

A SHORT STORY FOR GIRLS.

BY ANNA.

It is a bright day in early June. Mattie Lee and Eva Warren, cousins, whose parents reside on adjoining farms a mile from the village—are spending the day in town with Mrs. Halstead.

Mrs. H. is the young wife of the most enterprising merchant in town; therefore it is a most desirable thing to be a privileged visitor at her house. But it is not this that makes Mattie and Eva enjoy these visits to her so much, but because she, although a matron, does not consider it necessary to be old and staid and poky, but enjoys their company equally as much as they do her.

Descriptions are proverbially tedious, yet I trust my readers will tolerate one of the pleasant sitting-rooms in which we find the cousins above named.

Imagine a little square room in the rear wing of the building, with a door opening out on a cool and shaded porch. The opposite side of the room, which is nearest the street, is lighted by two long, low windows. A Madras vine of vivid green grows in a hanging basket, its pliant tendrils partly trained over the snowy curtains that are looped gracefully back from one window, disclosing a box thickly studded with pink and white daisies. The other window is completely shaded by a "Wandering Jew," and still its wandering does not cease, for it has trailed its delicate branches and dark green leaves along the white wall from picture to picture, and over the clock on the mantel, until it has made the circuit of the room.

Beneath it, on the window-sill, stands a box of dark purple, velvet-leaved heart's-ease. At the end of the room, farthest from the main building, is a fire-place. This, however, is now closed by a lovely screen, and the hearth is covered by a brightly-tinted rug, its brilliant colors contrasting pleasantly with the pale straw color of the matting on the floor. Each end of the mantel is graced by a vase filled with lilacs and snow-balls. At the end of the room opposite the fire-place stands a table, covered with a crimson cloth delicately embroidered. A vase of June roses occupies the center of the table, their fragrant breath softly permeating all the air with summer odors. A basket of myrtle swinging from the ceiling directly overhead touches the roses on the table with a gentle, caressing movement, as the June breezes steal in for a sly flirtation. Several elegantly-bound books by the very best authors, together with late copies of several leading magazines and periodicals, lie upon the table. In a gilded cage hanging on the porch just outside the open door a canary is trilling forth song after song of sweet music, seemingly trying to drown the voices of several feathered choristers that are hidden in the foliage of the young oaks in the door-yard.

Well indeed does Mrs. Halstead fulfill her mission as "home-maker," and not only as far as externals are concerned, either. But it is quite time we began to make the acquaintance of the two girls that, at present, form such a conspicuous part of this room's furniture.

Mattie Lee is a tall, black-eyed, rosy-checked, generous-hearted, fun-loving girl. She is an only daughter, and consequently does just as she pleases. Eva Warren is rather below medium height, with light gray eyes, and hair of a kind of mouse color, that is not at all popular. She is a very sensible girl, of well-regulated mind, just as warm-hearted and generous as her cousin, but having been carefully brought up in the midst of a large family, she has learned to better control her impulses than has Mattie. There is nothing especially attractive about her personal appearance, but being always tastefully dressed, she is much admired.

These cousins are nearly the same age, neither having reached their eighteenth birthday. At present they are both busily plying their crochet needles, while their tongues keep up a continual clatter, as if to keep time with their fingers.

Suddenly Mattie breaks off in the middle of a sentence, jumps up, drops her work, and exclaims:

"O, Eva! there goes your handsome beau, Charlie Marshall. Don't be looking sweet, though, with his stylish hat set in such a careless fashion on top of his curly hair? Just look at him swinging his cane and puffing his cigar as he struts along. I just want to kiss him."

"Do hush, Mattie," replied Eva. "Suppose he should hear of that remark. You would be mortified to death."

"No danger of that. Who's going to tell? I might as well say it as to think it, and I know your mouth shaped itself for a kiss just every time you see him," retorted Mattie.

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in from an adjoining room, where she has been soothing her little two-year-old to his afternoon nap. It is her rule that if she must have help she will have it in the kitchen and over the wash-tub, and take care of her baby herself.

"I don't know, girls," she says, "as I need to apologize for having overheard your remarks about Mr. Marshall, for if you didn't want me to hear you shouldn't have spoken so loudly, or else you should have told me to stop my ears."

"I'm sure we had no thought of being at all secret about our preference for Mr. Marshall," said Mattie, gayly. "It's only cousinly affection I have for him, you know, for he is Eva's acknowledged beau."

