

But the end of it all was, Margery took some of them to a friend who is a fashionable modistè. I have given up too many things, to feel pain for the loss of these.

It was a week ago she took them and they have not only met a ready sale, but she has brought back an order for an embroidered skirt, with the promise of pretty steady employment. As long as this lasts we can do very well. However I will not work at this fine work after daylight is gone, but rest my eyes and give Stuart and the three older girls a lesson in German every evening. The others have their regular lessons through the day.

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## CHAPTER XII.

APRIL 20.

I am so engaged I have hardly any time to write down our daily life, as I had intended. Stuart has been going to school for nearly a month, but before he goes in the morning he does a great deal towards making a garden. And the children most vigorously employ their spare time through the day in finishing what he has commenced; weeding, and stoning the particular bed which Stuart has dug up in the morning, constitutes their very important business after study hours.

We are very systematic and have an hour for every thing, and in this way get along nicely.

We are early risers too, and eat our breakfast, almost as soon as the sun bethinks to warm the noses of the far-away mountains; or over them to peer with his just opened eyes, into our humble grey old garden.

And through the day, that my daughters may neither of them be over wearied with sewing, I make them in turns, become the instructors of the younger ones, then for a while my assistants, then one at a time to aid Milly in her multitudinous duties.

Thus an hour at one thing and then at another, nothing grows very monotonous, and they work like a hive of cheer-

ful bees, not one single drone in the hive, save only baby, who has a right.

We speak French all day, and in the evening after the children from Howard down are in bed, we learn German for a couple of hours—and then until ten which is our invariable hour for retiring—while we knit or do some work which does not try our eyes, Stuart reads us some instructive book, which he has brought from the school library.

We have but one thing to trouble us, that is Margery's failing health, which makes us fear she can not much longer endure the labor necessary to the charge of this house.

She is very desirous that we should take it off her hands and allow her to do something which will require less exertion than this.

"It is only the walking about and sweeping which hurts me," she says. I do not know what would be best to do.

We have all felt badly about one thing—and that is, Stuart's being obliged to still go so poorly appareled to school.

I have thought much about this, for although he never hints such a thing, I am very sure the slights he receives on account of his shabby appearance, not alone from the boys, but I fear sometimes from the teacher, depresses his spirits, although he strives, earnestly, and manfully, against such a feeling: still he would not be human were not such taunts and sneers sufficient to sting him, even though he feigns not to regard them at all. I know were his mind free from all this petty vexation, he would improve even more rapidly than he does now.

I had intended to keep the remainder of the little sum left by Mrs. Aldrich, as a foundation upon which in the future we might by strict economy and great endeavors, raise a sufficient sum to send him one year at least to college. This was her cherished scheme, nourished amidst bitter poverty, and it shall be ours.

But now, because this present want seemed more urgent than anything in the future could, I have taken the money and am going to give it to Milly to purchase an entire suit for him. Dear boy how proud I will feel; how proud we shall all feel to see him dressed like—what he is, a true born gentleman.

This is to be a secret, for did he know we dreamed of

embroidered silk quite narrow enough to make the desired neck-tie.

"A very good idea sister mine, I am glad you have acted upon my words, entirely original with me dear friends you will remember," cried Birdie, as she caught sight of it, "I am glad to see your stock is still supplied."

"Shall I put it on dear Stuart," said Marion with a little nod to Cora. Then while her arms were round his neck she said her word of congratulation in his ear, and gently kissing his cheek added:

"Birdie's tongue runs as though it was hung in the middle, and worked at both ends. Suppose you were to give Lela a chance to say a word now."

"Well, having said my say, I am mute," said the gay girl, "every one must have their turn you know, in such a large family, else some poor bodys would never get a chance to say their say. If I have taken queen's turn I beg her pardon, I did not know she would deign to make a speech."

Lela who is quite used to her sister's saucy talk only pulled her curls over her eyes as she went up to Stuart, and laying her hand tenderly upon his shoulder, "Dear Stuart," she said, "dear brother, we are very proud of you always, because you are so good and true and work so hard, spite of so many difficulties, but now we are more proud than ever, is not mamma good? the very best of fairy watchers?"—her love for me the uppermost always.

