

## His Part.

(Agnes E. Wilson, in the 'Wellspring'.)

That the supper had been an unusually belated one, and that Theresa Valmer, spry little housekeeper that she was, was still in the kitchen, washing up pots and pans, when the clock struck eight, was her brother Loring's fault. Supper had waited until the busy father had at last eaten alone and departed to his evening work, but Theresa had waited and waited, slipping out to make fresh tea when the lag-gard's step was at last heard, and speaking not a word of reproach, although Loring offered no apology for his tardiness.

Loring had, indeed, little to offer in the way of conversation of any sort. Theresa was only a girl, and she could not be expected to understand the great schemes which were at that moment ripening in his fertile brain. Nevertheless, when supper was over he waited rather disconsolately for Theresa to finish her after-supper work and join him.

She came at last, slipping off the big apron and rubber cuffs which protected her pretty dress and stopping with them in her hand, while she answered brightly some of Loring's questions, before she turned to put them away.

'You've been such a long time getting through to-night,' Loring grumbled, ignoring the fact that it was he who had caused the delay.

Theresa ignored it, too.

'I had a good deal to do,' she answered. 'I'm glad to be able to sit down at last. I'm tired to-night.'

'I've been waiting for you to have a game of Crokinole,' Loring explained. 'Don't you want to?'

'I don't believe I can play, Loring. I cut my finger to-day, and it would interfere with my playing.'

'That's too bad. Well, can you play the accompaniment to my new violin solo, then?'

'Please excuse me to-night, Loring. I don't feel as if I could.'

'Then don't you want to help me classify my flowers?'

Theresa's face clouded.

'All that litter down here, to-night!' she exclaimed. Then, hastily, as she caught her brother's expression, 'Oh, all right, Loring. I don't really mind.'

'Of course, if you don't want to,' Loring replied, a little stiffly, 'I'll not bring them down. They do make litter, I suppose. That can't very well be helped.'

'Let's have a quiet chat,' Theresa pleaded. 'Tell me all about what happened at the store to-day, and what you did, and whom you saw.'

'Tell you over a whole lot of gossip, eh?' Loring's voice was not quite unkind, but the suggestion was not a pleasant one. 'I'm not very good at that business.'

Theresa made a few rather futile attempts at conversation, but Loring was fidgety. At last he got his hat.

'I guess I'll run round to Clarence Gregory's a little while,' he said. 'He has some flowers that he got on the marshes, and I want to see them.'

Theresa made no protest. It would be an hour or more before his father's return, and Theresa was left quite alone, but Loring did not think of that. He felt, in fact, that he himself was rather ill-used. Surely, it was Theresa's fault that there had been nothing amusing to occupy him at home. He believed it was a sister's duty

to make home pleasant for her brother, in the evening.

He found his chum, who was a widow's only child, reading aloud to his mother, but the book was put down at his arrival.

'Flowers?' Clarence queried, as Loring mentioned his errand. 'You'll have to come upstairs with me, old chap. Mother doesn't object to fresh flowers, but she seems prejudiced against having their desiccated remains down here. They are scrupulously confined to the attic.'

The two boys spent a pleasant half-hour in the attic. Then Clarence said: 'That's all. Let's go down to the sitting-room. Mother doesn't like sitting alone in the evening.'

For a moment a vision of Theresa, sitting alone at home, floated through Loring's mind, but it was soon forgotten in their pleasant chat. Mrs. Gregory, while apparently enjoying their lively conversation, did not often join in it, until Clarence was called for a few minutes from the room.

'How is Tressie, this evening?' she then asked, using the pet name by which she often called Theresa.

The query took Loring by surprise. 'She is well, thank you,' he answered.

'I am glad. Her headache isn't affecting her unpleasantly, then, this evening?'

'I guess not. I didn't even know she had one.'

'I ran in for a few minutes this morning, as I passed, and she was looking so miserable that I made her own up to a headache. Tressie is too good to you folks. She keeps on going when she isn't able.'

