

How They Missed the Blessing

They had gathered about the study-lamp. Agnes had taken up her fancy-work, Ned was busy with his algebra, Mr. Gray was poring over a lawbook and Cousin Margaret was looking over the latest issue of the daily paper.

'Hark, how the storm beats against the window!' said Ned, looking up from his book. 'A fellow is happy who has his own hearthstone such weather as this.'

'I am sorry it should have rained this evening,' Agnes answered. 'Dr. Edwards is always so interesting at the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting service, and I had hoped we could take Cousin Margaret to hear him.'

There was a look of surprise on Cousin Margaret's face and she turned inquiring eyes on Agnes.

'Do you have your prayer-meeting service only on pleasant evenings?'

'Oh, no, indeed, the prayer-meeting service is always held, no matter how stormy the weather.'

'Then you need not be sorry on my account that it is raining. I am accustomed to going out in all sorts of weather, and I do not mind the storm in the least.'

Ned whistled softly and father looked up from his book as if he had only just caught the drift of the conversation.

'You see, Cousin Margaret, we have the prayer-meeting every Wednesday evening, so we feel we can afford to stay at home when it storms.'

This was from Ned; Agnes had remained silent, but her cheeks were flushed as she glanced at Cousin Margaret.

'I scarcely thought you would care to go out in this storm,' she said.

'Oh, Agnes, if you only knew how hungry I am for just such services as these, and how in my western home I am deprived of them, you would not wonder that I am anxious to avail myself of every opportunity to be present. If you do not wish to face the storm, I would not have you do it on my account, but I am sure you will understand and excuse me if I go.'

Agnes laid aside the fancy-work and arose hastily.

'Indeed, I shall accompany you,' she said. 'I am not an invalid that I should mind the storm, and it is only force of habit that has kept me at home. We ought to leave here in ten minutes, Cousin Margaret.'

Mr. Gray closed the covers of the law-book with a bang and rose to his feet.

'You must not go unaccompanied,' he said. 'I'll be ready as soon as I put on my storm-coat.'

Ned laughed and threw his algebra-book on the corner of the couch. 'I was just wishing for an excuse to quit this,' he said. 'You must not suppose I am going to be the only one left at home.'

Just as Dr. Edwards announced the opening hymn, Mr. Gray and his family entered and heartily joined in the words of praise. There were few present, but they felt drawn very near the throne of grace as the pastor later expounded to them the word of God.

"What seek ye?" asks the Master, his hands overflowing with priceless gifts; and we ask some little trifle, something scarcely worth the having, when such glorious fulness might be ours.'

Thus he talked heart to heart with his people and they left later, feeling refreshed both in body and soul.

'The wind has changed to the west and the stars are shining,' said Mr. Gray. 'It would have been too bad had we missed this blessing.'

'And I was thinking' Cousin Margaret said,

'of the empty seats and of those who had missed it and would be poorer all their lives because of it.'

'Yes,' said Agnes, thoughtfully, 'we lavish so much care and thought upon our bodies and our souls are starving and we do not know it. Thank you, dear cousin, for the lesson you have taught us.'—Sara Virginia DuBois, in 'American Messenger.'

Chickadee's Comfort.

(Mary Alden Hopkins, in the 'Sunbeam'.)

When Mabel was twelve years old she received a very pretty canary for a birthday gift. He brought with him a letter:

Dear Mistress Mabel:

I have come to live with you now, and since you never have had a bird before, I will tell you what I need.

Please keep me out of draughts. My cage should be hung about five feet from the floor: nearer the ceiling is too warm.

Don't hang me outdoors, for some one will forget to bring me in when the sun grows too hot or the air too cool.

Please wash all my dishes in hot water every day, for if you do not a horrid little creature called a parasite will form in the water.

Be very careful to dry the perches thoroughly, for damp perches give me rheumatism.

Be sure my seed is pure, and give me a bit of fig or apple sometimes, or a small worm.

If you keep my cage neat and give me a bath every day, I will sing and chirp and make the room gay for you. Your loving,

CHICKADEE.

Thoughtlessness.

