

The Family Circle.

MY MENDING-BASKET.

It is made of the stoutest of willow ;
It is deep and capacious and wide ,
Yet the Gulf Stream that flows through its borders
Seems always to stand at flood-tide !

And the garments lie heaped on each other
I look at them often and sigh,
Shall I ever be able to grapple
With a pile that has grown two feet high ?

There's a top layer, always, of stockings ;
These arrive and depart every day ,
And the things that are playing " button button "
Also leave without any delay.

But, ah, underneath there are strata
Buried deep as the earth's cocoon !
Things put there the first of the autumn,
Still there when the trees have grown green !

There are things to be ripped and made over ;
There are things that give out in their prime ;
There are intricate tasks—all awaiting
One magical hour of " spare time."

Will it come ? Shall I ever possess it ?
I start with fresh hope every day.
Like a will-o'-the-wisp it allures me ;
Like a will-o'-the-wisp, fades away.

For the basket has never been empty,
During all of its burdened career,
But once, for a few fleeting moments,
When the baby upset it, last year !

—Bessie Chandler, in *Harper's Bazar*.

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MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

BY AGNES MAULE MACHAR.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

'O, Effie ! how did you do it ?' exclaimed Marion ; but poor Effie could not speak for the sobs that shook her little frame, and Norman had the magnanimity to confess that it was partly his fault ; that they wanted to get a plaything that had been put up on the same high shelf, and he had been trying to hold Effie up to get it, when, just as she was taking it down, it dislodged the cup, and then Effie herself had fallen and bruised her forehead.

It was a great vexation for Marion, but she conquered it bravely, and taking Effie up in her arms, began to examine the bump on her brow, while Alan, who had just come in, too, went to get something to bathe it with. But Effie only sobbed out :

'I don't mind the bump, Marion ; it's the cup. Will it mend ?'

'No, dear,' said Marion ; 'I must just try to get another done yet. But you know you and Norman have often been told not to try to get things down for yourselves. And if you had been good, obedient children, the cup wouldn't have been broken.'

'O, Marion ! I won't ever, ever try again !' she exclaimed, and Norman, standing by silent and rueful, looked as penitent as she did.

Marjorie thought she loved Marion twice as much when she saw the motherly sweetness with which she soothed the still sobbing child, telling her and Norman that nothing was to be said about the cup to Mrs. Ramsay who was out, as of course she was to know nothing about it till Christmas Day. And she promised to take five cents from Effie's and Norman's little hoard of savings, towards the purchase of a new cup, while Marjorie heroically offered—confidentially—to take Marion's place in helping Millie to dress a doll intended for a Christmas gift to Effie, so that Marion should have more time for her painting.

And finally, in order to cheer up the two downcast children, Marjorie offered to do what they had been daily teasing her to do ; go and take a ride on their little toboggan, down the very moderate sized slide the children used, in a field close by. So she had her first experience there, under Alan's supervision or Norman steering, while she, only a light weight, sat tucked into the front, making herself as small as she could. As we all know, it is generally, as the French say, "*le premier pas qui coûte*," and now that she had—not "broken the ice," but—tried the snow-slide, she felt as if she could venture another on a larger scale, with less nervousness and more pleasure than she had felt before, when looking at the sharp inclined planes erected for the slippery descent.

'It looks a little dreadful at first,' Millie admitted ; 'but every time you go down you like it better. And when you know just what the toboggan's going to do, you're no more afraid of it than of skating.'

Marjorie had learned to skate a little at home by her father's desire, and her cousins were going to take her to the rink by and by ; but just at present there were too many other things to do, and the skating was not so much of a novelty as these.

When they got home, just as the tints of a soft winter sunset were fading out of the pink and amber sky, Norman ran to tell his mother, as usual, what they had been doing. 'And Effie had a fall and got a bump,' he added incautiously.

'What ! not off the toboggan !' exclaimed Mrs. Ramsay, who was always a little nervous about this sport, though she knew her husband liked the children to do, within reasonably safe limits, whatever developed courage and muscle.

'O, no ! it was when the cup—oh, dear, I forgot ! That's a secret, you know, mamma, so you mustn't ask about it.'

