

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

REMEMBER THE WAIFS.

BY MRS. M. A. KIDDER.

How many children who seldom are glad,
Or merry, or joyful, but sorry and sad,
Scarce with the garments of decency clad!

Poor little waifs, with their innocent eyes
Looking about them as if in surprise,
Asking mute questions of beings more wise.

Many a wretched and supperless boy
Wonders why others God's good things enjoy—
Blessed home comforts, with naught to annoy.

Why he must beg for the food that he craves,
Sleep in the cellars, live in the streets,
Byways and alleys, and squalid retreats.

Poor little lads, who will some time be men,
Hailing from hovel and comfortless den,
Soon to take part in the world, and—what then?

Dear baby girls, without stocking or shoe,
Battling with cold, bitter winds, as they do,
Sufferings many, and blessings so few.

Look to it, children, for now is the time,
Winter is on us with frost and with rime,
Scatter your gifts 'gainst the sweet Christmas chime.

You who are children so carefully clad,
Happy and joyful, not sorry and sad,
Think of the poor homeless lassie and lad.

THE WHITE STONE.

A Christmas Story.

"We can have a happy Christmas, Francie, if we try," said Ruth Foster to her sister. "If we cannot have presents, we can do things to please other people, and be kind to each other. And then, there's the best of Christmas, you know—we can have that, if we are poor."

Poor Ruth looked as if she needed some brightness in her life. She was propped up in bed, with a board and a pillow at her back, and her pale face was drawn and wasted with suffering. There was no one with her but Francie, and the bed as well as the room had a neglected look.

"I think 'the best' is only for rich folks; so I do!" muttered Francie; "and I'm sure we can't do much to please anybody; that's just one of your dreams, Ruth. Mother says you are dreaming half the time."

Ruth tried to smile, but drew up her shoulders with a look of pain which brought Francie to her side instantly.

"Poor Ruthie! where is the pain now? Oh, I wish I could do something for you. If I were only big enough!"

"Never mind, dear," gasped Ruth; "it is going over a little. It doesn't give me much chance to 'dream' to-day, though!"

"I'm so sorry!" and the dark cloud gathered again on Francie's face, as she added:

"It's just mean that mother don't stay and take care of you. It is, Ruth; she might get some sort of work to do at home; the folks all say so!"

"You must not talk so, Francie dear. Mother thinks it is the best way; and she is very kind to us, I am sure."

"Well, I wish—"

"Don't wish, sissy; it will not help us. But if you'll just straighten the bed and tidy up the room a little it would be so nice! You take real good care of me sometimes, Francie."

Francie looked a little ashamed as she jumped up and began to do as Ruth had asked. She shook up the pillow and tried to make the sick girl more comfortable, and then turned her attention to the room, but with less zeal. In fact it was much easier for Francie to find fault with her stepmother than to bestir herself.

Ruth's and Francie's father had died when their little half-brother, Benny, was but two years old. Their mother had chosen to earn a support for herself and the children by taking an agency for several small articles; this kept her out on her rounds most of the time, and left the children very much to themselves.

Mrs. Foster liked going about; it suited her better than any work she could have done at

home; and, to do her justice, she did not realize how much Ruth needed care, nor how much was left on Francie's hands to do.

After picking up a few things, and raising a cloud of dust with her broom, Francie flung herself again into a chair by the bed-side and returned to her grievances.

"It's only a week to Christmas," she said, "and of course there won't be anything on the tree for either of us—except Ben—and I don't believe mother will ever think of it."

Ruth turned her head wearily on the pillow, but her face brightened as the door burst open, and Benny rushed in.

"Oh, you dear Ruth!" he cried, "are you worser to-day?" and he scrambled up to kiss his sister, adding: "Hasn't mother come home? Oh, I do want to tell her something!"

"Of course she hasn't," said Francie; "and don't scream so, Benny Foster; don't you know how Ruth's head aches?"

The little fellow looked troubled, but Ruth threw her arm around him.

"Never mind, Benny boy; it is pleasant noise. And mother'll be back soon I hope; but you can tell sister. What have you been doing to-day?"

"Oh, we had such nice times in school, practising the carols. We've 'most learned the new one—it's for Christmas Eve. And teacher says she is sorry Francie has stayed away so much, and—"

"You might have told her I couldn't help it!" exclaimed Francie, with flashing eyes. "You know I've had to stay with Ruth, for mother—"

"Yes, dear, we know," Ruth said, quietly; "and I'm so sorry to keep you."

Francie looked softened in a moment; but before she could speak a neighbor came hastily into the room.