'She didn't mention the headache. She pleaded a cut finger when I asked her to play Crokinole, but she didn't give any reason when I asked her to try my new piece over with me.'

Mrs. Gregory smiled. 'I fancy one of her nervous attacks doesn't leave her feeling like trying new violin solos,' she said.

'Perhaps my violin performance is rather nerve-racking,' admitted Loring, good-naturedly. 'And a new piece may be particularly so.'

'Oh, I didn't mean anything like that,' Mrs. Gregory protested, laughing. 'I wish you had brought Tressie with you this evening. But I suppose your father is at home to-night?'

Loring's face flushed. 'No; he isn't. Tressie is quite alone. But she isn't at all nervous about being alone.'

Mrs. Gregory hesitated a minute. She did not want to be officious, but after all, Loring was the son of one of her oldest and dearest friends. She decided to speak.

'Isn't it just possible, Loring, that her nervousness may be like her headache—that she may never have spoken of it? I do not mean that she is afraid to stay alone. The neighborhood is a perfectly safe one, and Tressie is much too strong and sensible for idle fears. But I don't think you realize how much Tressie is alone. All day long, she sees you and your father only at meal times, and for the rest of the time, no one; unless a neighbor chances to drop in. Tressie is quite young, Loring, and her loneliness is not easier to bear because it is so recent. She has not complained, I assure you, but I am giving you a little bit of my own experience. I know what it is to spend all day in household tasks, and then to spend my evening in silence and alone.'

Loring was silent for a minute. Then he spoke, slowly and thoughtfully. 'I

think I see what you mean, Mrs. Gregory. I guess I've been thinking that I was a pretty decent sort of fellow when I was willing to stay at home and let Tressie amuse me. I never thought that she might sometimes not feel like being amusing.'

'Yes,' Mrs. Gregory smiled back; 'I think that it is just possible that so much has been said about the duty of girls to make home a pleasant place for their brothers, that the duty of the brothers to make home pleasant for their sisters is quite overlooked.'

'You must help me, please, Mrs. Gregory,' Loring begged. 'I don't remember ever having seen any literature on the subject.'

Mrs. Gregory laughed outright. 'No, I don't remember any myself. Perhaps Tressie might write an article on the subject.'

'I wish she would. Can't you coax her to do it, Mrs. Gregory?'

'I'm afraid she's much too busy a little housewife to find time for it,' his friend answered.

'Then will you please do it? And I'd like a private reading from the advance sheets.'

Mrs. Gregory hesitated. 'Duty number one,' Loring suggested, merrily; 'never to leave one's sister alone from supper till bedtime.'

'Number two,' Mrs. Gregory added, catching his tone; 'to remember that she loves to hear what goes on in the world outside, which she so seldom sees. That would make conversation a standard evening amusement.'

'Clarence suggested number three to me,' Loring said; 'that is not to make her tasks harder by needless litter, late meals, and unnecessary demands on her time and attention.'

'You're getting on famously. I see you will soon be ready to write this article yourself. You might add that you will consult her taste at least half the time about games and amusements. It's just possible, you know, that she detests Crokinole and likes Halma. I'll warrant you you know as little about her likes and dislikes as you do about her headaches.'

'She knows all about mine,' Loring said, with keen self-reproach.

'Yes, and she has found great pleasure in conforming herself to them, Loring,' Mrs. Gregory said, sympathetically. 'You must not think that they have burdened her. But I think it only fair that you should have some of the pleasure of considering her whims, and that she should have some of the delights of finding herself being considered. You will double your own pleasure, Loring, as well as hers.'

'I wish you would tell me more,' he pleaded.

'No, your eyes are open, now. You will see them for yourself. But I will tell you one thing more,' she added, after a minute's thought. 'It is as I told you, the outcome of my own experience in loneliness. You don't know how pleasant it will be for Tressie to know that she need not hesitate to ask for your escort if she wants to go out in the evening, to see a friend, or to go to an entertainment or lecture. I know it seems pleasant to you to stay in the house, after being out all day, but you will remember that Tressie has been in all day, and that it will seem just as pleasant to her to get out.'