

The Orphans' Friend.

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THE NEGRO'S RING.

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Now I hope—but, as I remember the ways of girls and boys, I am not at all sure—that you will find this story more attractive because it is in all essential particulars absolutely true.

It is of a curious thing that happened to an old gentleman—Parson Adams—who taught the little children in Vailstown their A, B, C's in his dining-room, and made them ready to go to the big wooden academy, established at the top of the street, by two young fellows from college.

Now every term the number of the parson's scholars grew fewer. Not that the people in Vailstown had not the profoundest respect for the old man. No. When he was a young man he had gone out as a missionary to Brazil, with his wife, and labored there for his Master until he came home, old and broken down. And Vailstown was a little vain of having a citizen who could talk, as an every-day matter, of the Amazon and coffee-fazendas. Whenever a stranger was in the village, Parson Adams was sure to be asked out to tea with him.

But teaching the children was another thing. The old man was one of the most godly and unworldly of men,—that everybody acknowledged,—but the youngsters did as they pleased with him. He was ready any day to lay down the primers or slates, and tell them hunting or snake stories by the hour. Besides, the academy was so magnificently Greek, as to portico, and its young "Pernapals" so full of overflowing of all classical knowledge, that the town felt a pride in supporting it, and every mother who sent her little Bob or Betty to it, had a vague conviction that she thus became allied, somehow, to Homer and Thucydides.

The old parson, too, was subject to the inflammatory rheumatism, and as the squire's wife said to Mrs. Potts, "Of course the poor man was not exactly to blame; but for a teacher to sit with one leg bandaged with red flannel was not calculated to imbue his scholars with that—that veneration for learning which—if there be one thing, Mrs. Potts, which I desire for my Joe, it is veneration for learning,—and the parson has been swathed in red flannel now for three weeks."

Joe, therefore, with Mrs. Potts' Bill, were sent to the academy at the first day of the next quarter.

The old parson, who had doffed his red flannel, and gone back to ordinary trousers, sat all the morning waiting for scholars. When noon came, Mrs. Adams and Dolly—they had but one child, Dolly—had to ring the dinner-bell two or three times before the parson came hobbling out, laughing and rubbing his hands as usual.

"Well, mother, I hope we have something good. I'm fairly ravenous, I can tell you. Hello! Potatoes and milk. No tea, Dolly?"

"The tea's all gone, father."
"And what about meat? Why, it's more than two weeks since

we had meat. Not that I want it. I'm better without it. But you're a strong, growing girl, Dolly, and mother, here, begins to look pale and peaked."

"It couldn't be managed, father, that's a fact," said Polly, laughing. She was like her father, and could extract a laugh out of the very poorest materials for a joke. "The last chicken is killed, and it took every penny of the tuition money from last term to pay the bills. But we shall have plenty now. There were a good many children to-day?"

The old gentleman's face grew sad, and he fingered his baked potatoes nervously.

"There were just—two, Dolly. There was a blank silence."

"I am sure," said old Mrs. Adams' gentle voice, "as long as we have potatoes and milk we ought to be thankful."

"But if we could double our thankfulness with a chop or chicken!" said Dolly. And then she and her father turned the whole matter into a very good joke.

But a week later she came to him with a letter in her hand.

"Father, I'm going to leave you. I wrote to Mrs. Sands, in Brooklyn, to know if she still needed a governess, and she is willing to take me."

"Dolly, my dear," stretching out his hand to her, as though he was suddenly blind, "I—why, you can't go!"—suddenly—"You're nothing but a child!"

"No, I'm a woman—seventeen! And I must, father! In a little while—we'll—we'll starve, sir, to state the case plainly."

But the old parson found no place for a laugh, now. He went out and wandered about, looking more stricken and older each day.

"Dolly," said her mother, "your father will die without you."

Dolly winked the tears from her eyes resolutely.

"We shall all die together if I stay."

"Don't joke about it, my child. I do not feel like joking, mother."

"If he or I are sick next winter, who will take care of us?"

"I have thought of all that. But this is summer, and God will provide for us for the winter."

Dolly laid her hand over her breast, and looked straight out of the window.

When her mother said, with a sob, "I thought I could have kept you with me, Dolly," she did not dare to look at her, as she knew she would cry out with the pain tugging at her heart.

She started to Brooklyn the next Saturday. Nothing happened worth noting, except that she heard, for the first time, a strange story. Her father always wore a common-looking ring of plain gold, with a black or brownish stone. He put it on Dolly's finger the night before she went away, saying,—

"It is a lucky stone, my dear."

"Who gave it to you, father?"

"A negro I used to know. It is of no value. I had it set myself, and there is but little gold, as you see."

When he had gone out Mrs. Adams said,—

"I believe your father is superstitious about that ring, and wants to give you the good fortune that goes with it."

"Who was the negro, mother?"

"Yes, I will tell you. I should like you to hear the story. Your father's health failed in Brazil, as you know, after thirty years' work there, and the physicians ordered him home. You were a fat little girl of ten then. Your Uncle John wrote to us that if we could reach home by a certain day, the 8th of April, I think it was, your father could obtain a position as librarian in a large public library in Philadelphia. But the post must be filled by that time; to delay was to lose it."

The salary was large. It seemed as if comfort and happiness were provided for us for the rest of our lives. We had some dear friends in Philadelphia, too, and we remembered some cosy old houses in the suburbs,—Germantown and Camden,—in one of which we planned we would live.

The San Juan was the vessel we were to sail in,—the only one by which we could reach the States in time. The evening before our day for departure we went out to look at Rio de Janeiro for the last time. I remember looking at the black peaks of the Organ Mountains against the red sky, and the white sails moving softly across the great glittering bay; and then at the strange old Spanish houses, half decayed, hidden behind palms and brilliant masses of scarlet flowers; and the narrow street with its filthy gutter in the midst; and contrasting it all with prim, neat, home-like Philadelphia, and longing so eagerly to get away.

