The Story Page.

Closed Doors.

BY AGNES E. WILSON.

Her mother had gone, and Loreen Elliott, who had watched the carriage out of sight, turned from the gate and went back to the house with a rather sober face. It did not brighten either as she set about making tidy the rooms thrown into disorder by the hurried departure.

"Aunt Belle is always fancying herself ill," she muttered, ungraciously, "and of course she must have mother. If she were really sick, I wouldn't mind; but I believe she imagines half of it."

To do Loreen justice, she would not have made any such remark had she had any other audience than her golden canary, who turned his head to one side and regarded her critically. She was ashamed in a minute, too, that she had even said it to herself.

"Poor Aunt Bell," she murmured, in a softened tone, "I should want mamma, too, if I were only ever so little sick. But I don't believe it is wholly selfish of me to wish that mother hadn't had to go away just now." The canary chirruped sympathetically, and Loreen, who had been looking at himabsent mindedly, laughed a little.

"Oh, you needn't pretend that you know anything about it, Dickie bird," she said sticking her fingers through the brass bars of the cage, "you don't begin to know anything about all my lovely plans being spoiled. Well, Dickie, we've got to make the best of it and keep this house in living order for father and the boys, and attend to the pickling and preserving, and numerous other duties, which no doubt will fully employ us without attempting to entertain company. It's fortunate I didn't get those notes sent off before the telegram came; but why, oh why, did things happen this way?"

The same question pursued her as she went on with her work in her thorough going way. Loreen was disappointed. In her desk upstairs lay three dainty notes addressed to as many shopgirls in the city not far away, asking them to spend the days of their vacation at her home. A friend in the city, who knew the girls personally, had recommended them to her, and had further promised to see that they should have their vacation at the same time. Her mother and she had taken great pleasure in planning for the entertainment of their guests, and they had meant to make it a long-to-be-remembered pleasure. Nothing had been done hastily, or without due consideration. They had taken care that the invited guests should be those who would be most benefitted by the visit, and it had seemed to Loreen that it was a good and beautiful thing to do.

And now it was out of the question. Loreen, who at first had half thought that she might undertake to carry through the plan without her mother's assistance, was forced to admit that it was impossible. The work, which had seemed light enough for two pairs of deft hands, was an absorbing task when all depended upon her own efforts. Guests would be an added burden which it would be impossible for her to bear, even with the assistance of a servant. Loreen could not "manage" as her mother did.

So, with a long-drawn sigh, the young girl gave up her cherished plan. The sigh was not for herself either, although she had promised herself great pleasure only as she found it in giving them a glimpse of brightness. She had told herself gladly that she meant it as a "cup of cold water in the name of a disciple." And now she was not permitted to offer it.

Better thoughts came, however, before the work was all done. Her cup of cold water must be given by loving service at home. Perhaps Aunt Belle needed the service as much as the shopgirls. It was not God's way to have her serve Him. She must be content with knowing that.

She could not help telling Aunt Milly about it, though. Aunt Milly was aunt to the entire village, and knowing that Loreen was alone, she dropped in that afternoon to see that she should not feel lonely.

"It seemed such a beautiful opportunity," Loreen said regretfully. "And now the door is closed, and I don't know whether it will ever be open for me again."

"Well, dearie," Aunt Milly replied, cheerily, "when the Lord closes the door, don't waste your energies in beating against it. It may open for you again; if it doesn't, you must be content to walk in the path where He leads you."

"It isn't myself," Loreen said, slowly. "Of course the girls didn't know I was going to invite them, but I feel some way as if I couldn't bear to have them lose the pleasure I had planned for them. It isn't so hard, of course, as if I had been obliged to disappoint them, but I know I could have given them such a happy time."

"Yes, I know," Aunt Milly agreed, warmly. "I know you could have made them happy, Loreen. But don't feel badly about it, dear. Remember that it was His own hand that closed the door.

