

Letters of an Old Housekeeper to Her Pretty Married Daughter

(Continued from page 12)

"homey" feeling come over her, and thought of the bright fire in the sitting room, "And you, dear, she said," putting her arm about my shoulders.

"I am afraid, Elizabeth," I said, "that I have a very demoralizing influence upon your professional career. You see, I am such a home-body, and I am bound to be just a home woman always."

Elizabeth sighed as she slipped into an easy chair. I insisted upon taking off her heavy boots and getting her her slippers. She protested, saying she would ring for her maid to perform this service, but I reminded her that I had taken off her boots many times when she was a sleepy little girl, and then we fell to talking about Elizabeth the First, her mother.

Presently Elizabeth went from the room, and in a little while returned. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes shining like stars. I do not know what worked the transformation in an instant—I will know some day. I do not believe Elizabeth herself knew what it was at the moment. But her whole being seemed bathed in tenderness. It was as though her wings had brushed the sky. I lifted my eyes from the book I had taken up. There stood Elizabeth before me, clad all in the most wonderful little gown, just like a violet-coloured cloud. The violet shade brought out all the gold in her hair by contrast, and deepened the blue of her eyes.

"I am going down stairs to Harold," she said, and blushed like a schoolgirl. "I feel that the dear old fellow has an idea I have neglected him lately. Of course I love him just the same—I could never love him less. He is, really, a grand fellow, isn't he?"

I nodded my head. "I am very fond of Harold," I said.

Elizabeth held out her hand to me.

"Will you come, too?" she said. I declined, and she tripped down the stairs, humming a little tune. I heard the greeting in the library. There was a note of surprise in Harold's tone of greeting. And presently I heard Elizabeth playing.

The moon was shining, and I meant to walk home alone. I rang for Elizabeth's maid, who helped me on with my wraps, and I instructed her to tell her mistress that I had not wished to disturb her to say good-bye. I felt that Elizabeth would understand. I had 'phoned that no one was to call for me.

Elizabeth had told me of her Christmas plans. While they include some public duties that she has undertaken for hospitals and schools—which seem enough in themselves to crowd her every hour—she will have quite a little house party over the holidays. The new addition to her little home—a wing thrown out to the East—has given several guest rooms, both upstairs and down, so that she can now entertain without being crowded. One of her guests she especially mentioned, a girl who has been left quite alone in the world with income sufficient to keep her from knowing dependence upon well-to-do relatives, but who, Elizabeth thinks, must feel the lack of near kin to really take an interest in her. As Elizabeth has not seen her since she was very young, she is not sure that such an arrangement will be agreeable, but she is going to have her extend her visit beyond the holiday, to Easter, at any rate, if it seems a happy thing for all concerned. She showed me her picture, a girl of the lower like type—one could never for a moment think of her as having the self reliance that Elizabeth possesses, and I feel it will be rather a good thing for Elizabeth to have such a companion for a while at least. She is a few years Elizabeth's junior, but then, Elizabeth is so ridiculously young herself—that is, young to shoulder what she has, young to put aside traditions and to declare that she is strong enough, and wise enough to stand alone, if need be.

And now, my dear child, have I not, your gossip mother, given you quite an insight into why I am watching Elizabeth with concern these days, and wondering what the hanging out of the "shingle" will all lead to? I wonder which of us is right, Elizabeth or I. Women are surely being widely divided by their views nowadays, and I am wondering if a house divided against itself can stand.

Write me soon and tell me of all your plans and doings. Your busy and happy life is of interest to me in every detail.

De votedly,
MOTHER.

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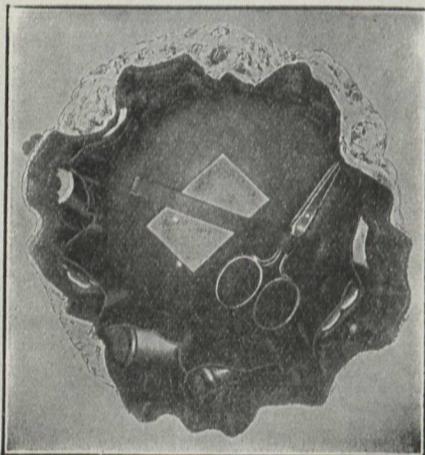
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