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The Magic Rug of Friendship

—BY MRS. JOHN ALMY.

PART I.

Toward evening, the wind grew stronger, bringing with it a cold rain. Mrs. Lester peered into the thickening darkness.

"I'll put another log on the fire, Grandma," Mrs. Lester said, "and light up a little more so that it will seem good to the family to get home."

"There's George now," Grandmother Lester said, her face brightening.

"Well! Home for the night and glad of it!" Mr. Lester was tall, spare and white-haired. He laid his hand caressingly across his mother's shoulders. "As soon as I stepped off of the car, I caught the light in the upper tower-room and it beckoned so cheerily that I could scarcely wait to get home. And yet, it's been a great day! I must have waited on at least two hundred freshmen and half as many sophomores. Just being with them makes me feel young, Agnes. Are the children home yet?"

"They're coming now, I think. Supper's ready—all of you!" she cried, as Myrtle and Ina, rosy and tingling with the cold, came into the room, followed by Glen, whose stalwart form almost filled the doorway.

Mr. Lester, for years country clerk in a small country town, had moved to the city a few months ago with his family, so that the children might have educational advantages. He had obtained a position as storekeeper for the Physics Laboratory at the University, which brought him only a

modest salary. Myrtle hoped to enter the University the next year. She had a position in the office of one of the largest stores in the city. Glen, who had just turned twenty, had a position with a manufacturing company, and was saving his money for a four-years course in architecture. Ina, fifteen, was attending high school.

"Family, listen!" Myrtle cried, as they were about to leave the table. "Mother has asked me to preside over the decision of an important matter."

"State the question," demanded Grandmother Lester.

"It's this: shall we buy that oriental rug that looks as if it belonged to us?"

"Agnes," said Grandmother Lester, turning to her daughter-in-law, "if you feel that you would like to have that rug, get it. I've no doubt that it's worth economizing for, or you wouldn't even be considering it."

"To be sure, Agnes, let us get it," said Mr. Lester smiling kindly at his wife. "It's a long time since the family has indulged in anything other than a necessity. To have a thing of real beauty in our home would be worth more than money. Do get it!"

Ina spoke up with all the wisdom of her young years. "We Lesters ought to realize that fact. Our house is dreadfully run-down looking and that's the reason these rich people pay no attention to us. It's not fair! I mean to Mother, most of all! I suppose that they are glorying in the fact that they have dozens of Persian rugs, and floor-lamps, and half a dozen automobiles apiece! But, for my part, I'd a great deal sooner be as poor as we are—and be decent—than that sort of new-rich!"

"Ina!" her father said mildly reprimand. "You can't judge. Your mother would be the last person in the world to hair for friendship. We must not forget that we are living in the city and that it is not customary for neighbors to be freely neighborly." "You'd better buy it, Mother," said Glen. "We want to begin to get used to beautiful things—I mean, really artistic ones, for, you know, some day, I'm going to build the sort of house that will need the finest rugs. That is, if I succeed," he added, suddenly embarrassed as he caught the answering glow in the faces about him.

Holden's, where Myrtle worked, carried the largest stock of oriental rugs in the city. Mrs. Lester had seen the rug in the window on display and its peculiar beauty had taken possession of her. "Just as if I had woven it out of myself, telling how I feel towards folks," she thought. "I like that rug," she had said to Myrtle, "better than any I have ever seen before. I wish that we could afford to have one like that. Find out how much it costs."

Myrtle inquired of Mr. Chesney, assistant in the rug department, and Mr. Chesney asked to be allowed to initiate her into the respective merits of oriental rugs. Then she too agreed, with her mother, that there was just one in the lot that was peculiarly suited to the Lesters. In case they bought the rug, Mr. Chesney had made a second and more reasonable price.

"We've come to buy our rug, Mr. Chesney," Mrs. Lester said, following the family decision. "I'm beginning to understand why these rugs take one's fancy so. They are like something living. This one looks like kindness to me—like an open fire and hospitality and good friends."

"They don't suspect that all of my commission goes with that rug but I wanted her to have a real treasure," Mr. Chesney said to himself, as he attended to the details of the purchase. That evening, Mrs. Lester spread the rug upon the floor for the family's inspection. It was an oblong, not more than a yard wide, over which medallions of quaint flower-forms merged their variegated, jewel-like colors, the whole subdued with a sheen like summer haze across shadow-purpled hills.

"It's like poetry," said Mr. Lester. The new rug was laid in the little square room on the ground floor of the tower. It would have been the parlor if the Lesters had needed one in addition to their living room. Its furniture consisted only of the rug, the old walnut cupboard, the hickory summer chairs, and the wide brick

fireplace, above which hung Grandfather's sword.

"Surely no one will think that I am basing for neighbors," said Mrs. Lester weeks later as she carefully spread the precious thing over the railing of the verandah. "And yet," she thought whimsically, "how happy I should be if this rug was really a charm to draw neighbors!"

