

MISS BECKY'S COMPFORT BAG.

ANNIE L. HANNAH.

"It's most too late, but I guess I can make one any way. Dear me! If I had only been at home when the note came, I should have been so glad to make half a dozen at least. But who knows, perhaps it was just as much the Lord's work, setting up with an 'angel' Susan Maria, as making comfort bags for sailors; though I mistrust, Becky Cathcart, you'd rather make the bags. Well, I'll get at this one right off."

And Miss Becky laid down the note which she had found lying on her hall floor (it having been found slipped under the door by some obliging neighbor), hurried off hat and shawl, and, in a clean apron over her neat dress, and going to the closet, brought out her "piece bag," and carried it, with her work-basket, to the lamp-lit table.

"It does seem real sort of nice to be home again," she mused, as she sorted over the contents of the bag in search of a suitable bit, then lifted her eyes to glance about the cozy little room. "Not that I grudge Susan Maria the work, but I expect I'm getting to be real sort of carnal in my love for having things sort of neat and comfortable about me. This will do for selecting a piece of bright, strong cotton; and now for a bit of that red braid for a drawing string."

That also having been found, with quick, strong stitches Miss Becky plied her bag, laid the hem, and ran in the string, after which she chose buttons, needles, thread, and a pair of blunt scissors from her stock, and added a mold of her best wax, placing each article carefully in the pockets of the bag. Then bringing a box from her chest she selected a bright New Year card, carefully saved from last year, and having erased the words, "Aunt Becky, with Doris's love," she substituted: "With loving New Year wishes and a God bless you," and having laid that, with a box of cough candies, a tiny Testament, and a handkerchief which had once belonged to her father, in the bottom of the bag, she drew up the red strings with a sigh of satisfaction.

"It's real handsome if I do say so that should, and I hope it will make some poor lad happier that might be feeling kind of homesick away from his folks." But in spite of her admiration for her handiwork she did not seem quite satisfied. "It is better than what I thought I ought to write a few lines to him; it might make him feel as if somebody was taking a real interest in him, and maybe it would harden him up a bit, poor lad!" By this time Miss Becky had come to feel quite proprietary in this unknown "lad," for, for some inexplicable reason, it never occurred to her that her bag could fall into the hands of other than a boy.

"Yes, I believe it will," said opening the table drawer she took out pen, ink and paper, and in her stiff, formal little hand wrote the following note:

MY DEAR BOY.—You never saw me, and more'n likely you never will, but all the same you will let me say that I hope that the New Year will be a happy year to you, and it surely will be if you love God and do your duty. Be a good boy, and then you will be a good sailor too, as you ought to be if that's your business; and remember always how much the dear Lord loves sailors. Try to be the kind of a sailor He would like you to be. And now no more.

From your friend,
MISS BECKY CATHCART.

Not for a moment did Miss Becky think of withholding her name and address—it simply never occurred to her so to do on the contrary, as she slipped the note into the bag, she felt so deep an interest in the "boy" who would some day read it, that she thought perhaps she ought to have signed it "Aunt Becky," as she always did to her other young friends.

Before she fell asleep that night she had asked God to bless and keep "that boy," and the next morning she hurried to the post-office with her bag, that it might be in good time to be packed in the box which was to start that day for the nearest seaport town, some twenty miles away.

Christmas came and went, and New Year's Day followed in its train and became a memory as well, and then, one night a strange thing happened.

"Oh, you're awful particular!" laughed his mother, and there he sits the others went away, leaving "dandy Jack," as they had dubbed him, to "make himself fine."

Left alone, Jack sat down on the side of his bunk with the little bag still in his hand, and presently, untying the bright red strings, he spread the contents out beside him, wondering vaguely who had taken so much trouble for an unknown sailor. There was everything that a sailor in his situation could need in those pockets; he smiled at the sight of the cough drops, his eyes softened as he read the inscription on the card, but when, from the Testament, the notes fell out, and he had read it through, once, twice, three times, then Jack Nelson laid it tenderly away, and with his elbows resting on his knees, his chin in the palms of his hands, sat thinking.

The forecastle faded away, and he was back again in the wide old kitchen of his boyhood's English home, kneeling beside his mother on that last night before he went to sea, listening to her much worn as he had read in this note from his unknown friend. It was the last time he had looked into that dear face or listened to that voice; for when his ship came back again the mother had this will do for selecting a piece of bright, strong cotton; and now for a bit of that red braid for a drawing string. It might have all been so different during the ten long years which had passed since then, had she lived, he thought bitterly, for her sake he would have striven to make more of himself, to keep himself from that which he knew she would not approve; and a great and bitter longing filled his soul to look once more upon his mother's face and tell her what her dear old heart had meant to him. But then, suddenly, there came a feeling of deep shame—shame that for her sake, dead though she was, he had not made his life what she would have had him make it, had not kept himself from what she would have had him do. But it was too late now; those mispent years could never be wiped out; he could never again be that boy who had knelt beside his mother's knees on that night so long ago. With a stifled moan his face dropped into his hands, and great scalding tears forced their way between his fingers.

