



**MRS. DUNLAP'S
COMMENTARY**

Isabella Alden

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Isabella “Pansy” Alden

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Monday Morning Nerves

It was nine o'clock in the sultry heat of an August morning. One of those breathless mornings, when leaves and grasses hang listlessly in the quiet air, too much exhausted to wave or sparkle. When grasshoppers, and locusts and bees and whatever else of insect kind can make a buzzing droning noise to add to the sense of heat, are alert and eager.

In Mrs. Dunlap's usually cool kitchen there was, on this particular morning, a passable representation of the fiery furnace. The great cook stove glowed, the fire within roaring and snapping in a manner that made one feel as if the heat increased every minute. The table near the sink, and indeed the sink itself, were piled with sticky dishes of all shapes and sizes, and the flies buzzed exasperatingly around the weary dish washer, who was trying to reduce the mass to order.

The rows of shining cans, sealed and cooling on the table near the west window, and the rows of shining cans on the table near it, waiting to be filled, together with a certain delicious odor which oozed up continually from the covered dish on the stove, would

have informed even the comparatively uninitiated that the solemn business of fruit canning was in process in that kitchen. *Monday* morning, too. With the strange perversity—not to say stupidity—occasionally showing itself in the masculine mind, Mr. Dunlap had appeared very late on Saturday evening, followed by a man bearing an immense basket of peaches, of just the right degree of hardness for canning, bought because they were so nice, and large, and perfect, and so remarkably cheap! Ignoring entirely the two startling facts: that the next day was to be Sunday, and the day following that was to be Monday! This fact proves conclusively to every woman in existence, that Mr. Dunlap was not designed by nature for a housekeeper.

Well, the practical results of his forethought had been late paring of peaches, away into the last hours of Saturday night, almost fringing on the edge of Sunday morning; for certain were found, even among these fair ones which would not “*keep*” until Monday—then a very early rising on Monday, to complete the nerve-trying process of peach paring; then, ominous frowns on Mrs. Dunlap’s face, because the Saturday night peaches had turned dark!” Not that their flavor was affected, but then, every housekeeper knew that they wouldn’t look so well as those which were canned as soon as pare.

“Just like a man!” Mrs. Dunlap murmured, as she wiped the perspiration from her forehead, and gloomily surveyed the dark juice. And the frown deepened.

“Rub-a-dub-dub!” sounded from the back kitchen, where

Hannah washed. Splash! went the soapy dish water over the sticky dishes. Sizzle! went the syrup on the stove, hinting continually of a determination to boil over unless it was vigilantly watched.

“There is too much fire!” said Mrs. Dunlap in her most irritated tone; but surely the fault was her own. Had she not, with housewifely thrift, determined that such a good fire as that should not be allowed to run to waste in the region of the oven, so the baking which had usually to wait until Tuesday, came in for its full share of nerves today. It was an economy of time as well, for since Mrs. Dunlap must needs be in the kitchen all the morning, why should she not attend to her nice baking at the same time? All very well, only it has been demonstrated that time and temper cannot always be economized together. So she was warm, and she was weary, and a dozen little exasperating things had already happened, before Mattie let the large dish that she was rinsing, slip from her soapy fingers, and land in many pieces on the floor.

“Why, Mattie Marshall!” exclaimed the mistress—and those who knew her natural tone would have been justified in starting at the sharpness of this one. “What *have* you broken now! My fruit dish!” Oh, the concentration of horror in this tone! “How is it possible that you could have been so fearfully careless! And you knew that I valued that dish more than anything that I had in the world.” (Think of valuing a fruit dish above everything in the world!) Mrs. Dunlap’s voice had in it that which said, “You *know* you did it on purpose. It was nothing but premeditated malice.”

I have not told you all that she said. It would be difficult. On a

stifling August morning, in a stifling kitchen, when one's nerves are rasped to the boiling point, one can talk very fast, and say a great deal that sounds badly put on paper. This, Mrs. Dunlap did. Moreover, the longer she talked the more vexed with herself did she grow, to think that she could not get away from the trying subject; also, she grew warmer every minute, and, in her zeal over the broken dish, the watchful syrup on the stove gained a victory, and bubbled triumphantly over, making a stifling smell of burnt sugar in the air. Then came Eva from the pantry, her hands sticky with flour which she had been manipulating; and, essaying to help, she seized upon the bubbling syrup and shook a lump or two of flour into the boiling mass.

“There now!” said Mrs. Dunlap. “See what *you* have done! These peaches will not look ugly enough, so you must come and streak them with flour! I do wish you would go back to your work; when I need your help I will call for it. Such *helpers* as I have! I declare it is enough to provoke a saint.”