Mrs. Ramsay was quite accustomed to the little ones' blundering attempts to keep their Christmas secrets, and she was very careful always to respect their innocent mysteries, and to avoid tempting them to untruth by unnecessary questions ; and indeed deceit was a thing almost unknown in that household ; for all knew that it was considered the gravest of all offences. So she only smiled a little as Norman went on :

'It's only a secret, you know, because it's to be a surprise for you'—

But Millie cut Norman short : 'You stupid boy ! can't you be quiet ? It's nothing at all, mother, only Effie and Norman were playing in the study, and Effie fell and bumped her forehead.'

'Well, never mind, dear, let me see the bump ; and don't scold Norman. Little boys can only learn by experience when "silence is golden." And I'd rather have him make ever so many blunders by frankness, than see him in the least sly.'

Effie soon recovered from her fall, the new cup was bought, and everybody tried to help Marion to get time to finish it. Marjorie detested dressing dolls as much as Marion liked it, but she would not let her cousin touch the one that she and Millie wrestled over for three whole evenings, after Effie was gone to bed, till 'their baby' became a joke with everybody. For it was not a task that could be 'cobbled up' in a hurry. Effie had very decided views on the subject of dolls, and would scarcely have felt grateful, even at Christmas time, for the most beautiful doll whose clothes were sewed on, since the duty of dressing and undressing her doll was one of its greatest pleasures to her motherly little heart. Happily Marjorie had not any Christmas work of her own to do ; for her father, who had, even in the hurry of his own departure, procured appropriate gifts for each member of his sister's family, had considerably counselled Marjorie to reserve them till Christmas, knowing that she would naturally like to have her share in the general interchange of gifts, and that she might be puzzled as to the selection. So she had these safely stowed away in her trunk, each in its neat paper packet, inscribed with the name of its owner, all ready for the Christmas tree.

For they were to have a Christmas-tree. Dr. Ramsay, though he often objected to what he would humorously style 'the monstrous regimen of children,' declaring that everything nowadays was being made subservient to them and their enjoyment, always felt that Christmas was more especially the 'children's festival,' and endeavored to make it a time of real happiness to his own family. And as he knew that one of the truest means of happiness is to help to make others happy, he tried to make this an especial element of the Christmas pleasures.

On Christmas Eve, for two or three Christmases past, he had given up his surgery for the evening, to the celebration of the festival and of the Christmas tree. The boys made a pilgrimage to a place on the Lachine road, where they had permission to select a suitable young spruce, which was tastefully

decorated with tapers, bright-tinted ornaments and bonbons. The children were allowed to invite some of their young friends, and the doctor invited his young friends—the children of a number of poor patients, who had little chance of Christmas presents otherwise, and for whom small inexpensive, but welcome gifts were provided by Mrs. Ramsay and Marion. In this way the little assemblage soon grew to some thirty or forty children. And besides the Christmas-tree itself, Dr. Ramsay, with the invaluable assistance of Professor Duncan, always prepared a little exhibition for their entertainment. The professor had a large magic lantern or stereopticon for which he had, each year, some new and original dissolving views prepared. This he always exhibited for the first time at the Christmas-tree, interpreting them as he went along, with what were as good as stories to the children. The year before he had given them a series of views from Dickens' Christmas Carol, which had been exceedingly popular, but the subject was always a secret from every one but Dr. Ramsay, till the evening arrived. The little exhibition was frequently repeated during the winter for large audiences at Sunday-school festivals and similar celebrations ; but it never came off with more zest and enjoyment—both to entertainers and entertained—than it did at the Ramsay's Christmas-tree.

As soon as the growing moonlight made it practicable to enjoy going out after tea, Alan and Jack insisted on giving Marjorie her first lesson in snow-shoeing, when there would be no spectators—to speak of—to laugh at her first attempts. They had to walk some distance to reach a suitable open space at the eastern base of the mountain, and then Marion's snowshoes, borrowed for the time, were carefully strapped to Marjorie's moccasined feet by the long thongs of buckskin that tied the network to the front part of the sole, by being interlaced across the instep. Marjorie was shown how her toes were to rest on the snow itself through the opening in the snow-shoe, so as to have the necessary spring for walking, while she was to take as long steps as possible, putting the foremost foot well in advance of the other, and keeping the snow-shoes exactly parallel with each other so as not to overlap, or 'interfere,' as Alan preferred to call it. As the snow-shoes she wore were very narrow ones, she did not find this very difficult after a little practice, though just at first she got the long narrow points behind interlocked two or three times, the result being a plunge into the snow, out of which she was pulled by her cousins, amid much merriment. After two or three lessons, however, she could walk quite easily and lightly over the surface of the deep snow, and Alan declared that before long she would be able to run as he did, on her snow-shoes, a feat which appeared to her almost an impossible one.

