

Family Department.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST 1st January.

O Jesu, consecrate to God always,
Baptized in blood for us from infant days,
Be thine, O Lord, by holy prayer and love,
The year we enter by Thy mercy now.

We know not, Master, and we would not know,
What shall befall us day by day below;
Or, if the angel of Thy will and love
This year shall bear us to Thy rest above.

But well we know Thy tenderness and power
Will never faint nor fall us, hour by hour,
And all our supplications blend in one,
Thy will in us, Thy will by us, be done.
—Bickersteth's Year to Year.

THE EPIPHANY.

"Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."—Isaiah lx. 1.

Rise, Captive Zion, shine: Thy light is come;
The glory of the Lord on Thee hath risen.
Arise and sing: and in Thy palace home
Forget the dust and darkness of thy prison.
Lost and astray, Thy Shepherd now hath found thee;
Childless so long, thy children cluster round thee:
A widow for these weary centuries,
Thy Husband hath returned and bids thee, rise.

Yet faint and feeble to the eyes of man,
Dawns the far day spring for the dead and dying
Earth cannot read heaven's mighty-majestic plan,
Where sleeps yon Infant in a manger lying:
But God's own courtier leads His Eastern sages
There to adore the Great Desire of ages,
Who shower before Him costly offerings,
And worship in that Babe the King of Kings.

O Thou who biddest light from darkness shine,
Write in our hearts Redemption's earliest story,
The human only veiling the Divine,
Love's coronation in that hidden glory.
Faith knows Thee now. Oh, grant us the fruition
Hereafter of Thy Godhead's glorious vision;
Now God with us, all hail Emmanuel!
Then and for ever, we with God to dwell.
—Year to Year.

JULIE.

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

On and on, a long way they went, till another village came in sight. Up the straight street they went.

Here and there a man or woman bade him "Good day," or passed a remark on the weather. He answered them, but made no reference to the little body lying in the cart; and by-and-by the village was left behind, and they were on a country road again.

Presently he turned down a lane, and a small farmhouse in sight; he drove up to the door, jumped down, and took Julie carefully out of the cart.

Into the house he went, through a stone passage, and into a stone-floored kitchen—a clean, fresh, bright kitchen, with the firelight dancing on the polished cans and tins that hung on the well-scrubbed dresser. Tea was laid on a snowy white cloth; it looked so nice and tempting.

The person he expected to find was evidently not there, so he paused in the doorway and called, "Martha! Martha!"

Footsteps sounded over the kitchen, and fell upon the stairs. "I'm coming, John," answered a rather muffled voice, as a sob and a sigh were checked.

The man looked down on senseless Julie with almost a smile of satisfaction as he heard the stifled sigh.

"Martha," he said, turning to meet her in the doorway, "here's summat to comfort you. I picked 'er up in the road. She's had an accident," and he placed Julie in the astonished woman's arms.

The woman burst into a flood of tears. "She minds me of our little one," she sobbed. "O my Julie! my Julie!" and pressed a kiss on the still white face, carried her tenderly into the kitchen.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARTHA.

I must tell you about this man and woman, so we must go back ten years ago.

Ten years ago Martha was a nurse—not a nursemaid who looked after children, but a nurse who went about nursing sick people; and a very clever nurse she was. The doctor in the village would have been badly off without her help, and Nurse Martha was known by everybody.

She lived, when she was not away nursing people in their own houses, in a pretty cottage with a young sister, whom she loved devotedly, and spoilt a great deal, some people said.

This sister was a pretty girl, with pleasant, taking manners, and before she was eighteen years old a gentleman, far above her in position, fell in love with her, married her, and took her, away to his own home.

Martha missed Jessie sorely, but was too unselfish not to rejoice in her good prospects, and read with eagerness the letters Jessie wrote to her from her new and beautiful home. They went travelling about from place to place; they crossed the sea and went to France; then, a short year after, sad tidings came to Martha, telling of Jessie's death with the news that she had left a baby behind—a little girl a few weeks old.

Mr. Strickland stayed abroad a month or so longer, and Martha was not very much surprised when one day a closed carriage stopped at her cottage door and out of it came Mr. Strickland and the baby, and the baby's nurse.

How Martha cried over Jessie's child! "It was so like Jessie," she said.

