

The Fireside.

MARGARET BARSTON'S DECISION.

BY MRS. CARRIE ASHTON-JOHNSON.

"No, girls, I've made my decision, and no amount of teasing can change it. You all talk as if it was an easy matter for me to give up such a delightful outing, and seem to imply that I only wish to spoil your fun by not going.

"Jessie stands ready and glad to take my place and complete your quartette. She is jollier and a far better travelling companion than ever I was, so I see no reason why you should not make it doubly hard for me," and Margaret Barston walked quietly away.

The trip in question had been planned for months by the merry quartette who had just completed their high school course and were anxious to see something of the outside world.

Mabel Crane's uncle and aunt (with whom she resided) had offered to chaperon the party to Yellowstone Park. What a glorious trip it would be! They expected to be gone a month, and possibly six weeks.

They had to meet to discuss whether they should depend on the "diner" or provide lunch, and to talk over other last plans—for this was Monday, and on Wednesday they were to start.

Margaret had greatly surprised them by stating that circumstances had arisen which would prevent her accompanying them, but Jessie Ray, who had been longing to join the party, was ready to go in her place.

Jessie had wanted to go from the first, but she was a year or two younger than the others, and her sister Louise had insisted that she would make an odd number, which would be undesirable.

Not until the party were really on their way, did Margaret show any sign of regret. She had been the jolliest of the group at the station, had written letters to be read on the way, had made a huge box of confectionery for which she was famous, and had hunted up numerous books which they might wish to read during the trip.

When the train pulled out, a quiet girl walked hurriedly home, and seeking her own room, spent the remainder of the day alone. She excused herself on the plea of a headache, and did not even go down to dinner. Even her mother and chum, Louise Ray, were in ignorance of the real reason why she had not gone, but Mrs. Barston was a wise woman, who never questioned her daughter, but waited for her confidence, which in good time always came.

The night before Margaret made her decision, she lay curled up on the divan in the small alcove which opened out of her mother's private sitting-room.

It was dusk and Mrs. Barston supposed that her daughter had gone down street, as she had spoken of it at the dinner table. Aunt Clara had dropped in on her way home from a neighbor's and chatted pleasantly for half an hour. In the course of conversation she said: "I am so sorry, Florence, that Margaret is an only child. She is such a sweet, winsome girl, but you and Fred are in great danger of spoiling her. She has never known what it means to have a wish ungratified. She has never been taught the beauty of self-denial. Do not for a moment think I am blaming you," she added, as a

pained look crossed her niece's face. "It is only my great love for the dear child that makes me tremble lest she does not grow up as thoughtful and unselfish a woman as her mother. Here she is ready for the Yellowstone trip and will certainly have a glorious time. Only last night I heard Jessie Ray lamenting the fact that she could not go, and remarking what fortunate girls Louise and Margaret were to have everything to come their way. Well, good night, I must go."

While her mother went to the door with Aunt Clara, Margaret slipped out to her room.

Was she selfish? The question had never occurred to her before. She certainly had not meant to be, for she detested selfishness in others. Could she prove that she was not self-indulgent by letting Jessie go in her place, and stay quietly at home while the other girls were gone?

These and many other thoughts flitted through her brain, for it was very late when she closed her eyes.

It was some days later when a sweet faced girl said to her mother:

"Will you help me, dearest mother, to make this summer a happy, profitable one for myself, as well as other people? Without your co-operation I can do little. I heard Aunt Clara's lament about my growing selfishness, and it opened my eyes sufficiently so that I gave up my trip. I truly want to be of some use in this world. I have been reading Sidney Smith's receipt for making every day happy, and it does not look hard. "I am going to pledge myself with your help to do something, however trifling, for at least one person every day. I shall need help, but I know you will give it, and not continue to spoil your only daughter," and her eyes filled with unshed tears.

Six weeks sped away before the tourists returned, and glowing accounts they gave of the wonderful and magnificent scenery which must be seen to be properly appreciated.

