

ONE



The Girl of Thirteen

“WHERE THE BROOK AND RIVER MEET”

IT MAKES NO LITTLE DIFFERENCE TO THE GIRL OF THIRTEEN whether or not she is the oldest daughter of her parents or occupies the position of middle child, where she touches hands with the young people who are grown up and with the little ones below her, or is the baby of the group. In the last position, that of the youngest daughter in a household of several children, she is considered and treated as a mere child when she is thirteen. But if she were the oldest, many duties would fall to her lot, and she would be regarded as almost a woman. Being the middle daughter has certain advantages, and certain handicaps, which neither the oldest nor the youngest girl in the family may possess or disclaim. Unless her family is very well-to-do, she may have to wear “hand-me-downs” while her older sisters are taking college courses. She is the one who helps her mother at odd seasons with the housekeeping, mends her father’s clothes, plays football and tennis with her brothers, and takes care of the little ones. She is thirteen and, as the middle girl, a sort of clasp of

the family. The eldest daughter and second oldest have had their share of intimacy with their mother.

A young woman of thirteen has a peculiar and individual question to settle. What she is now forecasts what she may be, indeed what she will be twenty years hence, when life with its broad opportunities and obligations has made her its own. She now stands where the little limpid brook, with its narrow, silvery thread and flower-bordered banks, meets the brimming full-bosomed river, and it is impossible not to love her, not to be wistful for her, not to pray for her, if one has in her own heart the memory of the sweet days she lived when she herself was thirteen and a daughter of some happy home.

Winsome and clever, or thoughtful and brooding, merry or quiet, according to her temperament, the girl of thirteen is in some ways a riddle to her mother and, in many ways, a puzzle

What a young woman of thirteen is now, forecasts what she may be twenty years hence.

to herself. She is no longer a child to play freely with her mates in the games which delighted her at ten. She is not yet a woman, even though she may have womanly tastes and aspirations. On some subjects, for instance her dress, her amusements, her studies, she has very decided views. She is daily

gaining in breadth and independence. At the same time, she is still under her mother's wing and accustomed to refer all questions at issue to her for settlement as the final authority. At this time she needs more than ever the mother's loving guardianship, and the wise mother keeps her daughter very close to her side in confidential affection in daily life, in the purest and most intimate association, for the little woman is passing through a transformation. Nowhere else can she be safe and as sheltered as in the sweet seclusion of the home. If the daughter is sent away to school, the choice should be a matter of careful thought and

personal investigation into the status of the school. The atmosphere of the institution, the character of the teachers and students would need to measure up to the family's standards.

At thirteen, a young girl is full of enthusiasm. She adores her favorite teacher; she worships the classmate who seems to her to be beautiful and faultless; she makes many sacrifices for her friends; and chameleon-like, unless she is of strong character, she takes on the color, absorbs the manner, and reflects the opinion of her companions. If she desires the finest intellectual discipline available today, she may be prepared for college at home or in a good preparatory school. During this time, lessons in practical housewifery should also be taught and learned with diligence. The best school of domestic arts is in the mother's own kitchen and house. A college graduate, however profound and brilliant, however fully furnished mentally, is hardly fitted to be an all-around woman unless she practically understands cooking and general home management. At this age, while being taught as she is being raised, a girl can take over and practice fully the domestic arts.

The reserves of girlhood are an unfathomed sea. For no reason she can explain, the young girl often withholds her thoughts and fancies from her parents and folds herself in secrecy, like a rosebud not yet ready to bloom. It may be that her mother, who is her natural confidante, has been so busy and so cumbered with outside service that she has lost her child's heart. When this occurs it is a deplorable misfortune, for a daughter's first refuge should be her mother and her next best shield, her father. Now and then it happens that a father has a special understanding of his little girl, not grasped by her mother. Her inexperience needs a guide, and she must be piloted over and across the perils which lie between her and the happy days awaiting her farther on.

