

arithmetic, haven't you? Have you noticed how pale she is?"

Molly hesitated. A little flush came into her cheeks. "She has been working before breakfast. Miss Day found it out and put a stop to it." She hesitated, and then honestly spoke out. "I have not been helping her, Miss Monro. I have not had time to help her. Bab knows that. I have scarcely seen her lately, except at meal-times."

Miss Monro did not speak for a moment. She sat looking away from Molly, her grave gentle face full of sorrowful thought. Molly felt rebuked by her silence somehow, and added hastily, "I really have a tremendous lot to do, Miss Monro. There doesn't seem time for anything but the examination. It is so important I should do well."

"I know, dear," said Miss Monro. "I have felt just as you do, Molly." She stopped and then said abruptly: "I should like to tell you something about myself."

She did not go on, and it was not till Molly said, with shy eagerness, "Won't you tell me, Miss Monro?" that she seemed to remember Molly's existence. Her thoughts had gone backward to some sad time in her past of which the memory was bitter still.

"Yes, I will tell you, Molly. It is not often I can speak of it. But when you spoke of your examination being so important"—she broke off there and turned her eyes on Molly with a little smile in them. "Of course examinations are important if they are kept in their right place. But there are things more important than examinations. I was taught that by a very bitter lesson, Molly. It is that which I am going to tell you. You know I am not so fortunate as you are, I have no little sisters. But my cousin lived with us, she was only a year or two older than I was, and we were just like sisters. She was not very clever; we used to call her the domestic genius. I thought it was quite right that all the little home duties should fall on her while I devoted myself to my books. We lived in London and I went to the nearest high school. I was nearly eighteen, busily preparing for the London matriculation, when Annette was called away from home to nurse an aunt in Scotland. Almost her last words to me were to beg me to see mother did not overtire herself. We were not rich, we only kept one servant, so that there was plenty to do."

"I promised to look after mother. I was angry with Annette for thinking it necessary to remind me; for after all, as I had often said to myself, she was my mother and Annette was only her niece."

"Annette was away for many weeks. Towards the close of them I was asked to join a reading party at Cromer. I was eager, wildly eager to go. I wanted to escape from all the interruptions of home, and have a quiet time for my work. I went. I had been there three

weeks when I got a telegram from home. My mother was very ill. They feared she was in imminent danger. Molly, I loved my mother passionately, though I had been so careless of her. You can understand how great the shock was of receiving that telegram. But the bitterest moment was to come. When I reached home I found she had been ill for more than a week, but would not allow me to be sent for. Annette was with her and she did not want me. I had been so careless, so self-absorbed, so neglectful, she shrank from having me near her. I had lost my daughter's place in her heart. It was Annette she turned to and wanted near her."

Miss Monro paused. She had spoken very quietly, but there was a thrill in her quiet voice that told how deep her feeling was. Her next words were said after the pause in answer to Molly's unspoken question.

"No, Molly, she did not die. Annette nursed her back to health. She lived for many years after that. But I can never forget the bitterness of that time. And I never won back all I had lost, Molly. She tried to be just, but Annette was always first. She deserved to be."

Molly had no time to say anything in answer to these words, for Miss Monro was called away to join in a glee about to be sung; and Molly did not speak to her again that evening. But her story lingered with her, as Miss Monro had intended it should. The lesson had gone home. For she knew, as she had known all the time in her inmost heart of hearts, that she had been neglecting Bab, that she had been unkind and hard to her, to her own little sister whom her mother had entrusted to her care.

That examination which had seemed so all-important, which had so filled her life as to shut out sisterly love and sympathy from it, suddenly dwindled and shrank to its right proportions, became a trifle, a nothing, compared with taking proper care of Bab.

The lamp was burning brightly in Molly's little study when she got home. There was a good hour yet for her work before the elder girls' bed-time. But Molly could not work. She sat for a little while with the books open before her, and then went up to Bab's cubicle.

The big dormitory was divided into half a dozen little cubicles. Bab's was nearest the door, and had a little window looking out over the lawn.

Molly had opened the door softly, and very softly she drew back the curtains. She expected to find Bab asleep. A dim light from the lamp in the corridor came through the glass door of the dormitory, and filtered through the white curtains. It was light enough for Molly to see the little figure kneeling on the chair, with her face pressed against the window, looking out into the darkness.