"How have you managed to put in your time? Have you not been out of town for a single day? Wasn't it dreadfully forlorn with all of us away?" These were only a few of the ejaculations and inquiries, to all of which our heroine remarked that she had not spent a lonely or unhappy hour, and had found plenty with which to occupy herself.

"What a busy life Margaret seems to lead," exclaimed Jessie Ray some days after their return. "We have asked her over at least four different times, but she always has an engagement. Whatever in the world is the girl doing? I never see her playing golf or tennis as she used to do when out of school."

Margaret wisely kept her own counsel, but gradually the girls heard of the beautiful flowers which found their way from the Barston conservatory into the homes of the afflicted and lonely, the drives which gladdened the hearts of many working women and invalids, and the little comforts which were sent to various homes. Nor was this all, for letters were also written to absent friends who had heretofore been neglected. Dear old Grandma Gray, whose eyes were failing her, was delighted once or twice a week to be read aloud to,

and to be remembered with some appetizing dainty.

Margaret's own family were never neglected for outside duties. During the morning hours Margaret acted as her father's private clerk for two weeks, in order to give the clerk his much needed vacation. Then her mother was sent away for a rest to her sister's, and the young girl took charge of the house-keeping for some weeks.

It was not always easy to forego some social function, when she had promised to take some one for a drive or to read aloud to a convalescent, but Margaret always felt repaid in the end. She never forgot her pledge, for over her dressing table was a constant reminder in the form of a daintily framed card, bearing Sidney Smith's receipt for making every day happy.

"When you rise in the morning form a resolution to make the day a happy one to a fellow creature. It is easily done—a kind word to the sorrowful, an encouraging expression to the striving, trifles in themselves light as air will do it, at least for the twenty-four hours; and if you are young depend upon it, it will tell when you are old; and if you are old, it will send you gently and happily down the stream of human time to eternity.

By the most simple arithmetical sum, look at the result, you send one person, only one, happy through the day, that is three hundred and sixty-five in the course of the year; and supposing you live only forty years after you have commenced that course of medicine, you have made fourteen thousand six hundred human beings happy, at all events for a time.

"Now is not this simple? It is too short for a sermon, too homely for ethics, too easily accomplished for you to say, 'I would if I could.'"—*New York Observer.*

THE JOY SCATTERERS.

There are those who say that they cannot understand some of the writings of Emerson, and that his poetry is particularly obscure in its meaning. But much that he wrote is so simple and so clear that it is easily understood. Here is a sentence in illustration that ought to be spread broadcast throughout the world:

"There is no beautifier of complexion or form or behavior like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us."

Here is a cosmetic that all the world should use in lavish abundance. No one will accuse you of vanity if you try to make yourself beautiful in this way. I heard some ladies talking about another lady one day not long ago, and one of them said:

"Don't you think that she is a very homely woman?"

"Why, I never think anything about it when I meet her, for she is always saying or doing something so kind and good; she is always making some one so happy that her face seems beautiful to me."

The superintendent of a free hospital told me once that the most welcome visitor to the hospital was a woman with a strikingly plain face and stooped shoulders.

"But the moment she comes into the wards there are smiles on the faces of the patients," said the superintendent. "There is something simply magnetic in her voice; it is so overflowing with genuine kindness, and she has the most beautiful smile. She sits and listens quietly to the complainings of the most fretful and discontented of the patients,

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and is sure to say something soothing to them. They all think that she is lovely."

All scatterers of joy are lovely. All sharp-tongued and bitter persons are unlovely, no matter how beautiful they may be in form and figure. I know a woman of regal beauty of face and form whom everyone shuns because of her caustic tongue and the bitterness of spirit that manifests itself every time she speaks. She is not really beautiful to anyone. She would be a real "fright" in the hospital ward in which the homely stoop-shouldered woman is so beautiful to the patients. She has never been known to do or say a kind thing. She has never scattered any joy in the world.

There are pain scatterers enough in the world; alas! there are too many of them. No recruits are needed in that

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