



WITH A ROARING FIRE IN THE STOVE.

THE NICEST KIND OF A PARTY.

Yes, it is all over now. The Christmas-tree has been decked and rifled, the Christmas pudding stoned and eaten, the snapdragon lit and scrambled for by troops of merry youngsters. All the fun of the fair is over. But it is only for a time; for despite what the would-be cynics say of the decline of Christmas, and the folly of old customs, we know that the loveliest of all our holidays will never be forgotten while boys and girls, and homes exist.

I have taken my share of the festivities, of course. I have stirred three puddings, and assured myself of at least six 'happy months' by partaking of a mince-pie at the houses of six different friends. I have been to a merry family-gathering, and pulled innumerable crackers. And I have danced the New Year in. And while this year is still a happy baby, what grand resolutions we are all making! We intend to be so industrious, and work so hard, and not give ourselves half so many holidays as last year. Boys and girls have settled steadily down to lessons, and are planning to carry off each a midsummer prize; and although our laudable resolutions may be fated to be upset, we start with the very best intentions of keeping every one of them—and that's a great thing, you know.

The very nicest party I have been to this winter, took place at Christmas time, in a large school room belonging to two young relatives of mine. I was invited to their grand schoolroom dinner, which was an exciting entertainment if only from the fact that the whole of it was cooked upon the tiny stove made by the elder brother of my two young cousins—a youth of sixteen, with wonderful constructing capabilities. He is, indeed, a clever boy, and deserves a special notice, although his mechanical mind is a cause of some little anxiety to his fond parents. You see, he wants to make everything go by steam or clockwork. The mangle and knife-grinder, his mother's sewing-machine, and the rocking-horse in the nursery have all been 'improved,' as he said. The mangle was a complete success for two days, for the young engineer made a beautiful steam-engine to drive it. Then a dreadful thing happened; it blew

up—the engine, I mean—and the rest of the household nearly followed its example. This was a little discouraging, and calculated to create a nervous feeling in the family with regard to future experiments. But the rocking-horse and sewing-machine were made to go on different principles. They were driven by clockwork, and the only difficulty that arose then was that, when once started, they couldn't be stopped; and the rocking-horse pranced for a whole day, and the sewing-machine whirled round for three, without one halt. It became a trifle wearying, as it was not what could be called 'silent' clockwork.

Still, with all these little failures, the miniature stove made by the aspiring mechanic is in every way a success, and burns real wood and coal, and cooks real things, as you will hear. To the stove is attached a set of cooking utensils, tiny saucepans and frying pans, and, best of all, a little copper kettle, all manufactured by my young kinsman's clever fingers. Oh, the pleasure that has been extracted from this pigmy stove! Rainy half-holidays are generally given over to the cooking of a feast; but, of course, at Christmas time something special was desired, and a menu of many dishes was drawn out. Here it is:—

Clear soup.
Cod and Oyster sauce.
Brussels sprouts, Turkey, Potato snow.
Plum pudding.
Mince pies. Custards in glasses.
Apple cream.
Dessert.

I was allowed to be present, and assist at the preparation of the dinner, and I will try and tell you a little of how we managed.

Clear soup; well, that we *did* get from cook, but it was not quite prepared, and we thickened it with a pinch of corn-flour, and found it beautiful. Codfish and oyster sauce—a big sprat made a truly handsome dish, and one oyster mixed up was ample for the sauce. Turkey—yes, we had one. A plump lark, stuffed quite in the orthodox way, and roasted in our stove's real oven, made a noble turkey. The plum pudding was a little bit of the family one, boiled in a tiny basin; but the custards and apple cream were prepared by us. You can imagine how exciting it was when, with a roaring fire in the stove, we watched the

turkey roasting, and the fish and pudding boiling merrily away; then when the moment came to 'dish-up,' expectation reached its highest pitch. We were so frightened for fear anything might turn out a 'failure.' But it didn't; and when the bell was rung, and the rest of the family trooped in to view our labors, we were proud, I can tell you. We arranged the banquet on a small table we rigged up on the very big one in the schoolroom, and everything was set out and served on the beautiful miniature dinner-service owned by my small cousins. We spent a long time over our table decorations—and very charming the effect was too. A strip of pale yellow silk ran down the centre of the table; tiny bouquets of scarlet geraniums were dotted here and there, while the whole was lit up by colored candles in silver candelabra borrowed from the dolls' house.

During the dinner, of which we all partook with a solemnity that was very impressive, toasts were proposed and drunk to the health of the 'maker of the stove' and the 'promoters of the banquet,' and it was suggested and carried with unanimous applause that every birthday in the family should be made the occasion of such another banquet. I must not forget to tell you that our dessert was crowned with a box of crackers—tiny bon-bons manufactured by my little cousins, and filled with sweets and a motto. This gave a realistic touch to our Christmas dinner, especially when we pulled them.—*Pull Mall Budget.*

A CUNNING SCHEME.

'I'll send her a valentine,' quoth he,
'And only Mabel shall know it's me;
I'll pop it into the box at night,
When there isn't a single soul in sight.'

'If wrote on the envelope,' quoth he,
'Most any one of them might know 'twas me.
So never a word outside I'll write,
But I'll keep the address blank and white.'

