

her uncle, quite unconscious of the thoughts its jangling tones were awakening in his mind. 'Old rattle-box; no wonder it squeaks and groans in its old age,' he said to himself as Ruth ended a brisk little march with a flourish which betrayed faults of tune too clearly for comfort to his sensitive ears. 'If I had been pummeled by twelve pairs of hands—not to mention the thirteenth—all these years, I doubt, if I should have a sound note in my body, either.'

Ruth clasped her mother's neck in a transport of delight when she reached home. 'O, mamma!' she cried, breathlessly. 'I've had the loveliest, bestest time, but coming home is the dearest and best of it all, I do believe.'

Her uncle enjoyed her surprise quite as much as he had expected when she spied the new piano standing in the place of the old one. She flew at him with a little shriek of delight.

'You naughty uncle, to be so good to me,' she cried, between kisses.

'Good to you! Well, Miss, you take things quite for granted, it strikes me,' Mr. Gregory said smilingly. 'Mamma stayed at home and kept the pot boiling while we went skerruping. I think she deserves a present.'

'That is quite true, Uncle. I'll thank you as sincerely for mamma's piano then!'

'Perhaps she will allow you to practice on it a little, though. I shall expect to hear "Yankee Doodle" well executed the next time I come. Every American girl should be able to play the national airs well.'

The memory of that wonderful month of travel lingered in Ruth's mind long after her uncle had gone back to his California home.

He had given Mrs. Winslow a taste of travel also before he went, a recreation which brightened her eyes and brought a tinge of pink into her cheeks. He had been her favorite brother in the old home life, and as they parted she said to him, feelingly, 'Please do not leave us so long again, Chris. It seems wrong for families to entirely lose sight of each other.'

'If Matt had been able to travel we should have been here long ago,' he replied. 'I wish you could spare little Ruth to us for a year or so. Matt needs just such a champion.'

'I'll think of it, Chris,' Mrs. Winslow replied. 'I did not dream we should miss her so, but if it is best and right, I would be willing to deny myself much for your sake.'

'She shall have the best the city affords in the line of education,' he said, laying his hand affectionately on Ruth's bright hair.

And so it came to pass afterward that Ruth spent three years in San Francisco; years of active study and social culture which transformed her from an untrained schoolgirl in a country town to a thoughtful, cultured young woman, whose active mind unfolded in the congenial atmosphere of culture and research as a rose unfolds in the sunlight.

She was still sunny-faced, cheerful Ruth, her uncle's treasure and the sunshine of her aunt's invalid chamber. Mrs. Gregory had long been a sufferer from an obscure disease which unfitted her for active life, and she had grown morbid and low-spirited through long confinement. Ruth acted upon her like a healthful tonic, her interest in the young girl's advancement arousing her from self-contemplation and brooding.

It was almost as hard for Ruth to leave her aunt as it had been to say good-bye to her mother; but Mrs. Winslow had met with an accident and needed Ruth so sadly that there was no question of duty in the matter, so the good-byes were said, and Ruth was speeding toward home, the echo of a manly voice in her ears which had said in parting, 'I shall come for you soon, dear. I



cannot spare you very long, even to the best of mothers.'

'We might as well hang up our fiddles on that unlucky thirteenth sign,' Mrs. Elkins said in a tone of unwilling conviction a year later.

A wedding party had just passed her house, and her neck had been craned out in eager curiosity as she leaned on her broom in her front porch to catch a glimpse of the bride's gown and the bridegroom's face. Mrs. Parkins had run over so as to get a better view of the proceedings from Mrs. Elkins's porch.

'I've watched Ruth Winslow from a baby, expectin' something'd happen to 'er, and there has, I must say, ever since she was born, but its allers been something uncommon good.'

'They do say this young feller she's married to is rich, and harnsome as Ruth is herself,' replied Mrs. Parkins. 'It'll come hard for Mrs. Winslow to spare Ruth, but it's what most o' mothers come to after they've brought up a family.'

'Le's see. Twenty-four of 'em all counted, and not a scrub amongst 'em,' Mrs. Elkins continued. 'I tell Mrs. Winslow she's the luckiest woman I ever seen in her children's marryin'. It's like a convention over to the pars'nage. A bed in every corner, and then the neighbors has to take the overflow. They've never all been home together before, but, as the twins says, it's a sort o' jubilee occasion when the baby gets married, and they all wanted to see the new brother. It'll all end, I reckon, in Mr. an' Mis' Winslow goin' to Californy to live some day.'

'Well, I reckon they won't want for a home in their old age,' Mrs. Parkins replied, reflectively. 'There ain't one of 'em but

would think 'twas the greatest kind of a privilege to have Pa or Ma live with them, though I ain't sayin' as that kind o' livin' is the best for anybody. There's no place like home, especially for old folks.'

So the question of the past, present and future of the Winslows was settled by the worthy cronies, now quite advanced in years, and the ancient superstition which they had believed in firmly faded from their minds as they saw its fallacy demonstrated so forcibly in the life of Ruth, the lucky thirteenth, as they now call her.

### Don't Fret.

(Mary D. Brine in 'Forward'.)

What are we fretting for, day after day  
Worrying our lives and good tempers away;  
Envyng our neighbors, and reaching for  
gains

Which, when we attain them, are not worth  
our pains.

If we know in our hearts that in heaven  
above

There's a 'Father' who watches his children  
in love,

Then, why are we not true to that knowledge  
and so

Just trust to him wholly, and let the 'cares'  
go?

'God is in heaven—'tis well with the world,'  
For His glorious banners o'er earth are unfurled.

Then let us be happy, and 'worry' no more;  
Where faith enters in, doubt flies out the  
heart's door;

And, once rid of doubt, it is true as can be  
That the heart from all worries and fears  
must be free.