

ing for sleep and our weary bodies for rest—yet I do not wish to murmur, or repine, or indeed complain. I am thankful to have work to do, still as I sit sewing I often draw my needle sadly to the monotonous notes,

“Stich, stich, stich.
From weary chime to chime.
Work, work, work
As prisoners work for crime.”

While we sew Cora is our busy housewife, and a very Will-o-wisp she is. Still with our occasional aid she keeps our small menage in “apple-pie order” according to her own words, looking at her hands the while and shaking her head ruefully declaring,

“They will not be fit to be seen, after I have swept, scrubbed and washed the dishes a little while longer.”

But nevertheless, spite of her words she keeps up a brave little heart and is the only sunshiny thing in the establishment; for while the little ones pine for fresh air and more play-room, she is as blithe as a bird, scolding, petting, and taking care of every one in turn, although she gaily shakes her curls and declares “it is her firm belief indeed it is,

“That do my best I shall never get all the smoke and dust out of them.”

My poor babe, is a most churlishly used little one, although she has Cora’s best attention, and yet Marion says truly.

“We never have had a baby who was so rugged and healthy.” Howard rebelled a little at the first, at having such close quarters, but now Stuart is able to sit up he gives him regular lessons and he is quite contented.

We are not very rapid sewers and it takes longer than it ought to get through our work, so that we are obliged to labor very late at night, but we hope to improve in this respect. My health bears up wonderfully under this confinement, better than I dared to hope. And Marion and Lela, are the most enduring of assistants, although I do strive very hard to save them, especially from night work, my good little daughters.

CHAPTER IX.

DECEMBER 25.

“It was the birth-night. A thousand, almost two thousand years have the hearts of men clung to that day.—Who does not love it? Around it clusters the holiest associations of youth—the holiest memories of old times when pleasant stories and happy songs made the fire-side glad, songs and stories told by voices that are silent now.”—“OLD HOUSE BY THE RIVER.”

We have passed a quiet Christmas, we elder ones spoke not much of its approach, for fear of the change striking with a chill upon the hearts of our little ones. Oh the difference with the last time!

Last Christmas Walter gave a dinner in honor of Gov. B——, it was not his custom to have strangers in his house this day which he usually devoted to his children’s pleasure. But this time he was compelled to pay respect to one whom he loved and revered, and upon this day. There were twenty five distinguished gentlemen bidden to meet him, and give him farewell, ere he left the country as a minister to some foreign court.

Oh I remember, my husband was so pleased with the arrangements I made for their entertainment, and pronounced the appointments of the cusiné faultless, and the arrangements of the table *recherche*.

How proud I was of him, and of his praise that day!

In the evening the children were to have a party, and many of the gentlemen were pleased to remain. It was only an entertainment given to the village children, and of course my little ones had no rivals.

Leanore was permitted to display for the first time, in public, her wonderful vocal powers, and with papa’s accompaniment, sang some choice pieces very sweetly.

“She is a true Percy,” whispered Judge L—— to me as he watched her standing proudly and coldly in her childish grace, listening to the compliments lavished upon her.

And then she sang “Spirito Gentil,” and when she was done—

“My very, *very* best, dear papa, not because they like it, but to please you,” and her arms were clasped tightly round his neck.

And papa kissed the blushing eager face, and would not let her sing again, because—

“Her sweet artlessness must not be tarnished by compliments.” And thus we passed one year ago, the happy, happy time! and now——but no matter for now.

JANUARY I.

A new year broke in upon us quietly and sadly, our festivals were—a long walk in the fresh cold air, and gleefully the children enjoyed it. When they were well tired out we came home, where Marion and Lela had cooked us a dinner.

“The first real dinner we have had in a long while,” said Cora. It is the first piece of extravagance we have been guilty of this many a day, and I think with Marion: “Even if we do have to work a little harder it has done us good.”

After dinner, was spent by the busy little folks in making “the most elegant” candy from a quart of molasses presented them by Mrs. MacKay, for that especial purpose.

