



BY MARY E. C. WYETH

IT was the night after Christmas. The dear parents, who had expected to be at home several days before the blessed Christmas eve, were yet detained away; and the children and hung up their stockings and taken them down, too, for the first time in their lives, with no loving parents' smile of surprise, sympathy and joy to enhance the value of each Christmas favor.

"It must have stormed furiously up there; and papa and mamma are snow-bound very likely," said George, as he filled the wood box behind the kitchen stove. In that case they may not get away from the mills for another week."

"Oh!" cried both the twin pairs. "It will be Happy New Year before that time. They'll have to come home. Merry Christmas hasn't been half merry; and Happy New Year won't be happy at all without mamma and papa."

George and Mary exchanged glances and smiled. They felt as the twins did; but they forebore to say so.

"It is turning colder," Mary said, presently. "Did you split a good lot of wood, George?"

"Yes; and you burn two or three good lots. We must let the dining-room fire go out and contrive to eat in the kitchen. Can't we?"

"I suppose we'll have to," said Mary, with a faint sigh. "It is growing colder every hour. Hear that dismal blast! We must all be as brave as ever we can. Oh! I hope papa and mamma are not worrying about us."

"Bud and I will go to the timber to-morrow, and draw up a big lot of fagots," said Bijle. Bud and Bijle were the ten-year-old twins. Mrs. Mason doesn't get any wood but fagots. She says they burn capital. She and Neddy drag them up with a rope.

Mary smiled.

"They live so near the woods, little boy," she said. "Yet you may try to get one load to-morrow; for I am sure I shall need much firing. There, Bijle, don't crowd the yeast jug so, or you'll tip it over, and we'll get no light bread to-morrow. You're copying after Jim, cuddling down in a corner for a nap. Hop up. Let's have our Bible reading; and then we'll cover up the fire and go to bed."

"Don't get the blues, Molly," said George. "You never care to go to bed before nine o'clock, unless you're blue over something. Papa and mamma are able to take care of themselves. You know papa said that was a rough country and the travelling accommodations were almost none, even in good weather. Now, it must have stormed up there; and they can't get any one to convey them over to the stage. I think I see just how it is."

"So do I," said Mary. "But it is perplexing. I wish they were here. If they shouldn't get home by New Year's Day."

"You oughtn't to cross bridges before you come to 'em," said Bud, sagely, as Mary paused as if impressed with the measure of discomfort contained in the implied possibility of that small "if."

"Nor sup sorrow through a long tube!" put in Bijle.

George and Mary looked at the twins in amazement, for a moment; and then both laughed heartily.

"You little Solomons," said Mary. "Where did you get so much wisdom?"

"Mrs. Mason," replied the twins gravely. "We told her the spilt wood was most gone, and maybe, if George couldn't chop faster, and papa and mamma didn't come home pretty soon, we'd freeze to death."

"Oh, you horrid youngsters!" said George, grimacing at Mary.

"And she said then we ought to be very good, so's to be prepared to die if we had got; but that the timber was chock full of fagots, and we could all turn out and drag, same as she did; and we oughtn't to cross bridges before we come to 'em, and nobody but fools would choose to sup sorrow through a long tube."

"Good for Mrs. Mason!" said Mary. "Let's profit by her wisdom. Surely we're not fools; so we'll sup no more on fools' diet. And we won't cross our bridges before we come to them; shall we, George?"

"We'll do our very best; and thank God for all His blessings; and even if it comes to keeping our New

Year's s'posed, we'll be ready for it."

let them make a second trip, though they begged lustily, but made them sit behind the kitchen stove till they were thoroughly dried, and she rewarded each with a large apple turnover.

George chopped faithfully for an hour or two every day; and when the fierce cold came, he had a good sized pile of wood. Yet, to his dismay, it consumed away rapidly. The cold was terrible. Frost covered the windows, and in the rooms where no fire was kept the cold was numbing. Mary said her fingers felt as if they were freezing, while she hastily made the beds.

"And were going to have a truly-ly Happy New Year," cried little Sally, as Mary set about her preparations for the feast in good earnest. "Let's tell 's'posens' while we're stoning the raisins and cutting the citron. Won't it be fun?"

And Bud and Bijle chiming heartily with the note, Bud at once began to s'pose what he would do, if he were a great Indian chief who owned snow shoes that would carry him over the deepest snow that ever fell, and Bijle s'posed he was the Governor of the State, and indulged in many amendments to the prevailing order of things. Little Jim s'posed he was sister Mary's s'posen, and thought he would cook sausages and buckwheat cake three times a day, and let the children eat all the bits of citron that fell slantwise on the plate.

"Why, most of 'em fall that way!" said Sally. "You'd be a Tom Gip, wouldn't you?"

Then Sally s'posed; and Mary said her's was the nicest and jolliest s'posed of all. "A right, regular Happy New Year's s'posed," George added.

How hard they all worked, and how cheery with chatter the bright kitchen was for two days before the feast.

On the eve of New Year's Day, the great turkey was plucked and hung up, the chickens dressed, the pantry shelves stocked with pies and cake and krullers, and George's favorites, raspberry tartlets.

"We're tired; but we're ready for to-morrow," said Mary. "And we can't have our New Year's dinner in the kitchen, George. Not if I have to go out in the moonlight and chop wood myself. We must have a dining-room fire."

"Which reminds me," said George, with a mock groan, as he took his cap and mittens and went out. Mary heard the blows of his axe long after the little ones were tucked away in bed.

In the morning a second snow-storm was raging.

"Dearie me!" sighed Mary. "If it keeps on at this rate they will never get home."

"Oh, they will arrive in the Spring, no doubt," answered George, dryly. And Mary blushed; for she remembered that she had resolved to keep the feast with a cheerful mind. So she sighed no more, but prepared the breakfast, not forgetting little Jim's sausage and buckwheats, for which the small lad was hilariously thankful.

After the morning's reading, all hands set merrily to work. George fed the fires, and ran down cellar and up, for the vegetables and apples and nutmeg, and he lifted the heavy pots and kettles, and even tied the legs of the plump turkey when Mary had prepared it for the oven. Bud and Bijle brightened the silver and scoured the knives until they shone, while Jim and Sally cracked and picked

## TIME

"Why sitt'st thou by that ruin'd hall,  
Thou aged carle so stern and gray?  
Dost thou the former pride recall,  
Or ponder how it pass'd away?"

"Know'st thou not me?" the Deep Voice cried:  
"So long enjoy'd, so oft misused—  
Alternate, in thy sickle pride,  
Desired, neglected, and accused!"

"Before my breath, like blazing fax,  
Man and his marvels pass away;  
And changing empires wane and wax,  
Are founded, flourish, and decay."

"Redeem mine hours—the space is brief—  
While in my axe the sand-grains shiver,  
And measureless thy joy or grief,  
When Time and thou shalt part forever!"

—Sir Walter Scott.

Year's Day without papa and mamma, we'll do our best toward that. Won't we, little ones?"

And the little ones being all wide awake now the Bibles were opened and the reading and the prayers were offered as their evening service to the good God in whose care the little family was left; and at an early hour they were all soundly sleeping.

For three days and nights the snow fell steadily. On the fourth day a furious wind heaped and piled and tossed the snow in drifts. Then the wind shifted and fell, and the fierce, bitter, stinging cold came down.

On the first day, holding Mary to her promise, the twins had worked heroically, and though the snow almost blinded them as they tumbled in the teeth of the storm over the half-mile of open road that stretched between them and the timber, they accomplished a mighty work, and brought a load of fagots that delighted Mary's eyes.

The little lads were dripping with perspiration, however, and Mary would not