And certainly to see her now with her flushed face and angry eyes, no one would have mistaken Mrs. Dunlap for a saint, so perhaps she was more than justified.

The effect of her words was instantaneous. Miss Eva went back to her pantry and her pie, the glow on her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes not being additions to her face. It was hard when she had attempted to help to be greeted with such words as these, especially before Mattie.

“As if I were a little child!” she said, indignantly, tossing back

her head, and resolving that the tears gathering in her eyes should be seen by no one.

This Mattie was not exactly a hired servant, but a neighbor's daughter, a poor girl, eager for an education; *so* eager for it that she was willing to earn her bread in Mrs. Dunlap's kitchen by doing with her might the many things that her hands found to do mornings and evenings and Saturdays; to say nothing of occasional Mondays, like this one, when work was said to press so heavily that she must needs stay from school in the forenoon to help them through.

Staying from school was a heavy cross for Mattie, and it was this, added to the fact that she did not deserve the imputation of carelessness, and resented the untruthful insinuation that she broke many dishes, which served to make the trials of this particular Monday almost too much for her young nerves. She pressed her lips closely to keep the angry thoughts from bubbling into words, and she worked away rapidly, slamming the dishes just a little, and thinking her thoughts just as damaging so far as Mrs. Dunlap's influence over her was concerned, as though she had put them into words.

There was a solemn and pitiful side to this morning's influence, for bright-eyed, keen-brained Mattie was Mrs. Dunlap's Sabbath scholar in the Bible class. Also, the lesson set for next Sabbath's study was one which had been familiar to Mattie's childhood; she turned to it yesterday and noticed with a pleased smile that the verses were those which she used so glibly to recite

to her father in the days when she was seven; and to the girl of seventeen, those days seem in the long gone, dreamy past. By some subtle chain of association, these verses flashed before her now, and she repeated them in undertone, enjoying to the utmost the sarcasm which she threw into her voice, as she attempted to fit them to Mrs. Dunlap's present condition.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness!” She stole a glance just then at the black brows which bent over the scorched syrup, and laughed outright; there was such a conspicuous absence of meekness.

Now, be it known, that Mrs. Dunlap's unbecoming outburst had not served to steady her nerves or calm her heart. Instead, she felt less able to bear the strain of the hour, and more hopelessly irritable than before. Why should she not? Having weakened her powers of self-control by indulgence, why should they not exhibit weakness? The undertone of words from Mattie struck with special harshness on her ear. Her voice sounded proportionately discordant.

“Mattie, why do you keep up such a disagreeable muttering over your work? If you have anything to say, pray speak plainly. *Any* words, however disrespectful, are preferable to mutterings.”

“I was simply repeating a verse of next Sabbath's lesson, ma'am.” It would be impossible to convey to you the degree of superciliousness expressed in Mattie's tone of voice; she knew how to be exasperating when she chose, and people almost always

choose, when the occasion is specially trying.

Mrs. Dunlap was slightly startled; she had not the remotest idea what next Sabbath's lesson was, but it was certainly a marvel that Mattie Marshall should be conning it over just at this moment; there was something in the words and more in the tone that ruffled her still further.

"Well," she said, "there is a fitness in all things. Monday morning, over the dish-pan, is hardly the time or place for studying a Bible lesson. Any sort of muttering is distasteful at such a time, even if the words *are* from the Bible."

"I thought religion fitted in everywhere," said Miss Mattie, and she tossed her handsome head and flashed her handsome eyes in a way which indicated that *she* at least, had little to fit in, *anywhere*.

"Mattie," said Mrs. Dunlap severely, "don't be irreverent, as well as impertinent." Whereupon Mattie giggled. She could not help it. She could feel that she was impertinent, but the idea of irreverence struck her as funny.

"One would think she was quite elated over breaking my choicest fruit dish," remarked Mrs. Dunlap in an injured tone to Eva, a tone which was intended for, and reached Mattie's ears. But Eva had a grievance on her own account, and had no soothing words for her mother. As may be supposed, the trials of the hour did not lessen. Mrs. Dunlap had summoned an evil spirit to the heart of both daughter and handmaiden, to help complicate the domestic bewilderments; and those spirits did their best. Gloom,

and sharpness, and bitterness—the very antipodes of peace, and joy, and gentleness—ruled the morning. Even little Davie came in for his share of sharpness.

“Do, Davie, keep out from under my feet; you are always in the way when I am especially busy. Don’t come into the kitchen again unless you want to be sent to bed.” And Mattie listened, and muttered again:

“Lots of love and joy about that. More fruit than peaches gets spoiled in the growing, I guess.”

