

bread about making any trouble; but there was the "ostentatious" look of it that she dreaded. Carol would make those satirical remarks, and Uncle Leslie would worry at her going without proper breakfast. She would be disagreeably conspicuous,—and was it worth while for only two months? By and by she would go home to her own class, her own poor people, her own regular and harmonious duties. Wasn't it best after all to stop thinking of it, as Mab said, and enjoy her two months' holiday in the idle fashion of the house?

A girl of less positive convictions, or more selfish nature would have decided, yes, and suffered herself to drift with the stream. But Laura's heart was in her religion, and in its active work. A favorite text floated to her mind presently, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters," and there was the balance for her wavering thoughts.

She said nothing to Mab, but she made an opportunity to speak privately to her aunt by and by; and her persuasive eloquence so smoothed the way, that when she was missed at the breakfast table next morning, and Mab made an outcry, Mrs. Leslie silenced it directly.

"Laura has acted with my consent, and I do not wish any remarks made," she said, decisively. "She isn't a girl to make a parade of her goodness, as you very well know."

"Whoever intimated that she was, mother?" asked Carol, lifting his eyebrows. "Well, I only meant to say that I will not have any teasing or ridicule about it. Whatever we may think ourselves, Laura's behaviour is always conscientious, and therefore to be respected."

"I perfectly agree with you," was Carol's grave answer.

And Mab look from one to the other with a little laughing wonder in her eyes, and an imperceptible shrug of her shoulders, but said nothing, so the matter ended, for the present, as far as the family was concerned. No remarks were made, no questions asked, when the cousins met again, and Laura was thankful to escape criticism at least, if she did not meet sympathy.

From the first hour she was glad she had taken the class. The Sunday-school was a crowded one, and good teachers were not too plenty. The superintendent received her with open hands, and affirmed that her coming would make one crooked path at least plain for him. "I have a class of boys here that I really did not know what to do with. Their teacher has left us suddenly, and the other classes are too full to take them in. Besides, I would rather not scatter them," he said as he led Laura toward her new charge.

There were eight boys, ages varying from ten to fourteen; all of them, as she saw at a glance, very far below her own social level, and several of them representing a different nationality. There were two little Irish lads with pug noses and inquisitive eyes; two stolid-looking German boys, an olive-skinned, dark-eyed little Cuban. The others were American; one pale and patient, with a look of constant pain, the others free of all expression but curiosity about their new teacher.

Laura undertook her work with some trepidation. She saw she had mixed materials to deal with, and she was by no means sure of her power to assimilate them. She had her own methods, however, of winning confidence and showing sympathy, and before the hour was over she felt that she had gained a foothold. She strengthened her foundation, during the following week, by making opportunities to go and see several of the children in their homes. They were poor homes, some of them squalid, almost destitute; and in them she found ample room for the exercise of various Christian graces.

Her little sickly scholar, Frank Woodford, was the first one visited. She found him living in an attic room, with bare floor scanty fire, and evidently a meagre cupboard. His mother, pale and patient like himself, was at work upon red flannel shirts; and by stitching from morning till night she could not earn sixty cents a day, she told Laura. They had to pinch very close to get food and fire, when the rent was paid; but she was thankful for steady work.

The German boys were poorer still. Here was a widowed mother, a consumptive sister, and a big brother, who worked in a bakery and did his best to support the family. The others wore baskets and cane bottoms for chairs when they could get employment. But that was not all ways, and there were many months to feed Laura's purse was lighter when she came home from these visits, but she left grateful hearts behind her. And her Sunday teachings struck deeper root, when the children were conscious of her sympathy in the hardships and troubles of their lives.

To tell you the details of her two months' work would take more space than these columns allow. But some of the results can be stated briefly. She was called

down-stairs one day to see a little boy at the basement door. It was Carl Letzen, and his sick sister was dying. Wouldn't the teacher please come and talk to her?

Laura went, to be sure, and sat by the death-bed, and lightened the dark way for the poor sufferer with tender words and cheering promise, and earnest prayers that lifted the cloud of doubt and fear from a timid soul. It was her gentle hand that closed the tired eyes, and straightened the wasted limbs for their last repose; her sweet voice that whispered hope and comfort to the weeping mother.

Going home, when she had done all she could, she met her cousin Carol, coming in search of her. It was dark by this time, and Carol's face expressed anxiety and disapproval.

"Is it right for you to expose yourself in this way, Laura?" he asked, severely. "There are limitations even in good works."

"O Carol!" Laura clung to his offered arm gladly, for her nerves were shaken by what she had passed through. "Don't be vexed with me, but help me. Those poor people are in such trouble!"

And, then, in her excitement and longing for sympathy, she poured out the whole story of the Letzens—their honest struggles with poverty, poor Lena's patient illness and peaceful death, and now their need of assistance, even to give her a decent burial. She talked as she had never ventured to talk to Carol before, quite forgetting in her eager earnestness the old dread of his criticisms, and certainly nothing in his manner recalled it. His heart was touched with genuine, unselfish interest as he listened, and more than that, his conscience was awakened. He called himself a Christian, believed he was one, and that he did not fail in any duty as a church member. Yet here was this young girl, a stranger and a sojourner merely, and how much more she knew of the poor of his own parish than he did! She was simply doing the Master's work—going about to do it, without noise or self-seeking, when he had been an idler in the field.

Laura did not guess what seed she was sowing to bear blossom and fruit by and by, as she talked. But she felt gratefully the ready sympathy that he gave her, and that took substantial shape as far as the Letzens were concerned. There were ways and means of aiding them that he understood; and thanks to the impulse from Laura, he found himself soon engaged in works of benevolence more actively than he had ever anticipated.

Mab began to make speeches about the private and confidential interviews that grew frequent between Laura and her brother; and she shrugged her shoulders with significant emphasis when Carol's place, too, was vacant at the breakfast table one Sunday morning. It was the last Sunday that Laura was to be in the city, and she was grieving at the inevitable parting with her scholars, between whom and herself the bond had grown strong and tender. She had established loving relations with every one of them, from the sullen, hot-tempered little Cuban to the restless, feather-headed little Irish boys. Carl and Peter Letzen were wholly devoted to her, and poor Frank Woodford thought her almost an angel. Every one of these children had grown better for her coming to them; one by one, and all together, she had striven to lead them to Christ, and for these two months had borne them in her heart continually. It was hard to give them up now to the possibility of careless, indifferent teaching, or none at all.

"Yet what am I?" she said to herself. "Only the humble tool the Master has designed to use for a little while, and He can replace it with a better one, surely."

It was, nevertheless, a surprise and delight when Carol said, "Will you trust me to take your class after you are gone? And may I go with you to-day and watch your method?"

She blushed with such a vivid pleasure that Carol's eyes sparkled, and his heart grew bold to ask another question. Not just now; it was Sunday and they were on their way to church, so they talked only of things befitting the time and place. But there was a blissful cousinship in both hearts, of a pure and noble sympathy drawing them onward and upward for holy service. And the question was asked and answered in due time.

"One might have known how it would end," said Mab, rather illogically. "But marriage will cure them of the Sunday-school mania, see if it doesn't."

An assertion that remains to be proved, for as yet marriage has had no such effect. Laura did not anticipate the full blessedness that would come to her in "sowing beside all waters," but she gladly recognized her married happiness as one of the indirect results. And with a fresh impulse, and an increasing faith, she still seeks her opportunities to scatter "precious seed" in the morning, and at evening, and beside all waters, wherever her lot is cast.—S. S. Times.

SUI GENERIS.



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