On a rare, crisp autumn day, Mrs. Lester again hung the rug over the railing and stroked its silky surface tenderly. It was such a lovely thing and it seemed as if it silently breathed a message of friendliness and good will. "I suppose that there are a good many people who wouldn't care about immediate neighbors," she thought, "but, somehow or other, having friends has grown to be a part of me and I'm getting too old to change. I wish I did not think so much about it!"

"We had a caller to-day," Mrs. Lester said, as they sat together at the evening meal. "I'm so glad that she came!"

"O Mother! At last! Which one of them?" This, from always eager Ina.

"It was Mrs. Finley, the woman who works for the Hardys, the Heatherbys and Pettibrooks."

"O-oh!" Ina's exclamation registered disappointment. "How did she happen to come?"

"The rug did it! This afternoon, about two o'clock when I thought that the rug had aired long enough, I went to bring it into the house. It was gone. I walked all around the house, looking everywhere. I decided to call up the police station. Just then, I caught sight of a bit of purple hanging on that sharp prong of the gate. It was a piece of the rug. I walked down the street a way, looking. Then, I found another piece, just as if it had been torn out with a jagged fork—"

"Oh, Mother!" cried Myrtle, "our beautiful rug!"

"I thought a dog must have torn it down. Still, I couldn't find any other trace of it. I was sick at heart. About four o'clock some one knocked at the side door. It was a woman, carrying our rug rolled up under her arm. I could see that she had been crying. She was greatly distressed. She introduced herself as Mrs. Finley, the woman who washes for the neighbors. She said that her dog had come home about an hour before, dragging the rug with him. He was a big St. Bernard, though not much more than a pup, and always getting into mischief."

"She said she would have got rid of him save that her husband, who is somewhat of an invalid, was greatly attached to him. She knew the rug belonged to us for she had seen it hanging on the railing. She said that she was willing to pay for the damage, though she supposed it would be a great deal, for that kind of a rug was expensive. She went on, then, to tell about her family: they had had a great deal of sickness and trouble the last few years. I told her not to worry but to come right in and we'd talk it over. We looked at the rug—it might have been mutilated worse. It's in the tower-room now."

"As we talked, Mrs. Finley spoke of the neighbors, especially young Mrs. Hardy who has lost her baby; it died a few weeks before we moved here. The poor young mother does nothing but grieve. Mrs. Finley also spoke of Mrs. Pettibrook as an unusual woman, 'one in ten thousand.' I wish I might know her."

All the next day Mrs. Lester kept thinking about the neighbors. She looked across the street, to the third house, the largest and finest. "Such a lovely girl in such a great house! If I could only go to her and comfort her!"

As the days passed, Mrs. Lester's longing to show Mrs. Hardy that she cared, grew stronger. How could she let her grieve alone! In the home town she would have known how to take comfort to her. She must find a way now, too. She would have to think of a way. She pondered and then had an idea which she shared only with Grandmother Lester.

A Rule of Three.

- Three things to govern—temper, tongue and conduct.
- Three things to cultivate—courage, affection and gentleness.
- Three things to commend—thrift, industry and promptness.
- Three things to despise—cruelty, arrogance and ingratitude.
- Three things to wish for—health, friends and contentment.
- Three things to admire—dignity, gracefulness and intellectual power.
- Three things to give—aims to the needy, comfort to the sad and appreciation to the worthy.

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Dear Avon's banks, where "free to roam," Sweet songs sang glorious "will"; "Ye banks and braes of Bonny Doon" Where "Rab's" ghost wonders still.

Where "Irish Nora's eyes grow dim," Where Moore's sweet songs of love Diffuse their mystic brightness round, Like incense from above.

The cities by "Old Father Thames," Whence wealth and culture flow; The "Silver Forth," "Dunedin's" towers, Their glamor and their glow.

The purple hills of proud Argyle, Loch Katrine's rugged shore, Where Scott writ tales of love and hate, To charm us evermore.

In thought we fly to Flodden Field, Where Scotia's noblest fell, 'Gainst serried ranks of the gallant South, As ancient records tell.

When tartan'd clans fierce battle fought, With buckler and claymore, Where Melrose shed her mystic light, Amidst the clash of war.

We glory in Great Britain's fame, Brave sons and daughters fair; Her mighty strength, her vast renown, And her protecting care.


Let us, "The Maple Leaf Forever," With loyal voices sing, In union with each patriot's song, "God Save Our Gracious King."

—Robert Stark.

Minard's Liniment for Coughs & Colds

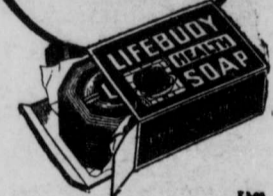
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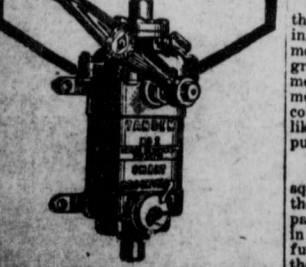
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