

A QUESTION of SERVICE.

BY EDITH WYATT



Indeed, on one of these occasions, she told a certain sympathetic lady among the customers that she had a cousin—this seemed more delicate—who was a fireman, and so, of course, she was worried to death whenever there was a fire.

This customer was an influential lady, a serene, kind, rich person, regarded as almost indispensable to civilization by many women and girls. She was able to persuade them to do almost anything, more, it must be acknowledged, by the dignity of her presence than by the power of her thought, which was of the most soothing and casual nature, and made no pretense of being convincing.

She used to come with her daughter's children to buy candy for them; and on these occasions Annie would talk to her about her niece and nephews; how her eldest niece had hair reaching below her waist; how they were all such perfect cut-ups; how on April Fool's day they

made some chocolates with cotton batting inside, and gave them to a friend of hers—it had been Mr. Murphy; how they were just in mischief all the time, and how her youngest nephew took the prize at a baby show.

Mrs. La Grange on her side made appreciative monosyllabic replies. She was so pleased with Annie that she invited her to come to see her and to bring her nephews and nieces to play with her daughter's children.

That day was so oppressively warm that the streets were empty and almost still; the grass of the empty lots was gray and parched, and the dust was thick on the roads and on the burning asphalt pavements; the few people they met had handkerchiefs tucked in their necks, and a man passing on a bicycle stopped and sat on the curb to fan himself with a newspaper. The children's arrangements of their turns under their aunt's new white satin parasol had just been fairly

decided, and they were approaching the corner where the eldest child must give up her place, when there sounded on the heavy air the startling, hurrying clang of a fire bell.

People put their heads out of the windows; they rushed from all sides; they looked north and south and east and west; they peered up and down the cross streets, and then they saw and heard, far down the street, a rattling, glittering mass, the swept manes and heading gait of galloping horses, and amidst smoke clouds and clanging, in a furious whirl of brass and scarlet, a leviathan fire engine rolled past, reverberating. Two more engines rumbled fiercely behind, like chariots in a terrific chariot race, with enormous plunging horses, and helmeted firemen straining forward on the front seats. Little boys chased behind through the stifling clouds of dust, stumbling and whistling and yelling in an ecstasy of excitement, and a hurrying crowd walked and ran in their wake.

In this crowd Annie and the children were swept, just as they were always swept when there was a fire in their neighborhood, but this time with an especial enthusiasm, for high up on the front of the jarring hook and ladder wagon that closed the procession they saw Mr. Murphy. What was more remarkable, in all the crowd and in his rushing passage he had seen them and touched his helmet and smiled magnificently at them.

And it seemed only fitting when they reached the object of so rapid a chase, led by engines so glorious, that this should be a raging fire in a building so given up to it that its square lines and flat front were seen wavering and almost hidden in clouds of black smoke, with sheets of flame rising from its roof and brilliant tongues darting from its lower windows.

But that impulse of excitement which had drawn them to it as to an exhilarating spectacle received a cold and dizzying shock when they saw standing on the doorstep of a house opposite a stocky, grim-faced old Irish woman, her face white and her hands shaking, straining her absorbed gaze at one of the windows of the stricken building, where a little group of factory girls was occasionally and dimly visible through the mists of the smoke.

The people in the crowd were making frantic and helpless gestures; they stretched out their arms to the girls; they called to them not to jump—to wait. The girls were quiet and clinging together, apparently in a panic of dumb and hopeless horror.

The engines were already playing, and the steam from the jets of water drew a thicker and thicker veil of white mist, occasionally blown aside by a light and rising wind, between the clamoring people below and the isolated girl above. The old woman pressed her hands against her head. "My Kitty! My Kitty!" she groaned monotonously over and over again.

They heard the rattling of the hooks and ladders through the chuffing steam and the murmuring crowd, and then in the blowing smoke they saw two men set the top of the ladder against the row of windows marking the floor next below that where the girls were. They could not put it higher, for the fire had curled up around the sill above, and evidently the smoke was becoming stifling there, for the girls put their heads farther out of the window.

