

"A Cent's Worth of Raisins."

BY MARY F. AMES.

Ellen Doty was sitting on one of the revolving stools in a dry-goods store in a Western village of some importance. She was dressed in black—not the conventional black seen every day and in all places—but in that which speaks mutely of a recent loss, and kept the crape veil closely over her face while making selections, to the evident chagrin of the two susceptible clerks who attended to her orders.

"A cent's worth of raising if you please, sir?" came in a child's voice from farther back.

The lady had been aware of a murmured conversation at a desk, just a little distance from the place where she was seated, and now a voice thrillingly familiar, said:

"We do not keep raisins here, little one, but I will show you where to find them. Have you only one penny?"

"That is all, and I founded it on the sidewalk. You see, I was just going to Aunt Sara's when I see'd it; and just as soon as I picked it up I thought I'd buy some raisins to carry to cousin Caddy, 'cause she's been awful sick, and then she's blind too, and couldn't see any money if she should find it as I did."

"Oh! that is how it is? Now you give me the penny, and I will change it for a dime, which will buy more raisins."

The little woman looked questioningly into his face and asked doubtfully, "will that be right?"

"Certainly, quite right! Here, Jim," to the errand boy, "lead this child to Mutchin's and see that she gets her raisins!"

"Yes, sir," and he took the little one's hand and accompanied her to a grocer's across the street.

"Say, Syd, is that the way you usually treat customers?" Ellen heard his companion ask.

"No, only babies; and more especially, girl babies. But come in here and I will tell you" and he led the way to a private office.

The Ellen Doty gathered up her parcels, and with a wildly-beating heart passed out on to the street.

The two young men were old college friends, and had just met for the first time in three years. They seated themselves, lighted cigars, and Sydney Smith, the host, said:

"You wonder why I should be interested in that little girl?"

"Yes."

"Simply because she called for a 'cent's worth of raisins.' It reminded me of something similar which occurred several years ago. When I was about 16, back in our old home in Massachusetts, as I was on my way to school, one morning, a little miss almost ran into my arms as she hurried from a grocery-store I was passing. She was crying, and I said, impulsively: 'Hello! what is the matter, now?'"

"She turned upon me with a look of defiance in her great, brown, wet eyes.

"Now you are going to make fun of me too!"

"No, really and truly, I am not. Who has been teasing you? tell me, please and see if I don't make him quit it."

"It is no matter, now," she said more gently, as she kept along in the same direction I was going. I soon found that she attended school in the same building I did, and she finally allowed me to carry her books.

"Again I ventured to ask who had troubled her?"

"She looked searchingly in my face for an instant and then said:

"I suspect I have been very silly, and will tell you all about it: You see Black Chloe is our washerwoman, and she told her boy, Pete, if he would stay in and mind the baby (the baby is black, too, don't you think?) she would bring him home some raisins when she was through with the washing. She gave me a penny and asked me to get them on my way to school. When I asked for them the man looked cross and said it was a nuisance, just a polite way of begging; that my mother was too rich a woman to buy things that way. Then a hateful boy asked him if he was going to send them up in the express wagon; and another just as hateful, said something about taking up a contribution. And then I knew I should cry, and

without stopping for the raisins, I ran out of the shop and almost over you," and she looked up at me with the brown eyes laughing now.

"Yes, but how about Pete's raisins?"

"The sweet lips began to quiver again, and I told Chloe I would bring them at noon."

"And you shall! You walk on, slowly, and I will overtake you," I said.

"I ran up a cross street, and into a shop which I knew, and got a pound of raisins and gave them to her for Black Chloe. That was the way our acquaintance commenced, and as scholars at the same institution we saw much of each other. And at any time, within the next four years, I could call a smile to her lips, and a blush to her cheek by saying or writing "A cents worth of raisins."

"She developed into a charming lass and when I left school for college, I asked her to correspond with me? Her mother, who was one of the straight-laced sort and a widow, would not consent to the correspondence until after her daughter should have left school.

"But I am going too much into details. When I left college the mother had married again, and was in Europe with her husband and the dear girl I had hoped to win. I had no clue to their whereabouts, and have never been able to learn anything of their movements. I tell you, old fellow the memory of that girl's brown eyes and rare smile kept me out of more than one college scrape, and I doubt not earned me the title of 'Muff.' No, not from you, Frank, you always took me for all I was worth, and some more I suspect."

"Let that pass, Syd. And what you have been telling me is why you would not suffer that midget to go blundering after a stock of raisins with the princely sum of money she founded."

"Yes, I left a strange tenderness to ward the little thing, and when you noticed it fancied, I owed you this explanation."

"I thank you, Syd, I firmly believe you will find your brown-eyed maid yet."

"To echo your own words, let that pass, Frank!" And then the two friends conversed of matters not connected with this sketch.

And Ellen Doty, as she walked hastily away from the store was recalling the very incidents Sydney Smith had been rehearsing to his friend.

