

WHAT WAS HIS ANSWER?

BY GERTRUDE SMITH.

"Why, sister, isn't this our birthday?"

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"I declare it completely slipped my mind, so much so that I never failed before to stir up a cake. I'd never it myself."

"Oh, yes, I remembered it. I couldn't well forget it with such a fine present coming to us."

The sisters were sitting on either side of a wide open fire in high back chairs. So exactly alike were they in form and feature and dress that only one who knew them well could have told them apart.

Their fingers were busy with knitting. Jane's work was a scarlet and orange Afghan. Hulda was rounding off the toe of a pair of gray woolen stockings.

In the center of the room by the claw-legged table a young girl sat, apparently reading, though her eyes rested on the two figures before her.

"What present did you get, Jane?"

Hulda stopped her work and looked over her glasses. Jane smiled and nodded her head toward the young girl seated by the table.

The tall clock that stood on the winding staircase at the end of the long drawing room struck 11. The three started and looked around, and the girl threw down her book and sprang to her feet, laughing.

"Father Time has come to life," she said. "He objects to our being so quiet. Come, Aunt Hulda, let us do something to celebrate Aunt Jane's birthday. Aunt Jane, what shall we do to celebrate Aunt Hulda's birthday?"

The eyes of the two elder ladies were fixed on the clock and they made no answer. The girl came and stood on the hearth rug, and, stooping, took Jane's face between her small, plump hands and kissed her. Then, catching up the Afghan, she ran down the room and up the stairs, and threw it over the face of the clock. The sisters laughed merrily.

"That was the hour we two came into the world," said Hulda. "You can't say but it was rather startling to have the old clock ring out that hour. It hasn't made a move to my knowledge since you went away, Amy."

"Oh, well, it just happened, Aunt Hulda. Amy answered with the happy carelessness of youth. "Besides, it isn't 1 o'clock now, it is only 7:30." She danced across the room and seated herself at the piano. "Come, Aunt Jane, let us sing something."

"Why, child, I sing beautifully."

"I'm afraid you forget that we've grown old since you went away. People don't sing much as a rule when they are 60."

The girl wheeled about on the music stool and shook her finger at the covered clock.

"You have done this," she said. "You pretended to be sitting there doing nothing all these years, but you've proven to-night that you're up to your old tricks, running away with the years."

The sisters laughed again.

"You used to stand and talk to that clock when you didn't care for the drops of the weights, Amy," said Hulda.

"We've a long account to settle," Amy answered, shaking her head. "To come home and find you both so quiet and complaining of growing old, when we used to have such good times! Shall I get some knitting and sit down in the parlor and knit old, too?"

Hulda rolled up her work and stood up.

"I suppose we do seem changed, child," she said, anxiously. "What can we do to amuse her, Jane?"

"Don't mind what I say, dears. You are so pretty and picturesque sitting there in those high-backed chairs by that grand old fireplace. I'll get my sketchbook out and make a sketch of you."

"We might dance the minuet," said Jane, standing by her sister's side. "That used to amuse her greatly when she was a child."

"Oh, do," cried Amy. "I'd forgotten about your dotting your feet on the piano. She turned to the piano and began the merry music of the minuet. Daintily the two little old ladies stepped forward in time to the music. Their small faces at first were grave with the desire to please, but presently the melody entered their hearts. Their faces lost the dull line of years and shone with the pleasure of youth.

Jane's hair fell out of coil and hung in soft silver curls about her face. Hulda picked up her skirts and tripped airily away, showing her trim little feet in blue embroidered slippers.

"You do it even better than you used to!" Amy cried, clapping her hands as the music came to an end. "I never saw any one more graceful and pretty than you two are! Sixty isn't old! Why, you could go to Washington and be the belles of the season yet if you only wanted to! You have just stayed here in the country and you haven't any idea how lovely you are."

The sisters looked at each other and smiled. Jane slipped her hand into Hulda's.

"We haven't been discontented, or I suppose we would have made a venture out into the world," she said.

"I wish you would make a venture this winter," said Amy, seriously. "There is no need of our staying here. Uncle James says he has invited you repeatedly to come to Washington. I said I'd stay all winter, but I don't believe I can, it is so lonely."

"We have never been lonely," said Hulda, after a short silence, "but of course we've always had the thought that you were coming to live with us when you finished school. It will be different when you go away this time."

"Amy ran and threw her arms around them."

"It is a beautiful home, dears, and you know I love you both as though you were my mothers, but it is so still and solemn here, and you know I haven't been used to it."

"We might recite her some of the plays, Hulda," said Jane.

"Yes, I'm sure that would amuse her," said Hulda. "I hope you don't think, Amy, that we are women who settle down and spend all our time and mind on our work."

