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Poetry.

BRIGHTENING THE WAY.

It was only a sunny smile,
And little it cost in giving,
But it scattered the night,
Like the morning light,
And it made the day worth living.
Through life's dull warp a woof it wove
In shining colors of light and love,
And the angels smiled as they watched above,
Yet little it cost in giving.

It was only a kindly word,
And a word that was lightly spoken,
Yet not in vain,
For it stilled the pain
Of a heart that was nearly broken—
It strengthened a fate beset by fears,
Groping blindly through mists of tears
For light to brighten the coming years,
Although it was lightly spoken.

It was only a helping hand,
And it seemed of little availing,
"But its clasp was warm,
And it saved from harm"
A brother whose strength was failing.
Its touch was tender as angel's wings,
But it rolled the stone from the hidden springs,
And pointed the way to higher things,
Though it seemed of little availing.

A smile, a word, or a touch,
And each is easily given,
Yet one may win
A soul from sin,
Or smooth the way to heaven.
A smile may lighten the falling heart,
A word may soften pain's keenest smart,
A touch may lead us from sin apart—
How easily each is given!

Select Family Reading

The Language of the Flowers

SPRING held sway over the spurs of the Alleghanies. Around Eliza Jane was the breadth of moist earth, the pungent odor of cedar, green shoots and wild pink azaleas. Below the call of the robin came the purring of the mountain stream, a little to the left, as it crawled over its stony bed, lapping tender mosses on either side and stirring ferns and tiny white violets into active growth.

Eliza Jane, seated on a decaying log, her feet deep in dry brown leaves, was conscious of all this, though her eyes and fingers were busy over the writing pad resting on her knee. She was writing verses. Back of her consciousness was a little silent laugh at the foolishness of such an occupation for her, a staid teacher in a New England school.

Ten years had she held the position. Never in all that period had she so wasted precious hours. It was as if the past had been suddenly recalled. A certain memorable day spent in the Maine woods seemed by reason of her present environment but yesterday, whereas in truth it dated further back than the monotonous grind of school routine that now enslaved her. The teacher salved her self respect for such a frivolous impulse with the reminder that it was vacation time. Work of any sort had been prohibited on pain of nerves, already severely taxed, failing in the coming winter.

She had inscribed the title above her effusion in her neat, stiff writing, "Language of the Woods," and the simple words, faulty enough as poetry, were illuminated with sincerity. The language of the woods, unheard for years, now in a different section of the country came clear and insistent as on that other holiday. Again she caught the murmur of hope in the swish of tall maples, drowning the sigh of regret among the dark pines. The bridal white of the dogwood rose against cloudless sky. White, wind swayed anemones, great purple violets and creeping pelogala, thrusting frail heads high through decaying leaves, all spoke of imperishable youth and love. A couple of lines in her little verses brought a faint tinge of color to Eliza Jane's pale cheek:

Amid lightning and hailstones and rain,
Came love's kiss in the pine woods of Maine.

She let them remain because, like an echo of the language of which she wrote, they seemed to belong here. Presently the rhymes were completed, and, dropping both pad and pencil into the basket that she had brought to carry home such mountain treasures as she might find, she rose and stretched her arms with luxurious abandon. It was wonderful to be free from the cramp and irksome strain of routine. She breathed long and deeply of the invigorating air.

"I wonder, Elias, do you, too, remember? But of course not; you're a man. I don't myself, except here, where one feels as if actually coming alive again after being petrified. I shall forget my dignity when I go back. It's only the language of the woods after all."

Eliza Jane laughed half regretfully. It was not unnatural that the place should stir sentiment in her. It was the same town to which Elias Smith had come after their misunderstanding, before they quite lost track of each other. Once, writing to her cousin, she casually inquired for her old friend. But Mrs. Hart answered that, while she heard of numberless Smiths, she had yet to come across one called Elias, which, in her judgment, was a mercy, since it was an ugly name, Scripture or no Scripture; hence when Eliza Jane accepted the invitation she had done so confident she ran no risk of meeting with her boy lover.

Catching sight through the tangle of underbrush, of a glowing mass of azaleas, she pushed her way through, eagerly filling her hands. From one shrub to another she wandered, sometimes higher up the mountain side, sometimes dropping back, but always adding to her blossoms. When she could carry no more Eliza Jane paused for breath. The flash of scarlet and glossy black of a tanager caught her eye, and she held herself breathless so as not to scare him away.

When the green tangle swallowed him up she realized her own fatigue and retraced her steps to find her basket. Search as she would, she could not come upon it. Back and forth she walked, now climbing afresh the rocky incline, now descending with greater speed. At times stray bits of azalea caught on alien shrubs made her realize with disgust that she was covering ground already trodden. Her watch proved the hour late; dinner would be over and her cousin anxious at her nonappearance. Of small value in itself the basket could be easily replaced, but the little splinter did not relieve leaving her inspiration of the woods to the mercy of any stranger passing that way. In the end she was compelled to do so.

Usually self-possessed, she stammered while explaining this misfortune on her return. Her cousin paused in setting the warmed-over dinner before her to express her disapproval.

"At your age, Eliza Jane, to take to rhymes. You'd better stick to teaching. There's some use and more money in that."

"Should any one find it," suggested Eliza Jane uneasily.

"Is your name on it? No? Then they'd never lay such nonsense at your door. A school ma'am is not supposed to be hanging verses about the woods like that young man we saw in the play last winter."

Two days later while sipping her coffee Eliza Jane glanced carelessly over the morning paper. Prominently on the editorial page was printed a small poem. The title seemed fairly to jump out of the column at her, "Language of the Woods."

The cup clattered as she set it in the saucer, and Mrs. Hart looked up reproachfully.

"Lor', Eliza Jane, what scared you now?"

"My—my verses"—

"For land's sake!" Her cousin appropriated the paper, and, adjusting her glasses carefully, read in a monotone, regardless of all punctuation, the verses Eliza Jane had pencilled in the woods. She cast a suspicious glance at her relative's bent head on reaching the couplet