"Indeed indeed she is sweet Lela, how can I ever be grateful enough, how let her know how much I feel all she does for me?"

"By always being the good son you are now I suppose, is it not so mamma?"

"Yes dear, I need no other reward, be my brave true hearted boy, and your grand-mother's God, and mine too I trust, will bless you."

"Dear Stuart I want to do something for you too, but now-a-days we have less to give than once," and Lela's lip curled for an instant bitterly. "Marion has given you something, so will you be good and take what I have for you? say yes," and she turned her bright eyes up to his face.

"Hold him fast that's right Nora," cried Howard in great glee, at Stuart looking into her earnest face irresolutely.

"But I have taken so much already"—he began.

"Make him promise or I will make him the sorriest fellow," cried Cora.

"Birdie I give you, sorriest fellow, as used by a young lady to a young gentleman to parse," said Marion.

"Oh dear my unfortunate tongue, I will bite it off, it gets me into so much trouble all the while."

"Oh your heedless brain which makes you such a careless girl," said Marion. "Such a very careless little sister."

"Little hear her mamma," cried Cora, "little and I am a whole inch taller than her."

"Than her!" laughed Lela who being secure in a whole foot or more of stature says little with impunity "'than her,' my little sister put that down to parse to me when I have charge of your education, this afternoon."

"Unfortunate me," said Cora, raising both hands, "I will talk no more."

"But all this while I am waiting for an answer Stuart," said Lela holding both his hands.

"Well I promise," he said, "though I am burdened with favors now."

"That is a good boy, then wear these studs, they are plain gold you see, and have Marion's name engraved upon them. It is a good name to wear upon your breast brother dear, take one for her sake, the other for mine," and with a grace which always dwells in her every action she gave him a kiss, which—

"Is worth more than the gold, from its rarity," says Howard.

"How tall are you Stuart?" broke in Cora.

"I do not know I am sure Birdie," he answered.

"Well you are such a steeple for a boy of sixteen I think I must measure you," she replied.

And she did, and found him five feet five inches.

"Quite a respectable size, if you do as well as you have been doing you will be a six—oh my," and she clasped both hands over her lips.

"What were you going to say?" said Stuart holding her fast.

"I shall not tell you, else Marion will give me more parsing."

"No I will forgive you this once," laughed Marion "what was it?"

"A six-footer," said Cora blushing, "as Milly says."  
 "Yes but Milly does not study grammar," explained Howard.

The children have always taken a walk under Milly's care, but this morning our long talk, brought us to breakfast and worship time without it. After breakfast we are all very busy until dark brings a resting time.

This afternoon we had a visit from the clergyman of C— church, which is the one we have been attending since we came here.

The attraction to it was, that it is the one which Mrs. Aldrich attended when she lived in this part of the city and where she is buried.

Mr. Raymond is a young man, very agreeable, indeed, I have been much pleased with his preaching, and am very happy to know him. He passed an half hour with us. He seems much interested in his 'little church,' as he calls it, and talks as though his whole heart was in his work.

He has given us the freedom of his pew, which he says is never occupied.

"It will give me great pleasure to see it always filled with these bright faces," he said looking with loving eyes at the children.

This is a great comfort to me, for as I told him, as yet we could not afford to pay for a pew, and it has caused me much uneasiness to have no settled place to which we might go.

He has engaged us all to enter the Sabbath-school, some for his Bible class, and others for younger classes. I have promised to teach also, so Cora thinks she knows whose class she will be in.

This visit has done me a world of good, I feel anchored in a safe place, what a comfort one's church is. I wonder how they get on in our little church at home,—home! well it was home once.

Dear old Mr. Balstone what a good thing a letter would be from him, but I must not dream of that, for he is already too much burdened—and it would be cruel to tax him one iota more. I must not let my desires make me selfish. Our schools, I wonder if they have fallen into good hands.

Dear Walter how his whole heart was in that little school, and how he had their whole heart's love in return.

