

## BREAKFAST FOR TWO.

(By Joanna H. Mathews.)

## CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

Edward took up the morning paper, and read aloud the headings of the principal articles, and one or two items of interest, as his custom was; then, as if struck by a sudden thought, turned the paper and glanced down the column of advertisements. I saw his eye light as if he had found something for which he was seeking; and before I had time to put any questions, which I assuredly should have done, he read aloud:

"Lost.—On Wednesday afternoon, in Twenty-sixth street, between Madison and Fifth Avenues, a stone cameo ring, heavy gold setting. It is specially valued as a relic; and the finder will be liberally rewarded by bringing it to—Fifth Avenue."

"They ain't a-goin' fer to get it!" shouted Jim, forgetting the strict orders he was under never to join, while on duty, in the conversation of the family; and, in his excitement, dropping the plate of hot cakes he was bringing. "They might as well a-kept out their ole advertise, 'cause I found it, an' I'm goin' to hole enter it! So now!"

Here the culprit was pounced upon by Thomas, who, with a portentous face, carried him off to the butler's pantry, whence he was not allowed to emerge again during breakfast. It is to be feared that the keeping of the ring would have been a venial offence in Thomas' eyes, compared to Jim's heinous and double sin of dropping the plate of cakes, and presuming to express himself with so much force in the presence of his superiors.

Feeling that the training he was receiving in these menial duties was but a stepping-stone to the presidency of the United States, and that all reproofs were, as Thomas assured him, "for his good," Jim submitted to these with marvellous docility for a youth of his stamp, and general rebelliousness; and he was now duly impressed with the enormity of his behavior. Whether it was this, or that the matter of the ring was weighing upon his heart and conscience, he was in an uncommonly depressed and subdued state the whole morning; and, by-and-by, he requested a little conversation with Milly.

This quiet talk with her changed his views on the subject of the ring; and that afternoon he sallied forth to return it to its rightful owner, obtaining the address from Milly.

He came back triumphant in the possession of a ten dollar bill, crisp and new.

"She's a nice gal, the one that lost the ring; there ain't none nicer, I guess," cept our Miss Milly," he said to Bill, holding up the note, which was a world of wealth to him. "I ringed the bell, an' a nigger chap—I mean a colored feller—he came to the door, an' I tells him I wanted to see the one what lived there, an' put a advertise in the paper this mornin'; an' he says, 'Yer gimme it, an' I'll take it to her'; an' says I, 'No, yer don't; I'll give it to her myself, 'cause yer see I foun' out 'twas her what lost it'; an' he looked awful mad, but I telled him he needn't be rollin' up his eyes at me, an' jest then there comes down-stairs a real purty gal—young lady, I mean—an' I s'pose she seen me an' him a-lookin' daggers, an' says she, 'What's the matter?' an' yer see he had to tell her, an' I outs with the ring. She lit all up when she seen I had it; an' then she most as good as cried, swallowin' an' chokin' to keep in the tears, 'cause it was the last thing her sister gave her what's dead, she said, an' then she was smilin' like, agen, an' out with her pocket-book an' gimme this, an' shook han's, too, an' said I was an honest boy. I didn't tell her, yer know, I meant to hang onto it fust goin' off, an' only got honest this afternoon, along of Miss Milly tellin' me what was the right thing. 'Taint any odds, anyhow; this is better nor the ring, 'cause I kin get Miss Milly a beautiful Krismas present, an' somethin' for little Allie and Miss Daisy, too; an' I might have some left to buy somethin' for me an' you, Bill."

"I want to speak to yer about it," said Bill, who had borne a grave countenance during the latter portion of Jim's harangue; and the two withdrew into privacy. Jim believing that Bill intended to make some attractive suggestion respecting the disposal of the money.

"Jim," he said, "yer know yer tole me yer wanted awful bad to do some kind of a make-up, if yer could get the chance."

"Yes, an' I jest got the luck to find the way, didn't I?" answered Jim, beaming, and not yet seeing the drift of his companion. "Spendin' lots of money what's my own—my own, real honest, true an' fair—for a Krismas present for Miss Milly an' her little sisters is a beautiful make-up for what I got done for me."

"It's ten dollars, ain't it?" said Bill, significantly.

"Yes, yer know it," answered Jim, still too exultant over his good fortune to notice his tone or manner.

"An' it was ten dollars yer hooked off the ole woman to the shirt shop, wasn't it?" questioned Bill.

Bill's moral instincts were naturally finer than those of his friend and comrade, and responded more readily to the teachings he received than did those of his fellow waif.

Jim's face flushed scarlet at this home thrust, for he could not fail to see this point of the question.

"Yes, it was, an' yer know that, too," he answered, angrily; but ain't yer jest mean to cast it up to a feller like that?"