Both the boys were quite eager that Marjorie and Millie should accompany them on their moonlight tramp in search of the Christmas spruce, an expedition in which Gerald was to join them. But Mrs. Ramsay thought an eight mile tramp quite too much for Marjorie in her present state of 'training.' The boys were very unwilling to give up the plan, however, and Professor Duncan, hearing the discussion, declared that he should like tremendously to accompany them part of the way at least, and suggested that the girls go just as far as they felt able to manage, and he would escort them back. And so it was accordingly arranged. Professor Duncan came to tea, and shortly after seven the little party set out, carrying their snow-shoes till they had got into somewhat open ground, where the snow afforded them a convenient surface on which to use them.

It was a glorious night. The moon, more than half full, had the brilliancy which only a winter moon can have—shining from an unclouded sky over a landscape of dazzling white. Yet the brighter stars, at any rate, were not obscured, but shone with diamond-like clearness against the deep gray-blue sky. The shadows of the leafless boughs were defined on the pure white snow as clearly as if penciled on its surface, and the feathery points of the pines and spruces were more

distinct in the silhouette than in the reality. The air was keenly cold, but to the snow-shoers it was only bracing and exhilarating. Marjorie felt its subtle influence, and did not wonder at the high spirits of the boys, as they sometimes ran races or made little detours across fences into fields, and sometimes dropped into line and made little jokes with Professor Duncan. He was in his most genial mood, too, and entered with spirit into the 'quips and cranks' of the boys, occasionally giving them an original conundrum suggested by the impressions of the moment, and creating much amusement when the answer was either guessed or revealed—generally the latter. By degrees, however, no one knew how, the solemn beauty of the moonlight landscape sobered them into a quieter mood. And in a similar way, as it often happened, without any particular intention, Professor Duncan had got on his favorite subject : the old days of the French pioneers, and incidents of the guerilla warfare of those days which had taken place in that vicinity.

'Well,' said Gerald, 'I shouldn't have objected to some of those adventures. The excitement must have been something to make up for the hardship.'

'And what grand times they must have had,' said Alan, 'when they had the country all to themselves, and could go on their snowshoes all through the woods, with lots of game everywhere, and nothing to do in winter but shoot it and keep themselves warm !'

'Yes,' said the professor ; 'but it wasn't such a fine thing to come across an ambuscade of Indians with their guns or tomahawks, and know that at any moment you might be scalped or carried off to a fate a thousand times worse.'

'No,' replied Gerald. 'That was the other side.'

'Yes, my boy,' the professor went on, 'it's very nice for us to be enjoying ourselves here tramping on light-heartedly, with a fine clear landscape all about us, and nothing and no one to make us afraid. But it was quite another matter to have to stumble along among the shadows of the great trees and fallen logs, never knowing when you might hear the crack of an arquebuse or the heart-chilling war-hoop, or be picked off without warning by an invisible foe ! Why, do you know, the colonists at Ville Marie were often practically prisoners within their palisades, not daring to go out to shoot game or cut firewood, except in armed parties as though in an enemy's country, and then pursued back often with heavy loss. And the men got sick of staying mewed up in their fortifications, and no wonder, though they got a good lesson when Maisonneuve let them have their way, and then made such a plucky retreat.'

'Was that the one Uncle Norman told me about in the Place d'Armes ?' said Marjorie.

'Yes. He was a splendid fellow—that Maisonneuve ; true Christian knight and gallant soldier !'

'Well, it beats me,' said Alan, 'to understand how those people could give up every thing else, and go on suffering all they did, for such a set of stupid, miserable savages as those Indians were !'

(To be continued.)

A STRANGE (CLASSICAL) COINCIDENCE.

The celebrated astronomer, the late Richard A. Proctor, has given almost a scientific character to the subject of Strange Coincidences by the interesting papers with this title published in his miscellaneous essays. Most persons have, I suppose, happened now and then on coincidences so strange as to seem, as the Scotch say, uncanny. But these strange coincidences, like our strange dreams, are usually left (wisely no doubt) unrecorded. If now, in violation of this wise rule, I place on record one of my personal experiences in this way, I am tempted to do so not merely because the incident seems to me exceptionally remarkable, but also because it gives me an opportunity, of which I am glad to avail myself, of associating my name with that of a very old friend, Mr. John Langton, but recently passed away after a very useful and active life unusually prolonged.