

IN THE LATIN ROOM.

"Virginia Booth, if you aren't a case!"

The class in Cicero was on its way back to the general assembly room. There was always a minute or two in the corridor.

Virginia held her book aloft and regarded the audacious little marginal sketch critically. "Pretty good, don't you think?" she said. "Didn't any of you notice what a splendid chance I had today? If you think I could resist it—"

"Oh, we don't!" laughed Georgia Lovejoy, under her breath. "Girls, will you look at him! Isn't that Prof. Gregg all over?"

Prof. Gregg was the instructor in Latin at the girls' High School in Elwell. He was a wiry, nervous young man, whose smooth, spectacled countenance was capable of a great variety of astonishing expressions.

He was also Virginia Booth's best "subject." From cover to cover of her Cicero were irresistible little sketches of his favorite attitudes and grimaces.

This very morning had not Salome warned her? Poor Salome! Did she not always do it at the last minute?

"Not today, dear. Promise you won't today. I'd like to lie here and feel easy just for one day."

"You poor dear! But I never could keep my promise if Prof. Gregg looked over his spectacles in that perfectly beautiful way. I'd have to sketch him. No use Salome; I'm hopeless."

"So am I. I give you up. But, remember, some day you'll wish you hadn't. It's coming."

"Pity me when it does! Good-bye, dear! Don't begin to worry till quarter of eleven. Cicero doesn't come till then. Here, take this, and this, and this! Put 'em under your pillow. That's every pencil I've got!"

There was always this little scene—varying only in wording—when Virginia said good-bye. After she went away Salome lay among her pillows, white and wistful. Virginia was sixteen, Salome thirty. They had only each other. Salome was and incurable invalid, but all day long, while Virginia was away, her thin white fingers flew. That was her secret. The things she fashioned out of her gay wools meant pretty clothes for the child and a chance for an education. Salome never told her sister how pitifully small their income was. That was another secret.

One day there was a discussion in the Cicero class, and Prof. Gregg held out his hand.

"May I take your book, Miss Booth?" he said. "Possibly your text differs here. Misprints sometimes occur. Er—your book, Miss Booth?" For in the horror of the moment Virginia had held back.

Now, because there was nothing else to do, she extended the book. A soft gasp was audible at her elbow and traveled over the whole class. Georgia Lovejoy's face grew pale, and Virginia's crimson.

Prof. Gregg studied the open pages attentively. Now he was turning the leaves!

Georgia hid her face. Virginia's bright head went up high and defiant.

"Yes, I see the—er—text differs here." Prof. Gregg's voice was unmoved. Yes, yes, yes, I see! There is a decided—er—variation here. This—er—text is like the original. I see, I see. The class is dismissed. We will look further into this and report to-morrow. The usual lesson in advance, young ladies. You may go."

He made no motion as if to give back the book, and Virginia marched out at the head of the file in silence. She went on down the hall, and then was surrounded.

"Never mind, Virgie, we'll all stand by you!"

"We'll body guard you! We'll tell him it's a species of insanity—runs it the family. All the Booths have made faces, back to nobody knows when!"

"Yes, you dear; he shan't have you expelled; he shan't!"

Expelled! Oh, was that what it meant? O, poor Salome! Not expelled!

"Phrase stop; please let go!" Virginia cried. "I don't want to be body guarded. I hope you don't think I'm afraid!"

"Well, I am," chattered Georgia. "I'm frightened to pieces. He'll look at all those dreadful sketches and keep growing madder and madder!"

Virginia smiled grimly. "I shan't blame him at all, shall you?"

After school Virginia and a "committee of four" went back to the Latin recitation room for the book, but Prof. Gregg had already gone. The book was gone, too. Virginia forgot that it was her music lesson day, and went straight home.

Salome had not forgotten. Music lesson days gave her an extra hour with her wools. She was so intent on them to-day that she did not hear the outside door snap or the slow feet come plodding up the stairs. They usually came up to her in quick, light bounds. She would not have thought it was Virginia even if she had heard.

The steps came slowly along the hall to the door, and Virginia looked in. It was then she found out Salome's hoarded little secret, and the discovery sent her to her own room in a tempest of woe.