"No one is like Mr. Walter at the great house," they

used to say. What a resting place and bright spot, Walter's church and Sabbath duties were to him, after the turmoil and anxieties of the days of toil which were past: how entirely he knew the blessing of a 'Sabbath-day's resting from toil.'

Oh blessed sacred day—God's day—our Saviour's day—could it be I was too cold, too negligent in those happy times, did my earthly sunshine blind my eyes to the mercies from above? I fear I grieved my husband sometimes by my careless using of what he esteemed so very precious a gift.

#### SUNDAY EVENING.

When we arrived at church to-day, we found Mr. Raymond had most kindly waited to escort us to his pew. It was very thoughtful, and spared us the embarrassment we should have felt in taking possession of the minister's seat in the face of his whole congregation. We had a very quiet peaceful time, and I think the peace remains with us still, or at least some of us.

Mr. Raymond again came to us after church, and went with us into the little church-yard to visit for a moment Mrs. Aldrich's grave.

Although it was not right to think of such things I could not help but see how much attention my three daughters attracted, but our deep mourning and Mr. Raymond's kind attention made us noticed perhaps.

Mr. Raymond is a young man, tall and slender, with a face which seems to have a kind of halo about it, the sanctifying of a pure spirit, and a good life shining upon it, the kind of a face which in a woman we call 'an angel face.'

In the afternoon I heard some of those to whom Mr. Raymond introduced me, making very particular enquiry as to who, and what I was.

"Are they relatives of your's sir?" asked one.

"Not at all madam," was his reply.

"From New England I suppose since you are acquainted with them?"

"I think not—they reside at the corner of Elm and C— Streets."

"In the old Gleason property! indeed? I suppose then they are related to the old family, perhaps the heirs?"

"I did not enquire into the particulars of their family history," he said quietly:

"Of course not, but," with a sigh of resignation, and a look at the rest of the group, "I suppose we must call upon her."

The answer to this I lost in the thought which came across me, that they must do no such thing. A little while afterwards when we were going home, Mr. Raymond came up to us.

"Mr. Raymond will you excuse what I am going to say, I just overheard some of the ladies say they intended calling upon me, please do not let them, I cannot receive visitors, tell them so for me, I earnestly desire to do what is right, I will teach in the Sabbath School, I will work in the societies of the church, but I cannot receive strangers into my home, even in my happiest days this was a trial to me, now it is impossible." As I paused I noticed his look of embarrassment, and added quickly, "Pardon me for imposing such a duty upon you, but it would be very unpleasant to refuse your friends when they were at the door, but I should be obliged to do so, indeed I should. Our recent affliction must by my excuse for this seeming rudeness. You do not dream Mr. Raymond what a sad weariness a stranger's face is to me. And moreover we are too poor to spare the time, from our sewing, it takes up much time visiting and receiving visits, and ours is very precious now, for it is our bread." I believe I spoke very earnestly.

"Please Mr. Raymond," said Marion laying her hand quickly upon his arm before he had time to reply, "please understand mamma to mean your congregation, not yourself, you are not a stranger now, she had so much comfort from your one visit,"—dear daughter thus she always like her father explains and makes straight, whenever my vehement temperament would do me wrong; thus she watches over me.

"Oh certainly," I said quickly, pained by the thought, "surely Mr. Raymond understands that he"—

But a look into his face told me he had not understood at all. Marion's quick perception of anything likely to cause annoyance to another, was right as usual. Giving him my hand, I said:

"Dear friend if you knew but half the infinite good your visit was to me, if you knew the balm your words of to-day

have poured upon my wounded heart, you would not thus misconstrue my words, please understand me, I own frankly that I feel it will be long years before the presence of strangers under my own roof will cease to cause me exquisite pain, but this is casual acquaintances."

"Is this quite right?" he asked very gently.

"For the present I trust it is not wrong. I do not mean to condemn my children to a life of solitude, but now my first duty is to provide for their wants, and attend to their education, and while they have also like duties to perform, can we do these things well if we attend to other calls foreign to them? When the time comes they will find me no barrier to their enjoyment. Now the days are but half long enough to do all we have to do."

