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Lucy Ellen Guernsey

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[The Round Spring Stories.]

CLARIBEL;

OR,

REST AT LAST.

BY

LUCY ELLEN GUERNSEY

AUTHOR OF "IRISH AMY," "OPPOSITE NEIGHBOURS," "COMFORT ALLISON," "THE TATTLER," "NELLY; OR, THE BEST INHERITANCE," "TWIN ROSES," "ETHEL'S TRIAL," "THE FAIRCHILDS," "THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL EXHIBITION," "THE RED PLANT," "PERCY'S HOLIDAYS," "ON THE MOUNTAIN," "RHODA'S EDUCATION," ETC.

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PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
NO. 1122 CHESTNUT STREET.

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NEW YORK: 8 & 10 BIBLE HOUSE, ASTOR PLACE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by the

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

WESTCOTT & THOMSON
HENRY B. ASHMEAD Stereotypers and Electrotypers,
Philada. Printer, Philada.

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CLARIBEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW SCHOLAR.

"WE have got a new boarder, girls," said Emma Hausen, joining a group of her companions, under a great tree on the lawn. "She has just come up from the boat with Uncle Hausen. I believe he went to the Bridge to meet her."

"What is she like?" asked Tilly Mansfield. "Does she look nice?"

"I didn't see her face—she had a thick crape veil over it; but she is in deep mourning which looks quite new, and she is lame. She walks with a crutch."

"Poor thing!" said Eva Church. "How old should thee think she was, Emma?"

"How can I tell, child, when I didn't see her face at all? She is about

as tall as I am, but larger. She was very nicely dressed, and has two large trunks; and, as I told you, she walks with a crutch. So there 'you have the sum of the facts which have come under my immediate observation,' as Professor Ashhurst says."

"Poor thing!" said Percy Dunham.

"Why poor thing?" asked Tilly. "Do you know her, Percy?"

"No; I never saw or heard of her; but I know it cannot be very nice to be lame, and Emma says she is dressed in new deep mourning; so she must have lost some near friend—her mother, perhaps."

"Lame people are not always unhappy," remarked Tilly. "There is old Uncle Jacob; he is lame, and poor too, and I don't believe any person in Round Springs is happier than he is; and only just look at Bab!"

"I think Bab's tail rather preys on his mind, though, when he compares it with Molly's," observed Percy, seriously.

"What nonsense you do talk about those cats!" said Rebecca Stiney, who always took everything literally. "I should think you would be ashamed."

"What is there to be ashamed of?"

"Talking as if a cat could have a mind of his own."

"You just try to make Molly do something she doesn't like, and see if she hasn't a mind of her own," said Percy. "But here comes Florry Lester. Florry, have you seen the new girl?"

Flora nodded.

"What is she like?"

"Well, she is odd-looking, but I dare say she was tired out, poor thing. She has been travelling all night, I heard Mr. Hausen say, and it must have been hard, for she does not look as if she could be strong. She is very lame, for one thing, and it is a curious kind of lameness, which makes her rather awkward, and she is pale and dark, and looks as if she might be cross."

"I dare say she is only tired," said Percy. "Once, in New York, I went shopping all one horridly cold, wet morning with a cousin of Aunt Ackerman's and Cousin Margaret. Now aunt's cousin was absurdly particular and perfectly sure that everybody meant to cheat her, and I thought we never should be done with running about from store to store; and, after all, she went back and took the very first thing she looked at.

"Well, we went into a store where there were beautiful mirrors set flat in the walls. I saw, as I thought, a girl of my own age standing at the end of the counter, and I said to myself, 'How cross that girl looks!'

"And when I looked again, I saw it was myself I was criticising. But I did not feel cross at all, only tired with standing about so long. It has always been a lesson to me, and when I see such a kind of face, I always say to myself, 'I dare say she is tired or has the face-ache, or perhaps she has on new shoes and they hurt her, as mine did that day, I remember.'"

"Does any one know this poor girl's name?" asked Tilly.

"Yes; I heard Uncle Hausen tell Mrs. Richardson: it is Claribel Woodworth."

"She ought to be nice with such a pretty name," said Tilly. "I do think

we are the greatest people for fine names in this school—Claribel, and Blandina, and Eva, and Matilda, and Amabel: it sounds like an old-fashioned novel."

"Don't forget my romantic name—Perseverance," said Percy, laughing. "I think it ought to outweigh any number of Claribels and Amabels. Anyhow, girls, we ought to take pains to make things pleasant for this new scholar. If she is sick and lonely, she will have a hard time enough."

"That's so," said Fanny Morey, emphatically. "Most of you don't know anything about that, because you have never been to any school but this, which isn't one bit like a school. But I remember how I felt when I was first turned loose in the primary department of Eaton College. There were two hundred girls of all ages, all strange, and I, a poor little mite of twelve, just as shy as a young fox, and knowing nothing of school life, was left to make my own way among them. Oh how homesick I was! I really used to think I should die. Then the lessons were so hard, and there were so many of them, and the teachers never had time to explain anything. If a girl was strong and bright, she got on well enough, but if she were lazy, as a great many were, or dull and not very strong, as I was, she might go to the wall. There was no help for her."

"But didn't the girls help each other?" asked Percy. "Didn't the older girls help the little ones? I am sure I don't know how I should have got on here when I first came if Blandina hadn't taken me up."

"They never had any time, child; it was all they could do to learn their own lessons. As I said, the lazy girls shirked and did nothing, but I really did want to improve very much, for I knew it was hard for

father to keep me at school, any way, and I nearly killed myself the first term. I used to be doing lessons all night when I was not being buried alive, or chased by wild beasts, or something else as pleasant. I don't believe I should have lived through the year if I had stayed there."

"And how did you get away?" asked one of the girls.

"Oh, I went to spend my spring holidays with Doctor Gregory, my mother's brother, in Yonkers, because, of course, I wouldn't go all the way home to Texas for so short a time. Aunt Emily found out that I did not sleep, and told my uncle; and when he heard all the story, he would not let me go back, but wrote to father about me. I stayed with them all summer, and didn't do anything much, only take some music-lessons and lie on a sofa put out on the verandah or under a tree, for my back was weak and ached all the time. Then in the fall, uncle sent me here, and oh, wasn't I glad? I'll tell you what: you Hausen girls don't know half your privileges. When I hear some of the grumblers, I say to myself, 'I just wish you were at Eaton College a while.'"

"I'm sure I wish I was," said Rebecca, taking the remark to herself; "I think there would be a great deal more chance for fun where there was so many girls. Here one can't do a thing but everybody knows it."

"Yes, very nice fun, flirting out of the windows and running away down town and getting into all sorts of scrapes."

"What kind of fun does thee want that thee don't care to have people know about?" asked Eva. "For my part, I thought we had plenty of fun."

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