

Around the Table.

LIVING IN AN OMNIBUS.

A TRUE STORY.

"CHIPS, ma'am? Only five cents a basket," said a little voice, as I stood at my gate one morning, deciding which way I should walk.

Looking around, I saw a small yellow-haired, blue-eyed boy, smiling at me with such a cheerful, confiding face, that I took the chips at once, and ordered some more.

"Where do you live?" I asked, as we waited for Katy, the girl, to empty the basket.

"In the old 'bus, ma'am."

"In what?" I exclaimed.

"The old omnibus down on the Flats, ma'am. It's cheap, and jolly, now we are used to it," said the boy.

"How came you to live there?" I asked, laughing at the odd idea.

"We were Germans; and when father died we were very poor. We came to this city in the spring; but couldn't get any place, there were so many of us, and we had so little money. We stopped one night in the 'bus that was left to tumble down on the Flats behind the great stables. The man who owned it laughed when my mother asked if we might stay there, and said we might for a while; so we've been there ever since, and like it lots."

While the boy spoke, I took a fancy that I'd like to see this queer home of his. The Flats were not far off, and I decided to go that way and perhaps help the poor woman, if she seemed honest. As Katy handed back the basket, I said to the lad,—

"Will you show me this funny house of yours, and tell me your name?"

"O yes, ma'am; I am just going home, and my name is Fritz."

I saw him look wistfully at a tray of nice little cakes which Katy had put on the window-seat, and I gave him one, saying, as he put it in his pocket, very carefully,—

"How many of you are there?"

"Six, besides mother."

I just emptied the tray into the basket, and we went away together. We soon came to the Flats behind the stables, and there I saw a queer sight. A great shabby omnibus of the old-fashioned sort, with a long body, high steps, and flat roof, with the grass growing about its wheels, and smoke coming out of a stove-pipe poked through the roof. A pig dozed underneath it; ducks waddled and swam in a pool near by; children of all sizes swarmed up and down the steps; and a woman was washing in the shadow of the great omnibus.

"That's mother," said Fritz, and then left me to introduce myself, while he passed his cake-basket to the little folks.

A stout, cheery, tidy body was Mrs. Hummel, and very ready to tell her story and show her house.

"Hans, the oldest, works in the stables, ma'am, and Gretchen and Fritz sell chips; little Karl and Lottie beg the cold victuals, and baby Franz minds the ducks while I wash; and so we get on well, thanks be to Gott," said the good woman, watching her flock with a contented smile.

She took me into the omnibus, where everything was as neat and closely stowed as on board of a ship. The stove stood at the end, and on it was cooking some savory-smelling soup, made from the scraps the children had begged. They slept and sat on the long seats and ate on a wide board laid across. Clothes were hung to the roof in bundles, or stowed under the seat. The dishes were on a shelf or two over the stove; and the small stock of food they had was kept in a closet made in the driver's seat, which was boarded over outside, and a door cut from the inside. Some of the boys slept on the roof in fine weather, for they were hardy lads, and a big dog guarded the pig and ducks, as well as the children.

"How will you manage when the cold weather comes?" I asked.

She shook her head, and looked sober for a minute as she stroked the white head of baby Franz, who clung to her gown; then a smile broke over her face, and she answered trustfully,—

"I do my best ma'am, and keep a brave heart in me; for I remember the dear Gott is a father to such as these; and He won't let them suffer."

"You may be sure of that," I said heartily, and resolved that her beautiful faith should be rewarded by finding friends close by her.

"We are saving to get clothes for Gretchen and Fritz to go to school in the winter, ma'am. Karl and Lottie make toy furniture, as the father taught them; and when the bad weather comes they can sit warm in the 'bus, and make their bits of chairs and tables as well as ever. They can earn but little yet; still, they are so good I can leave Franz with them, and old Spitz, the dog, while I go out washing when it gets too cold to work here."

"Perhaps some kind person would take one of the children, and so lessen your care," I said; for I rather coveted pretty Lottie.

"Ah, but no! I could not spare one, even to you, best ma'am. They are my treasures, and I keep them all, all, as long as I can find bread to give them," cried the mother, gathering her flock into her arms, and feeling herself rich in spite of her poverty. I said no more, but slipped a bit of money into pretty Lottie's hand, and said good-bye.

A happier, healthier, busier set I never saw; each had work to do, and did it cheerfully. Often they had hunger and cold to bear, but bore it patiently. Very seldom did any of the pleasant things that children like come to them; but they were contented, and enjoyed playing with oyster-shells, old shoes and broken crockery as much as many children

enjoy their fine toys. Few mothers have more loving children, or do more for them, than good Mrs. Hummel; and I think I never saw a happier family than those little red-cheeked, yellow-haired Germans, as they gratefully smiled and nodded at me from the steps of their funny omnibus home.

KIT MIDGE.

KIT MIDGE was thought in the family to be a wonderful little cat. She enjoyed sitting in the sunshine; she liked to feast upon the dainty little mice; and O, dear me! now and then she liked to catch a bird!

This was very naughty, of course; but the best trained cats have their faults. One morning Kit ate her breakfast with great relish, washed her face and paws, smoothed down her fur coat, and went into the parlour to take a nap in the big arm chair.

The sun shone full in her face; and she blinked and purred and felt very good-natured; for only the night before she had caught her first rat, and for such a valiant deed had been praised and petted to her heart's content.

Well, Kit Midge fell asleep in the chair, with one little pink ear turned back, that she might wake easily, and a black tail curled round her paws. By-and-by one eye opened; and peeping out she saw her mistress walking across the room with a dear little yellow-bird in her hand, which she placed on a plant that stood on the top shelf of the plant stand.

Now, Midge had looked with longing eyes for weeks upon a lovely canary, which sang on its perch far out of her reach; and I suppose she thought this was the same bird among the green leaves.

But she was a wise little cat; so she slept on, with both eyes open, until her mistress had left the room. Then Kitty came down from the chair, and creeping slowly to the stand made a spring, and seized the birdie between her teeth. Then, jumping down, she dropped the bird on the carpet, smelled it, looked ashamed, and sneaked away.

It was only a stuffed bird; and when her mistress, who had been peeping in at the door all the time, said, laughing, "O, Kit Midge, I am perfectly ashamed of you!" Kitty just ran out of the room and did not show herself the rest of the day.

Kit Midge was never known to catch a bird after that.—*Nursery.*

"A PRUDENT man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." Proverbs xxvii 12.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

BIRTH.

On the 20th ultimo, the wife of the Rev. J. C. Wright, Franklin Centre, of a son.

MARRIED.

At the Congregational parsonage, Stouffville, by the Rev. E. D. Silcox, on July 2nd, George Jones, of Nottawasaga, to Sarah Paton, of King.