



A prominent Southern lady, Mrs. Blanchard, of Nashville, Tenn., tells how she was cured of backache, dizziness, painful and irregular periods by the use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—Gratitude compels me to acknowledge the great merit of your Vegetable Compound. I have suffered for four years with irregular and painful menstruation, also dizziness, pains in the back and lower limbs, and fitful sleep. I dreaded the time to come which would only mean suffering to me.

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"Six bottles brought me health, and was worth more than months under the doctor's care, which really did not benefit me at all. I am satisfied there is no medicine so good for sick women as your Vegetable Compound, and I advocate it to my lady friends in need of medical help."—Mrs. B. A. BLANCHARD, 422 Broad St., Nashville, Tenn.—\$5000 forfeit if original of above letter proving truthfulness cannot be produced.

SUSTAINING A STOLEN REPUTATION.

BY CARROLL WATSON RANKIN.

Serene Mrs. Margrave awoke one day to a realizing sense that her daughter Rhea had become a problem; perhaps not an unsolvable one, but still one that presented difficulties to a mother unaccustomed to problems. Rhea was sufficiently energetic along certain lines, but her triumphs were usually the result of accident rather than the fitting reward of labor faithfully performed.

Her older sister, Anne, conscientiously brushed her smooth, taffy-colored hair for twenty minutes by the clock each night and morning, yet no one thought of bestowing commendations upon the well-kept head. Rhea, on the other hand, gave her dark, shaggy locks what matter-of-fact Aunt Julia called "a lick and a promise" at rising-time, and daily reaped a harvest of compliments from admiring classmates.

There was no harm in this, perhaps, but there was another phase to the situation. Not content with what credit rightfully accrued to her, Rhea was gradually appropriating all that belonged to Anne.

Painstaking Anne studied the lessons, Rhea recited them. Somebody had to, Rhea said truthfully; and diffident Anne was afflicted with a faltering tongue. Industrious Anne patiently embroidered elaborate doilies and centerpieces for Rhea to give away with a flourish at Christmas time.

To be sure, the cards attached always read, in Rhea's big, vertical hand, "With love from Anne and Rhea"; but somehow the notes of thanks were always addressed to Rhea, whose impatient fingers were absolutely guiltless of embroidery.

It was Rhea, too, whom the girls invited to make a cake for the "junior party." It was Anne who rose at five to make the cake. Nevertheless, Rhea from that time forth proudly bore the reputation for making the best nut-cake that the class had ever eaten. It was so with everything else.

Seventeen-year-old Anne did the work, and Rhea, a year younger, reaped the reward.

No one but wise Aunt Julia, who lived next door, noticed the wistful look that sometimes crept into Anne's patient gray eyes when some visitor praised Rhea's supposed achievements.

Mrs. Margrave, incited by Aunt Julia, would frequently remonstrate with her younger daughter, who, however, promptly shed all remonstrances just as the gaily plumaged mandarin ducks at Bronx Park shed water.

"But, Rhea," Mrs. Margrave would say, "do you think it's quite fair or quite honest to take all the credit when it really belongs to Anne? There was that burnt-wood plaque that Anne made for Mrs. Adams. I think that you might have mentioned, when she thanked you for it, that Anne made it. And those hemstitched ruffles that Anne—"

"Oh, Anne doesn't mind," Rhea would respond, lightly. "I'm tired of explaining that Anne is the clever one. Nobody ever believes it, anyway. When people thank Anne, she turns pink and looks silly and

wishes that the floor would open to let her through. It's much more comfortable all around for me to do the accepting—I do it so much more gracefully."

If the rest of the world failed, seemingly, to appreciate Anne, Aunt Julia, at least, did not. Easy-going Mrs. Margrave had wondered mildly for two years how to adjust matters so that Anne's excellent qualities would receive the recognition they deserved. When opportunity offered, Aunt Julia settled the matter in two minutes.

