

we will only make ourselves miserable, without making others happy."

"But papa, shouldn't every one try to make as many as they could happy?"

"Yes, darling. If they did this, there would be no real misery in the world. This is the true spirit of charity."

"And why don't they do it, papa?"

"Really, I cannot say, my pet. You see our Saviour was neglected in a manger, and forgotten by those He came to save."

"Oh! weren't they cruel, papa?"

"Yes, indeed, child, but I fear we are not a bit better. Our Divine Master says, as often as we relieve the poor we relieve himself; and now tell me, puss, what have you done for the poor this blessed Christmas?"

"I will tell you, papa; in the first place, mamma made up a basket of meat and bread, and tea and sugar for us, and then Kate and I went up to poor Mrs. Sullivan's, and——"

"Ha," said Kate, "little tell-tale; you know the Scripture says, let not your left hand see what your right hand giveth."

"True," said Mr. O'Donnell. "And now, Bessy darling, go sit near your mamma."

Bessy did sit near her mamma, and nestled her head upon her bosom, and prattled with her in low tones.

While this conversation was going on, Willy Shea was in a deep reverie. His elbows rested on his knees, and his face upon his open palms. Of what was he thinking?

Ah! he thought of the good old home where he spent many a Christmas night such as this; where father, mother, brothers, and sisters all joined to make it a merry Christmas. Where the yule-log burned, and the Christmas tree glistened, and where light hearts, and merry faces, and jocund laughter made a merry Christmas indeed. Where were all these now?

On such a Christmas night as this did his kind gentle mother—the last of her race—sleep for the first time in her cold grave. As he returned to his bleak home, the sleet and rain pattered without, but there was no yule-log, nor Christmas tree, nor fond hearts to greet him within.

"Ah! my good tender mother, where are you?" he exclaimed, half audibly, as the tears trickled between his fingers.

"Willy, what ails you?" said Kate, leaning her hand upon his.

"Nothing, nothing dear!" and he brushed away the tears, and tried to look cheerful.

"Come," said Alice Maher, "Willy, get your flute and come to the kitchen, we will set up a dance there."

"Agreed, agreed!"

And the kitchen became merrier, and resounded with the song and dance of light and loving hearts, until the old clock in the hall chimed twelve, and then that merry Christmas had passed away.

When Willy rose in the morning, he went to the window to look out. The ground was covered with a slight sprinkling of snow. He looked towards the farm-yard. A long range of ricks of hay and stacks of corn crowded behind the house. The noise of the flail resounded from the barn.

In the yard was Kate O'Donnell and Mary Cahill, with a whole troop of gabbling turkeys and geese, cackling hens, and ducks around them. Over and about these fluttered a lot of busy pigeons. Kate, in a plain dress, with her sleeves tucked up, was feeding them with oats from a sieve, which Mary held.

A pigeon was cooing from her shoulder jealously at another that was busily pecking on the sieve.

"This is happiness, indeed," said Willy; "and with such a noble, loving girl I would gladly live and die amidst such scenes."

When he came down to the parlor, Alice Maher and Frank were enjoying a pleasant *tele-a-tele* on the settee near the fire.

They seemed very happy, and evidently on very good terms with one another.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Donnell shortly joined them. Kate and Bessy soon came in with two plates of hot butter cakes, which they were after baking in the kitchen.

After breakfast, as the day was too unpleasant to go out, our party amused themselves playing drafts, backgammon, and other games. Then they sang and played on the flute and concertina, and read amusing books alternately.

About noon, their recreation was enlivened with the most discordant attempts at music imaginable, proceeding from the little lawn in front.

"Come here," said Alice, looking out of the window; "come here," and she laughed heartily. "Such a motley group I have never witnessed; what the deuce are they?"

They all ran to the window.

It was no wonder that Alice laughed, for a more picturesque group of rags and patches you could not see.

"The wren boys, the wren boys," exclaimed the party.

The wren-boys, or, as they called themselves, the wren boys, now came up to the window, and commenced to puff and blow their spasmodic instruments.

One fellow had an old flute which would elicit for him, despite all his puffing and blowing, only a few shrill whistles. Another was scratching at a fiddle, whilst another was trying to force the wind out of an old asthmatic bagpipes; but all these were completely thrown in the shade by an old drum.

Their appearance was not less ludicrous than their music.

Some had petticoats and gowns, mounted with ribbons, drawn over them; others had shawls for sashes and hatbands.