

watched developments. The man came determinedly across the street, on his face a combination of wrath and tomatoes; and as he glared up at the window Cricket felt the end of the Universe had come.

The child shivered with fright, wondering what Miss Adelaide would say now; yet knowing the silence and averted eyes of Anna would hurt more than any words or whipping. Creeping on tip-toes to the head of the stairs, she stood listening to the man's angry voice as he told his story and exhibited his spattered clothes.

"A man can hardly be in a proper frame of mind for prayer when he is made a target for soft tomatoes!"

Cricket waited for no more, but, running hastily to her room, dragged a chair to the mantel; climbing up she seized her little bank and opened it, dropping the twenty pennies and bright new nickel into her hand. With all her worldly wealth clutched tightly in her chubby fist she climbed down again and slipped from the room.

The front and back parlors communicated by folding doors which were nearly closed, effectually screening the stairway that led into the back room. By dint of flattening her small body against the wall she managed to make her way into the back yard. Only a minute elapsed, but in that time a tiny figure with quivering lips was hurrying away.

She had no idea of where she was going; her only thought was to wonder why she was so much naughtier than other children. Someone always loved them, but nobody wanted her. Mrs. Jessup had been glad to get rid of her, and Miss Adelaide said she was sick of the commotion; even Miss Anna's sympathy had failed. Maybe if she died they would be sorry, and then she would be God's little girl. A guilty thought flashed over her; God didn't love naughty little girls, so Miss Adelaide said. Well, if she couldn't go to heaven, the devil would get her, and she was so naughty maybe he would let her be his little girl. That would be better than not belonging to anyone. Cheered by the thought she trudged on.

Passers looked curiously at the child, but concluded she knew where she was going. "Possibly sent on an errand," they thought, so said nothing to her. It was growing dark, and she was tired and for the first time in her life afraid. At last she stopped and sank wearily on a step, just to see if her feet would stop hurting. Then her head nodded and she was fast asleep.

Meanwhile, the irate old gentleman, whose name was Burns, had calmed down, and, with Chesterfieldian courtesy, refused all offers of "the girls" to be allowed to recompense him for damages sustained, asserting that he considered himself under obligations to Cricket for the pleasure of meeting the sisters; this with a deep bow, which was acknowledged by sweeping curtsies from "the girls." When he asked how they came to give the child such a name as "Cricket," they told the story of her life, and then it transpired that Mr. Burns' son was an army officer, and had known Lieutenant and Mrs. Arlington. Further, that his son and wife were at present visiting the old gentleman, and "would the ladies permit him to beg the privilege of calling with them?"

While the other sisters assured him how delighted they would be, Anna hurried up to tell Cricket and bring her down, only to find that the child was gone.

In a few minutes Cricket caused more commotion by her absence than she had ever done by her presence. Mr. Burns volunteered to give the alarm at the police station, for there were no telephones in those days.

In spite of his corpulency he made good time, and returned to the house as the five "girls" were hastily donning their "bonnets." No one noticed that Adelaide had on Mary Ann's bonnet, while the more juvenile one, belonging to Adelaide, was perched

rakishly over sedate Emmaline's right ear.

As they hurried to the door Adelaide stopped, and laying her hands on Anna's shoulders, said: "Some one must stay here, sister. She will want you when we bring her home. Don't worry, dear; we will find her, please God!" and he kissed the wrinkled, twitching face, her own eyes bright with tears.

The sound of jangling bells woke Cricket, and she raised herself stiffly, wondering why the bed and pillow were so cold and hard. Then she remembered.

As she rose aimlessly the bells grew louder. Church bells never rang that way. There was a thud of galloping hoofs, and Cricket forgot all her troubles as she darted to the curbstone to watch the fire engine dash past. Windows were raised, doors opened and people seemed to spring from the earth; for a moment Cricket stood alone under the flickering light of the gas street lamp.

Mr. Burns and Adelaide had met a few blocks away by a prearranged plan, hoping one or the other might have good news. A glance had shown the results of their efforts, and together they started to meet Emmaline and Mary Ann, who had been hunting another neighborhood, while Malvina, with a friend's son, searched in a different direction.

The clanging bells also attracted their attention, and they paused at the crossing to allow the engine to pass. As Mr. Burns turned to speak to Adelaide he caught sight of the child.

"There she is!" he called, triumphantly, and started forward. Cricket looked up, and seeing only the man whom she thought was pursuing her for vengeance, ran out into the street, blind with fear.

There was a horrified cry from the people, and the child glanced up at the horses that loomed above her. Then the engine passed leaving a limp little form on the ground.

In an instant Adelaide and Mr. Burns were at her side, surrounded by a fast gathering crowd which repeated a different version to each new-comer. An elderly man pushed through the mass of humanity and knelt by the child, saying, "I am a physician."

As he listened for the faint heart-beats, and held the tiny wrist, more than one woman in the crowd sobbed audibly; but Adelaide, with face and eyes that seemed frozen with horror, stood without a sound, her hands tightly clinched, until the doctor raised his head and said, "I think she is only stunned from the fall;" then Adelaide threw her hands out wildly and broke into sobs, "Oh, thank God! I have not killed her!"

Mr. Burns called out, "A quarter to the first boy who gets me a hack;" and it did not take long for a carriage to materialize. While waiting for it the doctor carried Cricket into an adjoining house, and Adelaide followed, without wondering whether the people who owned the house ever had a grandfather or not.

Mr. Burns waited on the steps, and presently came in to say the carriage had arrived. The doctor entered first, holding the child, then Adelaide got in and held out her arms in mute appeal, and Cricket was laid in her lap. Mr. Burns mounted the seat with the driver, saying, "Drive as carefully as you can." The red-faced driver nodded, "You bet your swate loife! Oi've got childers of me own."

Anna, who had been watching the window, saw the carriage stop and ran to open the door. As she saw the child in Adelaide's arms she made an effort to speak, but her lips refused to move. Adelaide looked into her face with an attempt at smiling. She is only stunned from a fall, sister. I drove her away, but, thank God, we have her back!"

The next morning the doctor came to inquire about his patient, whom he had ordered to remain in bed a couple of days. He was conducted upstairs to find a small girl lying in a big, old-fashioned four-posted feather bed, a pink velvet bonnet on her

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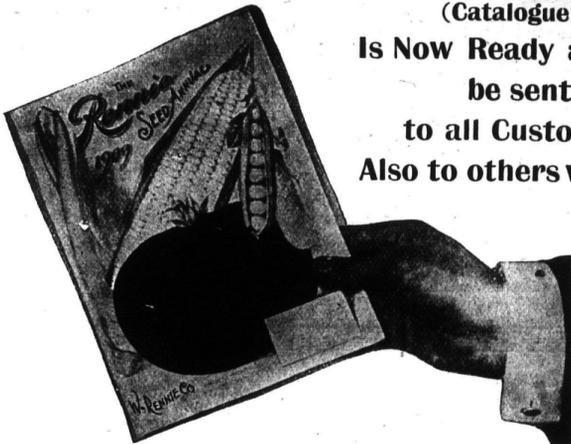
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