This forceful woman arrived at the Margraves' one morning just as Rhea, flushed with vicarious triumph was graciously receiving over the telephone congratulations for the salad Anne had laboriously made for the school-board luncheon. Anne, shy and silent as usual, appeared limp and dejected. Rhea was saying, glibly:

"So glad you liked it! Oh, not at all hard to make. Yes, walnuts chopped very fine. Oh, mayonnaise—Anne, it was mayonnaise, wasn't it? Yes, mayonnaise dressing. Oh, thank you! It's very good of you to say so. Thank you!"

"Anne doesn't seem at all well this morning," said Mrs. Margrave, greeting Aunt Julia. "I've been wondering lately if I hadn't better take her away from school for a month. I think a little change would do her good."

"A great big change is what she needs," said Aunt Julia, drawing a letter from the large leather bag that dangled from her wide belt.—Aunt Julia's belongings were invariably substantial and of heroic size—"and she's going to get it. She's going to Bermuda with me tomorrow night."

"Bermuda!" gasped Mrs. Margrave and Rhea.

"Bermuda," echoed Anne.

"Yes, Bermuda. This letter's from your Uncle William's partner. William's been ordered to Bermudah to look after things for the firm for three months, and I'm going with him. So is Anne."

"Oh," began Rhea, eagerly, "Anne wouldn't care half—"

"I said Anne!" snapped Aunt Julia, who was as brusque as she was warm-hearted. "When I want to take you to Bermuda I'll say so. There, never mind, I didn't mean to be so short. I guess I'm edgewise this morning with so much to do. Have Anne ready, Mary, for the six o'clock train tomorrow night. Expenses! Bless you! This is my treat."

After two exceedingly busy days the Margraves settled down to life without Anne. Troubles began almost immediately for Rhea, who found herself face to face with the problem of living up to a reputation that did not belong to her, but that had nevertheless, become dear. It was not dishonesty, but pride, the kind of pride that is said to go before destruction, that moved Rhea to conceal the fact that she could not do the things that all the town appeared suddenly to demand from her.

"O Rhea," called one of her classmates the day after Anne's hurried departure, "mother wants you to make a big plateful of your delicious fudge for the candy-table at the fair tomorrow night. She tasted some that you gave Millie Rice, and she said it was the best fudge—"

"Anne really makes better fudge than I do," said Rhea, loath to confess that she herself had never made fudge of any quality. "Still, I'll do the best I can."

Rhea's best was not very good. The first batch went up in smoke; the second boiled over, much to the detriment of the gas stove. The third crumbled to bits in the pan.

"I'll make a decent lot of fudge if it takes all night!" declared Rhea, vigorously scouring the fudge kettle with the rasping wire dish cloth. "I will, I will, I will!"

And she did.

Next it was an embroidered doily for Margaret Sutton's "shower."

"It must be violets," said Hilda. "It's to match the luncheon set the girls are making. You do make such adorable violets!"

"Why," began Rhea, truthfully, "I never—"

Suddenly, however, she remembered the violet centerpiece she had supposedly embroidered for Hilda's mother, and deftly amended her reply. "I never did like to do violets," she said, "but I'll try."

She did try. When the first unflowerlike blossom was completed she asked her cousin Rob, who could be trusted for an unbiased opinion, what the purple blotch looked like to him.

"Well," said honest Robert, eying the attempted violet critically, "I should call it a very fair imitation of a smashed house-fly."

"It comes out!" said Rhea, snipping the stitches with her scissors. "I'll make violetty violets if I have to make a bushel of the horrid things before I get one perfect!"

"I'm not sure," admitted Rhea, ruefully.

"You can't imagine how I dread the winter. Don't tell anybody, but I'm sitting up nights to sustain a reputation that doesn't belong to me. I'm beginning to wish I'd never acquired it."

"Whose is it? Anne's?"

"Yes."

"Not for nut-cake."

"Yes, for nut-cake, geometry, fudge, embroidery, biology, pyrography, hemstitching, basket-weaving, bead work, everything that

WOODSTOCK, N. Y.

means hard work."

