

Mrs. Fisher's Silk Waist.

(By Pansy, in 'C. E. World.')

Everybody who knew Mrs. Fisher, knew that she had lost her black and white silk waist. She had lost a number of other valuables as well; there had been a steam-boat accident, and much excitement and no little peril. All lives were saved, but all of the baggage was lost; Mrs. Fisher's hat-box with the rest. But the collars, and laces and wraps that had gone were as nothing compared with her black and white silk waist. She had told the minutest details concerning it to every friend she had, and had been consoled with until language, and possibly, in some instances, patience, had been exhausted. If she only had left it at home, as she did the skirt! Of what use was the skirt without the waist? It was of so peculiar a pattern that it would never look well with any other waist.

It was strange what an infatuation had taken possession of the dear lady. Her acquaintances began to say: 'Isn't it queer that Mrs. Fisher talks so much about her losses, or, rather, her loss? One would think that a black and white silk dress waist was the only article that hat-box contained!' Then they would laugh good-naturedly, and dismiss her from their minds. But Mrs. Fisher's family, her son and daughter, could not dispose of it so easily. Especially was her daughter Elinor troubled.

For two years, ever since, indeed, she had settled the great question for herself, Elinor had been longing to win her mother to a personal friendship with Jesus Christ. Thus far every effort had been a failure. Mrs. Fisher had a kind heart and genial ways, but she had not been trained in a Christian home, and really knew very little indeed about the personal attraction of religion. The subject seemed to her a solemn one, important for old people and frail people who were liable to sudden death. But why the young, or the middle-aged, who were strong and healthy, should concern themselves with such matters she could not understand.

All through the autumn, whenever Elinor had read bits from Dr. Walker's addresses made in different cities, she had wished that her mother might hear him. And now, behold, he was in their own city for a two weeks' stay, and was speaking every afternoon and evening, and Mrs. Fisher could not be coaxed to put herself under his power.

Sunday morning was as clear and beautiful a day as could be desired, and Elinor Fisher was happy. At last the wind did not blow, nor a suspicion of a cloud suggest a possible shower, and it was neither too warm nor too cold: there had positively been no excuse for Mrs. Fisher to urge against attendance at morning service, and Dr. Walker was to preach in their own church.

Elinor watched her mother narrowly at first, disappointed that she did not see a look of intense interest in her face. Then her own interest deepened so rapidly that she forgot her mother, until, turning suddenly after an unusually thrilling appeal, she caught such a look of wonder and delight on the mother's face as made her bow her own in a rush of happy tears. At last, O at last, her precious mother had been reached! It was near the close of the service now; she could hardly wait for the hymn and the prayer. She wanted to introduce her mother to Dr. Walker, and let him answer the questions her eyes were asking.

Mrs. Fisher hardly waited for the 'Amen' of the benediction before she caught her daughter's arm.

'My dear, do you see that girl in the third seat from us? Do you notice what she has on? My identical black and white silk!'

'Oh, mother!'

Elinor's tone arrested her mother's thought for a moment.

'Why, child!' she said, 'I mean, of course, one like it. Who is she? Speak to her, dear, and ask her where she bought it. Hers is quite new, and she must have got it from some other city; there isn't a yard of it in this one; so much I am sure of; but I could send, you know; hurry, child, and ask her about it before we lose sight of her.'

'Mother! I cannot. That is Miss Sunderland. I never spoke to her in my life, and, besides, it is Sunday. Oh, mother, I thought—'

'Miss Sunderland!' repeated Mrs. Fisher, awed for the moment. 'Do you really

'My dear sister,' he said soothingly, 'we might as well laugh as cry; you will not deny that there is a laughable side to it.'

'But Andrew—' a moment's hesitation, then, with faltering voice, 'I prayed about this, and I thought I was answered, and I don't understand.'

'No,' Andrew was grave enough now, 'We don't understand, little sister, any of us; and, when we do not, we must trust.'

But the very next Sunday he found it easy not to laugh, and extremely hard not to flash out some indignant word at his mother, to be regretted afterwards. They had heard much about the black and white silk during the week, but had hoped against hope that the Sunday service would give them relief. Lo! who should be seated this time directly in line with their pew, but Miss Sunderland dressed in the identical silk gown that so moved Mrs. Fisher's desires? It seemed like a fatality. The glance that the mother gave to her obsti-



"EXCUSE ME, BUT MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION?"

mean that girl who is so very wealthy? She doesn't look it; her dress is simplicity itself; though that was a very fine silk; I always told you so. "Sunday," child! what if it is? A simple question about where one bought a dress can't be wicked. I wish you knew her, Elinor; or, even if you don't, there would be no harm in a civil question; she is only a girl, not much older than you. Couldn't you just ask her, dear?"

Elinor detailed her disappointment to her brother Andrew that afternoon, and was almost provoked at him because he could not help laughing at it, and making a caricature of her rushing up to ask the famous Miss Sunderland where she bought her dress.

'I don't see how you can laugh,' she said; 'Mother did not even seem to hear what Dr. Walker was talking about; and I had hoped so much from this service!'

nate daughter had both reproach and triumph in it, and Elinor felt that Dr. Walker might preach in Hebrew if he chose, so far as her mother was concerned.

As soon as the benediction was pronounced, what did that indefatigable woman do but lean across the aisle, touch the wondering heiress on the shoulder, and say, quite as she would have spoken to an intimate friend of Eleanor's, 'My dear, excuse me, but may I ask you a question?' and the two walked down the aisle together, the elderly lady in animated talk.

For once in his life Andrew Fisher scolded so loud, on the way home, that his distressed sister had twice to remind him that they were on the public street. It was she who had to bear the scolding, for their mother walked home with a neighbour, serene and innocent.