

HUMBLE ROMANCE.

MARY E. WILKINS

"The girl he a gown with pickers in the back," mused the peddler, gazing after her. Then he hastened out to his cart, and arranged a vacant space in the body of it. He had a great coat, which he spread over the floor. "There, little un, let me put you right in," he whispered, when Sally emerged, her bonnet on, a figured green delaine showed over her shoulders, and her little head in an old stocking dangling from her hand. She turned round and faced him once more, her eyes like a child's peering into a black room. "You mean honest?" "Before God I do little un. Now git in, and let me see your feet."

they proceeded on foot down the principal street in which all the shops were congregated, in search of some amendments to the bride's attire.

If it was comparatively unnoticed Sally was fully alive to the unsuitableness of her costume. She turned around and looked over with wistful eyes the prettily dressed girls they met. There was a great regret in her heart over her best gown, a brown delaine with a flounce on the bottom and a shiny back. She had so confidently believed in its grandeur so long that now seen by her mental vision, it hardly paled before these splendours of pleating and draping. It compared advantageously, in her mind, with a brown velvet suit whose wearer looked with amusement in her eyes at Sally's forlorn figure. If she only had on her brown delaine, she felt that she could walk more confidently through this strangeness. But, nervously snatching her bonnet and her money, she had, in fact, heard Mrs. King's tread on the attic stairs, and had not dared to stop longer to secure it.

She knew they were out on a search for a new dress for her now, but she felt a sorrowful conviction that nothing could be found which could fully make up for the loss of her own beloved best gown. And then Sally was not very quick with her needle; she thought with dismay of the making up; the possibility of being aided by a dressmaker, for a ready-made costume never entered her simple mind.

Jake shambled loosely down the street, and she followed meekly after him a pace or two behind.

At length the peddler stopped before a large establishment in whose windows some ready-made ladies' garments were displayed. "Here we air," said he triumphantly.

Sally stepped wet after him up the broad steps.

One particular dress in the window had excited the peddler's warm admiration. It was a trifle florid in design with dashes of red here and there.

Sally eyed it a little doubtfully when the clerk, at Jake's request, had taken it down to show them. Untutored as her taste was she turned as naturally to quiet plumage as a wood-pigeon. The red slashes rather alarmed her. However, she said nothing against her husband's decision to purchase the dress. She turned pale at the price; it was nearly the whole of her precious store. But she took up her stocking-purse determinedly when Jake began examining his pocket-book.

"I pays for this," said she to the clerk, lifting up her little face to him with scared resolve. "Why, no you don't, little un!" cried Jake, catching hold of her arm. "I'm agoin' to pay for it, o' course. It's a pity if I can't buy my own wife a dress."

Sally flushed all over her lean throat, but she resolutely held out the money.

"No," she said again, shaking her head obstinately, "I pays for it."

The peddler let her have her way then, though he bit his scraggy moustache with amaze and vexation as he watched her pay the bill, and stare with a sort of frightened wistfulness after her beloved money as it disappeared in the clerk's grasp.

When they emerged from the store, the new dress under his arm, he burst out, "What on airth made you do that, little un?"

"Other folks does that way. When they gits married they buys their own close of they kin."

"But it took pretty nearly all you'd got didn't it?"

"That ain't no matter."

The peddler stared at her half in consternation half in admiration.

"Well," said he, "I guess you've got a little will of your own arter all little un an' I'm glad on't. A woman'd orter hev a little will to back her sweetness; it is all too soft an' slushy otherways. But I'll git even with you about the dress."

Which he proceeded to do by ushering his startled bride into the next dry goods establishment and purchasing a dress pattern of robin's-egg blue silk, and a delicate white bonnet. Sally, however, insisted on buying a plain sun-hat, with the remainder of her own money.

She was keenly alive to the absurdity and peril of that airy white structure on the top of a tin-cart.

The pair remained in Derby about a week; then they started forth on their travels, the blue silk, which a Derby dress-maker had made up after the prevailing mode, and the white bonnet, stowed away in a little new trunk in the body of the cart.

The peddler, having only himself to consult as to his motions struck a new route now. Sally wished to keep away from her late mistress's vicinity. She had always a nervous dread of meeting her in some unlikely fashion.

She wrote a curious little ill-spelled note to her, at the first town where they stopped after leaving Derby. Whether or not Mrs. King was consoled and mollified by it she never knew.

Their way still lay through a thinly settled country. The tin-peddler found reader customers in those farmers' wives who were far from stores. It was the spring ofering. Often they rode for a mile or two through the lovely fresh woods, without coming to a single house.

The girl had never heard of Arcadia, but all unexpressed to herself, she was riding through it under gold-green boughs, to the sweet, broken jangling of tin-ware.

When they stopped to trade at the farm houses how proudly she sat a new erectness in her slender back and held her husband's horse tightly while he talked with the woman of the houses with now and then a careful glance towards her to see if she were safe. They always contrived to bring up, on a Sabbath-day, at some town where there was a place of worship.

