

WHEN ELLEN FORGOT

By Beth Slater Whitson

“Don’t forget to come by the grocery and bring me two dozen lemons, Ellen dear,” called Ellen’s mother from the kitchen one hot July morning.

“Yes, mamma,” absently answered Ellen, who was busy tilting her hat to just the right angle before starting to the village.

“I want you to be sure to get them,” Mrs. Ladd continued, “because it is so warm and gelatin may not set, and if it doesn’t then we can have lemonade with the cake.”

“Yes, mamma,” again rejoined Ellen, who went flitting out of the door, thinking of the little girl’s party she was going to have in the afternoon and of the flowers that Mrs. Turner had just called up to say she had cut for her. She meant to hurry back and decorate the rooms and put up the hanging baskets on the porches.

It was just on the stroke of twelve, when Mrs. Ladd was giving the last touches to the prettily decorated house, that Ellen came running in with a great basket of lovely pink roses.

“O mamma,” she cried, glancing at the clock, “I never thought about it being so late! I was having such a good time, and now you have had all the work to do,” she finished remorsefully.

“I was afraid we wouldn’t have time after lunch,” returned Ellen’s mother. She started to say something, when she noticed that Ellen had failed to bring the lemons, but checked herself and help to arrange the roses, then when out to look again at the still watery gelatin. “I hate to do it,” she said aloud, “but the girlie must have a lesson sometime before the habit fixes itself upon her for life.”

At four o’clock that afternoon a happy crowd of little girls sat in groups on the broad, shady porch of Ellen’s pretty home, eating sandwiches and apparently enjoying themselves greatly.

“Mother made the loveliest cake,” whispered Ellen to one of her little friends, “and she is going to serve gelatin and whipped cream with it.”

Just then Mrs. Ladd came out, bearing a waiter on which were the plates piled with delicious-looking cake, and she began passing it to the guests.

“Shall I run bring the gelatin and cream, mamma?” Ellen called.

Mrs. Ladd did not answer, but went on passing the cake. When she came close, Ellen heard her speaking. "I intended having gelatin" she apologized, "but it failed to congeal, and then I sent for lemons, thinking lemonade would be nice, but the lemons were not brought. It was a disappointment to me" –

"O Mrs. Ladd, the cake is lovely without anything else!" cried someone, and all others joined in.

Ellen's face flushed scarlet. For a moment she hesitated, then she sprang to her feet. "Girls," she called earnestly, "I want you all to know whose fault it is about the lemonade and gelatin both. Mamma told me to order extra ice to cool the gelatin on, and I forgot; then she sent by me for lemons, and I was so busy thinking about the party that I didn't bring them, and" – She looked up and caught her mother's smile. "I know you just didn't mention it when you saw I had been careless, because it was a good time to teach me a lesson about absent-mindedness."

"Yes, dear," answered Mrs. Ladd, "I could have telephoned for the lemons after I saw you had forgotten them, but I thought this might be helpful to you."

"It will, mamma," said Ellen hastily.

"I think nearly all of us need a lesson like this," joined in one of the guests, smiling at Ellen.

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