But was it too late? Must he, because those years were wasted and unspent, waste and mispend those which might still be before him? Like a breath of sweet fresh air from the country lanes the new hope came. But oh, if there were not some one to counsel and advise him!—some one, like his mother, to lay a hand upon his head and bid him go forward! And with the thought came the memory of that blessed little note. Might not that woman who could have written that help him in this hour of his great need?

Eagerly he opened the letter and looked at the name and address. He knew about where the little village lay; he would go there as soon as matters could be arranged. His pay was lying untouched in his pocket; he would buy a new suit and make himself presentable, and then he would go, though he were obliged to walk the whole distance there and back.

Miss Becky lifted her head and listened. Yes, she had not been mistaken, some one was coming up the little flagged walk leading to her cottage, and when she saw the man in the long coat, she knew it was he. He was on no familiar face that her glance of welcome fell, and the voice which she had heard in the next morning she hurried to the post-office with her bag, that it might be in good time to be packed in the box which was to start that day for the nearest seaport town, some twenty miles away.

Christmas came and went, and New Year's Day followed in its train and became a memory as well, and then, one night a strange thing happened.

Miss Becky's bag, with several others, had come into the hands of the captain of one of the floating Bethels, and he had taken them to a certain ship which had just arrived in port after a long voyage, and distributed them among the sailors, telling them that though they were too late for Christmas, they would be quite as useful as though they had been received on that particular day. But Miss Becky's bag, instead of falling into the hands of the boy that she had pictured, became the property of a man of twenty-five—a man whose appearance was above the average common sailor—who took it and stood turning it over and over in his hand after the other men had tossed theirs into their bunks to await examination until after they had been ashore.

In violence, the rain and sleet dashed against the window-panes, and the wind howled about the house. He was a perfect stranger, but she did not hesitate to lead him to her little guest chamber—a room at the end of the passage, not long used—and when she led him there it was with a blessing ringing in his ears which went with him into his happy dreams.

Not was that the last by many, many times that his head rested on that pillow. Third, second, first mate, and captain, he came back to the little cottage, bringing such gladness to the loving heart that people said that Miss Becky was growing younger every year. And when, finally, a new little home was started where he was master, and that same Doris whose New Year card was among his most precious treasures was the gentle mistress, why, it had not been long that the two women could be always together when "my boy," as Miss Becky called him, was away on a voyage.

And what those voyages were to the men who sailed with him, perhaps not the best, but he had not seen for himself he knew even to himself till that great day when the Lord comes to make up his jewels. —Zion's Herald.

TWO GAMES FOR RAINY DAYS.
BY CAROLINE A. CREVEY.

This is how the children played them, at a seaside boarding-house on one rainy day. They had been with one begonia, and the first of them, the boy and girl, began to race up and down stairs, and tear through the halls, till the patient old ladies looked dismayed and were threatened with headaches. Cousin Ruth came to the rescue. She was wearing a beautiful young lady, who could do anything with children. Hunting up a pad of paper and some pencils, she clapped her hands and called out, "All who want to play a nice, quiet, sitting-down game, a new one, draw up to this table."

The flock came, and, after a little scrambling for coveted places, next to the dear friend, they became quiet and expectant. The old ladies in the next room were seated and unimpressed, waste and mispend those which might still be before him? Like a breath of sweet fresh air from the country lanes the new hope came. But oh, if there were not some one to counsel and advise him!—some one, like his mother, to lay a hand upon his head and bid him go forward! And with the thought came the memory of that blessed little note. Might not that woman who could have written that help him in this hour of his great need?

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the ship got safely in before the storm broke, and the poor fisherman held his little granddaughter on his lap that night while he ate his supper."

"Was that your idea when you cut-lined your picture?" said Cousin Ruth to Cliff.

"No," he answered, "but her picture is so much prettier, I would rather not tell mine."

Janie came next, a bright boy of nine years, Cliff's brother. It was Nellie's outline which he read. "A flat-roofed house, towers, cupolas, an elephant, lots of people." This said Janie, "is called 'Life in the Orient.' A large flat-roofed house is there, with a ladder reaching to the top. An elephant is climbing the ladder."

"No, no, I s'ant mate any kouds. Doot angels, I tell oo, nuttin' else at all." Cousin Ruth drew the dear to her lap, and hugged her. "Just angels, my pet, and nothing else. And the sweetest little angel of them all is the one that drew them."

The children were all surprised when the luteen-bell rang. They declared the game of "Painting Pictures" to be worth trying again when they should get home.

After luncheon Cousin Ruth showed them how to play "Recognition." One was chosen to be the host and sent into a room by himself. The other united in dressing up and disguising one of their number. A broom, a pillow, and a sheet were called into requisition to help make taller or larger, and to cover the whole dress. The right hand alone was left exposed. The dressed-up guest then called upon the host, who greeted his visitor, of course shaking him cordially by the hand. If he could not recognize by the hand alone, the host might ask three questions, which the guest must answer, disguising his voice if he chose. The host had but one chance, and if he guessed correctly the caller disbanded and became the host, or the children expressed it, became it, former host taking his place among the guests.