She had seen the thin figure bolstered up against the pillows, and the thin fingers flying in and out among the bright wools. She had seen the red spots on Salome's cheeks; they meant excitement or pain. How well acquainted Virginia was with those tiny dots of red! She had tried to kiss them away many and many an afternoon when she had come home from school. Now she knew why they had been there.

"She's making things for Miss Goldthwaite's store; I've seen them there!" sobbed Virginia. "But I never thought—oh, I never thought Salome made them! How could I have known? She's been making them right along. That's why she's always so tired when I get home. It kills Salome to sit up like that!"

Little by little things grew clearer for Virginia. At the end of her sobbing vigil two things stood out in black relief; there wasn't enough money, and so Salome had to work; and Prof. Gregg would probably have her expelled. The first thought broke Virginia's heart, and the second would break Salome's.

It was a wakeful night for the merry, careless girl. At ten o'clock she had shaken her head scornfully. Apologize to Prof. Gregg? Never! She had meant no harm to him. She had to look at him, did she not? And when she looked could she help drawing him? Could anybody?

That was at ten. At eleven Virginia was uncertain and miserable. At twelve she sprang out of bed. "I shall apologize," she said, aloud. "Salome and I are in the scales. I'm up so high it makes me light-headed, and Salome—Salome's down so low she bumps! I shall apologize!"

But it was hard—only Virginia knew how hard.

Afterwards she remembered but one happening in that recitation. That one would stand out clearly in her memory till she was an old woman. She could always hear the calm tread of Prof. Gregg's boots across the room to her.

"Your book, Miss Booth." Pardon me for retaining it. I wanted to compare certain portions of it with the original. I find they agree exactly—exactly."

She could never stop wondering if there had been a wicked twinkle behind the professor's spectacles. She had not dared to look, but there had been one in his tone.

On the next day the recitation dragged out its length. The girls were all dull and absent minded from sympathy. Georgia clutched one of Virginia's hands in her own, and breathed alternate encouragement and defiance in a whisper.

But at the end of the hour Virginia cast off the friendly fingers and sat up straight.

"Go out, all of you!" she whispered. "My last will and testament is, 'Never make faces.' Take me as a warning. Now, go along, every soul of you!"

"Miss Booth will remain for a moment," a quiet voice was saying, as the class was dismissed.

"For all the world as if he said 'Miss Booth's hour has come,'" groaned Georgia, beneath her breath. "Good-bye, poor dear!"

Virginia turned and faced the quiet young man. He did not give an instant to speak.

"Miss Booth, I have discovered something," he began.

His eyes were twinkling down at her in the kindest way. His tone was quite commonplace and friendly.

"I have discovered that one of my young ladies has a most remarkable talent—no, please don't speak yet! Let me finish. She is a genius, perhaps; I am not sure. But, in her place, do you know what I should do? I would turn that talent to account. It should not be buried in a Latin text-book any longer. Now, I have an idea. It is this, Miss Booth: My friend, the managing editor of the Express, wants me to write up the evening sessions of the Labor Convention just about to open. The best speakers, he tells me, are to be saved for the evenings. Some noted men will talk."

"Now," he continued, "if this young artist in my class were to attend those meetings, and make sketches of the speakers in their favorite attitudes, and if I were to submit said sketches with my reports—well, I think it might be a way to get that talent out of its napkin. It is worth trying, don't you think?"

Not a word of complaint; not a mention of the subject of all those dreadful sketches! Virginia gasped with astonishment. It was a full minute before she could speak. Then the words flowed out in an impetuous, girlish torrent:

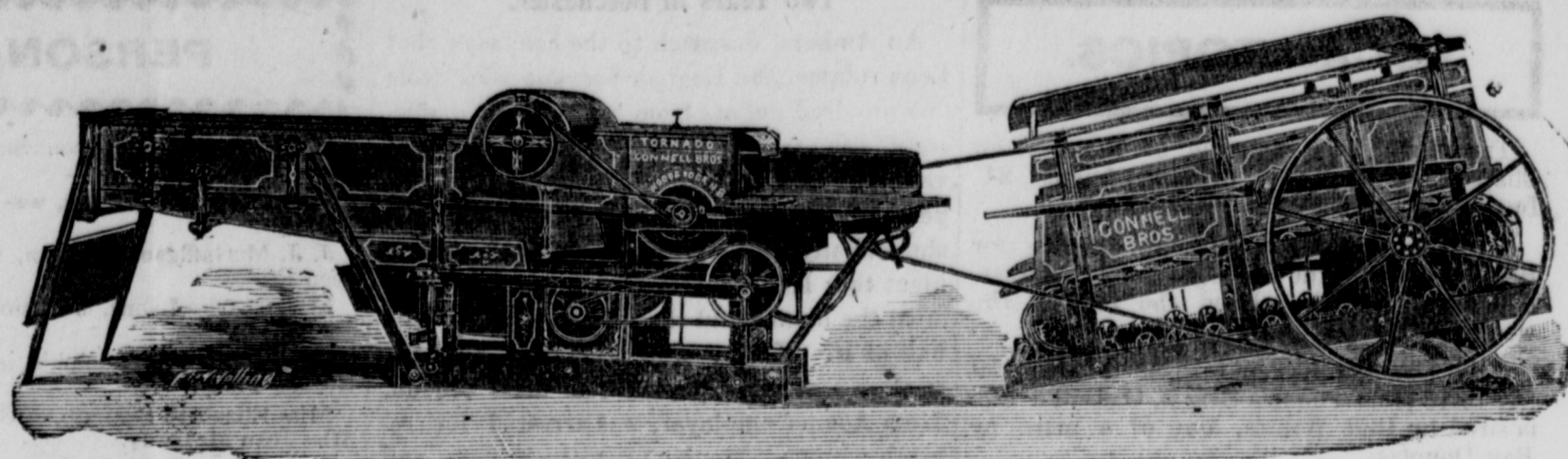
"O, Prof. Gregg, I'm so glad—no, I mean I'm so sorry! I'm so ashamed! I know you must think I'm a—saucybox. But I didn't mean anything bad, truly!"

She stopped for breath, and he waited, smiling.

"You don't mean I could do anything? Make sketches and get—and get money for them? Why, I've always drawn faces ever since I can remember, but I never thought of that! You don't think—it doesn't seem possible—that I could earn something doing that?"

"If you did it as well as some of you work I have seen," Prof. Gregg said, gravely. "I

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know how good that is, for I compared it with the original. It is singularly correct. Miss Booth, I tell you our talents are given us to use the best way. Use yours."

"Oh, I will! I want to!" cried the girl. "I will do anything you say. Georgia's father will let me go to the meetings with him, and I will draw as I never did before. And if anything ever comes of it—if its a start—I shall always bless—"

He held up his hand to stop her. His thin, homely face was radiant with friendliness and interest.

"I shall bless myself," he smiled. If Virginia could have looked ahead, could have seen the success of that first little attempt, followed by other successes leading slowly, steadily upward to the honorable height of her eager hopes! If she could have seen the pride in Salome's sweet face when the success had come!

But now, unseeing, she only stood there in the quiet of the big, empty room and hung her head. She only looked up in meek, earnest contrition at her friend.

"Well, did he scold you dreadfully, poor dear? Are you more dead than alive? Is he a perfect wreck?" the girls clamored, softly, when she went out to them at last.

Virginia waved them off and faced them at arm's length. She tried to laugh to keep from crying.

"No! I'm the wretch," she said. "He is an angel!"

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The Three Nationalities.

An Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotchman, making a tour round Manchester a short time since, were observed looking through a confectioner's window at a beautiful young woman serving in the shop.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Patrick, "do let us be after spending half a crown with the dear craytur, that we may look at her conveniently and have a bit of chat wid her."

"You extravagant dog," said Mr. Bull. "I'm sure one-half of the money will be sufficient; but let us go in, by all means; she's a charming girl."

"Ah, wait a wee," interposed Mr. McAndrew; "dinna ye ken it'll serve our purpose equally well just to ask the bonnie lassie to gie us twa sixpences for a shilling, and inquire where's Mr. Toompson's house, and sic-like? We're no hungry, and may as well save the siller."

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