The two left the room, and Amy was presently surprised by their returning dressed in costume. With the first lines she knew they were dressed to represent Portia and Nerissa. With surprising ability in recitation and action they went through the well known scene from the "Merchant of Venice."

"They could not have had a more appreciative audience."

Amy recalled them again and again with a storm of applause.

The two little ladies had used the years of their solitude and leisure in learning from beginning to end a number of plays of Shakespeare, and for amusement had brought several chests of costumes, and before the long mirrors of the drawing room had acted many parts together.

When they again appeared to Amy from an inner room they were in the costume of Rosalind and Celia in the forest of Arden. So perfect was their presentation of this part that it certainly entered the borderland of art.

"Bravo!" cried Amy in great excitement. "We'll not go to Washington, we'll have our own little theatre in the country. We'll have a number of plays and the gayest home party that was ever known in the country."

To this plan Hulda and Jane gave slow consent.

A month later every guest chamber in the fine old country house was occupied. The news of his sisters' wonderful accom-

plishments drew the beloved brother in Washington to the home he had not visited for twenty years.

They were mostly the brother's friends and Amy, who made the place gay with laughter and song.

But one room was reserved for a guest whom Hulda and Jane had specially invited. It was late one evening after all the others had retired that he arrived. Amy was greatly amused and surprised the next morning when she met on the stair one of the nearest neighbors—an old gentleman who lived just across the country road.

"Why, Mr. Weston!" she exclaimed, "are you the guest of honor?"

He was a tall, handsome man with a most dignified bearing.

"I've always been an honored guest in this house," he replied, holding out his hand. "The girls thought I couldn't really be one of the party unless I closed my house and came over bag and baggage. Now, if you don't mind, Amy, just keeping it to yourself, let them think I'm a dignitary from some remote quarter of the globe, and they will appreciate me, but if they know I'm John Weston, who lives across the road, I'll figure for a simpleton."

"No, indeed, you wouldn't," Amy laughed. "You'll be the life of the party. I hoped you'd come over every day, as you always do, but it will be so much nicer to have you in the house."

Half an hour later, when the merry party had gathered at the breakfast table, the guest of honor was presented. No one had



SHE TURNED TO THE PIANO AND BEGAN THE MUSIC OF THE MINUET.

ever a truer gift of conversation than John Weston. He naturally assumed the position of his long friendship with the family and it was noticed that Hulda and Jane deferred to him in all things, as though they were used to depending on his judgment.

The following day it was rumored that the sisters intended giving the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet" in their first appearance before their guests.

Amy had been out sleighing all the afternoon with a number of the young people and had not known that her aunts intended representing these juvenile lovers. The drawing room was being set in readiness for the amusement when the party returned.

John Weston, acting as stage architect, was hanging a picture screen against the winding staircase. "I'll have to run over home and get my scenery with the woodbine," he was saying to the man who was assisting him.

There was a burst of merry laughter in the doorway.

"Oh, Mr. Weston, what are you doing?" Amy exclaimed, running forward. "Aunt Jane and I are sure you can't run Romeo and Juliet!"

"Can't they? Wait till you see them try it. You heard me say that I live across the road, didn't you?" he added, smiling at the young people who had followed Amy into the room. "Well, we need both houses to circle around in anyway."

With a girl on each arm John Weston presently went down the snow-beaten path and across the road to his own home among the evergreens.

"I asked you who lived here the other day," said one of the girls, "and she said: 'An old gentleman who spent all his time with his bookshelves.' I've been so interested wondering what you were like. What made you keep it secret that you lived here?"

"But this is such a beautiful home!"

"There isn't a finer interior in the country," said John Weston proudly.

"Do you live here all alone?"

"Well, I'm over the way a great deal, and she is over here."

"Oh, how artistic! The other of the girls exclaimed as they entered the hall. "You've been abroad. Only people who travel have houses that look like this."

"I have been in every country that I ever heard of," John Weston replied, smiling. "Now just room around and make yourselves at home."

One of the girls wandered away, but the other sat down and fixed her bright eyes on the erect old man before her.

"What is that it, my child?" he asked.

"Will you think I am very rude if I ask you something?"

"No, indeed; you may ask me anything you please."

"Do you love both of them just the same?"

John Weston's face flushed like a boy's; smiling, he answered sufficient," he asked.

"But how do you know? They are just alike. None of us can tell them apart."

"They are no more alike than you and I," he replied gravely.

"I suppose I shall know which it is if I wait patiently," the girl said with a pert little toss of her head.

"Never!" John Weston answered quickly; but if you live long enough you may know what friendship is when it is free from selfishness."

The guests gathered in the long drawing room that evening were prepared for nothing more amusing than a play. But when they could see Jane's supreme endeavor of love? How could a little old lady of 60 be other than amusing as the ardent young Montague?