Your father had left me, for a few minutes, seated on a parapet that was built just above the bay; but he came hastily back, leading a negro by the hand. Dolly, you can have no idea of the misery of that poor creature! He was one of the public porters in Rio Janeiro, who carry loads instead of mules. He was covered with sores, half naked and wholly starved. If you had seen him, standing in the midst of the wonderful flowers, even the beetles that flew about him looking like jewels, you would not have blamed your father for what he did."

"He died perfectly right. What was it?"

"There was no place, no hospital or asylum there then, you understand, to which he could take the man, and he was dying. So—so—he brought him to our own house, and took care of him until he died."

"And gave up the appointment in Philadelphia?"

"Yes; but what else could he do, Dolly! We could not leave the poor creature to die. When God had sent him to us. And your father thought if he told him of Jesus, even so late as it was, he might understand and believe."

"And did he?"

"I don't know,"—thoughtfully—"I don't know. It was very late, you see. He was very ignorant, and had lived among the mountains. And the miners at Serra de Frio are a bad class of men, I am afraid."

"When your father would ask

him if he believed, he would say, 'I believe in *you*, seulyer,' and did not seem to be able to go farther than your father's goodness. It was two weeks before he died, and then we sailed."

"But the stone?"

"O, the stone! He gave it to your father the night he died, saying it was a charmed stone, and that a blessing of some spirit went with it. The negroes believe in such things."

"I think a blessing of some sort ought to go with it," said Dolly, turning it on her finger, the tears in her eyes.

Somehow this picture of the tropical city had cast a glow over the little street of Vailstown, and the story made her own sacrifice appear small and light.

Dolly did not meet, at Mrs. Sands, with the legitimate fate of governesses in novels. She was not treated cruelly,—not even snubbed; nor did any handsome son of the family fall in love with her. She had a comfortable enough time, and was very fond of Mrs. Sands, and the children, especially the baby.

But the salary which the Sands were able to pay her barely sufficed to keep her father and mother on the barest necessities, with no chance of saving a penny.

It was in November when the summons she had dreaded all through the fall came. Her father was ill, and she was needed at home.

She packed her trunk, her heart heavier than ever before. What was to be done for the winter? If she had but a few dollars to take home with her! But she had but little more than would pay her fare.

It was not Dolly's habit, however, to go weeping through the day. She went down to the parlor with a cheerful face.

"I am ready to go in the morning," she said to Mrs. Sands, "but for an errand to Crosby's, the jeweller's. I left my ring there last week. The stone was loose in its setting."

"I shall go with you there," said Mrs. Sands.

She had become very much attached to Dolly, and was more disappointed at her summons home than she had thought it right to say. The two women walked in silence down the street, Dolly's brain full of wild plans for making money. If she should write a book, now which would have a great success, and sell for thousands of dollars! But she was a stupid girl, and it was not likely that—

"Dolly Mr. Crosby is speaking to you."

They were standing in front of the glass counter, and the jeweller was turning the ring over with a singular tenderness of touch.

"I beg your pardon," said Dolly.

"I suppose you know Miss Adams, what is the value of your ring?"

"It has no value, my father told me, but as a *souvenir*."

"I must beg your pardon then. The stone is a black diamond, from the Brazilian mines, I infer, and exceedingly rare."

"About how much," said Mrs.

Sands, seeing that Dolly was speechless,—about how much is it worth?"

"If the young lady is inclined to part with it I will give her three thousand dollars. But I think it only fair to tell you that you could obtain a much higher sum from a New York dealer. I have a different class of customers from theirs."

Dolly was almost stunned with the shock. There is no use lingering on the story. The next day Mr. Sands took the stone and sold it to Ball & Blak for seven thousand dollars. So Dolly went home with some money in her pocket, after all.

They are living now in bits of the cosy old houses in Germantown, just as her mother had planned long ago. The old parson loiters out, part of every day, in one of the great libraries, thankful that he has not the care of them, and then goes home to dinner, frequently taking some old crow with him. And there is no brighter or rosier face than Dolly's to-day, in the Quaker city.

Good Food and Good Health.

The following article on good food and good health, which we take from the *Rural Carolinian* may pay for a careful perusal:—*Bl. Recorder*.

Upon this topic Professor Blot thus expresses himself "The man who does not use his brain to select and prepare his food is not above the brutes that take it in the raw state. It is to the physique what education is to the mind, coarse or refined. Good and well prepared food beautifies the mind. People's taste is in food as in dress, differing not only in colors, but also in shape, therefore by our variety of dishes and our different styles of decorating them, by the ease that they can be prepared in the cheapest as well as in the most costly way, we think we meet all wants and tastes. In fact, to use a very trite remark, 'you cannot make a gentleman by feeding him on cod-fish.'" There is no country where there is so much dyspepsia as in America, because our people pay but little attention to food and eat too much meat for the exercise they take. If one has mental labor, fish every second day, at least is requisite. Soup serves all the glands at work, and prepares the stomach for the most important function of digestion, and therefore should be taken at dinner every day. Beef broth is to old age what milk is to the young. Cookery properly attended to keeps man in health; if the stomach is out of order the brain is affected. We have the soft and hard parts in our anatomy, and the bile, and therefore it is requisite to vary our food. We should eat more fruits, vegetables, soup and fish. Fish and cheese are the best articles of diet to give the children. We of the United States have the most money of any people, and the greatest abundance of raw material, yet we live more poorly, comparatively, than any civilized nation. For instance there is a millionaire in Brooklyn who has pork and beans every second day for dinner. Wrinkles are produced by the want of a variety of food.