"Doubtless you are right, pardon my question."

"All this is for those I do not know," said I smiling. "We have given you a place in our hearts, henceforth we will count your visits as one of our pleasures."

"Thank you kindly, your pretty room with its bright little faces," placing his hand as he spoke on Cora's curls, "has a charm for me, beyond what you can imagine. I have thought of it as a very pleasant thing, often since."

"Please come often into it sir," said Stuart heartily.

"Thank you, but take care you do not rue the breadth of your invitation, I may come too often," he said gaily.

"I do not fear your too often," I answered.

And so we feel sure we have gained a friend, worth having, and I know he will save me, if possible, from an invasion of the threatened visitors, whom I dread beyond expression.

using this money for him, he would never submit, Milly is to take his measure and make the whole purchase.

It seems a little thing to talk so much about, but our lives are made up of little things, and this like most others is important even in its littleness to us, for we are sadly poor now-a-days, but not so poor but we can lift our hearts up to the Throne, and say to Him who sitteth thereon. 'We thank Thee for many tender mercies, to us.'

The examination for the High School is to come on shortly and Stuart is working day and night hoping to be able to gain admittance.

We are very sanguine all of us, as to his success, save himself. I hope he will accept his new dress as an happy omen.

APRIL 30.

This morning with the first peep of the dawn Milly stole into the room where Stuart and Howard sleep, and

"Tucked up dis old rubbish of his'n, and laid the span new black suit, jist whare dese lay."

Pretty soon after there was a great talking in their room, then out ran Howard half dressed, with eyes bearing a resemblance to saucers.

"Oh mamma! Oh Milly! all of Stuart's old clothes are gone, and such a splendid suit of black put in their place. It is just for all the world like the Father in 'Beauty and the Beast!' is it not? what shall he do?"

"Put them on of course, and let us see them."

"Oh he will never do that, he just sits up and looks at them so, and never says a word," and Howard assumed a ludicrous expression of astonishment, a good imitation I doubt not of poor amazed Stuart.

"Tell him mamma lays her commands on him to come into her presence immediately, little son," I said.

And in a short space out came Stuart with such a lugubrious face.

"Looking for all the world as if he had a whipping, instead of such a handsome suit," declared Cora.

And foolish fellow instead of standing up to be admired, he threw himself at my side and burying his face in my dress said with a half sob :

"Oh Bertha how could you do it? Oh I wish you had not."

For a while I could not speak or do anything but smooth back his clustering curls.

"Get up you great fellow and let an old soul look at you," said Milly, the tears of joy streaming down her black cheeks, and then as he never noticed her: "Can't ye 'have yerself, what she do it fur, so you may be some credit to the folks you 'long to fur sure. Get up I say."

Her droll way of putting the matter did us more good than anything else could. And with an earnest silent kiss, Stuart stood up to be inspected.

"So you have been ashamed of me, Aunt Milly," said he, winking away the few tears which spite of the unmanliness of such a thing would come, and looking at her with a merry twinkle in his eye, which showed spite of him how very glad he was for all. I know it was a pleasant thought he need not be ashamed of his dress.

"Oh ye go 'long wid yer imperence, and let me call up my chicks to see this grand show from the tailor's shop," retorted Milly, as proud of his appearance as it was possible to be.

Then such a time as there was, exclaiming, praising, and wondering over him, but indeed his handsome looks warranted the full amount of complimenting.

"Let me see," said Cora, standing him in the middle of the room, and then walking deliberately round him holding a pair of scissors to her eyes for a quizzing glass. "Let me see, a full suit of black, vest and all, a very handsome turn down collar, which, however, needs a black ribbon to make the true Byron style, handsome pair of patent leathers upon a very—handsome foot, a profusion of nut-brown curls round a remarkably handsome face, rather like my own, which is saying a good deal for it. Altogether quite a credit to the house of Percy, I think I will take a kiss if you please."

"Certainly my young child if it will make you happy, but only one," was the gay reply, although it was a multiplied one he gave.

While Birdie was delivering her *opinion*, Marion had stolen from the room, and now returned with a scarf of