

The Family Circle.

MY WEE CRIPPLE WEAN

Herieque was broken when her mither lay dyin',
And death took our new-born bairnie awa';
There was naething but poortith and sabbin' an' sighin'
For it seemed as if heaven had forsaken us a'.
Ere her soul sunward soared, that a towmon' had fluttered
For freedom, to bask in Omnipotence sheen;
My heart maistly rent when her last words were uttered—
"Willie be good to our wee cripple wean."

Years ha'e rolled on sin' the sool happ'd her mither;
Whiles we've been dowie, an' whiles we've been glad,
An' whiles whan we're cantie an' courtin' tegither,
A stranger micht tak's for a lass an' a lad,
In the weird wintry time, when lang wark made me weary,
Fra chanticleer's matin to vesper at e'en,
The click o' her staff on the stanes made me cheery
Whan, smiling, she met me—my wee cripple wean.

'Twas a cauld cabin, ours, for 'twas rotten' an' fa'in,
Sometimes we had fire an' sometimes we had nae;
An' we cudna help shiverin' when Boreas was blawin'
The "beautiful snaw thro' the auld crackit pane."
Tho' oor bits o' bed trappin' were no unco cozy,
We cuddled the closer and steekit oor een,
An' I felt mair than happy, when sleepin' sae rosy,
She dream'd in my oter—my wee cripple wean.

She grew grave at her prayers, an' she learned her carritch,
An' sang hymns o' heaven wi' an organ like swell;
An' at night when the dear thing had suppit her parritch,
I wash'd wi' a will her bit duddies mysel'.
Oor gear bein' scant, unbefriended, unaided,
I mendit her stockin's and cloutit her sheen;
An' blithe beat my breast as the broon curls I braided
That kissed the broad brow o' my wee cripple wean.

She's a little Minerva in wisdom, the Kitty—
Ye'd wonder hoo words came sae glib to her tongue;
Her funny remarkin', sae wise-like an' witty,
Amuse the auld and dumfounders the young;
A Venus in beauty, as modest's a gowan,
A seraph in mind, a Madonna in mien,
Wi' a heartie sae tender, sae lovin', sae lowin',
She's a' body's body—my wee cripple wean

The clouds that sae lang hae been hovering o'er us,
Hope's balmy breezes are driving away;
An' I'll live yet to sing ye a cheerier chorus
While Tibbuck's the love an' he lick—my lay.
I dootna some day she'll astonish the warl',
An' the warl' mayhap hail her Poetry's Queen,
Wi' a ha' o' her ain, an' a garland o' laurel
Be wreath'd round the brow o' my wee cripple wean.

—*Prize Poem of Dundee People's Journal.*

A TRUE STORY OF RUM, WRETCHEDNESS, AND RUIN.

"It was the 24th of December, and the late-rising sun appeared far to the south-east, flashing across the snow-covered fields, and was hidden by a dark cloud-bank. The cold, gray sky changed to crimson and gold—a sunrise that old settlers said predicted a storm before sunset.

The Haddon household was astir. Joe's team, hitched to the double sleigh, was at the door with the extended box piled full of sacked wheat. Joe himself, enveloped in fur coat and mittens, was about to mount the load, when his wife came out with a slip of paper in her hand.

"Here, Joe," she said, "is a list of little things I wish you would get for to-morrow. We would like some sugar and tea for Christmas, and don't forget Minnie's shoes. Poor girl, she has so long anticipated shoes for Christmas that I am afraid the disappointment would kill her if she did not get them."

"All right, Lucy; I'll not forget them," he replied, placing the slip in an inner pocket.

"And Joe," she continued, the habitual look of anxiety on her face deepening.

"What, Lucy?" he asked, trying to act as if he did not understand the import of her troubled manner.

"Take care of your money and come home early; won't you, Joe?" she pleaded.

"Yes, Lucy; I'll be home by five o'clock, sure."

He bade her good-bye, climbed on the load and drove off. She watched him out of sight, and turned again to the low, tapered shanty she called home. She was a young woman, not yet thirty, but the lines on her face told of much suffering.

"Mamma, did you tell papa about the shoes?" asked a weak, childish voice.

"Yes, darling; he promised sure to bring them."