The morning waned, and the twelve o’clock dinner hour approached, and work increased, and heat increased, also. At intervals the mother in this home made feeble attempts to get away from the demons of haste and irritability who seemed to have her in control; but at best it was very feeble resistance which she gave. It presently took the form of a pudding of which the Dunlap family were quite fond, and which, owing to the amount of time and trouble and ingredients which it required, was rarely made. That imp of the kitchen who stands ready to suggest to busy, nervous people, three times as much work as they ought to undertake, whispered in Mrs. Dunlap’s ear, “Why not make that pudding today? You have been promising it for a long time, and you can manage it while you are waiting for other things, and it will be a sort of atonement for the sour words which you have been serving up so lavishly all the morning.” No, he didn’t put that last thought into such bold shape—if he had, Mrs. Dunlap would have resented it; he just sent a flitting reminder through her brain, which served

to goad her to physical exertions which she really ought not to have made, and then he laughed fiendishly over his successful ruse.

With dismay did the daughter and handmaiden see the elaborate pudding added to the kitchen confusion. But they lived through it (not without certain mutterings from Mattie which could not have been found in the Sunday-school lesson) and the rich sauce which accompanied it was just receiving its finishing touch when Master Robert arrived from school.

“Mother, oh, mother!” he shouted in sudden, dismayed tones. “Oh, don’t, don’t!”

“My patience, child,” said Mrs. Dunlap, nearly upsetting the large bottle in her hand as she started in fright. “What *on earth* is the matter! What are you screaming about?”

“I didn’t mean to scream,” said Robert deprecatingly; “but, oh, mother, you were just going to spoil that nice sauce, and I had to scream to stop you. It is *my* sauce, you know, the kind you always make for me, and if you put brandy in it I can’t eat it.”

“Why not, pray? Half a teaspoonful of brandy! Don’t you always eat it?”

“But mother, I’m a ‘safeguard,’ you know; president of our society. I *can’t* eat it.”

“Fiddlesticks! Since when did you consider it necessary to teach your mother how to cook! You have eaten the sauce a hundred times with the amount of brandy in it that I use.”

“I never knew it,” said Robert, mournfully but firmly.

“Of course you didn’t. There is not enough in it to taste; it is simply used for a flavoring. Now go away—you don’t deserve any pudding for startling me so; I thought something dreadful had happened. Run away, quick.”

But Robert was his mother’s own boy, and didn’t give up things easily. He took two steps forward by way of obedience, then tried again.

“But mother, I truly *can’t* eat it. If there wasn’t but half a drop of brandy in, I couldn’t touch it. Our pledge says we must ‘touch not, taste not, handle not.’ *Please*, mother, don’t put the nasty stuff in; the pudding will be just grand without it.”

You are to remember that Mrs. Dunlap had been canning peaches, and baking cake, and overseeing pies, and concocting a pudding, and managing the affairs of the household generally, and it was very warm. In general, she was willing to do almost anything to gratify her bright-eyed handsome boy Robert. On ordinary occasions she would have laughed, and called him a “young fanatic,” and then, most probably have commended him for his principles, though really, with her education they seemed foolishly extreme; but she would have set the brandy jar away, and good-naturedly have eaten the sauce without it; and liked it quite as well—it was not for the taste that she cared. But the occasion was extraordinary. She had pressed her tired hands and feet into service over this pudding as a sort of peace offering for her family; she had taken extra pains with it; the teaspoonful of brandy was an extra very often omitted but nothing was to be omitted today; and

now to have the offering quarantined just as it was about to be completed, was too much for nerves like hers. She straightened herself up from the table, brandy bottle in hand, spoke in sternest authority.

“Robert Dunlap, go up to your room and stay there until the dinner bell rings, and then eat what is set before you; it is a new sort of morals that leads a boy to forget to honor his mother. You are to remember that *my* judgment is *almost* as good as yours. Now leave the room immediately.”

And Robert obeyed, and Mattie Marshall giggled. There was something very funny to her in the way that the familiar verses of the Sunday-school lesson ran that day. The very next word to “meekness” was “temperance,” and she remembered it.

Mattie was not scholarly, she was not aware that St. Paul had as much reference to the eating of meats, for instance, as he did to the drinking of liquors. Possibly if she *had* known it, it wouldn't have altered the force of the statement, as it really seems to in some minds. Mattie, in her ignorance, supposed that temperance was really more greatly needed in regard to alcoholic liquors than in any other place; so she applied the word to the brandy bottle in her Sabbath-school teacher's hand, and the contrast was—to *her*—so funny that she laughed.

CHAPTER TWO

Real and Imitation

It was drawing toward the close of a summer evening. Mrs. Dunlap, with her hair unbound and her boots exchanged for slippers, rested from the excitements of the day on a couch in the back parlor, while her daughter Eva, and her niece Alice lounged in the easy chairs, and talked over the events of the afternoon: The special event being the fact that on this Wednesday afternoon Mrs. Dunlap had entertained the sewing circle connected with her church.

