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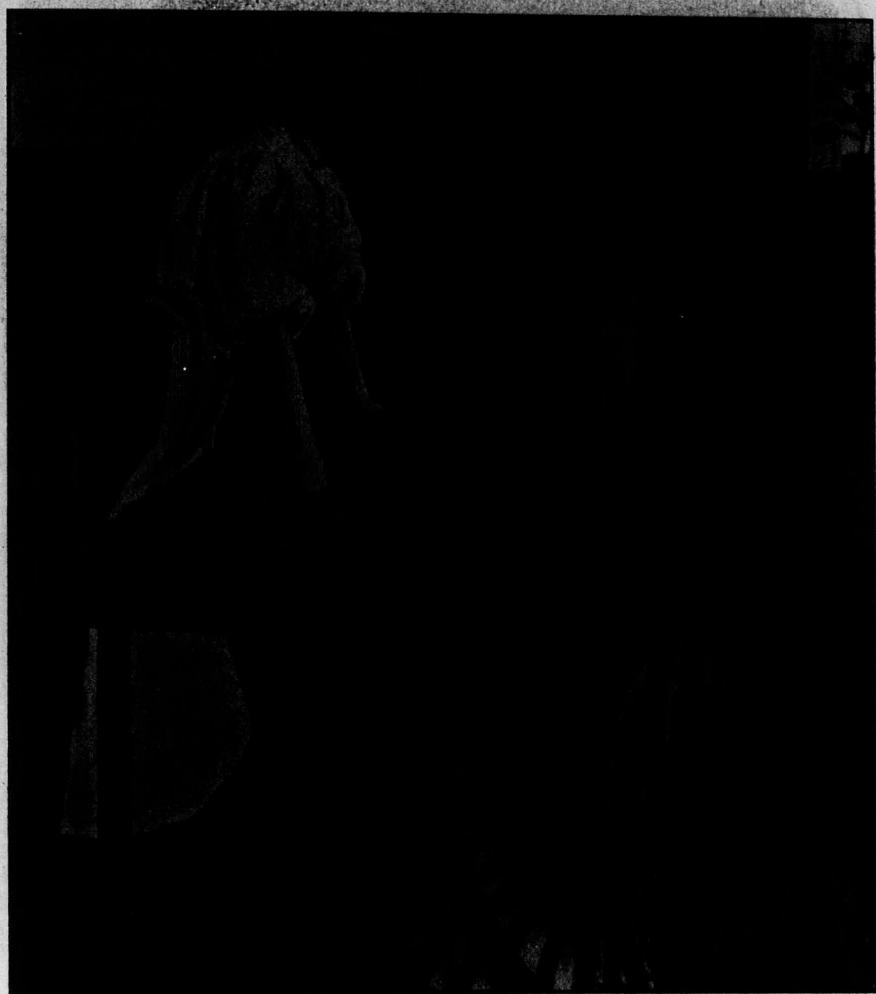
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ears rose to
sign, and I
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laxed and were murmuring softly. The dark little hands responded with a clap, clap, to the call of the piano. At this moment Miss Corning came into the room. Usually, after a smile and a pleasant word to the children, she would pass on through. To-day, glancing around the circle, she saw the transformation in my Nicholas and looked at me in amazement. With a motion to take no notice of him, I went on with the song, but she had seen and appreciated with me the beginning of new and better things. It was with difficulty that I could take my eyes from the face of this strange, new child. I gave his little companions their work, pretty gold and silver weaving-mats. Uncertain what to do, I hesitated beside his chair. But he solved the problem for me. "Giva me one," he said. It was the first time I had heard his voice. Selecting one, I stooped over him, showing him how to weave in the shining strips. He watched me for a moment, and then, taking it from my hands, said, "Now me do." To my surprise, he proceeded to "do" as quickly and neatly as any of the children who had tried for days, and

on some lofty hill-top and, raising my arms to heaven, cry out "Peace on earth, good will to men."

And this was only the beginning. Day by day Nicholas D'anfrio grew sweeter and more sunny. The little voice, harsh from long disuse, grew soft and mellow, and he sang like a bird. His dark eyes shone with a light that seemed not of earth; he came to be "sunshine" to Miss Corning and to us all, and I thought in my overflowing heart that no sweeter, stronger tribute had ever been paid to the charm and wonder of the story of that Child of long ago.

There were many times of struggle. I have seen his face grow dark and ugly, and the fist raised fiercely for a blow, but if the sorrow in my heart was reflected in my eyes as I looked at him, I do not wonder that the arm fell to his side, and the black eyes dropped and the little face flushed hotly. It has been a long, brave struggle, and the victory of that stalwart child nature which exorcised the demon and banished him has won him much respect and infinite love.