One corner of the room that served as kitchen, dining-room and sitting-room was curtained off. There, on a rude couch, lay six year old Minnie, just recovering from a serious illness. The little one had been without shoes all the fall, and Jack Frost had bitten her toes several times before she fell sick. All through her sleepless delirium she had begged for shoes, and had taken her bitter medicine under promise of having them for Christmas.

"Can't I sit up long enough to try them on when papa comes?" she asked.

"Yes, Minnie; we'll hold you up until you try them anyway."

A well-dressed, well-fed, evil-eyed man was looking on: over the screens in the front of a saloon when Joe Haddon came into town with his wheat.

"Say, pard, let's keep an eye on Joe an' do him up before he goes out," he said to a puppet-faced man at his side.

It was one o'clock when Joe left the Farmers' Elevator, his sleigh empty and a cheque for twenty dollars in his pocket. "Ten dollars to pay a store bill, five dollars to the doctor, and five for Minnie's shoes and a Christmas dinner. I'll do my business while the horses eat, then start for home," he thought as he drove down the street to find accommodations for his team.

He had not gone far when the well-dressed man accosted him.

"Hallo there, Joe! how do you make it nowadays?"

"Pretty hard times," replied Joe, trying to drive on.

"Oh, now, don't be in a rush. Hitch your team and come in a minute."

"Can't do it," was the reply. "One of my children is sick and I am in a hurry to get home."

"Well, come in and have something to warm you up. Come on. It won't take you but a minute. You need bracing for your cold ride home."

A little more urging and Joe yielded. The horses were tied to a post and the two disappeared behind the partitioned apartment of the saloon.

It was a busy day for Mrs. Haddon with her children and her work, but by five o'clock supper was ready—that is, if the dishes she had prepared could be called by that name. There were hot boiled potatoes, bread and barley coffee, no milk, sugar, or butter. It was all she had to cook, but she had bestowed much care on it, and her table was neatly laid.

Snow had been falling since noon, and night came on unusually early. Anxious eyes had watched the road from town since three o'clock. When it became too dark to see they placed a light in the window. They waited until ten, but he did not come. The mother put away, untasted, her portion of the supper, and coaxed the disappointed children to bed. Minnie had been in good spirits all day, bravely swallowing frequent doses under the stimulus of new shoes. At eleven Mrs. Haddon went to her with a spoon and bottle in hand; she raised up the little patient, and the quivering lips opened to receive the dreaded potion. Neither spoke of the shoes, and the mother knew that the child had given them up as she had had to do before.

Slowly the long dark night wore away. Mrs. Haddon's sorrow was too great to be described. Not that she feared for Joe's safety, for he had often stayed in town over night, but the thought of the barren Christmas awaiting her little ones was too much. She had to take down the little patched stockings hanging on the wall so pitifully waiting for Santa Claus; she could not look at them. Near morning she fell into a troubled sleep, to be aroused by a ray of sunlight streaming through the frosted window. The Christmas day had dawned and the Christmas sun was lighting that desolate home.

The snow had drifted high over everything. She shovelled a path to the stables. Imagine her surprise to find Joe's team there, attached to the sleigh. The horses had crowded into the stables as far as their position would allow. Fearing some dreadful thing had befallen her husband, she hastened to the house of her nearest neighbor, a mile off. The neighbor went at once to town, traced Joe to the afore-said saloon and was told by the barkeeper: "We put him out o' here about one o'clock. He was full, and got too noisy. He declared some of us had stolen a cheque from him, and kicked up such a racket that we chased him out." The town was small and they soon searched it thoroughly, but found nothing further concerning his whereabouts. The entire neighborhood came out and spared neither pains nor labor to find the lost man, but without success. Christmas Day came and went, a week, a month, three months passed, and he had not yet been found.

With help from kind neighbors the family struggled through the severe winter.

It was April before some of the great snowdrifts yielded to the sun's warmth. The children were playing one sunny day on what had been their favorite coasting place, when one of them noticed the sole of a man's boot protruding where the drift was crumbling. They cleared away the snow to find—their father's body.

Joe Haddon had perished within twenty rods of home. An empty flask lay near him, and in his inner pocket they found the list Mrs. Haddon had given him that December morning.—*The Voice.*

UNDERGRADUATE LIFE AT OXFORD.