“I am thankful it is over,” she said, drawing a sigh of relief. “There is really nothing in my line of duties which exhausts me more than that sewing society. One never knows how many will come, nor how much to prepare, and it is anxiety and doubt from the beginning to the end; it just wears me out.”

“Aunt Annie,” said niece Alice, “don’t you think if the ladies had simpler teas, the society wouldn’t be such a burden?”

“Oh yes, I suppose so; it is very foolish to have such grand teas. I have always opposed it, but you can’t do anything with people. Mrs. Parsons always makes just as much parade as though she were giving a large party. I wonder what she thought of *my*

cake? I was determined to let her see that some others, besides herself, knew how to make cake. I don't believe she ever had anything so nice on her table: she always prides herself on having the nicest teas of anyone. I was bent on showing her that *I* knew how to get up a supper as well as she did. She was really vexed this evening. I could see it in her face, just because my supper table outshone hers. So silly of her! Hand me the camphor bottle, Eva. Oh dear, what a headache I have! I knew I would have; I never fuss over that snow cake without having a headache afterwards; but Mrs. Parsons' face actually paid me, it was so full of envy. Some people are *so* small!"

"What did Mrs. Porter give for the box today?" This question from Eva.

"Why, only two dollars! And *she* abundantly able to make out the entire sum. I didn't intend to give but one, myself; after what I had expended on this supper for their entertainment, it was all that I felt I could afford, but she actually provoked me into giving three. She seemed to think she had done such a wonderful thing in giving two, that I couldn't resist the temptation to show her she wasn't the most generous person in the world, after all. I dislike a parade of one's charities. Mrs. Porter is *so* ostentatious, I just enjoy letting down her pride once in a while. But, oh, dear me! I'm glad it's over. Your father says societies don't pay; and I'm not sure I think they do, when they are managed at the expense of such a fearful headache as I have. But one thing is certain: I doubt whether anyone will try to surpass my supper table tonight. I was

really resolved upon showing them that I could make as good an appearance in that line as some who have finer rooms and more money.”

What a strange ambition to possess a Christian woman! To make her a willing martyr to headache and weariness! Could Saint Paul possibly have had such in mind when he said, “Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another”? Is it possible that he could have known that away down among the ages, in the nineteenth century, would live Christian women who would be tempted to vainglory, and envy, and be filled with a desire to provoke one another, over the number of dishes presented at a society supper?

As for the two young ladies who sat listening to this weary Christian martyr, the daughter drooped her eyes, and her fair face flushed; *was* there lurking in her heart, a sense of disappointment over her mother?

Bright-eyed Alice laughed, and regarded her aunt with a curious air, as she said, “Ambition is a queer thing, isn’t it, Aunt Annie?”

Ambition takes other forms than society suppers or society dollars, given for the purpose of exceeding some other woman’s dollars. Mrs. Dunlap had many ambitions, and was conscious of them, albeit she fed some unconsciously.

It was but the next day after the society that she descended from her chamber, ready for the brightness of the streets, arrayed in all the beauties of a carefully chosen, perfectly made, summer

toilet. She was ready now, for that duty supposed to be dear to the feminine heart: shopping.

Miss Eva was also attired in the fairest of summer silks, prepared to attend her. Mattie came up the street with a pile of books in her arms, and stood in the tree-shaded doorway, and looked after the elegantly attired ladies, and looked down at her plain gray calico, and sighed. It was not that she despised the gray calico, it was that she thought of the coveted white dress for commencement, and realized that Miss Eva had the price of half a dozen of them about her wardrobe at this moment, and the difference in spheres just then pressed heavily on her young heart.

In the fancy store where Mrs. Dunlap and her daughter stopped, there were many other ladies, among them a mother and daughter, both quite as elegantly attired as our friends; the daughter, at least, was indulging in rhapsodies over the lovely shades in kid gloves.

“Oh, now, mamma,” she was saying, being so eager that her tones were hardly modulated enough to suit the proprietors of a first-class store, “don’t say they are too expensive! You always say that about everything, and these are such beauties. I shall not be satisfied with any other quality. Here are Mrs. Dunlap and Eva. Dear Mrs. Dunlap, do say that I ought to have this pair of kids, they are so lovely and they match my new suit perfectly.”

“But they are so expensive, Fanny,” murmured the mother; “and besides, six-button kids are absurd.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Dunlap smilingly, “that is quite reasonable;

some young ladies require ten buttons.”