"I didn't mean for ter hurt yer, but yer said yer wanted so awful bad to find a make-up," said Bill, "an' it jest seemed as if yer got the chance now so fust-rate. Seems as if it was jest made straight out for yer, most as if real luck—or—maybe the Lord had a hand in it, ter fix it for yer."

Bill had hesitated before propounding any religious sentiment—all unused to such as he was—and it was met as he had feared and expected it would be.

"Aw, now! ain't yer turnin' awful pious?" responded Jim, scornfully; "an' I don't believe the Lord had no hand in it at all; anyway, yer oughtn't ter go for ter say he'd bother hisself puttin' luck in folks' way—but I'm a-goin' for ter give him part of it, ten cents, I guess, in the mission box nex' Sunday—an' I'm goin' to keep the rest on it for Miss Milly's, an' Miss Allie's an' Miss Daisy's Krismas, least most part on it, and the rest on it for spendin' money."

"But I thought yer wanted to get the best kind of a make-up for all what's been done for us," persisted Bill, determined to bring Jim to a right view of his obligations, if that were possible.

"An' so my way is the best," retorted Jim; "best for me, an' Miss Milly, an' the Lord, an' that's three on us, an' the ole woman only one."

And failing altogether, poor fellow, to see the moral bearings of the case, as presented by Bill, he was not to be convinced to the contrary, and refused to hear more on the subject, treating Bill with an air of offence and injured virtue which made the other servants wonder, inasmuch as such a state of things had never been known before. But they both kept the secret.

## CHAPTER XII.—JIM'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

As the evening wore on, however, Jim's moral perceptions seemed to quicken—perhaps Bill's arguments were bearing fruit—his conscience waxed uneasy, and he resolved to apply to his second conscience, "Miss Milly," to solve his doubts for him.

He would not confess to Bill, however, but made a pretence of wishing to go upstairs to see Miss Milly on some other business. We were all in the library, but he fidgeted about the hall and door until he attracted her attention, when he demanded to speak with her in private.

"Yer see, Miss Milly," he said, when he had honestly set forth to that gentle mistress all the pros and cons, Bill's arguments and objections, and his own, "yer see there'll be such a lot set up if I does my way, an' keep it, mean the Lord, an' somebody else what I was a-goin' to do the beautifullest thing for; an' t'other way there's nothin' but the ole woman."

"And the right, Jim," said his young mistress, quietly. "And that is what the Lord loves best, the right, the true and the just; better, far better, than the giving of that which is not justly ours, and which we give to please ourselves, or to quiet our consciences."

Poor Jim plunged his hand into his pocket, taking thence an old pocket-book, discarded by some one of the family and seized upon by him as a prize; opened it, and took out the crisp ten dollar note, which he turned over and over, regarding it wistfully, while Milly watched him in

silence, leaving what she had said to work its results.

"Then yer say I must give this back to the ole woman, Miss Milly?" he asked, half sulkily.

"I do not say that you must, my boy," she answered. "I have no right to say so; the money was given to you, and you may do with it what you will; but we were speaking, you know, of what is right, of what would best show your gratitude for all that has been done for you."

"Well, that's just it, Miss Milly," said the boy, his face brightening. "It's just what I want to do—the best make-up I could—keepin' out a little for spendin' on myself an' Bill—Bill never went back on me afore this—an' I don't mind tellin' yer, Miss Milly, it's you I was goin' ter do that beautiful thing for, come Krismas, an' for the little young ladies too."

"And the most beautiful thing you can do for me, the best Christmas present would be to let me see you do a truly honest and noble deed, Jim," said Milly, with a heartfelt and earnest sympathy in her voice and manner. "But, Jim, you put me and the gratitude you owe to me before the Lord, and that you owe to him. Do you not know that it was his hand, his care, which brought us together that first day we met, and led me to give you the home, and the care, and the teaching which you say you are so anxious to repay in some way?"

"Do yer mean it was along of him yer took hold of me an' Bill, an' been so good to us ever since yer first seen us?" asked the boy.

"I do," said Milly, adding softly to herself: "He hath led us by a way we knew not of."

"Don't it seem funny, an' Him so far off?" said Jim, thoughtfully.

"But he is not far off from those that love him, and try to do that which will please him," said Milly. "And he sees the least thing we do to show that we are grateful to him."

"Then he'll see the ten cents in the mission box," responded the irrepressible.

"He will see it, but I fear that it will grieve him more than it will please him," answered Milly.

"It's awful hard work making up for the Lord, ain't it, Miss Milly?"

"It ought not to be," said Milly, while her heart ached for the boy, as she saw his disappointed face, and heard the grieved, despondent tone of his voice. "It ought not to be, not when we remember all he has done for us."