Somehow Loreen felt comforted. She would not allow herself to feel disappointed after that. It was too much like beating against the door which God's own hand had closed.

But Aunt Milly, too, wondered a little about it.

"I wonder," she said to herself, reverently, 'If He didn't close this door to Loreen Elliott just so as to open it to somebody else; somebody who needs to walk that way more than Loreen does."

The thought seemed to take possession of her. She could not get away from it.

"It isn't any harm to try," she said at last looking for the hundredth time at the breezy mansion on the hill, and thinking of the widowed owner who lived her life of sorrow there alone. "If Helen Travis could take an interest in something like that, it would be the best thing for her. If I succeed, Loreen will forgive me for violating her confidence. If I don't, she will never know it, unless I tell her."

She must have told her story effectively, and used her arts of persuasion well. Perhaps Mrs. Travis was ready to turn toward the open door; at least it was Mrs. Travis herself who surprised Loreen by a call on the following day

"I shall have to tell on Aunt Milly," she said, brightly, "but she told me about your disappointment in not being able to entertain some young people whom you had planned to invite this summer. Would you be willing to help me make things bright for them if I should invite them instead?' You see"—she glanced down at her widow's weeds.

Loreen met her with quick sympathy "Oh, Mrs. Travis! It is so lovely of you to think of it! Are you sure you won't mind?'

A quick spasm of pain passed over Mrs. Travis' face

"I did not think of it, Loreen," she said in a low voice, "and I am afraid I am going to 'mind' very much. That is why I must depend upon you for the brightness. Perhaps," she added, regaining her composure, "you and I can together make them have a pleasant time, although it will be nothing like your delightful family circle."

Loreen thought differently. Her quick imagination grasped the delights which Mrs Travis' elegant home offered to the expected guests, and she was ready to believe that their visit could be made more pleasant than in her own more modest one. She entered upon an eager discussion of what she had meant to do with her caller, who found herself more interested than she had been in anything since her sorrow came upon her.

"He has opened the door," Loreen said to herself with glad reverence, as Mrs. Travis went away with the names of the girls she had meant to invite. "And it was only closed to make possible a larger opportunity. I wonder," she mused, "if that isn't the way with a good many of the doors which his hand closes."

Even Loreen did not see how large the new opportunity was. The weeks of the visitors' stay were all that she had hoped or planned. With the help of Aunt Milly's planning, who felt in duty bound to assist her to find time for the guests, Loreen was able to spend much of the time of their too short visit in assisting Mrs. Travis in their entertainment.

So absorbed was she in her interest in the guests that she scarcely noted the changed attitude of the hostess. She could not understand that it was a sacrifice for Mrs. Travis to lay aside her widow's weeds and put on white house dresses, during their stay, that she might not cloud their happiness by reminding them of her sorrow. She did not realize either that the healing balm of a new interest was soothing the sorrow of a wounded heart. Loreen was too unused to grief to think of these things.

But one day when the visitors were gone and Loreen and Mrs. Travis stood together, the girl was surprised when her new friend, who had grown very dear, suddenly grasped her hand

"Loreen," she said, impulsively, "do you know what this has done for me?"

Before Loreen could answer, she went on hurriedly, "You don't, of course. You never have known sorrow. God grant its shadows may be far from you. But, Loreen, these few weeks have shown me that I have something to live for yet. I have been so selfish in my sorrow, that I didn't see how much I had left to share with others. Aunt Milly told me the story of your disappointment, but I didn't see then that I was beating against the door which God closed when he sent my sorrow. These few weeks have helped me to realize that there is still an open door of opportunity for me."

Loreen turned to her friend with tears in her eyes.

"Mrs. Travis," she said under her breath, "don't you suppose that some day we shall know enough to praise him for the doors he closes?"—American Messenger.

The Old Cooky Woman.

BY L. M. MONTGOMERY.

Bert Macdonald and Archie Adams were talking together on the Academy campus at Millboro. Ellis Saunders had just gone past with his books under his arm. They watched his straight, well set-up figure down the elm-shaded street.