They could see Mr. Murphy's long body hurrying up the ladder; he stood on the top rung and steadied himself with one hand on a projecting rain pipe. The girls began to speak and to cling together then, and the old woman stopped moaning. He held out his right arm and said: "Just drop away," they could hear him call; the girl pressed closest to the window casing got out and poised giddily on the sill. "Hang by your hands!" he shouted; she clambered down, hung, and dropped safe and plumb, caught in his arm.

The ladder trembled, the crowd yelled hoarsely, and the girl, dizzy and white, was helped down by the other firemen to the crowded sidewalk, where the old woman, her mother, stood, now in a paroxysm of joy, pressing her hands together, blessing the saints, blessing the firemen, with tears pouring down her cheeks.

When the last frantic girl was safe on the ground Murphy turned around to the hurrying, weeping people, and climbed down the ladder. They shook his hand, some of them kissed it, they wept over him; they cheered for him; they carried him on their shoulders.

It cannot be said that Mr. Murphy knew so well how to behave on this occasion as he knew how to behave in distributing the prizes of the Elks or in leading the grand march. He hung his head and even growled when the old woman kissed his hand, and wished they wouldn't do it; and when he observed Kitty and her parent excitedly approaching him he longed more than for anything else to be able to get out of their way.

But when he saw on the outskirts of the people pressing around him Annie and the little McGarrigles, laughing and crying, it occurred to him with thrilling conviction that this incident would give him a considerable pull over Mr. O'Mara and Mr. Sullivan. His hope was not vain.

"I'm afraid I won't see you any more in the candy store," Annie said to Mrs. La Grange on the next day over the counter.

Mrs. La Grange made a low, dignified sound, expressive of regret and inquiry.

"I ain't going to be here after the first of the month," continued Annie. "I'm going to be married. I'll be sorry not to see you so often. I started to see you Saturday, but I didn't get the time."

"I'm glad you didn't come," said Mrs. La Grange. It had, indeed, been the afternoon of her paper at the club.

"I got caught in that big fire. Did you see about it in the newspapers?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. La Grange. It was not a part of her Christian Science philosophy to acknowledge that flames might be painful, but she was sometimes startled into moments of sanity and inconsistency. "That brave fireman who caught the girls—I thought of your cousin at the time—I hope he wasn't in it."

Annie looked down at the candy box she was filling; the tears crowded to her eyes.

"That was him," she said.

Mrs. La Grange's heart beat with sympathetic pride. "Why, Annie!" she said.

"It's him I'm going to marry, too," said Annie, glancing distantly about the shop with shining eyes.

"He certainly deserves to be made happy," said Mrs. La Grange. "And you, Annie, you know how much I hope you will be happy, dear child."

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said Annie, with humble confidence. "He's lots too good for me."

Meanwhile two young girls, admirers of Mrs. La Grange, had come up from the end of the store.

"I've felt proud of being a Chicagoan ever since yesterday," said one.

"Yes, indeed," said the other. They were referring to Mrs. La Grange's paper.

But Mrs. La Grange's head was so full of fire that she honestly misunderstood them. She was absorbed in the sense of something finer, more helpful toward progress than any paper she had ever dreamed.

"Yes," she answered, "I don't see how anything could be more inspiring than such a perfect and humble courage."

"SOMETHING FINER, MORE HELPFUL TOWARD PROGRESS THAN ANY PAPER SHE HAD EVER DREAMED"

THOMPSON



(Copyright, 1900.)

Literary Furor? Well Rather!
E.W. TOWNSEND
 the Famous Author of
Chimmie Fadden
 Will Make His Debut as a Writer for
 The Sunday Call
 Next Sunday.

On the most crowded part of State street, Chicago, is a beautiful candy store.

It stands, gay and glittering, in the midst of all the hurrying and nervous anxiety of shoppers and of business men, and it is just as gay and as glittering when the air is richly yellow with damp, soft-coal smoke, when all the women's skirts are drabbed and when every one is either dragging despondently or hurrying distractedly as it is when the walks look wide and clean, when the air blows free and cool from the lake, when the women have on white gloves and every one seems to be taking a pleasant promenade.