The Oxford undergraduate lives in an atmosphere of tradition, and his life is encompassed with rules which the American undergraduate would find impossible, but which impress the visitor as both delightful and amusing. It is an amusing rule, for instance, which forbids the undergraduate to smoke after ten o'clock under penalty of a fine, which fine is increased by twopence if the smoking is continued after eleven o'clock. There is something so delightfully inconsequential in making smoking more pernicious at eleven than at ten. And the rule which fines an undergraduate of Balliol and his friends as well if he or they pass the gate after nine: I used to leave that college for no other reason than to hear the man at the gate say, "You are charged to Mr. —, sir," which meant that one of the undergraduates would have to pay the college one large penny because I chose to go out and come in again at the unnatural hour of ten in the evening. There were also some delightful rules as to when and where the undergraduate must appear in his cap and gown, which latter he wears with a careless contempt that would greatly shock the Seniors of the colleges in the Western States who adopt the hat and gown annually, and announce the fact in the papers. It struck me as a most *decollette* garment, and was in most cases very ragged, and wore without much dignity, for it only hung from the shoulders to the waist like a knapsack, or was carried wrapped up in a bundle in one hand.

The day of an Oxford man is somewhat

different from that of an American student. He rises at eight, and goes to chapel, and from chapel to breakfast in his own room, where he gets a most substantial breakfast—I never saw such substantial breakfasts anywhere else—or, what is more likely, he breakfasts with some one else in some one else's rooms. This is a most excellent and hospitable habit, and prevails generally. So far as I could see, no one ever lunched or dined or breakfasted alone. He either was engaged somewhere else or was giving a party of his own. And it frequently happened that after we were all seated our hosts would remember that he should be lunching with another man, and we would all march over to the other man's rooms and be received as a matter of course. It was as if they dreaded being left alone with their thoughts. It struck me as a university for the cultivation of hospitality before anything else.

After breakfast the undergraduate "reads" a bit, and then lunches with another man, and reads a little more, and then goes out on the river or to the cricket-field until dinner. The weather permits this sort of door life all the year round, which is a blessing the Oxford man enjoys and which his snow-bound American cousin does not. His dinner is at seven, and if in hall it is a very picturesque meal.

After dinner the undergraduate reads with his tutor out of college or in his own room. He cannot leave the college after a certain early hour, and if he should stay out all night the consequences would be awful. This is, of course, quite as incomprehensible to an American as are the jagged iron spikes and broken glass which top the college walls.

It is only fair to say of these prisons that they are the loveliest prisons in the world, and that they are only prisons by night. By day the gardens and lawns of the quadrangles, as cultivated and old and beautiful as any in England, are as free, and one wonders how any one ever studies there. One generally associates study with the green-baize table, a student-lamp, a wet towel, and a locked door. How men can study looking out on turf as soft and glossy as green velvet, with great gray buttresses and towers about it, and with rows above rows of window boxes of flowers set into the gray walls like orchids on a dead tree, and a lawn-tennis match going on in one corner, is more than I can understand. The only obvious answer is that they do not study. I am sure the men I knew did not. But there must be some who do, else from where would come the supply of dons?—*Richard Harding Davis, in Harper's Magazine.*

ABOUT THE BABY'S BED.

With regard to infants and their beds, warmth, next to the purity of the atmosphere, is of essential importance. Proportionally to its internal organism the body of the infant is more than twice as great in its degree of exposure as that of an adult, and its feebleness for several months is such as to require sleep for almost the whole of its time when not nursing.

Its bed should be soft and the covering light and warm. It should at the first, and for at least a week after birth, be placed upon its side, well over on its stomach, with its mouth and nose free, lest it strangle with the trickling of the saliva into the windpipe.

After a time, when it has gained sufficient strength and knowledge to use its limbs, for increased comfort, it may be placed upon its back, or at its own inclination. But in placing it in bed with its mother, which is generally best, care should always be taken to place it that it is not likely to work its way down under the bedclothes, where it would inhale the effluvia from the body of its mother.

Cradles and cribs are not only of great convenience, due care being observed with regard to the softness and warmth of the bed and covering, but advantageous for placing the occupant as to secure the best access to fresh air and warmth, without overheating, which should be guarded against by light wool covering.

Baby wagons require at least the same care with regard to bed and covering, and besides, special care in cold weather to prevent the abstraction of heat from the body by cold pavements.

To prevent this it is well to have an underbed; and for the same reason the baby wagons are best which have big wheels.—*The Sanitarian.*