Such charming candy so sweet (and so *burned*) was never before known, there was surely nothing in the annals of pleasure to excel candy making.

And in the evening we sat round the fire and sung sometimes a song, but more often a hymn, and told each other tales by the fire light. And just such beautiful stories as May and Stuart told were never before heard.

“It is good to be learned like Stuart, and have a soft voice like May’s,” said Howard admiringly.

And he was not alone in his admiration, Marion has a strange faculty for weaving a romance, and to-night she exerted it to the entire satisfaction of all.

To the story and the songs of Lela, and Cora, good Mrs. MacKay listened, with intense admiration, for she was the children’s guest, invited to partake of the candy treat.

One of Marion’s stories was after this wise.

“Once upon a time” upon a Christmas time, two bright Angels came to earth, and when they reached the verge they wound their arms round each other—pressed their lips together, and said “Good-bye sweet sister we part here.”

Then one gentle and beautiful, whose name was Celeste

said to herself, “I will go and watch by the couches of dear children and give them good dreams.” And so on, and on she went and when she came to a house she would enter, and if there seemed to be no other kind Angel watching round their bed, she would kiss the little ones and say a prayer to them, and as they slept they would smile—and say some happy words. And this good Celeste would leave them with another sweet kiss and stand by another bedside, in some other house. And thus she went on and on through the great city, and left a blessing upon many a child’s head. And bye and bye she came to the sea-side and in a small cottage she saw by the glimmer of a candle placed in the window, a fair young mother sitting with her baby upon her knee, rocking it to sleep, and singing softly a lullaby, and as the Angel listened to the song she smiled, and bent down and kissed the little baby, who smiled too. But listening to the song, Celeste soon learned what made the fair young mother’s face wear so sad a look, and more than that, why the candle sat on the window-sill shedding its bright light over the dark angry sea, which never seemed to heed the poor little ray beaming upon it so warmly, and so kindly, but went on moaning and roaring, talking angrily and fiercely to itself. And at the noise it made the poor mother’s face grew paler than ever, and she clasped her babe more closely to her heart, but yet she sang over and over her song, and the words she said which made the Angel smile and kiss the little one, and then made it smile back an answer were these,

“A baby was sleeping,
Its mother was weeping,
For husband was far on the wide raging sea,
And the tempest was swelling,
Round the fisherman’s dwelling,
And she cried Dermot, darling, oh come back to me.

“Her beads while she numbered,
Her baby still slumbered,
And smiled in her face as she bended her knee;
Oh! blessed be that warning,
My child thy sleep adorning,
For I know that the angels are whispering to thee.

And while they are keeping
Bright watch o'er thy sleeping,
Oh pray to them softly my baby with me,
And say thou wouldst rather,
They'd watch o'er thy father,
For I know that the angels are whispering to thee."

And the angel listened and smiled for a while, and then saying over the child a little prayer, flew away far o'er the sea. After a while she saw the husband of the pale woman, the baby's father, rowing in a small boat, through the dark night, and though he did not know whether he was going right or not, for the thick clouds round him, he kept up a cheerful heart, and said ever and anon, an earnest prayer. But the angel to whom the darkness made no difference, saw sitting in the front of the skiff, her sister angel, all bright and fair, who was with gentle care guiding unseen, and unknown, the bark of the poor fisherman to his home; and after Celeste had kissed her sister, they sat on the prow together, and told over what had occurred to each through the night, and the other angel said she had gone out on the broad ocean to guide and comfort the poor lost mariners and had found many an one who needed aid, "and this one she was bringing home with her."

In a little while the light of the candle in the cottage home, beside which the pale mother still sang her lullaby—broke o'er the sea, and the lonely mariner bowed his head and said softly (not too softly for the angels to hear.)

"Home! home! Thank God my home is near."

And the angels clasped their hands and said, to one another
"It is pleasant to see him so glad."