"But he solved the problem for me. 'Giva me one,' he said."

before the short half-hour was over, from his lips came the triumphant little phrase, "Me fineesh!" the little Italian's English cry of victory.

I could have folded him in my arms and kissed the dark eyes, now shining, but I knew that I must not. At the close of the morning, as we stood on the circle to sing a little farewell and shake each other's hands for good-bye, Nicholas was there with the rest. His hard little fist was placed for a moment in my hand, and my cup of joy was full.

Late that afternoon, as I took my way home, somewhat wearily, through the clear, glowing winter twilight, to the little room high up in the big house, my heart was filled with a great and glad thanksgiving. I wanted to stand

The term is over; we must separate. He to go to what he always calls not home, but "my house"—and I to a house which is as well a home—my home. It is the last day, and my heart is heavy with misgiving for the child. Ah, I see him come, running to me, across the snow. Now he is on the stair, and now beside me, here.

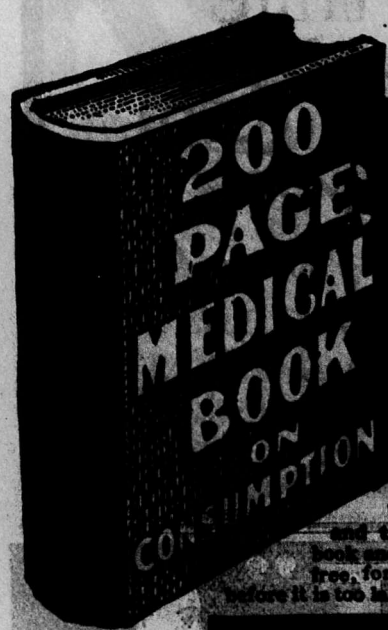
"I stay with you till the las' bell ring," he says.

And it has rung, dear little child; but as I look into your little face and see the clear, dark eyes and the steady little mouth, I feel that you are on the way, and that I need not be afraid. And so I go, leaving you to the care of One who watches even the birds of the air, and remembering that you are of "more value than many sparrows."

December.

Ding! Dong! Ding! Dong!
Hear the joy-bells ring!
One and thirty little men
To make them chime and sing.
Holly-berries gleam and glow;
Beneath their glossy leaves,
Icicles hang glittering down
And sparkle from the eaves;
Happy voices shout good will
To dear ones near and far;
And over all the earth shines fair
The light of Bethlehem's star.

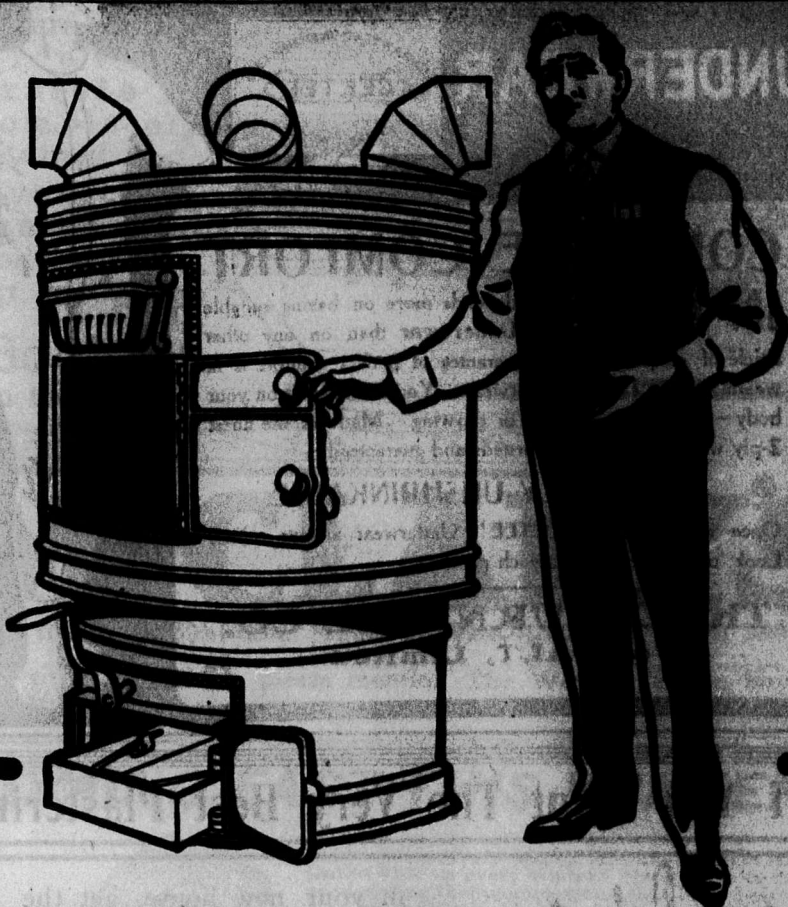
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