Then the blue silk and the white bonnet were taken reverently from their hiding place, and Sally, full of happy consciousness, went to church with her husband in all her bridal bravery.

These two simple pilgrims, with all the beauty and grace in either of them turned only towards each other, and seen rightly only in each other's untutored, untricked eyes, had journeyed together blissfully for about three months, when one afternoon Jake came out of a little

country tavern, where they had proposed stopping for the night, with a pale face. Sally had been waiting on the cart outside until he should see if they could be accommodated. He jumped up beside her and took the lines.

"We'll go on to Ware," he said in a dry voice; "it's only three mile further. They're full here."

Jake drove rapidly along, an awful look on his homely face giving it the beauty of tragedy. Sally kept looking up at him with pathetic wonder, but he never looked at her or spoke till they reached the last stretch of woods before Ware village. Then, just before they left the leafy cover, he slackened his speed a little, and threw his arm around her.

"See here, little un," he said brokenly. "You've got—considerable backbone, ain't you? Ef anything awful should happen, it would'n't—kill you—you'd bear up?"

"Ef you told me to."

He caught at her words eagerly. "I would tell you, to little un—I do tell you," he cried. "Ef anything awful ever should happen—you'll remember that I told you to bear up."

"Yes, I'll bear up." Then she clung to him, trembling; Oh, what is it, Jake? "Never mind now, little un," he answered; "perhaps 'nother' awful's goin' to happen; I didn't say that. Chirk up an' give us a kiss, an' look at that 'ere sky 'ther, all pink an' yellow."

He tried to be cheerful, and comfort her with joking endearments then, but the awful lines in his face stayed rigid and unchanged under the smiles.

Sally, however, had not much discernment, and little of the sensitiveness of temperament which takes impressions of coming evil. She soon recovered her spirits and was unusually merry, for her, the whole evening, making, out of the excess of her innocence and happiness, several little jokes, which made Jake laugh loyally, and set his stricken face harder the next minute.

In the course of the evening he took out his pocket-book and displayed his money, and counted it jokingly. Then he spoke in a careless casual manner of a certain sum he had deposited in a country bank and how, if he were taken sick and needed it, Sally could draw it out as well as he. Then he spoke of the value of his stock-in-trade and horse and cart. When they went to bed that night he had told his wife, without her suspecting he was telling her, all about his affairs.

She fell asleep as easily as a child. Jake lay rigid and motionless till he had listened an hour to her regular breathing. Then he rose softly, lighted a candle, which he shaded from her face, and sat down at a little table with a pen and paper. He wrote painfully, with cramped muscles, his head bent on one side, following every movement of his pen, yet with a confident steadiness which seemed to show that all the subject-matter had been learned by heart beforehand. Then he folded the paper carefully around a little book which he took from his pocket, and approached the bed, keeping his face turned away from his sleeping wife. He laid the little package on his vacant pillow, still keeping his face aside.

(To be Continued.)

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A trifle more than 150 years since John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, organized a Sunday school in the town of Savannah. The rules of that Sunday school were different from those that prevail nowadays. The children were compelled to attend excepting they were ill. A lack of fine clothing was no excuse, and so it happened that many of the boys and girls presented themselves in their classes without shoes or stockings.

The colonists were, many of them, too poor to buy shoes, or even much clothing of any kind. But the climate in Georgia is mild and it is no hardship to go scantily clad.

Human nature, however, as it showed itself in John Wesley's Sunday school was the same as it is now. The children who could afford shoes fell into the habit of saying disagreeable things to the barefooted boys and girls. When Mr. Wesley heard of this from the parents of the children whose feet were bare and whose pride was sensitive, he pondered for awhile as to what course it would be wisest to pursue. First he thought he ought to insist on all the children coming to the Sunday school barefooted.

Then he considered lecturing the offenders soundly on the sin of vanity. He did neither, but the next Sunday what was the surprise of teachers and pupils to see Preacher Wesley walk softly in with bare, clean, white feet!

One can fancy that those who wore shoes drew their feet far back under the benches, and the barefooted ones, conscious of being in good company, sat very straight and looked serious and happy.

In the course of the session Mr. Wesley took occasion to speak of the fearfully and wonderfully made human body, and, placing his feet on a convenient chair, he gave a bit of the bones, tendons and joints, with much other anatomical knowledge. He told the school that no human being could possibly make a piece of machinery as marvelous as the human foot.

He called attention to the clumsiness and ugliness of shoes and stockings, as compared with the natural foot, with its white and pink coloring, the blue veins showing through, and each toe protected by a beautiful, transparent shell.

Even the tan on the feet of children or grown people who ran barefooted all the time spoke of the goodness and kindness of the Creator. This tan was made by the great sun, and the soft, odorous winds.

The school thought this little lecture very interesting, and it had a much better effect than a scolding for the folly of vanity. It may be supposed, too, that later in life these boys and girls, when finding themselves at a disadvantage, tried to find out if there were not some compensation, even in what seemed to be real misfortunes.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

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