"What does Ellis mean to do when he graduates?" asked Bert. "Go to college?"

"No. He is going right to work if he can find anything to do," answered Archie. "He has applied for that position in the Steel Manufacturing Company that Jack Wallace had."

"He hasn't much chance there. Neil Blair is almost sure of that. His father has a pull,' he says."

"Well, I'm not so sure about that as Neil is. Mr. Burgess is the man who has most to say in the matter, and I've been given to understand that he doesn't altogether favor Neil. Thinks his Academy record isn't just what such a responsible employe's ought to be, I imagine. But there are other applicants, all of them with some influence at their backs, and some of them just as competent as Ellis. He hasn't any one to push his claims."

"Well, Ellis is a fine fellow," said Bert heartily, "and I hope he'll get something else if this goes against him. Burgess is an odd ticket, anyway. They say you never can tell what he's going to do till he does it; but they have great faith in his judgment. I must be off. A fellow musn't waste time with exams only two weeks off."

Meanwhile, Ellis Saunders had gone to his boarding-house in a brown study. He had been talking to Allan Burgess, the captain of the Academy foot-ball team and Burgess had told him that a match had been arranged between the "Invincibles" and the Sheffield High School "Wayfarers," to be played at Sheffield, fifty miles distant, in a week's time.

"Dr. Whidden has given us a holiday for it and all the Academy boys must go for the honor of Millboro. We'll have a regular celebration—especially if we wipe the 'Wayfarers' out of existence, as we fondly hope to do," he concluded, with a laugh.

Ellis did not respond as enthusiastically as usual. His face had flushed slightly at the mention of Sheffield, and he listened rather absently to Burgess' details. Just before they parted the latter said:

"You've applied for the position in the steel works, haven't you, Saunders?'

Ellis nodded.

"Thought as much from the questions father has been asking me about you. Was glad my answers could be favorable. Hope you'll get it."

"I don't expect it in the least," said Ellis, rather curtly.

Burgess shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you never can tell. Father's as close as a steel trap. Neil Blair has lots of 'pull,' and there's a Stanton fellow from Shattuck that father likes. Still, I think you've a good fighting chance, Saunders."

At first Ellis wondered if he could escape going to the football match. He decided that he could not, and then told himself firmly that he was a cad to want to go.

Ellis belonged to Sheffield. Allen Burgess did not know that; not many of the Academy boys knew it. Indeed, it was surprising how little they did know about Ellis Saunders, in spite of the fact that he had many friends and was one of the most popular boys in school. They could not even have told if he were poor or well off. He dressed neatly, belonged to two or three societies, and always contributed his share to any Academy project.

On the day of the football match the train that left Millboro in the morning was crowded with very hilarious boys. Every academician who could stand on his legs went down to Sheffield, and one or two unfortunate lads who were sick and could not go thought that there was really nothing worth living for.

Ellis Saunders was, perhaps, the only one who did not enjoy himself. He was very quiet and abstracted. His chums concluded that he was not feeling well and left him to himself.

When the train reached Sheffield the High School boys were down to receive the "Invincibles" in state. The two teams greeted each other frantically and then all hurried to the football grounds, for it was almost time for the game to begin.

Sheffield was a small village, but there were a great many people in it, judging from the crowd around the grounds. Everywhere Ellis encountered faces he knew. He nodded pleasantly and sometimes stopped to speak, but his eyes roved over the scene as if seeking for something else. Presently he gave a little sigh of relief.

"She can't have come," he thought. "I suppose I'm a cad to feel relieved. Still—before all those fellows—and Allan Burgess and Nelson Evans, too! I'll go up and see her after the game is over, of course."

When the match was fairly on even Ellis forgot everything else. The Millboro boys ranged themselves on one side and cheered and shouted themselves hoarse. The Sheffield lads did the same on the other side. The con-