In a little while the day broke and just then they touched the shore, and as they stopped, the poor young wife came out to look once more, and oh it was a very good sight for those dear angels as they flew towards heaven upon the first beams of the rising sun, to see how the paleness was all kissed from the cheeks of the (no more) sorrowful woman. And ere they left the earth they paused and looking back saw the baby clasped tightly to its mother's breast, as she sang words which a gentle breeze, wafted up to them where they stood, bending forward now with their outstretched wings all plumed for flight glowing brightly in the

warm sunshine, which was spread like a sea beneath them, and the words of her song now were,

"At dawn of the morning,
Saw Dermot returning,
His wife wept with joy, her babe's father to see;
Oh blest be the warning,
My child thy sleep adorning,
For I knew that the angels were whispering to thee."

Thus do God's precious angels bring happiness to this and many another home because they love mankind so kindly, and because God is very good and bids them come.

"Is it really true sister?" asked Gracie softly after a little.

"I think it may be, pet," replied Marion, "it is very good to think it may be, ask mamma if angels love little children."

"Do they mamma, do you think so?" questioned Gracie.

"I will give my little children and my big ones too, a verse for their morning text, which makes me think it may be true every word of it."

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

"Dear little children it is always a happy thought to me, that while you are locked in the arms of sleep, good angels are watching over you."

"I think they are good, so very good, I will always try to remember to say good-night to them before I sleep, and think they are kissing me over again," said Adele.

"Then I know one angel who will never stay away from us, poor little children, do not you mamma?" asked Howard.

"Yes, my little son if guardian spirits are round us, dear papa is blessing us now and ever."

"Dear papa," sobbed each saddened voice, and for a long while we were all very quiet. Then Marion said, "Lela dear sing papa's favorite hymn before we say good-night."

"I would not live always, I ask not to stay."

CHAPTER X.

JANUARY 20.

WE are all quite well. Stuart's health gradually improves, and I feel assured could he have the proper kind of food nourishing and invigorating, he would soon regain his wonted strength, but alas this is not within our means, and the thinking of it does no good,—and besides this there is another great drawback to his perfect recovery,—his feverish desire to be up and doing—the horror it is to have us work for him—ill as he is, he can scarcely be restrained from going out and seeking employment.

But in the meanwhile he studies untiringly, and with what aid I have been able to give him has made such progress, that he says:

"I am almost sure that I can pass the examination for the High School, if they will let me try."

He is schoolmaster to the little ones, and reads to the rest of us, and we are very glad God sent him to bear life's burdens with us.

A real sunshine came to us the other day, though the form was darkness personified—Milly, dear old blessed Milly has come—has found us out, and come "to take care of us."

One night we were sitting sadly enough, talking of, and trying to look bravely into the future, when some one knocked at the door, and a scream from Coralie as she opened it, made us drop our work:

"Oh you dear old darling, where did you come from?" and in an instant we were about her laughing and crying in a breath. When she found voice after a mighty groan to answer the myriads of questions which were rained upon her on all hands, it was to send forth such a torrent of blessings, and upbraidings, greetings, and reproaches, as made Stuart who is not used to such familiarity start up indignant. But Milly is a privileged body, and we would willingly take ten times the amount of scolding which she lavished upon all of us, especially upon my devoted head, for the sake of a peep into her shining black face, was it never so cross.

"Oh you pretty dears! oh you poor children! do I see you for sure? are you every single blessed one alive and whole? oh my! oh my! think I should live to see my bressed, glori-

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fied young massa's folks, a living in a nasty old alley-garret, not fit for a nigger—young misses you a born fool sure as you live, how you 'spect to inherit the kingdom? putty plight you'll be in to go up when yer Hebenly Father calls you, what you mean by bringing my poor fadderless chicks to die in this cussed place?"

I knew the best thing was to let her have her say, and I allowed her to go on until she grew ashamed as I knew she would.

