

## THE MORNING NAP.

BY EMMA CHURCHMAN HEWIT.

Slowly swinging to and fro,  
Baby, doll and doggie go,  
While the breezes softly blow.

Near by, nodding flowers keep  
Closest watch o'er baby's sleep.

But soon the puppy restless grows,  
A buzzing fly lights on his nose,  
He yawns till every tooth he shows  
And then, O naughty little pup!  
He slyly wakes the baby up.

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## Sunbeam.

TORONTO, JANUARY 6, 1906.

## BILLY'S CRUTCH.

"Will you please buy my geranium, sir?"

If a musical voice, a bright face, and a beautiful plant, all belonging to a young girl with dimpled cheeks and laughing blue eyes, will not bring a man to a standstill, then it must be that he is hurrying through the world too fast and wants nothing to come into his life that will gladden his heart and renew his youth.

I came to a full stop and would not have missed that sight for a great deal. As the girl stood there on that bright October morning, it was difficult to tell where the sunshine left off and where the girl began. They seemed made for each other; it was a perfect match, with the dividing line hard to discern.

"Have you any objection to tell me your name?"

"Oh, no, sir! My name's Gertrude Wilson."

"What a beautiful geranium you have there!"

"Isn't it lovely?"

"Indeed it is, and the finest I ever saw. Where did you get it?"

"About three years ago a lady left a slip lying on the seat in a horse-car. I took it home, got the richest dirt I could find, put it in this old paint-can, and then set the slip in it, and it began growing right away. I've given it plenty of water to drink, and kept it in the sunshine as much as possible."

"Why, I should think you would love it very dearly."

"Love it! I guess I do love it. It seems just like a part of myself."

"Well, my dear, if you love it so much, pray tell me why you want to sell it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't let it go if I did not want to help God answer Billy's prayer. Don't you think it splendid to help answer somebody's prayers?"

"How do you know I believe in prayer?"

"Oh, I am sure you do, for you have such a prayerful look."

She broke out into a merry laugh, and I joined her in it as I said: "Yes, I do believe in prayer. Now, tell me who Billy is?"

As I made this request a joyous look came into her face, and her large blue eyes shone with delight; and as the dimples deepened in her cheeks I beheld a picture that was worth going a long way to see.

"What, Billy? Oh, he's the nicest and best little fellow in all the city. Well, he is goodness, sunshine, and music all in one lump. Somebody let him drop when he was quite young and broke his hip, and ever since he has been a cripple. But his leg is the only crooked thing about him. My mother says that Billy's mother was the best Christian she ever knew. Well,

when she died last year everybody in our tenement-house wanted to adopt Billy, so you see, he belongs to all of us. He pays his way by selling newspapers, and no one with good legs can get around livelier than Billy can with a crutch. But yesterday his crutch caught in a hole in the sidewalk, broke in two, and let him fall. He managed to get into the house, and was not hurt. Well, last night, just as I was going to bed, I heard Billy praying. His room is next to mine, and only a board partition between—so I could hear it all. Oh, I shall never forget his words as he said:

"Dear Lord, I've never complained about my broken hip, and I am willing to go through life with it, but I can't get on without a crutch. I've no money to get another, and I don't know who to ask; so please, dear Lord, send me another one. Mother always told me to go to you when I was in trouble, and so I come now: Please, dear Lord, answer my prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen."

"I laid awake a good while thinking of that prayer, and it was the first thing I thought of this morning, and I began wondering if I couldn't do something to

help God answer Billy's prayer. Well, while I was wondering, I saw my geranium, and then I said, 'Oh, maybe I can sell it and get enough to buy another crutch!'

"Now you know who Billy is, and why I want to sell my geranium. Won't you please buy it?"

I was greatly moved and interested, and I'll own up to a great deal of moisture about my eyes as I inquired, "How tall is Billy?"

"Oh," she quickly responded, "I've got the measure of his old crutch, if that is what you mean."

"Yes, that is just what I mean; so if you please, Gertrude, we'll go and see about a crutch."

It did not take us long to find a store where such things were to be procured, nor a great while to get the keeper of the store as much interested as I was in the girl's story. Just the right kind of a crutch was found, and a minimum price was put upon it."

"Well," I said, "I'll give you that much for the geranium, Gertrude, and it is very cheap at that."

"Oh, thank you," she said, and her eyes fairly danced with gladness. "I'll take the crutch, please, but Billy mustn't know a word about where it came from. Isn't it just splendid to help God answer Billy's prayer?"

The moisture in my eyes didn't subside one bit, as I said: "I want you to do me a favor, Gertrude. I am hundreds of miles away from the place where I live, and I can't carry this plant around with me. Would it be too much trouble for you to keep it for me?"

"What, do you want me to take care of it for you?"

"Yes, my dear, if it will not be too much trouble."

"Oh, you splendid man, you! I'll be glad to do it, and I'll take just as good care of it as I did when it was mine."

I carried the plant, while she carried the crutch, and after reaching the house, Billy was called in to see me, while Gertrude smuggled the crutch into his room and came back with a face as happy as a face could be, but never betraying to Billy, by word or look, that she had been answering Billy's prayer.

To sum it all up, Billy got a new crutch, and he is the happiest cripple in the big city. Gertrude helped answer his prayer, and a happier girl doesn't live. I own the handsomest geranium bush I ever saw, and the one who takes care of it for me is as proud as I am of the plant.

Unselfish and noble acts are the most radiant epochs in the biography of souls. When wrought in earliest youth they lie in the memory of age amidst the melancholy waste of ocean.