All who are associated with a girl of thirteen have observed her fondness for clothing and sweets, and her indifference to

overshoes and thick boots. Hers is the bread-and-butter age, when she scorns precautions and is averse to the whole machinery of prudence. With a fatal facility she picks up and adopts the college slang from her brothers or the catch-all slang from the street. She needs frequent reminders of her duty to her mother tongue even when she is in the home.

It is well for our young girl if she forms the habit of going every day by herself for a little quiet time of reading her Bible

At thirteen, she may begin to establish this relationship with Christ in the privacy of her quiet time.

and praying in the morning and at night. When she was a little girl she was taught to say her prayers. Now she must enter the court of the Most High and, for her own soul's sake, confess her sins, ask for grace to resist temptation, and commune with her heavenly Father. No earthly love, no tenderness of parent or wisdom of preceptor, can impart

to her at this time the strength, the grace, and the beauty which will be hers, as she seeks the throne of our ever blessed Immanuel and turns to Him as Master and Friend. At thirteen she may well begin, if she has not already done this. This is a good time to begin to establish a relationship with Christ in the privacy of her quiet time. A room of her very own should be every young girl's retreat. Here she may enjoy the half-hours for devotion which tend to the soul's growth and may read and study and entertain her girlfriends. In this, her den, her bower, her nook, her special fancies may be indulged and her individuality find fit expression.

If a girl admit me to her room, I need no other interpreter of her character. Her daintiness, her delicacy, her fondness for art, her little fads and caprices are here revealed. Does she care for athletics? Her room tells the story. Her guitar and flute, her books on her bedside table, and her closet explain her, for

wherever we live we set our seal, and this unconsciously. The untidy girl keeps her room in chaos and confusion: it looks as if swept by a small tornado. The orderly girl has a place for each belonging and puts it there without effort and without fuss. As for the room itself, it may be plain to bareness, or beautifully luxurious; a cell or a shrine, it owes its grace or lack of charm more to its occupant than to its paper and paint, its bed and dresser, its rug and chairs. A girl's room is as much an expression of herself as her mother's house is an expression of herself. We need not resign our right to beautiful surroundings because we must keep a strict rein upon expenditure and have an eye to ways and means. Unless a young woman learns early to make the most of her little in hand, she will never be successful when she has a large sum in her stewardship.

At thirteen summers, the young woman should have some money of her own, whether she earns it from a part time job, babysitting, or an allowance from tasks done around the home. Now is the time for her to learn about how to handle the money she has and what to do when she does not have enough to purchase something she desires. Her purse should have sufficient amount to buy her own wardrobes and to cover expenses when going here and there. She should not be in debt; she should have some margin; she should learn judicious saving, as well as careful spending; and, at thirteen, it should be her custom to lay aside a portion of her means for the Lord's treasury.

One final word. A sensitive girl often suffers from the teasing jabs of her brothers and from the thoughtless despotism of her older sisters. She has her rights and privileges, and among them is immunity from needless jesting and careless tyranny. Nor ought a young girl be reproved in public nor held up to ridicule in front of others. Expect from her the performance of her regular daily duties, in the task-work of school, and the routine of the home, but include her in the simple household

pleasures. Above all, surround her with the protection of considerate politeness. If she is brusque and short with you, be the more civil to her. If she is willful, treat her with gentleness. If she is disturbed and disquieted, find out the reason. Be true to her, and expect from her the truth. Teach her now how to honor and care for her body and how to conserve her health. And above all things, love her. Let her know and feel that she is treasured for who she is. And let this be her secret of strength: that she is not her own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. So she may sing for Him, or work for Him, or live for Him, because her life is His, and He abides in her soul, as in a temple. A friend said of Frances Ridley Havergal, at this beautiful dawning of her life, "Her form was graceful as a flower-stem; her face as bright as the flower itself. She flashed into the room, caroling like a bird. Flashed! ...like a burst of sunshine, like a hillside breeze. There was joy in her face, joy in her words, joy in her ways."

Enjoy your girl of thirteen. She makes the world a blither place, where the brook and the river meet.