"This game may be played in a little different way. The host is blindfolded, after which those standing about quietly change their places. He may then approach and extend his hand to any one, who must shake hands with him. Kings should not be exchanged, as that would make the task of guessing by the hand too difficult. The host may also ask three questions, which must be fairly answered. For three failures to guess correctly the host forfeits his position and pays a penalty which is inflicted by one of the number elected as umpire.—Ex."

All who love Jesus will find something to do for him, if they seek his aid and obey his call.

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A SCOTCHMAN'S EXPLANATION.

"Well, you may say what you please," said Smith, "I, for my part, cannot believe that God would first impose laws on nature, and then violate his own laws. What would be the use of making them if they are to be so rapidly set aside?"

"I dinna ken, sir," said uncle, "or I revently, 'what God may do, or what he will do, but I don't regard a miracle to be a violation o' the laws o' nature. There is no violation o' the laws o' God that I ken o', save the wicked accounts o' wounded men."

"And what, then," asked Smith, "do you make a miracle to be?"

"I regard it," said uncle, "to be merely such an interference w' the established course o' things as finally shows us the presence and action o' the supernatural power. What o'clock is it w' you, sir, if you please?"

"It's half past twelve, exactly—Greenwich time," replied Smith.

"Well, sir," said his uncle, pulling a huge old timepiece from his pocket, "it's one o'clock w' me; I generally keep my watch a bit forrit a little forward. But I may have a special reason for setting my watch by the railway; and so you see, I'm turning the hand o' it round. Now, wad ye say that I had violated the laws o' a watch? True, I have done what watchdom w' a' its laws could nae do for itself; but I have done violence to none o' its laws. My action is only the interference o' a superior intelligence for a suitable end; but I have suspended nae law. Well, then, instead o' the watch, say the universe; instead o' moving the hands, say God, acting directly o' himself; and we have o' us contend for in a miracle, that is, the unquestionable presence o' the Almighty hand working the divine will. And if he see fit to work miracles, what can hinder him? He has done it oftener than once or twice already; and wad ye daur say he'll not get leave to do it again?" —Sunday Afternoon.

A PROPER RETORT.—A good story is told of a self-respecting carpenter who was sent to make some repairs in a private house. As he entered the room in which the work was to be done, accompanied by his apprentice, the lady of the house called out, "Mary, see that my jewel case is locked." The carpenter understood, and, as he was an honest man, he was indignant. He had his opportunity, however, and he used it. He removed his watch and chain from his waistcoat with a significant air, and gave them to his apprentice. "John," he said, "take these back to the shop. It seems that this house isn't safe." —Harper's Round Table.

A proud papa, not many hundred miles from the centre of Syracuse, is boasting of the alleged brightness of his ten-year-old son. The said ten-year-old was looking over a newspaper the other day, not forgetting to take in the advertisements. "Papa," he said, "I thought that Job and Lot was two different people?" "Why, they were, my son," was the proud father's answer. "Well, this newspaper is off its head, then," said he, "for ten years." "Look here! If you say 'Job Lot' at the base of this advertisement. Who's he, then?"

"How thin you never spoke of this except to the deceased, do you?" queried the lawyer. "That's what I said," answered the witness. "Now, don't you know, as a matter of fact," pursued the lawyer, raising and pointing his long finger impressively at him, "that deceased had been dead for ten years when these events took place? If you talked to him at all, you talked to his bones. Will you please tell me how you would communicate with a skeleton?" "I would wire it, sir," stilly rejoined the witness.

A quaker who was investigating the connection between drink and crime, obtained permission from the authorities to visit a jail. He entered a cell, and said to the prisoner, "Friend, what brought thee here?" The man, replied, "Two policemen, sir." "But," said the Quaker, "had drink anything to do with it?" "Well," said the prisoner, "an sorry to tell you it had, for both the policemen were drunk!"

One of the stories told by Dean Hole in his "Memories" is of an old-fashioned cathedral verger, "lord of the aisles," who, one noon, found a pious visitor on his knees in the sacred building. The verger hastened up to him, and said in a tone of indignant excitement, "The services in this cathedral are at ten in the morning and at four in the afternoon, and we don't have no fancy prayers." This is not unlike what took place at the Chester Cathedral when the Rev. Richard Knill asked the verger "if any conversions ever took place there?" "Do you think, sir," was the reply, "that this is some Methodist place?"



Mr. J. Alcide Chausse, Montreal, P. Q.

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Express for Sussex..... 16.40
Passenger from St. John for Quebec and Montreal take through sleeping car at Montreal at 11.30 o'clock.

TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN:
Express from Sussex..... 8.30
Express from Montreal and Quebec (Monday excepted)..... 10.30
Express from Moncton (daily)..... 10.30
Express from Halifax..... 12.30
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