"Nonsense, Mattie," said her cousin. "There is no telling which of us, if either, he has special affection for. I'll tell you just how it is, Mrs. Halstead. Each time he has called at our house, he only sat a few minutes before saying, 'Get your hat, Miss Warren, and let's go call on your cousin.' We walk over there together, and then he devotes himself to Mattie the rest of the evening."

"Excuse me for saying it, girls," said Mrs. Halstead, gravely, "but I don't believe he is a very desirable acquaintance for either of you. I'm inclined to think him dissipated."

"Disipated? Oh, impossible!" exclaims Mattie. "He is too refined for that. Somebody has been slandering him to you."

"Not at all. It is true I have scarcely a speaking acquaintance with him, but I think Mr. Halstead has good opportunity to know; and he is my informant. I don't tell you this, girls, because I want to gossip about the poor fellow, but because if you are not aware that, when in his company, you are associating with a 'hoodlum,' it seems to be my duty to inform you that such is the case."

"A 'hoodlum'! O, Mrs. Halstead!" ejaculated Mattie. "And he always so elegantly dressed, and such splendid company! Even you would be delighted to hear him talk."

"Nevertheless," replied Mrs. Halstead, "I venture to say that before this he is in the 'Gem Saloon' having had his 'slang,' or playing billiards, while between puffs of smoke he is blurring out oaths and talking 'slang' to such an extent that if you could hear him you would never again be delighted by anything he could say."

happy. My parents did everything in their power to counteract his influence over me, but I would not consent to give him up. As a last resort, they persuaded my sister and I to go away to the home of a friend to spend the summer, thinking that absence would weaken his power over me. About a fortnight after leaving home I received an anonymous letter (I never discovered who was the writer) unfolding to me the real character of my betrothed. It stated that the author had known Rayner before he came into our neighborhood, and told me instances of his having been guilty of such immoral conduct that I blush even now to think of it. The letter closed by an appeal to my love for my father, and begged me, if I did not wish to bring his gray hairs to sorrow to the grave, to give up all thought of marrying Rayner. A strange thing is a woman's heart. Although all respect for Ralph vanished with the reading of that letter (for somehow I did not doubt its truth), yet, when a few days after I received a visit from him, I found that his presence still had the power to cause my rebellious heart to pulsate as wildly as ever. I succeeded, however, in getting up my courage sufficiently to show him the letter I had received. If I had any doubt of its truth before, I had none after reading him read the terrible accusations against himself, for his face revealed his guilt too plainly for misconstruction. Of course he denied everything in the wildest terms, but my mind was made up—I told him all I over between us. Poor fellow! I believe he really did love me after all, for when I bade him good-bye he burst into tears, exclaiming:

"O, Mollie, this will kill me!" "You must know, girls, it was all I could do to hide the real state of my feelings from him. But I summoned all my pride to my aid and lightly told him he would soon forget me."

"It was a dark night, without a star, yet he and a friend that had come with him resolved to return home. I went outside the door and stood in the darkness, while they mounted their already tired steeds that were standing tied to the yard fence. Oh, what bitter curses I heard him pour forth. With what dreadful feelings I heard him vow to cut the heart out of the writer of that letter before morning (if it seemed he suspected who its author was). It is no wonder that when my sister came to look for me I turned to her, buried my face in my hands, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, 'O, what have I done? what have I done?' Is it any wonder that even now, looking back on my of my happy married life to that dreadful night, I cannot repress a shudder?"

Mrs. Halstead's eyes and Eva's also were filled with tears, as she closed, and Mattie was sobbing outright. Presently she said:

"I never could have done it, Mrs. Halstead—never. If I had cared for him just the least bit in the world, when he said that at parting, I should just have put my arms around his neck, and told him that I didn't care how mean he was, so long as he loved me, I would go with him to the ends of the earth."

"And that, too," said astonished Mrs. Halstead, "when all respect for him was gone? Take care, Mattie, or that impulsive little heart of yours will get you into trouble yet."

"And did you never see him again?" inquired Eva.

"Several times; and to save my life I couldn't keep my foolish little heart from coming right up in my throat at the sight of him; but that was before I had found a better love. I met him one afternoon after my marriage, at the house of a friend, who was a relative of his, and then I couldn't help wondering how I had ever been so silly as to see anything attractive about him."