A boy of fourteen or so stopped to buy a banana from a barrow, and then, as he went slowly along, he peeled it and threw the skin on the sidewalk.

Quick as a flash a tall, broad-shouldered man just behind him stepped forward, took hold of the boy's coat-collar, and turning him round, exclaimed:

'Do you know what you are doing? You are putting danger in the way of fifty people who will pass this spot in the next five minutes. Kick that banana skin into the gutter, and never be guilty of such a thoughtless act again. Somebody might have broken a leg from your carelessness.'

The boy, with a surprised look, obeyed, and went on his way when the strong hand was removed, with a new idea, it is to be hoped, in his head, and a new resolve in his heart.

He 'did not think,' of course, when he did the deed, but he ought to have thought, and we ought to think every day whether we are putting stumbling-blocks or danger in our neighbor's way.—'Young Soldier.'

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Summit, N.J., has asked the board of fire chiefs to accept a forty-gallon coffee urn, to cost \$150, which the union wishes to purchase and present the fire department so that the men may have hot coffee while at work at fires.

A Bagster Bible Free.

Send four new subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at thirty cents each for one year, and receive a nice Bagster Bible, bound in black pebbled cloth with red edges, suitable for Sabbath or Day School. Postage extra for Montreal and suburbs or foreign countries, except United States and its dependencies; also Great Britain and Ireland, Transvaal, Bermuda, Barbadoes, British Honduras, Ceylon, Gambia, Sarawak, Bahama Islands, and Zanzibar. No extra charge for postage in the countries named.

In Peril on the Sea.

(The 'Presbyterian Witness'.)

'For those in peril on the sea'—Hughie Bond sang the words over and over again to himself and almost unconsciously, and yet they were particularly appropriate to his present situation.

'What's that you're sayin'?' came in a gruff tone from the stern of the dory. 'If yer want to talk, why don't you speak out!'

'I wasn't saying anything to you, Ned,' responded Hughie mildly. 'I was just singin' to myself something I know.'

'What was it? Give us the whole of it,' demanded Ned, rousing himself from the state of semi-stupor he had been in for some hours past.

Hughie felt the color coming into his cheeks, for despite his rugged appearance, he had a vein of shyness in his nature, and he would have much rather not have complied with his companion's request, but he knew better than refuse, Ned Condon being a wilful man, and apt to be heavy of hand when met with opposition.

Accordingly, in a voice that, although utterly untrained, was not displeasing, he began to sing that splendid hymn which has brought comfort to so many anxious hearts:

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

'Where'd you learn that?' growled Condon, upon whom the words and music were making an impression that he resented and resisted.

'At the Mission School,' replied Hughie in a hesitating way, as if the statement might not be pleasing to his questioner.

Condon grunted sardonically, but instead of the jeering oath Hughie expected, relapsed into the sullen silence from which the boy's singing had aroused him.

The little dory rocked aimlessly upon the leaden-hued seas which stretched away on every side to the utmost limits of vision, and so far as its occupants could tell, they were the only living creatures in the world, save an occasional white gull that swept by them on graceful wing.

Two days had passed since Condon and Hughie had set out from the Cod-seeker, with a full complement of lines and bait, to drag a dory full of codfish from the opulent waters of the great Banks.

At first they had fared well, and their boat was rapidly filling with fine big fish, when suddenly a storm swept down upon them, and drove the light dory before it for many hours, during which they were in constant danger of being swamped or overturned.

All their catch had to be thrown back into the sea, and only by incessant bailing could they keep their frail craft afloat.

The strain upon nerves and muscles was fearful, and even the shaggy, sinewy Condon felt his strength failing him, while poor little Hughie could hardly hold up his head. When at last the violence of the gale abated and ere the next day dawned, only the heaving billows remained to show how furiously it had striven for the lives of the two hopeless dory-mates.

But although this one danger had passed, they were still in no slight jeopardy. Tortured by thirst, faint with hunger, and weakened by exposure, unless they soon had the good fortune to be picked up by a passing vessel, they were inevitably doomed to a terrible death.

And now the second night was darkening