And now let me explain how she came. I remember how unhappy her apparent indifference at parting with us made me, but it seems it was only because she did not mean it to be a parting.

When we went to kind Mr. Marstone's house in the village, she was left behind to take charge of, and see safely packed away in Alison William's cottage, the furniture, bedding, linen, and so forth, which I had reserved before the sale for myself. During this time our friend was stricken down, and the good old woman knowing there had been no definite arrangements made for our departure, supposed we would stay a month or so where we were—and feeling sure I would forbid her coming with us, she did not visit us, for fear we would have suspicion of her intentions, letting a couple of weeks go by without seeking us at the "Grange,"—but when she did to her dismay, we were gone no one knew whither.

All her rage and sorrow—and I can well imagine how she acted—were useless, and she was fain to wait for some clue to our whereabouts, which came at last, in a note I addressed to "Thompson," Mr. Marstone's late housekeeper, in reply to one she sent me the day before we left the Hotel, asking what should be done with the books, pictures, and other things which had been sent to her old master, from 'Percy's Cliffe' and which his nephew said he could not conscientiously appropriate, as they were meant for his uncle. I began an immediate answer, but in the anxiety and trials which succeeded our removal here, it was forgotten, and a couple of months elapsed before I remembered to despatch my directions to Thompson to have the articles removed to "Ingle side," the country-seat of my husband's guardian, Mr. Audley.

Upon its arrival Thompson was gone, and my poor letter

lay for another month unopened, until her return for a short space to her old home on business—then she kindly sent the letter to poor old Milly—and upon examining it I find it has the name of the Hotel from which it was commenced stamped upon the top.

From the Hotel, by the means of Jane, she at last found us out—and now we have her, we can but wonder how we could have done without her so long, and are infinitely content to have her to scold us once again, as she does not injure us thereby.

Milly at first looked unkindly upon Stuart as an interloper, but now that she has had some trouble nursing, and worrying over him she loves him cordially.

“Her own boy, a full-blood Percy,” she calls him, “is worth all other boys the world knows of.”

We have been fain to enlarge our borders, since Milly’s arrival, and although with some doubts as to the expense, have taken Mrs. Aldrich’s old room, which by some management of curtains made of coarse muslin, and strung across—devices only known to the poor I believe—Milly and Mrs. MacKay have made two comfortable sleeping rooms, into one of which we inducted Stuart and Howard.

Although this is an additional expense, with Milly to the fore I do not feel much fear.

“Why Milly,” laughed Coralie the other day, “you are almost as good a housekeeper as I am, which will be something to be proud of.”

“You! you! go ’long child, you can’t do nuffin,” laughed Milly.

“Can I not, that is all you know, why I have baked, brewed, swept and done divers other things too numerous to mention,—have I not mamma?” cried Cora.

“All but the baking and brewing,” said I with a smile.

“Oh that was speaking in a figure, but indeed Milly I am a grand housekeeper, you do not know how much I can do all alone.”

March 1st.

Milly has been with us two months, and we look back surprised at the three months we passed without her, and

wonder how it was possible for us to have lived at all, with nothing but our own hands to do all there was to do. She is just the best and dearest of helpers.

Marion and I are still kept busy at shirt making—while Lela, and under her instruction Cora (who although only ten years old can sew quite nicely,) do quite a creditable amount of the coarse work which Mrs. MacKay provides for them.

Stuart growing daily stronger helps Milly, teaches the children, and reads to us from our small stock of books and an occasional newspaper which Mrs. MacKay loans him; then his school books are histories, and other things, which interest us. Besides this we are teaching him French, and as Milly understands it from her long residence with us abroad, we speak it altogether, for his sake as well as that of the younger children whom we fear will forget.

But now I must write down what I have been unwilling to think of, another trial. To-day Mrs. MacKay came to me with a face in which joy and sorrow were strongly blended, joy for herself, sorrow for us.

“Me Jane is to be married to a worthy man who lives far west, and they mean to take the old woman with them,” she said.