It is decorated with pink and white stucco and silver, like a birthday cake or a paper-lace valentine, and it has a gleaming marble floor and dazzling mirrors, plainly visible from the outside through the broad, high windows. But all this pink and white, these beveled glasses and lustrous floors are only the shrine of what lies in long rows on the showcases. This is sometimes balls of rich, smooth, black chocolate; sometimes twists of pale, creamy molasses; sometimes dignified columns of shining, striped crimson and white peppermint sticks and

sometimes chaste, snowy squares of opera caramels, looking doubtless much as manna looked, but revealing to the taste the ethereal sweetness of the ambrosia of the ecstatic gods. Inside, of course, there are lavender, candied violet leaves and pink, candied rose leaves, whose flavor is doubtless much like that of the pearl dissolved in wine and which are probably bought only by people who choose their pleasures rather than from a degenerate esthetic ambition than from a healthy, natural taste.

Amid the mingled fragrances of these condiments and of nuts, raisins and sugared almonds move lightly and gracefully numbers of extremely pretty shopgirls; and of all these shopgirls the very prettiest was Annie O'Grady.

Annie O'Grady had the sunniest smile, the deepest dimples, the bluest eyes, the fluffiest brown hair, the most fairy-like figure, the whitest apron and the pinkest shirt waist.

Her days she spent in smilingly tying up boxes of candy, always hospitably handing out a piece to the customer before she closed the box; in tripping about with a tray of ice cream soda water, in allowing children to choose their purchases by tasting them and in tactfully guiding men, doubting over offerings to young girls, into the judicious path of mixed chocolates.

Her evenings and her holidays she spent in the attendance of butchers and grocers' picnics in Ogden's Grove, and of the Elks', the Foresters' and the firemen's balls, masquerades and dancing parties, at the numerous and pressing invitations of the happy young milkman, floor walkers and firemen honored with her acquaintance and favor.

She lived with a married sister, to whom she gave almost all her wages, and of whose crowded Irish flat she was the light and joy; and justly, for she was so good that she used to take numbers

of her little nieces and nephews with her when she went to walk in the park with Mr. Murphy or Mr. Sullivan on Sundays.

This, too, was not because she was apathetic to the charms of these gentlemen, for, indeed, Mr. Murphy, who was widely popular among his brother firemen and even in the social circles of the police, absorbed most of her reflections.

Mr. Murphy was a large dark blue Irishman, with very square shoulders and a very long waist. He had quick, gray blue eyes, a small top for his head, an enormous face and a long upper lip, covered with a deep black cataract of mustache. He used almost always to lead the grand march at the Elks' ball, and he often awarded the prizes for the wheelbarrow race, the three-legged race and the fat men's race at the picnics at Ogden's Grove. It was a grand sight to see him swooping down a room in a two-step with a high-stepping, prancing gait, holding his partner's hand lightly and proudly between his finger and thumb, or cutting a pigeon wing after elegantly handing a partner back in allemande left. Besides these material exterior advantages he possessed the innate spiritual charm of good nature. He used to lunge at and tickle the nieces and nephews when they appeared ready for a walk instead of looking slightly sullen and morose, as Mr. Sullivan and Mr. O'Mara sometimes did.

Annie used to think with pleasure of his arrival whenever she had a new hat or a new collar; and she felt an especial, even a proprietary, interest when she heard the fire bells clanging.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

DR. CHARLES FLESH FOOD
 For the Form and Complexion.

Has been successfully used by leading actresses, singers and models of fashion for more than 25 years.

Wherever applied it is instantly absorbed into the pores of the skin, and its wonderful nutrition feeds the wasting tissues.

Removing Pimples
 As if by magic, one application often showing a remarkable improvement.

DR. CHARLES FLESH FOOD is positively the only preparation known to medical science that will round out hollows in the neck and produce firm, healthy flesh on the cheeks, arms and hands.

FOR DEVELOPING THE BUST
 Or breasts shrunken from nursing it has the highest endorsement of physicians. Two boxes are often sufficient to make the bust firm, large and beautiful.

SOLD BY THE EMPORIUM AND OTHER DEPARTMENT STORES AND DRUGGISTS.
 Regular price, \$1.00 a box, but to all who give advance orders for this SPECIAL OFFER and send us one dollar we will send two (2) boxes, in plain wrapper.

FREE—A sample box and our book, "ART OF MASSAGE," fully illustrated, will be sent free to any lady sending 10 cents to pay for cost of mailing. Address DR. CHARLES FLESH, 19 Park Place, New York.