"Phew!" exclaimed Rob. "Yes, it is 'phew!' assented Rhea. "I hadn't an idea that Anne was so clever. I supposed that I was the smart one."

A week later Rhea rapped on the window as Rob was passing the house.

"Mercy, Rob," she cried, "come here, quick! I'm in a frightful pickle. We're to have a bit-or-miss review of all the last half of Caesar. All the Latin I know went to Bermuda with Anne, and you're my only hope. Come in and help me cram, while I stone raisins for the pie I'm to make for the school-board luncheon. It seems that I have a reputation for making mince pies. Oh, why was I so grasping?"

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave," quoted Rob, following Rhea to the library. "Why don't you just confess and be done with it? Why not let Anne have her thunder?"

"I won't. I want it myself. I'm going to deserve all the reputation I've acquired by proxy."

"But Anne—"

"Bother Anne!" said Rhea, crossly. "Do begin that vile Caesar."

As Rhea had prophesied, the winter proved trying. Naturally careless and always too hasty, the impulsive girl found it a stupendous undertaking to do tasks that required prolonged, painstaking effort. Anne was essential patient and persevering. Rhea was not, but thanks to her indomitable energy, by March the reputation that Anne had earned for her was honestly Rhea's. She had made her title clear by sheer grit.

Anne was coming in April, an everybody was doing things for her. Mrs. Margrave was making dainty underclothing, Cousin Bob was carving a book-shelf for Anne's room, Mr. Margrave had sent home a comfortable rocking chair with "For Anne" printed on a dangling card. Somehow, everybody seemed glad that Anne was coming. Rhea, grown taller and a trifle thinner, was plainly pondering some momentous question. She was absent-minded at meals, and sat for long moments gazing with unseeing eyes at the fire. It was not like Rhea to be thoughtful, yet for these weeks Rhea had been thinking. It worried Mrs. Margrave.

"Rhea, what are you going to do for Anne?" she asked, one day. "Have you made her anything?"

"I'm making it," said Rhea. "Don't ask about it, please. I'll tell you about it when it's finished. It's pretty hard work."

"To Mrs. Margrave's consternation Rhea's dark eyes filled suddenly with tears; she was not given, ordinarily, to tears.

"You're not working at night, I hope?" asked Mrs. Margrave, anxiously. "No, only daytimes," said Rhea, smiling through her tears. "It's all done but the finishing touches. I'm making a good job of it."

For twenty four hours Mrs. Margrave wondered what Rhea could be making for Anne.

She had not sewed a stitch, nor had she purchased material of any kind, unless one could call postage-stamps material—certainly Rhea had bought an unusual number of stamps. Still, the family connection was large, and Rhea, perhaps, was making a wholesale business of answering neglected letters.

When Rhea came in the next day her eyes were shining and she was humming a gay little tune. Mrs. Margrave knew that the girl was ready to answer questions.

"What have you made for Anne?" she asked abruptly.

"A reputation," said Rhea. "Or at any rate I've given her the one that rightfully belonged to her. Anne is a dividend-paying stock today."

"How did you do it?"

"Fessed up," said Rhea. "By words of mouth to everybody in town and by tremendous letters out of town. I've repudiated any share in any of the things that Anne had ever made or done. I told everybody that it was Anne, Anne, Anne that was clever, and I that was stupid and lazy. That until last November I was merely a fraud, a sware and a delusion. That I was just a little trashy Christmas-tree ornament in the shop-window, and that Anne was the diamond in the fire-proof safe inside. Told them that I was the frosting and that Anne was the cake. That I was just a little parlor fixed up for company and that Anne was the whole comfortable house. That I was the froth on top of the wash water, but that Anne was the suds—"

"Rhea!" gasped Mrs. Margrave.

"Well, not just that, of course, but words to that effect. And now I'm standing on my own feet and Anne's all solid on hers; and I do feel so relieved and so delightfully honest."

"How did they take it?"

"Well, to tell the truth, most of them said they'd always suspected it; but I don't care. My clear conscience is such a compensation!"

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