And again, in her loving, winning way she set forth the story of the immortal sacrifice, of the glories resigned, of the pains and woes endured, of the victory won; and all for frail mankind, all, all for the poor, weak child who stood there, with ignorant, blinded soul struggling feebly upward towards the light shed by the cross.

It was not the first time by many that Jim had heard it, but it seemed new to him now; it had a power and a pathos which had never touched him before, and his whole expression and bearing had changed and softened when she finished.

"I never thought before how good in him it was," he said, gently and thoughtfully; rubbing his hands one over the other, as he presently turned away and left the room.

Milly had asked no promise, and Jim had given none, but it was easy to see that her teaching had not been without its effect, whether it was to bring about the desired result did not at once appear. Many and mighty were the struggles within Jim's heart and soul, and the immediate consequences were not edifying, as is apt to be the case with older, stronger, and better instructed souls when passing through some great crisis. He was openly disobedient and impudent to Mary Jane, purposely setting all her rules and regulations at defiance, and neglecting such of his duties as were of any assistance to her. He was fractious with the other servants, even his chum, Bill; discontented and fretful in his daily work. But the ten dollar bill still remained intact.

So the days passed on until the eve of that which was to usher in the glad Christmas morning; and all the household was in a state of glad and happy excitement and preparation for the morrow. Even Mary Jane's temper had mellowed beneath the genial influence of the season, and the prospect of the coming festivities, and she

was quite beaming over her pans and kettles.

Only Jim, poor, harassed Jim, remained despondent and down-hearted; and Milly, watching with anxious interest the struggles of her protegee, and wondering what would be the result, felt her own enjoyment somewhat dampened. There was a shade of thoughtfulness on her sweet face as we decked library, dining and drawing room with Christmas greens and appropriate emblems, and her laugh rang out less gaily than usual.

We were a little late with our preparations, and the whole family were busy, while such of the servants as could be spared from their usual occupations had been pressed into the service.

Thomas was present, as also was Bill, eager, active and helpful; but Jim, who had also been called upon to help, and who had been more than usually dull and preoccupied all day, had disappeared about half an hour since, making no excuse, and giving no account of himself or his intentions.

"Hand me some more of that coarse wire, Thomas," said Edward, from the topmost step of the step-ladder, upon which he was mounted to wreath the chandelier.

"There's no more, sir," answered Thomas.

"Send one of the boys for some more," said Edward. "Girls, can you spare Bill? I must finish this room before dinner."

"O no, we can't spare him," I cried from the corner, where, with the assistance of Douglas and Bill, I was dressing some pictures with festoons of brilliant autumn leaves and delicate ferns. "Send Jim; he is not busy; at least he is not helping us. Where is he?"

"I will see," said mother, whom we would not allow to help, save by the assistance of her advice and taste. "I want to speak to the laundress, and will see if he is down-stairs, and send him."

But as she opened the door, and passed out into the hall in quest of Jim, she met the boy himself, in hat and overcoat, on his way to the front door, and evidently in great haste.

"I want you, Jim. I have an errand for you. Where have you been, and where are you going?" she asked, as he almost ran against her in his hurry.

"Don't stop me! O, ma'am don't stop me!" cried the boy, cheeks aglow and eyes aflame. "I've made up my mind an' I'm goin' to do it; but it's awful hard, an' if I get stopped I might go back on it. Don't go ter hinder me! They'll shut up shop to-morrow, 'cause it's Krismas day, an' if I had to wait, I know I couldn't go over the day an' keep to it; if yer ever had a thing to do that went agin yer, let me go now!"

Mother knew the story in common with all the rest of the household; and, with quick instinct, divined what he would be at. His hand was on the latch of the front door, as he stood facing her, and with a motion of her hand, she bade him god-speed. Then, heedless of the wintry wind, of the fast declining day, or the eyes of passers-by, stepped out upon the broad stone stoop, and with tears in her soft eyes, a blessing in her heart, and her stately head bent in mute reverence and thanksgiving, watched him as he flew down the street.

In less than an hour he was back, and, rushing into the room where Milly, Edward and I were putting the final touches to our decorations, he threw his arms about the neck of the former, regardless and forgetful of decorum and social distinctions, exclaiming:

"I done it, Miss Milly, I done it! An' now may-be it's a kind of a make-up all 'round; for him, an' for you, an' for the ole woman, too. An' I guess me an' Bill 'll feel pooty good about it too, an' yer won't none of yer care if I didn't get yer no Krismas presents outer it."

Milly pressed the boy to her own overflowing heart, with an unspoken thanksgiving of "Glory to God in the highest," that he had been led to choose for himself the best of all Christmas gifts, a heart and conscience at peace with God and man.

And who shall say that the angels did not rejoice anew, and sing an added anthem that that once darkened heart and soul were awakened beneath the influence of the light shed upon all the earth at the dawn of the Christmas morning.

THE END.