“Now hear that, mamma? You always think my tastes are expensive; and I don’t begin with other girls. Mrs. Dunlap, don’t you think I ought to have this pair? I have just set my heart on them.”

“Girls will be girls,” said Mrs. Dunlap, with a benevolent smile and a persuasive glance at the hard-hearted mother. “We mustn’t expect the wisdom of mature years on young shoulders.”

“I know,” said the mother, thoughtfully, “therefore I sometimes wonder whether their mothers were not intended to have judgment for them.”

“Oh, well, it won’t do to run athwart all their pretty tastes. Those gloves *are* a lovely shade; how much did you say? A ruinous price I declare; but you can’t get gloves in that quality for less.”

“Unless you can make up your mind to sacrifice yourself to only four buttons,” said the other mother, a shade of sarcasm in her voice. Then daughter Eva claimed attention.

“Look, mamma, this is the lace I want; just the right pattern.”

“Is it *real*?” asked Mrs. Dunlap, bending over it with anxious eyes.

“That is what I don’t know,” said the daughter, lowering her voice. “I wonder if Mrs. Stuart is a judge?”

On being appealed to, Mrs. Stuart came forward and bent over the lace with careful gaze. “It is really quite impossible to tell.” she said at last. “The imitations are so very perfect, nowadays; I have

to judge by the price of the article. Do you want real?"

"Oh yes indeed?" chorused mother and daughter, emphatically.

"Well, I buy the imitation, nowadays; it is just as good, and no one can tell them apart."

"I *won't* have imitation," said Miss Eva, with decision.

"I never buy imitation," said her mother, with firmness. "I dislike shams of any sort. I take real things or none."

"Well now, what is the use, when you own that you can't tell a good imitation from a real? Who knows whether it is a sham or not? For my part, I can't bring my conscience to consent to paying the exorbitant prices asked for real lace."

"My conscience is callous where lace is concerned," Mrs. Dunlap said, laughingly. "I am so fond of nice laces; it would be a real cross to me not to wear them. Well, Eva, I think we would better go to Weldon's for lace; we can trust to their word. I must select a sun umbrella, though; my old one is quite too shabby to last through the season."

Has it lately been your fortune to have to decide between the bewildering, ever-varying displays of sun umbrellas and select one to your mind, or, more properly speaking, to your purse? Then you know into what a labyrinth Mrs. Dunlap immediately plunged. Wooden handles, and ivory handles, and inlaid handles, and all silk, and part silk, and sateen, and white lining, and cream-tinted lining, and no lining at all. They began in price at a dollar, and they went away up among the thirties.

Mrs. Dunlap reflected; a dollar umbrella would certainly protect from the sun as effectually as a ten dollar one.

“But it would turn gray so soon,” said Eva.

True. Well then, a two dollar one, all silk, durable, neat, unobtrusive. But then the handle was of wood. Well, what of that? Wooden handles have nothing to do with protection from the sun’s rays.

“But they are so ugly,” said Eva.

“Oh I don’t know,” said Miss Fanny Stuart who had recently bought one, and didn’t like to have it called ugly. “I think they are real nice.”

Mrs. Dunlap did not think so. She hesitated and questioned, and examined the silk, and examined the bones, and then went back to the handle, and finally laid the article aside and took up another; three dollars, four dollars, five dollars, there was some objection to them all, having to do with the *handles*. Much time, much talk, much patience; finally the dread task was accomplished. Nine dollars and fifty cents for an instrument to keep out the sunlight! But then, the *handle* was *real* ivory, and was inlaid!

The Stuarts, mother and daughter looked at each other, and directly they were on the street they said, “How awfully extravagant the Dunlaps are! I don’t see how Mr. Dunlap endures the drain.”

And said the mother, “I don’t see how a Christian woman can think it is right to spend so much on *things*; the idea that she won’t

wear anything but real lace—and she can't tell it from the imitation—that is nothing but pride. I don't understand how Christians justify themselves in these things.”

There was actually an undertone of complaisance that she, at least, was not a Christian.

“They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.”

That sentence was in next Sabbath's lesson, and Miss Fanny Stuart was in Mrs. Dunlap's Bible class.

So, too, was the patient young clerk who turned and tumbled and selected umbrella after umbrella for her teacher's fastidious gaze. Directly the momentous choice was made, she appealed to her teacher with another matter.

“Mrs. Dunlap, did you know Clara Wheeler was in trouble?”

Now Clara Wheeler was another young lady from that large Bible class.

“No,” said Mrs. Dunlap, kindly. “I haven't heard of any trouble; what is it?”

“Oh it is her brother. He has been tempted again, and was out late, and got in with a dreadful set of young men, and the store was entered that night, and money taken from the safe, and they are afraid Fred will suffer; though, of course, he wasn't in that last affair; but it will be difficult to prove it, especially as he knew all about the safe.”