The room was but faintly lighted when from the garb the thickest young Romeo stopped. His first words held his listeners' attention: "He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

If Jane and Hulda Wainright had employed their years in earnest efforts to win the attention of an admiring public they could not have succeeded more completely than they had in private study for their own pleasure and improvement. The old house rang with applause as the scene came to an end.

This was the beginning of a series of entertainments. Surely a month like this had never been spent in the country. The sleighing was perfect. The wind blew the river bare for miles. Every morning a party of skaters were seen gliding in and out between the wooded banks.

John Weston was the leader of the outdoor sports. Skating was a pastime he had clung to with the enthusiasm of his boyhood. It was good to see the hale old

gentleman in his fur-trimmed coat and cap gliding on before with an ease of motion that only years of river skating can perfect.

The mystery of untold love that hovered about him made him of continual interest to the young people. The girl who had dared to question him wove many pretty little romances, in which Jane and Hulda alternately appeared as heroines. She watched the sisters closely, hoping to read the secret in one of their faces, but the brown eyes of each wore the same gentle confidence whenever they spoke with their friend.

One evening, when the moon was full, several of the party had gone down the river to skate for an hour or two. The later hours were to be spent in dancing, and the drawing room was being put in readiness. While they were buckling on their skates Amy proposed a race.

"I'll race the party," said John Weston. "Age against youth. If one reaches the bridge before me I'll pay any forfeit he may ask."

They rounded the wooded point, and were off for a clear half-mile to the bridge. After the first few minutes the competition rested between two.

Amy and John Weston were speeding on together. Shouting and cheers followed them. The white arch of the stone bridge was but a few rods ahead! Now Amy was in advance waving her muff above her head! A moment later they had reached the bridge and were resting in the shadow.

"Well, little girl, what is my forfeit to be?" John Weston asked.

"No, indeed, you wouldn't," Amy laughed. "You'll be the life of the party. I hoped you'd come over every day, as you always do, but it will be so much nicer to have you in the house."

Half an hour later, when the merry party had gathered at the breakfast table, the guest of honor was presented. No one had

SALT LAKE MINING CONVENTION.

Anticipation of a Good Meeting of the Western Miners.

SALT LAKE, Utah, May 24.—(Special.)—The following statement of the progress made in preparations for the International Mining Congress in this city commencing July 6, has been made by W. D. Johnson, chairman of the executive committee:

"We are meeting with hearty support from all over the country, and the prospects are that the convention will be the largest of its kind ever held. We expect about 2,000 delegates, not from the country only, but from many of the leading nations of the world. The program committee is working hard on the program, which will be ready for publication in a few weeks. There will be several very important matters to come before the convention which will have a decided moral effect upon the mining industry. A committee was appointed last year to present to congress a plan for making a Mines and Mining department, the head of the same to have a position on the president's cabinet. That committee will report what it has accomplished."

"Another committee was appointed to codify the mining laws. This is a very important matter, as it is well known that in some parts of the United States mining laws are open to criticism. During the convention a movement will be set on foot to bring together the mining laws of the different states and districts. The idea is to have all the laws as near alike as possible. Concentrated action is wanted to bring about harmony. Some of the features of the program that bear upon our products are:—

"1. The review of cases by appellate proceedings in this court, the transcript being filed in this court before the district court. It will be presumed that the facts there disclosed were of such character as to warrant the judgment rendered."

"2. If a bill of exceptions discloses that important evidence has been therefrom omitted, authentication of the bill that it contains the evidence will not control, and in such case the finding will not be disturbed as unsupported by the evidence."

"3. Twining against Finley. Appeal from Douglas county. Affirmed. Norval J. Evidence held insufficient to establish the defense of payment of court."

"4. The failure of an assessor to attach his oath to, and return the same with, the assessment roll are irregularities merely, which do not affect the validity of the tax. Leeder against State. Error from Douglas county. Reversed and dismissed. Norval J."

"In this state a decree awarding permanent alimony is enforceable in the same manner as judgments at law."

"Twining against Finley. Appeal from Dawson county. Affirmed. Ryan C."

"Where a party defendant gave his promissory note in renewal of his past due note which had been given party in consideration of the conveyance to him of certain lots by the payee named on both notes, such maker cannot defend an action against him on the renewal note by showing that at the time when said renewal note was executed the payee promised to cancel improvements to be made which would increase the value of the said lots, and the renewal note is not subject to cancellation being subsequent to the date when the renewal note is in the hands of the assignee thereof before due by showing that at the time when said renewal note was executed the payee promised to cancel improvements to be made which would increase the value of the said lots, and the renewal note is not subject to cancellation being subsequent to the date when the renewal note is in the hands of the assignee thereof before due by showing that at the time when said renewal note was executed the payee promised to cancel 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