"And will you take care of her for me?" Mr. Strickland added. "I could trust her with you, Martha; more than with any one else in the world."

"Take care of her!" Martha felt jealous of any one else touching the child. And that very evening the nurse was dismissed, and Nurse Martha installed in her place; and she and Mr. Strickland sat together and talked over the baby's future.

It turned out that Mr. Strickland had had a good post offered him in India, which he was loth to refuse; and as it was impossible to take out Jessie's baby with him, the best thing he could think of was to leave it with Jessie's sister. And Martha quite agreed.

Mr. Strickland then arranged to send her a sum of money quarter by quarter for the expenses of the little girl. "And if when I come home—and it may be many years hence," he said—"and I find my little Julie a happy, healthy girl I shall pay you down, Martha, the sum of five hundred pound; it will be a nest egg to provide for your old age."

Martha vehemently declared that she wanted nothing for taking charge of Jessie's child, except the money that the baby itself would cost; but Mr. Strickland took no notice of that, and simply wrote down all the conditions on a piece of paper, and, handing it to Martha, bade her keep it safe.

Then, with a tender farewell to the unconscious little child, the father placed her in Nurse Martha's arms, and said good-bye in a husky voice. A week later he had sailed to India, and so little Julie became Martha's charge.

A kind and faithful protector Martha made; its own mother could scarcely have been fonder of the little one. And so the years went by, and Julie, as she called her, grew into a happy well-cared-for child.

The money came regularly quarter by quarter, and helped to make Martha's own home more

comfortable, just as Mr. Strickland intended; because, since the care of the baby had come, Martha had very little time for nursing sick folk, and nursing had been her living.

It was a comforting thought, too—the thought of the five hundred pounds that was to make some provision for the time when she herself was old, and had become too feeble to work; and Martha often looked at the paper with the written conditions with a feeling of great complacency.

When Julie was about six years old Martha had a proposal of marriage. It came from John Gerring, who owned a small farm. Martha had known him for many years—he was a second cousin of hers—and as she had always liked him very well, she thought the best thing she could do was to accept him.

So a few months later they were married, and Martha, with Julie, left the cottage home and the village where she was born, and went to John's Gerring's farm, more than twenty miles away.

John Gerring was rather "near"—that was the only fault she found with him; and by "near" Martha meant rather stingy. He liked hoarding money; and how his eyes glittered when one day Martha showed him Mr. Strickland's conditions on that bit of paper!

He was a silent, surly sort of man, though kind enough in his way. His wife would have noticed it more, and been lonely, perhaps, if it hadn't been for Julie. And what a lively little chatterbox Julie was, and what winsome ways she had! She could even coax pennies out of John Gerring, which is saying a great deal. What pains Martha took to teach her to read, dreading, as she grew older, that Mr. Strickland would one day wish her to be sent to school.

She had been married two years, and Julie was eight, when the child fell suddenly ill. She faded and drooped, and when Martha suggested that a change of air might do her good, John Gerring, thinking of the five hundred pounds, packed off Martha and Julie to a seaside place though it made it very uncomfortable for himself without his brisk, tidy wife to keep him comfortable at home.

But the change was no good at all. Poor little Julie died, and was buried at the seashore place, and Martha came back alone—oh, how much alone!—with her heart left in Julie's grave.

John Gerring grew surlier and more silent, brooding over the blow that had come; he was fond of Julie in his way, but he liked five hundred pounds more. And then, just a week after Martha's sad return, he picked up a little girl lying stunned in the road, just, about Julie's size.

Why didn't he take her to the village where help could have soonest been got? John Gerring could hardly have told. First in his mind came his wife, looking so sorrowful at home. Wouldn't it cheer her a bit to have this little girl to nurse? and Martha loved nursing so. Then—a reward might be offered for the child, for she belonged to gentle folks by her looks; and why shouldn't John Gerring have the reward as well as another man? Hadn't John Gerring found her? "She might have died in the road but for him," he said over and over again.

So, with such thoughts struggling through his mind, not all straight as I have put it, but little confused bits at a time—John laid out little Julie in his cart, and went joggling towards his home. And as you know poor Martha's history, you are not surprised at her crying out, "My Julie! my Julie!" as she carried her into the kitchen. She soon found that her head had been hurt, and with a few hurried questions as to how John had found her, and where, she carried her off to bed.

All this while John Gerring sat waiting for his.