

LITTLE FOLKS

To Stay At Home Is Best.

(By Marina Everett, in 'Congregationalist and Christian World.')

There was a slight commotion at Mrs. Sawyer's back door. 'I've brushed and brushed, and there isn't a teenty mite of snow on my feet now.'

'There isn't a teenty mite on my feet either.'

The door swung open. In hopped Dorcas with her most intimate friend Susannah Gould.

'Oh, Mother, can I?' questioned Dorcas.

Mother Sawyer knew at once what was wanted. Ever since Dorcas (now strongly 'going on six') was five, she had asked regularly every little while to stay all night at Susannah's. The answer, however, had always been, 'No, my Dear.' But this time Mother Sawyer's countenance assumed a thoughtful expression. The little Dorcas looked so eager; she had borne the long series of disappointments sweetly; Susannah lived next door and had a good, motherly mother; well—

Seeing the yes-look gradually dawn, Dorcas added in a soft little voice, 'Pl-e-a-s-i-e, Mother.' Susannah, too, contributed a melodious, 'Pl-e-a-s-i-e, Mrs. Sawyer.'

A long, long minute passed. It was time to speak. Finally, instead of what Susannah once recklessly termed a 'mizzable old "No Dear,"' came a lovely brand-new 'Yes, Dear.'

'O goody, goody!' cried Dorcas.

'Goody, goody!' echoed Susannah.

The matter being decided, Mother Sawyer went into the bedroom for a small nightgown and nightcap. These she rather slowly wrapped up in an old newspaper.

Then Dorcas said good-by.

After the door closed Mother Sawyer stood at the small-paned window and watched the children, as their feet twinkled over the light November snow. One little figure, carrying a bundle under its arm, turned many times to wave a red-mittened hand. Then Mrs. Gould's side door opened, and the girls disappeared from view.

Father Sawyer came in to warm

up a bit. He was a quiet man. When the news about Dorcas was broken, he only scratched his head reflectively with his thumb and remarked, 'Sho! sho!'

The Sawyer supper table was far from being a merry one. There was an A B C plate of heart-shaped seed cookies on one end of the table. 'I only wish the child was here to eat them,' sighed Mother Sawyer.

Just before bedtime Father Sawyer absent-mindedly took up the warming pan. Then, remembering,



'OH! MOTHER, CAN I?'

he put it down slowly and shook his head, as if something was all wrong.

It was past eleven o'clock, and all good country folk were either asleep or dozing.

Suddenly Mother Sawyer thought she heard the rattle of the back-door latch. Father Sawyer heard it, too, and was out of bed in the twinkling of an eye, in his haste stumbling over an empty trundle bed.

'Who's there?'

'It's me,' replied a voice small, tearful, familiar.

'My sakes alive!' and in another twinkling of an eye Mother Sawyer was out of bed and at the door, too.

It didn't take long, you may be sure, to grab up Dorcas, barefooted, clad only in nightdress and nightcap, with a petticoat around her shoulders.

The frosty little feet were rubbed with snow, and soon swallows of hot ginger tea were doing their warming work. Then, wrapped in a woolly blanket, Dorcas was taken into bed with Father and Mother.

Very, very early in the morning, Father Sawyer crept softly out of bed so as not to awaken his 'baby.' He hastened over to the next house, hoping to save the kind Gould family a fright. They were not up. Great was their surprise to learn of Dorcas's flight, for they supposed she was sleeping peacefully beside Susannah!

All the forenoon Mother Sawyer was busy. There was the brick oven to be heated, brown bread and beans, pumpkin pies and cookies to be baked. Other housewifely duties, too, demanded attention. Dorcas 'saved steps' when she could. After dinner, as company was expected to tea, Dorcas was gowned in her favorite dress, a red delaine thickly peppered with white polka spots, and a clean white tier trimmed with lace.

Mother Sawyer seated herself on one side of the open fire with a pile of stockings to mend. Dorcas put her chair opposite, but not far away. Then she took some squares of Irish chain patchwork out of a green box.

'Now, daughter, tell me about your visit with Susannah,' said Mother Sawyer.

'Yes'm,' was the reply. Then, after one or two laborious stitches, Dorcas paused and stared into the fire. She was thinking. In a minute or two she remarked: 'At supper I ate out of a blue and white plate— Mine's red and white— The caraway cookies were round. Mine are like hearts— Mother, I like things I'm used to.'

'What did you do after supper, Dear?'

Dorcas's little nose went down into her patchwork and several brown curls fell over her face. She giggled.

'O Mother, we played 'hop to