"He married a girl whom he had been engaged to before I knew him, and for some reason had broken the engagement. When he came back to her she was so weak as to receive him with open arms. They only lived together a year or two, when he left and went off to the mines, or some place else, and was finally shot in a drunken row. His wife is still knocking about in the world somewhere, with blackened name, I hear, though I hope it is not true, for I would gladly believe that no life was wholly wrecked by his evil influence."

"Silence fell upon the little group for a while. It was broken at last by Mattie: "I do not wonder now, dear Mrs. Halstead, that you believed it to be your duty to warn us against Mr. Marshall. Are you quite sure he is as bad as you would have us believe?"

"Quite sure. In fact, I did not tell you half the truth."

"Why, you know our 'Golden Queens' are ripening fast, and we are going to have a strawberry sociable next week, and Charlie Marshall has been invited. I am going to recall that invitation."

"Bravo! Mattie," said Eva. "Do you do this without any regrets, Mattie?" inquired Mrs. Halstead.

"I'm afraid I can't truly say that I do. In fact, I'm afraid I've only just found out the danger my heart was in."

But never mind; I'll get over it soon enough." Writing material being produced, Mattie dictated the following note:

MR. MARSHALL—I have just learned, from a reliable source, the manner in which you spend the most of your time. Let me say that I consider myself too much of a woman to associate with a common saloon "bummer," when I know it. From this you will understand that your company is not required at our sociable next Thursday evening. When you have renounced your evil ways and have become a man, you may consider me as your friend.

Eva and Mrs. Halstead both commended the note, so Mattie addressed it and dropped it in the office herself, as they were on their way home later in the evening.

Great was Mr. Charles Marshall's consternation when he received Mattie Lee's note, and I fear his impressions were not the most chaste and refined. He did not change his ways in the least, however, but kept going on in the downhill road to destruction, until he finally brought up in the State prison, having been convicted of assisting one of his "chums" in breaking open the safe in Mr. Halstead's store.

Subsequently, on one of Mattie Lee's visits to Mrs. Halstead, she met a young gentleman, whom that worthy lady introduced to her as "My brother-in-law, Mr. Halstead." Mattie was not long in discovering that he was a man of superior intelligence. He was also possessed of all those sterling qualities which the "old folks" are always on the lookout for, when seeking a companion for a marriageable daughter. Moreover, he did not consider it beneath his manhood to dress himself with faultless taste, use perfumed handkerchiefs, and observe all the courtesies of life, etc., that serve to make a gentleman so attractive to feminine eyes.

One word right here to my unmarried gentlemen readers: Girls the world over admire sensible men, but they are slow to believe a man is really sensible, he be possessed of the whole catalogue of moral virtues, who thinks it is his duty to dress in old-fashioned togger, and who renders himself stupid generally, for fear some girl will marry him for his fine clothes or accomplishments, yet who, nevertheless, is sure to fall in love with the most accomplished, best-dressed girl of his acquaintance. As far as my knowledge extends, these men remain "old bachelors" to the end of the chapter. I firmly believe that the reason so many girls are fooled into marrying dissolute young men is because these men, knowing they have nothing else to recommend them, rarely fail to appear well-dressed and perfectly polite and proper when under the restraint of virtuous young ladies' company. It is hard for the young to believe that there are many things that "glitter only to lead us astray." But let us return to the story.

These two young people were mutually attracted to each other, and as a consequence were married within the year.

Sober little Eva has about concluded that there are other duties as imperative to her as the duty of looking out for a husband, so she is fast settling herself down as the acknowledged literary woman of Woodville, daily congratulating Eva Warren on being able to take care of herself in the absence of the "legal protector" who falls to make his appearance.

YOURSELF.—You cannot find a more companionable person than yourself, if proper attention be paid to the individual. You will find you when you ever you like, and every way, when you please, approve your jokes, assent to your propositions, and in short, be in every place agreeable, if you only learn to practice the true art of being on good terms with yourself. This, however, is not so easy as some imagine, who do not often try the experiment. Yourself, when it catches you in company with no other person, is apt to be a severe critic on your faults and follies, and when you are censured by yourself, it is generally the most judicious and intelligent species of reprover. It is on this account that you are afraid of yourself, and seek any associates, no matter how inferior, whose bold chat may keep you from playing the censor. Yourself is likewise a jealous friend. If neglected and slighted it becomes a bore, and to be left even for a short time "by yourself," is then regarded as actually a cruel penalty, or, at least, a deprivation.