“It will serve him right,” said Mrs. Dunlap, severity in face and voice. “I have no patience with Fred Wheeler, the only son and his mother a widow; the way he goes on is simply disgraceful.”

“I know it, ma’am; but Fred doesn’t mean it. He is the best hearted boy that ever was. He has been led astray, but he loves his mother, and he feels dreadfully.”

“I should think he would. Love shown in such a manner is not worth much; at least, it wouldn’t be to me. I have been expecting him to get into disgrace for some time; I told Mr. Dunlap it would be a miracle if he didn’t. I am sorry for poor Clara, but the innocent always have to suffer with the guilty, in this world.”

“But, Mrs. Dunlap, Fred isn’t *guilty*; not of what they will charge him with. He had been drinking, and acted like a simpleton, but that is the most they can say of him, except that he was found in bad company. Don’t you think,” and here the youthful voice took a pleading tone, “that if you spoke to Mr. Dunlap, and got him to interest himself in Fred he could get him out of this? It will just disgrace him for life, and I am afraid it will kill his poor mother.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Dunlap, and her voice was still cold, “as a rule I don’t interfere with Mr. Dunlap’s business. I might mention Fred Wheeler to him, but I don’t think it would do any good. I can’t conscientiously say any good of the boy; I consider him a worthless young fellow. The idea of a boy allowing himself to be led away by every unprincipled scamp who happens to be thrown

with him! It is too childish. I think Fred deserves a severe lesson. I am sorry for his mother, but he has brought it on himself and ought to take the consequences.”

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

What a pity that Saint Paul limited that advice to the *brethren*; if he hadn't, perhaps this Christian woman would have felt it her Christian duty to take on somewhat of the spirit of meekness, and help to restore poor Fred Wheeler, even though he were “overtaken in a fault.”

The little clerk closed her lips firmly, and said with her eyes that she had made a mistake, had appealed to the wrong source, and resolved that she would plead no more for Fred Wheeler. Instead, she grew suddenly anxious to have Mrs. Dunlap hold her peace concerning him, realizing that the spirit of meekness with which the work must be done was wanting here.

As for Mrs. Dunlap, she went away ruffled; she honestly disbelieved in Fred Wheeler, but she hated to appear ungracious.

“Worthless fellow!” she said to Eva. “Just dragging his mother and sister down! If I were they, I would have nothing more to do with him until he entirely reforms—if he ever does, which is doubtful.”

And she was in the worst possible condition to hear an appeal

from a little unpretending thread-and-needle store, the door of which opened suddenly as she was passing, and a clear childish voice said:

“Oh, Mrs. Dunlap, can mamma speak to you a minute?”

“What Shall the Harvest Be?”

“What now, I wonder?” said Mrs. Dunlap; but she went in. A little at one side sat a fair, pale girl, sewing steadily on a child’s embroidered dress. Behind the narrow counter stood a worn, pale woman, waiting for customers. This woman now addressed Mrs. Dunlap.

“I beg pardon for stopping you, ma’am, but I am in trouble, and Emma there suggested that we ask your advice. We have had a hard season, Mrs. Dunlap. What with sickness and ... and affliction—” Here the voice faltered, and she looked down for an instant at the rusty black dress which she wore, “—and the long and short of it is, we can’t get the money together for the quarter’s rent. We have strained every nerve, but we are seventeen dollars behind. The rent is due tomorrow night, and Mr. Smith isn’t the smoothest man in the world to deal with; and besides, he wants this building for a liquor saloon, and he will turn us out as sure as the world unless we are ready for him.”

“Well, really,” said Mrs. Dunlap, as the woman paused and seemed waiting for her to speak, “you *are* in a disagreeable position. What did you want me to do?”

Whereupon the shopwoman looked down, and the cheeks of the young girl at the end of the counter grew scarlet. Mrs. Dunlap's words sounded to them as cold as weights of solid lead dropping on their hearts, yet the *words* were well enough.

"Why, I thought," said Mrs. Baker, hesitating and then beginning again, as Mrs. Dunlap waited, "seeing we were members of the same church, and Emma in your Bible class, and all, and you know how hard we have struggled, that maybe you and the ladies, a few of them, would advance the seventeen dollars. I would pay you back every cent."

It was said now, and she stood flushing and paling before the silken-robed sister in the church.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Dunlap. "I don't know. Money is so very scarce now-a-days. I could hardly command seventeen dollars myself." And she toyed thoughtfully with the inlaid ivory handle of her new silk umbrella. "Don't you think you pay too high a rent, Mrs. Baker? Mr. Smith ought to lower it. I don't believe this little store is going to succeed, anyway; it is too far downtown, and then you know you can't compete with other stores, even in trifles. You will just be getting deeper and deeper into debt all the time. Don't you think you would better give it up, and let him have the room?"