Now she was motherless as well as fatherless, and was staying with relatives in this same Western village where Sydney Smith was a prosperous young merchant.

Her mother died of consumption, in Italy, and Ellen returned to her old home in Massachusetts, to look after the little property left from her father's estate. When everything was settled satisfactorily, she accepted the invitation of her mother's only sister, Mrs. Edson, who resided in a Western State, to visit her, and if she liked to make her house her home; little thinking that the boyish lover who has quite won her heart by his protecting kindness and tender chivalry was awaiting there, unknowingly, but still lovingly, to receive her.

When she recognized his voice, heard him called Syd, and took in the by-play of the child in pursuit of raisins her first impulse was to go to him and say, "It is I, Sydney." But quickly came the thought he may have forgotten me. I will wait, and she left the store a stranger as she had entered it.

"Auntie, I have changed my mind in regard to seeing company, and shall be glad to meet your friends if you care to invite them," she said, referring to a subject under discussion between them.

"Am glad to hear it, my dear. Life is too brief to give years of grieving to those who can never return. Come out into the sunshine, bravely, and you will be surprised to find how susceptible you are to its warmth. We will not forget the one who is gone, while we endeavor to contribute to the pleasure of those who are left. Now I will make a list of the guests and you write the invitations, if you please?"

"Certainly, shall be delighted to make myself useful."

She wrote Mr. and Mrs. Edson several times, and then came the single names a dozen or more, and Mrs. Edson,

said, "There that is the last I believe."

"I was in a Mr. Smith's store to-day, Ellen said, hesitatingly. Is anything wrong with him or his family?"

"Bless your heart, child, no. Did I not give you his name? I would not forget him of all others: Your uncle thinks there never was such a man; Mr. Sidney Smith, of course; and the girl was sensible of a feeling of satisfaction when she found that no Mrs. was to be put on his note.

No regrets came back, Mrs. Edson being very popular and her parties always pleasant.

Charades and tableaux were in the program for evening, and in one of them Ellen ventured to hide a little plot, to learn if she was quite forgotten by her school-boy lover.

As she figured in most of the scenes she begged her aunt's permission to remain a stranger until the acting was over. The last was this:

A room in a grocery store; Ellen, her figure shortened by kneeling behind some boxes, and wearing a schoolgirl's hat and duster, books in one hand and the other reaching forth an old-fashioned penny to a scornful visaged shopkeeper, who held a half-stripped bunch of raisins toward her; two uncouth boys grinning and smirking and one pointing at the penny.

"A cent's worth of raisins," murmured a voice among the guests.

The curtain went down for the last time, and many wondered why the last scene was the striking! But one knew or hoped he did, and he it was who had so readily given the solution. And as soon as he could make his way to Mrs. Edson he asked:

"Will you please tell me who planned that last tableau?"

"Certainly. It was my niece, Miss Doty. Her uncle has just gone for her to be introduced to our guests. I am looking for them at any moment."

"Can I see her for five minutes before she is introduced?"

"You! an entire stranger to her?"

"Not a stranger to me, but an old school-mate, if she is Miss Ellen Doty from Massachusetts."

"Yes, but—"

"Pardon me, but you will allow me to see her alone? I cannot meet her in this crowd!"

Mrs. Edson dearly loved a romance and as this looked a little like one, she wrote a line and had it conveyed to her husband. It met him on his way to the drawing-room, whither he was duly escorting his niece.

"This is an order for a counter-march," he said in a vexed tone to his companion.

"What is wrong now?"

"Blamed if I know," he replied, dropping into his favorite westernism in his amazement.

But he fancied that he knew as he witnessed the meeting of the young couple soon after; she, blushing radiantly, and he, wistfully tender in the greeting.

A few pleasant words, and then the young man stepped aside and Ellen was conducted to the expectant guests. There is little more to tell. They met as they had parted, with only the stretch of years between.

An extract from a letter to his college chum, to whom he had told his little love story, read thus:

"Do you remember that a young lady dressed in black was seated at the counter when I took you into my office to tell you of my early love affair? and you said: I firmly believe you will find your brown-eyed maid yet." It was she—the very one of whom I was speaking. But come on to the wedding, Christmas, and I will tell you all about it."

And he went, as in duty bound, and for a wedding gift presented the bride a handsome oil painting—his own hand work—and called "A Cent's Worth of Raisins." And to this picture, which embellishes the Smiths' parlor, the writer is indebted for this sketch.

BRISTLES.

While the American hog beats the world for pork products, has long course of breeding for this purpose has reduced the growth of bristles so that the German and Russian hog is ahead in that particular. The German, Polish and Russian Hog, with plenty of exercise, is thin and muscular, and grows bristles which are long, stiff, elastic and of good color. Eighty five per cent. of the bristles of American hogs are gray, and most undesirable color, the other fifteen per cent.

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