How important it is then to "know thyself," to cultivate thyself, to respect thyself, and to love thyself warmly but rationally! A sensible self is the best of guides, for few commit errors but in broad disregard of its admonitions. It urges continually at the skirts of men to draw them from their cheerful vices. It holds up its shadowy finger in warning when you go astray, and it sermonizes sharply on your sins after they have been committed. It is rarely so foolish as to be unable to rise up occasionally, albeit and pale, like Richard's victims, to overwhelm the offender with bitter reproaches. Study, therefore, to be on good terms with yourself. It is happiness to be truly pleased with yourself.

A small image of a human head carved in stone, which was dug up on a farm in Webster township, Michigan, some years ago, was exhibited at the Detroit meeting of the American Association. It appears to be made of Potomac red sandstone, which does not exist in that part of the country. The features of the face are those of an Egyptian cast.

A Call of the House. It will be impossible for me to forget my first experience on a call of the House. It was in the merry month of May, 1858. It occurred on a private bill. I had not then learned the secrets of the prison house. Being caught by the sergeant-officer on my way to duty, I was graciously allowed the freedom of the mall wagon. How I chafed under the first arrest! What would lynx-eyed constituents, and especially my opponents, in Ohio think! I trembled as I recall these apprehensions. I was brought before the bar with Zolliferoff and James B. Clay. The then lieutenant of the House, Humphrey Marshall, was in the chair. How he glowered on me with ponderous savagery! He made me feel like a dog in the gallery; one member told him that I was sorry to see his precious time, and would turn on him for mercy; but there was no mercy in him. What a company there was that night! Minister Washburn, General William Jones, Congressman Governor Houston, Alabama General Sibley, Groves, Stevenson, Colfax, Bishop of Connecticut, Bingham, Lamar, Groesbeck, Pendleton, Governor Smith of Virginia, Giddings, Farnsworth, John Cochrane, and many others, since then Ministers, Governors and Senators. Some of them are in the cold, cold ground. "Where be their gibes now?" Another "call" has summoned them to a more serious session. But it happened that on that night, as frequently since, that the vigilant and leading members were absent, while the dilatory wags were on guard. How they delighted to catch Mr. J. Glancy Jones, chairman of the Ways and Means, at President Buchanan's elbow, and to see him rise and make over his white tie and rufous face and the Pennsylvania delegation, with the "J. B." brand on their brows, fresh from festivity! Few excuses were received, though many were tendered. A member from Virginia had "paired off" with his wife; another felt so bad because his wife had gone home, he could not participate in deliberation; a member from Maryland was remarked as showing a disposition to be in the hall, by being in the gallery; one member found the sergeant before the sergeant found him, and asked to have that officer fined; a Kentucky member had attended all day, expecting to die in his tracks, for a favorite measure; but he could not die, so he left for home.

When John Cochrane was called, we all knew he had been to the Presidential dinner; and his exclamation was, not only a fine piece of oratorical humor, but it made the tables on the House as he did on the "fool sergeant" who had shocked him by the arrest. The man physiological was appalled, his federal constitution trembled, and nature gave signs of weakness. He was rudely grasped by the hand of authority? He had been called high, he felt low; and then some one suggested that the sergeant-at-arms held "Jack" and the game. Upon these occasions, the lively style of the member thus comes out. A dozen members exclaim that they had gone out for a bite, etc.; but General Cochrane disdained the ordinary Saxon tongue, and sailed into the empyrean of Epitourus.

The story of Crispin's life is brought in. He asks for counsel. Counsel is freely tendered. He makes a solemn plea in extenuation, whereupon Hughes of Indiana likens it to the sermon the old woman heard, "the best she ever heard." He could not read the text, or the points, or the sermon, but "it had such a godly tone!" General Curtis, of Iowa, comes in voluntarily; and he is fined for coming in without compulsion. Then arises the member from the wild-cat district of Pennsylvania, Mr. Gillis. He makes his excuse. It is expected that he should know the rules of such a disorderly body? He confessed that he had been to dine with the President. All he knows of etiquette is to go and dine with the president. Mr. Gillis. He asks for counsel. Counsel is freely tendered. He makes a solemn plea in extenuation, whereupon Hughes of Indiana likens it to the sermon the old woman heard, "the best she ever heard." 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