation, on his. The time was Saturday, very near midnight. Suddenly the young man broke the silence.

"Ill luck seems to follow us, Renie, or a rather go ahead of us. If the experiences we have had so far on this journey are a hint of what we are to expect, we may as well go back at once."

The girl tried to speak cheerfully. "There is one comfort, Arthur, we are not to blame for missing the train; and it isn't so very bad. We can stop at the little village the man told us about, over Sunday. We should have to wait until Monday, anyway, before we could settle, and this will be cheaper than staying in a great city."

"Cheaper! No, it will not; and what kind of staying will it be? 'Pine Tree Inn,' indeed! There will be pines enough, I'll warrant, and very little else, besides bad whiskey and tobacco smoke. I was all over this region with Uncle Will, remember, four years ago. I recollect his saying of this very village that a well brought up dog would be uncomfortable stopping at the 'inn' they had then. I think decidedly that we would better go on to the junction and wait in the station for the New York train. We shall get in, then, by nine o'clock, and can go directly to that boarding house, where you, at least, are expected; it is likely they can find a place for me, for over Sunday. That will be the cheapest and most sensible thing to do."

"But, Arthur, it is Sunday at nine o'clock in the morning, and by traveling on the cars until then, what becomes of our pledge?"

"My beloved sister, isn't that being a trifle fanatical? When we took that Endeavor pledge to make our influence and example tell, so far as possible, for a proper observance of the Sabbath, we did not promise that a freight train should not run off the track and make us seven hours behind time, so that we would be compelled to run into New York by a Sunday morning train."

"Not compelled, Arthur; the utmost that we can say is that it was more convenient and comfortable to do so."

"Cheaper also. Do I need to remind you that the necessity for our being rigidly economical is very great? Even the sixteenth-rate accommodations of the Pine Tree Inn are undoubtedly more than those at that boarding house where your regular board could commence, you see, with tomorrow morning. But I'm not going to press the matter; if your heart is set upon stopping in the pine woods and spending double money for sour bread and fried pork over Sunday, why, we'll do it. The question must be decided quickly; this next station is the delectable town of your desire. Which shall it be?"

The girl's reply was unhesitating: "Arthur, I don't think it would be keeping our pledge or doing right, to go on to New York on Sunday morning. What is a pledge worth if we are to ignore it when questions of convenience, or even economy, arise?"

For answer the young man snatched his traveling bag and his sister's case, and saying merely, "All right; we are in for it," hurriedly made his way out of the car.

"This way for the Pine Tree Inn," was the first call they heard, and following it, were bundled in the darkness and steadily falling rain into some sort of conveyance. A very short ride brought them to the place. Through the central doors, which were thrown hospitably open, the bewildered new-comers caught glimpses of elegant space, aglow with light, rich with carpets and curtains and upholstery. Astonishment held the young travelers speechless. They had looked for the coarsest and commonest, and behold here was every refinement and luxury that money could produce; yet with such a strange air of home thrown about it all, that it did not seem as though it could be an hotel.

"What does it all mean?" whispered Renie, in