"And *then* what would I do, ma'am?"

"Sure enough!" And the end of the new parasol was thoughtfully tapped against the lower lip of Mrs. Dunlap's mouth. "It seems as though there ought to be *something* that you could do.

Well, I don't know. I am very busy this week. Tomorrow will be Friday, you know; sweeping and dusting day at my house, and the Saturday's baking to plan for, and Saturday is a busy day always. I don't know of any ladies who could help you, either; but I'll think it over, and try to *advise* you, at least. Emma, you may call at my house tomorrow or next day, in the evening, and possibly I may have something thought out; though really, Mrs. Baker, I can't promise you any money. Nothing is scarcer in these days than that. I'm sorry you don't succeed here; I was afraid you wouldn't. It requires a good deal of skill to manage a fancy store, even in a small way."

Then Mrs. Dunlap went her way, more disturbed still. "The idea of expecting me to pay her rent, just because Emma is in my Bible class!" she said with spirit. "I declare, I don't know but I shall have to give up my class in self-defence. One would think I had entered into obligations to support all the poor families and get all the scapegraces out of trouble! It is a dreadfully mixed up class, anyway; all stations represented in it; I believe it ought to be divided."

"But, mother, Mrs. Baker didn't ask you to pay her rent; she only asked to borrow the money from some of the ladies."

"Oh, yes, that is a smooth way of putting it. She can never pay it, and if she could, who wants to run around and ask people to lend her money? I'm sure *I* don't; I would rather pay it myself. I would have given her fifty cents if I had had it to spare, but by the time your lace is paid for I don't believe I shall have a cent left.

Real lace is expensive business, Eva, and one can't do everything. I sometimes wish my tastes were not so highly cultivated; then I could wear shams like Mrs. Stuart and not mind it."

"Mother," said Emma Baker, looking up to the pale, worn woman, her own cheeks still glowing, "I *won't* call there tomorrow, or next day; *need I?*"

"No," said Mrs. Baker. "*We* will go to the poor-house first!"

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill
the law of Christ."

Mrs. Baker had applied for help in bearing her own crushing burden of poverty, but she could not get away from the feeling that it had been hurled back again on her own feeble shoulders. True, she was one of Christ's own, but she did not realize any better than did Mrs. Dunlap how to "walk in the Spirit."



A glowing, perfumed Sabbath morning. August, but the August heats had lessened, and a breeze from the sea had rolled inland and freshened everything; and in the elegant Sabbath-school room where Mrs. Dunlap's Bible class gathered, all was brightness and beauty. Mrs. Dunlap herself was in her place, every detail of her tasteful toilet in perfect order. Rich silk for her robing, real lace at throat and wrists, rare flowers adorned her real lace bonnet,

delicate kids matching with the tone of the ribbons which fluttered among the flowers and laces, and the inlaid ivory-handled sun umbrella lay in soft silky folds on the seat beside her, while the teacher opened her small, finely-bound, fine-print Bible and searched for the place.

“I have hardly had time to do my lesson justice, young ladies,” she began. “This has been a remarkably busy week at our house, and many important matters have had to suffer.”

Then did Mattie Marshall’s mischievous eyes flash behind their drooping lids. Did not she know of the many kinds of society cake and the rare puddings, and the rows and rows and *rows* of fruit cans which helped to crowd out this important lesson from her teacher’s thoughts? Nay, had she chosen, she could have explained that late into Saturday night an important finishing of a real lace trimmed mantle had held her teacher’s weary eyes until her husband was obliged to assure his wife that it was Sunday. What marvel that she had little time for the study of the lesson?

The work of the hour commenced. The young ladies alternated in reading the verses, and the young hand-maiden Mattie Marshall, read the first.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”

Was there a tone of suppressed mischief in her voice, or did her teacher imagine it? Was the young girl really to blame, when a vision of hot kitchen, and broken dishes, and keen, sharp-cutting words whizzing in the air, floated through her brain? Besides,

since that Monday morning the week had been long and warm and full of business, and the way had been plentifully strewn with illustrations fitting into this same lesson. How was anything short of a watchful abiding in Christ, an entire resting in the guidance and shielding care of the Spirit, to tide one through a week of time, without sadly illustrating such a verse as that? It is so much easier to be dreary than to be joyful, to be restless than to exhibit that unruffled front which can be called peace; it is so hard, under trying provocation, to be gentle. It is so difficult to exhibit long-suffering amid constant petty annoyances—surely, it is no wonder that Mrs. Dunlap failed. The cruel pity is that she was so used to failing, she hardly realized that she had failed.

