

in colour. It must be stuck so full of plums that the pudding itself will ooze out into the pan and not be brought on to the table at all. I expect to be there about the twentieth, to manage these little things—remembering it is the early Bird that catches the worm—but give you the instructions in case I should be delayed.

"And Carol must decide on the size of the tree—she knows best, she was a Christmas child; and she must plead for the snow-storm—the 'clerk of the weather' may pay some attention to her; and she must look up the boy with the dimple for me—she's likelier to find him than I am, this minute. She must advise about the turkey, and Bridget must bring the pudding to her bedside and let her drop every separate plum into it and stir it once for luck, or I'll not eat a single slice—for Carol is the dearest part of Christmas to Uncle Jack, and he'll have none of it without her. She is better than all the turkeys and puddings and apples and spare-ribs and wreaths and garlands and mistletoe and stockings and chimneys and sleigh-bells in Christendom. She is the very sweetest Christmas Carol that was ever written, said, sung or chanted, and I am coming, as fast as ships and railway trains can carry me, to tell her so."

Carol's joy knew no bounds. Mr. and Mrs. Bird laughed like children and kissed each other for sheer delight, and when the boys heard it they simply whooped like wild Indians, until the Ruggles family, whose back yard joined their garden, gathered at the door and wondered what was "up" in the big house.

IV.—"BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER."

Uncle Jack did really come on the twentieth. He was not detained by business, nor did he get left behind nor snowed up, as frequently happens in stories, and in real life too, I am afraid. The snow-storm came also; and the turkey nearly died a natural and premature death from over-eating. Donald came, too; Donald, with a line of down upon his upper lip, and Greek and Latin on his tongue, and stores of knowledge in his handsome head, and stories—bless me, you couldn't turn over a chip without reminding Donald of something that happened "at College." One or the other was always at Carol's bedside, for they fancied her

paler than she used to be, and they could not bear her out of sight. It was Uncle Jack, though, who sat beside her in the winter twilights. The room was quiet, and almost dark, save for the snow-light outside, and the flickering flame of the fire, that danced over the "Sleeping Beauty's" face, and touched the Fair One's golden locks with ruddier glory. Carol's hand (all too thin and white these latter days) lay close clasped in Uncle Jack's, and they talked together quietly of many, many things. "I want to tell you all about my plans for Christmas this year, Uncle Jack," said Carol, on the first evening of his visit, "because it will be the loveliest one I ever had. The boys laugh at me for caring so much about it; but it isn't altogether because it is Christmas nor because it is my birthday; but long, long ago, when I first began to be ill, I used to think, the first thing when I waked on Christmas morning, 'To-day is Christ's birthday—and mine!' I did not put the words close together, because that made it seem too bold; but I first thought, 'Christ's birthday,' and then, in a minute, softly to myself—'and mine!' 'Christ's birthday—and mine!' And so I do not quite feel about Christmas as other girls do. Mamma says she supposes that ever so many other children have been born on that day. I often wonder where they are, Uncle Jack, and whether it is a dear thought to them, too, or whether I am so much in bed, and so often alone, that it means more to me. Oh, I do hope that none of them are poor, or cold, or hungry, and I wish, I wish they were all as happy as I, because they are my little brothers and sisters. Now, Uncle Jack, dear, I am going to try and make somebody happy every single Christmas that I live, and this year it is to be the 'Ruggleses in the rear.'"

"That large and interesting brood of children in the little house at the end of the back garden?"

"Yes; isn't it nice to see so many together? We ought to call them the Ruggles children, of course; but Donald began talking of them as the 'Ruggleses in the rear,' and Papa and Mamma took it up, and now we cannot seem to help it. The house was built for Mr. Carter's coachman, but Mr. Carter lives in Europe, and the gentleman who rents his place doesn't

care what happens to it, and so this poor Irish family came to live there. When they first moved in, I used to sit in my window and watch them play in their back yard; they are so strong and jolly, and good-natured; and then, one day, I had a terrible headache, and Donald asked them if they would please not scream quite so loud, and they explained that they were having a game of circus, but that they would change and play 'Deaf and Dumb School' all the afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Uncle Jack, "what an obliging family, to be sure."

"Yes, we all thought it very funny, and I smiled at them from the window when I was well enough to be up again. Now, Sarah Maud comes to her door when the children come home from school, and if Mamma nods her head, 'Yes,' that means 'Carol is very well,' and then 'you ought to hear the little Ruggleses yell—I believe they tried to see how much noise they can make; but if Mamma shakes her head, 'No,' they always play at quite games. Then, one day, 'Cary,' my pet canary, flew out of her cage, and Peter Ruggles caught her and brought her back, and I had him up here in my room to thank him."

"Is Peter the oldest?"

"No; Sarah Maud is the oldest—she helps do the washing; and Peter is the next. He is a dressmaker's boy."

"And which is the pretty little red-haired girl?"

"That's Kitty."

"And the fat youngster?"

"Baby Larry."

"And that freckled one?"

"Now, don't laugh—that's Peoria!"

"Carol, you are joking."

"No, really, Uncle dear. She was born in Peoria; that's all."

"And is the next boy Oshkosh?"

"No," laughed Carol, "the others are Susan and Clement, and Eily and Cornelius."

"How did you ever learn all their names?"

(To be continued.)

SECRET reservoirs, far up in the mountains, supply the water-springs; and eternal deeps of boundless love in the everlasting hills, supply the love-springs of the believer's soul. Is it not written, "All my fresh springs are in Thee?"—*Spurgeon*.