"You poor children, here you are!" she exclaimed. "Do you know? have you heard?"

Their surprised faces answered the good woman, and she hastened to tell them that their mother had fallen down in crossing a street, and been run over.

"I expect she's hurt pretty bad; they've taken her to the hospital that the Church folks has been a-gettin' up—lucky for her that they'd got it started! But whatever is to become of you, poor dears! There, don't take on; maybe they'll soon have her about again," she added, a little startled by Ruth's pale face, and the frightened look of the other two. "I declare, I wish't I had a chance to do for you a bit; but those young ones of mine, they'll scald themselves to death if I don't run to them. Keep up a good heart now," and away bustled the neighbor, leaving the children alone with their trouble.

Little Benny was sobbing, with his face hidden by the bedclothes. Francie had not said a word, but she looked very much shocked. Ruth, all weak and trembling as she was, had to rouse herself to comfort the rest.

"There, dear Ben, don't cry; we will all pray the Lord to keep poor mother, and make her well very soon. And—why Francie, that must be the house for sick people that the Church ladies have been working for, where they've taken mother. They'll be so good to her, Benny, I know; and Dr. Barlow will be sure to see her himself."

Benny raised his head and nodded. He belonged to the parish school, and was very fond of the good rector whom he saw almost every day.

It comforted them all to think that Dr. Barlow would be sure to look after poor mother.

"Now, Francie—you'll have to be house-keeper you know—is there anything in the pantry for supper?"

"I'll get chips for the fire!" cried Benny; and Francie set to work with a will, and soon had a nice cup of tea and bit of toast ready for Ruth, and her own and Benny's supper on the table.

The next morning who should come in but Dr. Barlow himself. He had seen Mrs. Foster, and did not think she was dangerously injured, though it might be some weeks before she could be around again. As she had seemed very anxious about the children, and wanted to send them a little money which she had with her, the kind pastor had promised to go and see them.

His visit was a great comfort to the children. Ruth felt strengthened by it to bear her weary pain, and Francie was nerved up for any amount of housework and nursing.

The money, too, supplied their immediate wants; so, on the whole, the little household got on better than one might have expected.

"Sing the new carol for us, Benny," said Ruth that evening; and the little boy sang it through in a clear, sweet voice, which surprised his sisters.

"They tried that tune the last day I was at school," said Francie; "please sing it again, Benny, so I can sing with you."

Benny did so, Francie keeping with him very well.

"I wanted to sing it for mother, and s'prise her!" said Ben, sorrowfully.

"Maybe you can," Ruth said, raising herself a little. "I've thought of something. You and Francie learn it together; and then you ask Dr. Barlow if you may not go Christmas Eve, after the service, you know, and sing it under the window for mother."

Benny clapped his hands in delight; but Francie asked, "How could we leave you all alone, Ruth?"

"Oh, I should get on very well for that little time; anyway, you learn the carol."

Poor Francie! She could scarcely keep back her tears when the Christmas Eve service was mentioned. She must not think of leaving Ruth so long; and if she could, she had been absent so much from the Sunday-school as well as the day-school, that she had no hope of being remembered on the tree.

But there were no more fretful complaints, for some words which her pastor had spoken about showing her love to the dear Lord at this Christmas time, by doing her best for Ruth and Benny, had sunk deep into Francie's heart.

And then Ruth. Francie felt ashamed of her own naughtiness whenever she thought how patient Ruth was, with so much more to bear.

She said something like this to Benny. She had talked with Benny a good deal since the accident, and had begun to find out that he was a very sensible, nice little brother.

"I wish we could give Ruth a little bit of Christmas," Francie said; and Benny fell to thinking.

An hour or two after he came to the door and beckoned Francie out.

"See!" he whispered; "I picked up all these pretty greens around the church door. Mrs. Morse said I might have them, and I've found these sticks to make a cross, and if you will tie on the greens, you know, like the ladies do, we'll hang it up by Ruth's bed for Christmas. Shall we? And then we will take some to mother."

Francie was so pleased with this plan that he pulled her by the sleeve and whispered again; this time with a very red face: "And Francie, I want to give her my dear, pretty white stone; wouldn't you?"

"Why yes, if you like," was the doubtful answer; but Francie made haste to add, very heartily: "She'll be sure to like it from you, Benny."

The children soon had the carol quite perfectly, and they sang over a favorite one which they had learned the year before; for Benny said: "Maybe they'll let us sing two!"

Very timidly the little boy sought Dr. Barlow to make known his request, adding: "We want to, if Francie can get some one to look after Ruth, you know, sir."

The clergyman listened, and asked two or