"Why, Bab, childie, not in bed yet?" Molly exclaimed.

Bab turned round with a violent start. Molly could see her white face and the tired dark eyes, with their look of frightened misery.

If Molly had come there with her mind full of her examination, and no room for anything else, she might have noticed nothing unusual in Bab's face, and gone away and left her to herself. But she was not thinking of the examination to-night, she was thinking only of how she could best help Bab, and her eyes saw clearly that something was very wrong. She went quickly up to Bab and drew her down on the bed beside her.

"Bab, are you ill, darling? Is your head aching?"

Bab shook her head without speaking. She had obeyed Molly's guiding hand, but she had done it stiffly, unwillingly. And the little pale face was set in lines of stubborn defiance. She did not look at Molly.

Molly would not notice her sullen mood. "Miss Monro spoke to me about you this evening, Bab. She thinks your work is worrying you. Suppose you come and work in my study in the evenings—I am sure Miss Day will let you—and then I can help you with your arithmetic."

Bab's face began to quiver—all the stubbornness went out of it. "You are too busy," she faltered.

"I'm not going to be too busy to help you, Bab," said Molly stoutly. "It was too bad of me to send you off as I did the other day. Now you come and work in my study, and we'll see if we can't tackle that terrible arithmetic. Why, Bab, why, you silly childie." For Bab was crying, crying with her arms tight round Molly and her face pressed against her shoulder.

"Oh, Molly, I want to tell you—I want to tell you!" she sobbed when her tears would let her speak. "I can't do it if I tell you."

Molly's arms tightened round the child as she listened to her stammering confession.

"Oh, Bab, you took that book. You meant to copy from it?" she said in a tone of deep distress.

"Yes, I took it. It's in my locker," whispered Bab. "I haven't looked at it, Molly, but—"

"I don't believe you would have looked at it, Bab," interrupted Molly quickly. "You would have put it back to-morrow. I am sure you would."

Bab did not answer. And Molly, though she spoke so confidently, did not feel really sure. She held her little sister close, as if guarding her from some terrible peril.

"Oh, Bab, Bab," she said in a broken voice. "You must always come to me when you want help. I shall never be too busy again to help you. I've been a bad, thoughtless sister to you, darling. But I will make up for it now. And don't be afraid. You shall not be sent down to the second form."

A SPECIMEN FACTORY GIRL.

A GIRL at the age of ten years began by minding babies, but did not like it, and so got work herself at making mouse-traps. This was not at a factory, but a small workshop, where about a dozen children were employed. As soon as she looked old enough, she was taken on at a biscuit factory to put sweets on the top of fancy biscuits. From that she went to work at mouse-traps again, then as a packer in a confectionery factory. She was next engaged to learn fur-sewing at three shillings a week for a whole season. When the season ended she found work at making tin match-boxes. "Larking" with another girl got her the "sack," and she was taken on at another match-box factory. From that she went to tin toy making, and afterwards to tin-plate works for higher wages.

Here she had nine shillings a week day wages, and stayed till the factory was burnt down. The confectionery season being busy then, she soon got work, and being handy and quick to learn, was transferred from one department to another; and then went to another confectionery factory where she stayed nearly three years, being employed chiefly in cutting lozenges and making samples of fancy sweets. A strike at the factory ended her employment there. She tried several other confectionery places, but could not get the price she asked for her work, and then went to a neighbour to learn the sewing-machine for warehouse work. The work, however, was too irregular, and fetching and carrying the bundles from the warehouse to the neighbour's room was heavier than factory work, and so after filling in some

time with cleaning empty houses for a house-agent, she got work as a tea-packer. This she was obliged to leave after a few months on account of ill-health brought on by the strong odour of the tea. Depression of trade at this time made work very difficult to get, and after trying rag-sorting for a day or two and getting odd work at house-cleaning, she resumed the tin-work a few months ago. She is now doing well according to her own account, being advanced from the cutting press to the work of putting together coal-scuttles, fenders, etc., bending and riveting the various parts together. This is how a factory girl's life was spent from ten to twenty years of age.

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