And so the whole of the matter is, that by next month they desire to be gone, and we must lose Mrs. MacKay, and submit to the incoming of a new family into this small house, or else seek a new home, the latter will be better.

MARCH 7.

For the last week Milly, Stuart, and Mrs. MacKay, have been house or rather room hunting. With Milly to take charge, I have felt far less anxiety this time than before, but still it has been a dismal prospect.

But now, all is bright and certain, and we tell Milly over again,

“You good old thing you are our good fortune.”

In her travels over the length and breadth of the land, she accidentally came across a daughter of Allison Williams who we knew lived in this city, and for whom Milly has constantly been looking out, “Because she heard before she

left the village, that Margery's husband had left her and that she was letting lodging rooms to support herself."

And the best thing we could hope has come about from their meeting, for we have secured a pleasant home with an old friend.

Margery lives far away from here, on quite the other side of the city, in a pleasant old house, of which she has the whole. Her husband a worthless drunkard has deserted her, after making her endure much suffering, and she supports herself very comfortably by letting out the rooms of her house, all the front of it, comprising nine or ten rooms, (for it is an old fashioned mansion built when land was plenty and is a double house, with large airy halls running through it,) all of this part is rented out as offices.

"But the back-building is cut up into five or six of the most comical looking little rooms, you ever saw and is entirely vacant," says Stuart.

"Yes, and the best of it is, it has not a particle of connection with the front part, save by one door, which you reach after many twists, and turns, through a small dark entry, which leads from the immense oaken stair-way in the front, you need never go that way at all for there is the nicest way through the garden to the side street," declares Lela whom the idea of thus being able to seclude ourselves from observation rather pleases.

"And then mamma," broke in Cora, who had been one of the party of inspection, "and then, there is a splendid great garden, with a high stone wall all round it, and a summer-house in the centre, and it reaches away back, not the summer-house, but the yard you know, to a little street, and Elm street lies at the side of it. And there are all sorts of nice fruit trees in it, and we can make a splendid garden in the summer, for it will be all our own, because the windows that look out on it are never opened, have not been for so many years indeed that the grape-vines of which there are a dozen, have grown thickly over them, so you could not get the shutters open if you were to try ever so hard. They get their light in those rooms from the side street on the east, and a little side yard on the west, for the house stands all alone. And the great hall door at the back has been barricaded for ages, Margery says, and has shelves built across it on the inside. So you see nobody can have this splendid

old garden but us, and we can work and play in it and climb trees and all sorts of things, and no horrid old men can be peeping at us at all, I think it is grand."

"Especially the climbing trees," says Stuart laughing.

"Oh I dare say you will be glad enough to climb them next summer, when they are hanging full of all kinds of good fruit, looking for all the world as though they were saying, 'come and eat me,' and went I!"

And from Cora's wild talk, and Nora and Stuart's more reliable accounts I think it will be a happy exchange.

"So to-morrow I'll jist give them rooms a taring down washing, and you 'rite a letter for Ally to send on them ar things, and by the first of May we'll be all fixed the best kind," says Milly.

So now Marion and I work early and late with thankful hearts trying to finish the work we have on hand, for of course we will not be able to take any more from here, when we move so far away.

The children are wild with delight at the idea of the garden, which Cora paints to them so gloriously.

"Not because it is pretty at all, for it is barren and grey, but because it is so immense, and will be a place to run in and breathe fresh air, whenever we like," she says.

But still they are in a perplexed state of mind as to whether it is right to be very glad, over what is to take them away from kind Mrs. MacKay.

CHAPTER XI.

MARCH 25.

WE have been settled nearly one whole week—have bidden good-bye to Mrs. MacKay, Marion and Stuart going to Jane's wedding for a while.

Then, while Marion and I still worked steadily finishing shirts, Milly with the aid of all the rest, unpacked, cleaned and put in their places, the furniture which Allison forwarded.