The reading progressed. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Fanny Stuart read it, and regarded the teacher curiously. Had *she* crucified the flesh with its affections? Didn’t she like the expensive gloves, and ribbons, and styles, as well as any person could? Didn’t she buy “real” laces when quite nice people contented themselves with imitation?

“Didn’t she spend three times as much on a parasol as I should think of doing?” queried this young lady. “And I am not a Christian at all. I wonder what she thinks this verse means, and I wonder what she thinks she has crucified? It is all very queer, anyway. I do wonder if Christians *were* so different from other people when Paul was on earth!” So thought this scholar in Mrs. Dunlap’s Bible class.

They read on. “Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

“Oh, my!” murmured Katie Wells. “Who pays any attention to that direction, do you suppose? I know lots of people who are just as envious of each other as they can be—Christian people, too. About all they live for is to get ahead of somebody else.” She spoke to Alice, Mrs. Dunlap’s niece. Was it within the scope of human powers to keep the mind from travelling back to that elaborate society tea, and the after conversation, wherein it transpired that the ruling motive for getting it up was not, after all, the gratification of the guests, but the discomfiture of one of them?

“I know people who, apparently, give money for no other purpose,” said the young lady on her right, chiming in with Katie’s criticism. And while Alice *said* nothing, she thought of the three dollars in the missionary box that were given because Mrs. Porter thought she was so benevolent in giving two!

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou, also, be tempted.”

The little clerk in the grand store was not the reader but while the verse was being read she raised her great searching eyes, and fixed them full on Mrs. Dunlap’s face, and both of them thought instantly of Fred Wheeler, and the “fault” in which he had been overtaken, and the refusal to make any attempt at restoring him, either in the spirit of meekness or any other spirit.

Apparently, Mrs. Dunlap had forgotten that there was the

faintest possibility of *her* ever being tempted to do wrong. She flushed over this coincidence, and was so busy with her thoughts that she gave no heed to the reading of the next verse, though it was her daughter's clear voice that spoke the words.

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

The sewing girl, Emma, was not present. Eva looked at that moment to her vacant seat, and went back over the last recollections of her, and her mother, and their burden. What was the connecting link between those two, weighed down with poverty and anxiety, and her mother? What was the unconverted daughter to think of the bond of sisterhood between members of the church of Christ, if she judged in the light of her mother's witnessing?

“Ye are my witnesses,” saith the Lord. What wonders as a witness had Mrs. Dunlap accomplished during that one week for that one lesson!

I have given you but a passing picture of a half dozen events amid the hundreds which crowded the week, but seeing the spirit of these illustrations, what fruit probably grew with them and spread its influence far and wide!

On the whole, that was a trying hour for Mrs. Dunlap. She honestly desired to do those nine young ladies good. Do you imagine she accomplished it? Should you judge from what you have heard of her life that she spent an hour a day during that week, or fifteen minutes a day, or five minutes a day, or even five entire earnest minutes in *praying* for those girls? And yet she

honestly desired, on that lovely Sabbath morning, to speak some words which might do them good. Do you believe she accomplished it?

“I don’t know what to do with my class,” she said in a confidential tone to a fellow-teacher, as they walked up the shady street together. “They are certainly the most thoughtless set of young ladies that were ever classed together. I don’t seem to make any impression on them.” (Ah, yes, teacher, you do. Your impression is deep, and will be lasting!) “Now, this morning, although the lesson was so solemn, some of them actually seemed to find food for amusement. I believe Mattie Marshall ought to be removed to some other class. You know she lives with me, and I am not sure but that affects my influence over her. She feels so familiar with me that I don’t impress her as a stranger would. I believe it is a good deal so with my own daughter.”

Alas, alas! That I should have to admit that I believe with all my heart that it would not only be better for the young daughter, but for the young hand-maiden, to be removed to another class, not necessarily on account of *familiarity*, but on account of *contradiction* between profession and practice. Both of those young ladies learned long ago the solemn words of God, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” and both of them are at work—one of them consciously, the other unconsciously—applying the test to the life fruits.

Said the sympathetic fellow-teacher, “You must remember one verse in today’s lesson—such a helpful verse, I think. ‘Let us

not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.”

Blessed words, indeed. Helpful words; but should they have been applied to this teacher? Did they fit? Weary in *well* doing! *Are* there very many who have chance to weary in that? Was it not a pity that some searching voice did not arrest Mrs. Dunlap’s ears by repeating other words of God—words, too, from that same lesson, so fraught with solemn truth that surely they ought to have startled her:

“If a man think himself to be *something* when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself;” and,

“Let every man *prove* his own work;” and,

“He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;” and,

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”



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