'I'll send her a valentine,' quoth he,
'And dear little Mabel will know it's me;
But won't the postman be wild to know
Just who had the wit to fool him so!'

THE STORY OF A NEW DRESS.

'Are you going to have two puffs on your skirt, or only one? This question Mrs. Baker called out from the sewing-room, as her young daughter flitted by.

'Why, two, of course.'
'It is a good deal of work,' Mrs. Baker said, and she sighed.
'I know that; but when one has a nice dress, why, one wants it made nicely.'

From the sewing-room came the sound of Miss Wheeler's voice, singing softly:—

'Heavenly Father, I would wear
Angel garments, white and fair.'

'Miss Wheeler,' called Cornie, 'you think it ought to be made with two puffs, don't you?'

'I don't know. I haven't thought about it. Do you want me to think?'

Cornie came and stood in the door and looked at her in a surprised sort of way. 'Don't you think about your sewing when you are doing it?' she asked.

'Well, not more than I have to in order to do it well. It would be hard work to think about clothes all the time, you know. But about the puffs—that is the way most people think they must have them.'

They went into the front room. Mrs. Baker and Cornie talked it over, and all the time came that humming voice from the other room:—

'Take away my cloak of pride,
And the worthless rags 'twould hide.'

She has rather a sweet voice,' Cornie said. 'Mother, I believe I shall have to get some more silk for this sash; it isn't going to be heavy enough. I want it to wear over my white dress, you know, and it ought to be rich for that. Susie Grahame thinks she has the very grandest suit in town, but I suppose there can be things made to look as well as hers.' And Miss Wheeler sang:—

'Let me wear the white robes here,
Even on earth, my Father dear,
Holding fast Thy hand, and so
Through the world unspotted go.'

Cornie shivered a little. 'How she

does harp on that hymn,' she said nervously; 'I wish she wouldn't. I'm tired of it.'

'Can't you let the poor thing sing?' her mother said. 'It's all the comfort she has.'

'She might sing something besides that one hymn!' Cornie said. But she didn't, she seemed to delight in that; and she sang it over and over, especially those two lines:—

'Let me wear the white robes here,
Even on earth, my Father dear.'

At last Cornie went and stood in the door again. 'Do you like that hymn better than any other in the world,' she asked, 'that you sing it so much?'

Miss Wheeler looked up brightly. She had an old, rather faded face, but a wonderfully pleasant mouth and smiling eyes.

'Oh!' she said; 'I didn't realize that I was singing loud enough to be heard. Yes, I do like that hymn wonderfully well. I sing it a great deal. It is natural that I should, you know, as it is all about dress, and I have so much to do with dresses.'

Cornie laughed a little. 'Not much to do with that kind of dress, I should say. The sort that you have to sew on is mostly the "worthless rags." I should think. You see you have sung it so much that I have caught some of the words.'

'It was this white dress of yours that made me think of it to-day,' the little seamstress said. 'It is so pretty, and I was thinking how much I liked white, and then, naturally, that made me think of my own white dress, and I began singing about it before I thought.'

'It is not much like mine,' Cornie said, with a little sigh, 'mine is all spotted up with the world even before it is made. I wish the world wasn't so full of dress, Miss Wheeler. Sometimes I am tired of it, and I should think you would hate it.'

'I like dress ever so much,' Miss Wheeler said, softly. 'I am never tired of thinking about it. "Clean linen, pure and white." I always did like white linen.'

Cornie stood looking at her in silent wonder for a few minutes, then she went away, out of the dress-bestrewn rooms, downstairs to the parlor, and turning over the leaves of the hymn-book on the piano she found the words:—

'Heavenly Father, I would wear
Angel garments, white and fair.'

and read them carefully through. Upstairs in the sewing-room Miss Wheeler stopped her singing and sewed away steadily, with a little shadow on her face. 'That's just like me,' she murmured at last. 'I am always singing, but I never seem ready to speak a word for Jesus. Why couldn't I have asked her how she was getting on with her other white dress that the hymn tells about? The poor lamb may need a word of comfort that even I could speak.'

'Cornie Baker,' some of the girls said to her, months afterward, 'how came you to take such a sudden and decided stand; be so different, you know, from what you were before? You have been a Christian this long time, but not such a one as you are now.'

Cornie was still for a minute, then she looked up with eager, smiling eyes: 'I found my help in the sewing-room among my new dresses,' she said brightly.

'What a queer place to find help in!' one of them said.

Cornie then told them the story of the little seamstress, and her hymn about dress, that she sang over and over, speaking her name with a tender voice and a tear in her eye. But the little seamstress knew nothing about it.—*The Pansy.*

A DREADFUL POSSIBILITY.

BY JESSIE B. SHERMAN.

Molly stood beside the shore,
When the sun was setting,
Saw him drop into the sea—
Feared he'd get a 'wetting.'

'Nurse, dear!' she cried, distressed,
'Can't we help him out?
Some big fish will come along
And swallow him, no doubt.'

'Then to-morrow morning
How ever shall we see?
We'd have to dress by candle-light
And breakfast would be tea!'