

BY-AND-BY AND NEVER.

[A Spanish proverb says that "by the road of By-and-by one arrives at the house of Never."] There's a dangerous little Afrite who accosts us day by day,  
Upsetting every purpose in a soft, enticing way,  
Saying, "Rest from this, I pray you, for to-morrow you can try—  
If hard work is to be done, you can do it By-and-by."  
Though he tell you not to do it,  
Mind him not, or you will rue it,  
For his words so smooth and clever  
Take you to the house of Never.

His voice is like a siren's, and he always aims to please;  
He's as idle as a zephyr, and he bids you take your ease;  
If your spirits seem to falter, at your elbow he is nigh,  
Saying, "Wait a little, brother, you can do it By-and-by."  
Though he tell you not to do it,  
Mind him not, or you will rue it,  
For his words so smooth and clever  
Take you to the house of Never.

He commands an endless future, and has youth upon his side,  
So he makes your little horoscope magnificently wide:  
Quite disturbed by earnest plodders, he appeals with watching eye;  
"What's your hurry—wait a little—you can do it By-and-by."  
Though he tell you not to do it,  
Mind him not or you will rue it,  
For his words so smooth and clever  
Take you to the house of Never.

He's a tricky little prompter, and he always lingers near,  
Knowing just the proper moment when to whisper in your ear;  
He can span you pretty rainbows, and make fanciful your sky,  
With his magical proviso of the golden By-and-by.  
Though he tell you not to do it,  
Mind him not, or you will rue it,  
For his words so smooth and clever  
Take you to the house of Never.

On your eyes he presses poppies, on your will he puts a brake—  
Just to keep you soothed and idle, any trouble he will take;  
When he trains you in his harness—oh, so mischievous and sly!—  
Then you'll dose away the Present in a dream of By-and-by.  
Though he tell you not to do it,  
Mind him not, or you will rue it,  
For his words so smooth and clever  
Take you to the house of Never.

—Harper's Young People.

THE STORY OF PATSY.

BY KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

CHAPTER VII.—PATSY FINDS HIS THREE LOST YEARS.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought  
With love which softens yet.  
Now God be thanked for every thought  
Which is so tender it has caught  
Earth's guerdon of regret."

Well, Jim did not succeed in finding his girl, although he "looked" industriously. Either the "millingnaries" did not smile upon him and his slender bank account, or they were not willing to wash the dishes and halve the financial responsibilities besides; but as the winter days slipped by, we could not help seeing that Patsy's pale face grew paler and his soft dark eyes larger and more pathetic. In spite of better care than he had ever had before, he was often kept at home by suffering all too intense for a child to bear. It was almost as if a sixth sense came to him in those days, so full was he of strange thoughts and intuitions. His eyes followed me wistfully as I passed from one child to another, and when my glance fell upon him, his loving gaze seemed always waiting for mine.

When we were alone, as he pored over picture-books, or sat silently by the window, watching the drops chase each other down the pane, his talk was often of heaven and the angels.

Daga Ohlsen had left us. Her baby eyes had opened under Norway skies, but her tongue had learned the trick of our language when her father and mother could not speak nor understand a word, and so she became a childish interpreter of manners and customs in general. But we knew that mothers' hearts are the same the world over, and, lacking the power to put our sympathy in words, we sent Daga's last bit of sewing to her mother. Sure enough,

no word was needed; the message explained itself; and when we went to take a last look at the dear child, the scrap of cardboard lay in the still hand, the needle threaded with yellow wool, the childish knot, soiled and cumbersome, hanging below the pattern just as she had left it. It was her only funeral offering, her only funeral service, and was it not something of a sermon? It told the history of her industry, her sudden call from earthly things, and her mother's tender thought. It chanced to be a symbol, too, as things do chance sometimes, for it was a butterfly dropping its cocoon behind it, and spreading its wings for flight.

Patsy had been our messenger during Daga's illness, and his mind was evidently on that mystery which has puzzled souls since the beginning of time; for no anxious, weary, waiting heart has ever ceased to beat without its passionate desire to look into the beyond.

"Nixy Jones's mother died yesterday, Miss Kate. They had an orful nice funeral."

"Yes, I'm sorry for the poor little children; they will miss their mamma."

"Not 'nuff to hurt 'em! Them Joneses never cared nuthin' for nobody; they was playing on tin oyster cans the hull blessed ev'nin', till Jim went 'nd stop't 'em, 'nd told 'em it warn't perlite. Say! how dretful it must be to go down into the cold, dark ground, and be shut in a tight box,

door-bell. Though only half awakened, my forebodings seemed realized; and the bell rang "Patsy" in my ears.

I hastily slipped on my dress, and going to the door, saw just whom I expected,—Jim.

"What's the matter with Patsy?"

"He's turrrible bad, miss; he got took with one o' them fits the worst kind in the night, and liked ter died. Yer could a heard him screech a block off."

"Oh, my poor boy! Have you had a doctor? What did he say?"

"Well, he said he guessed it was the last one, miss, 'nd I'm afraid it is, sure."

"Who is with him now? Are you going right back?"

"Yes, miss, soon as I go 'nd git leave from the boss. Mis' Kennett's went to her washin.' She could n't 'ford ter lose a job. I found Mr. Kennett, 'nd he's mindin' Patsy. He cries for you; he says he don't want nothin' but jest Miss Kate, and he's that crazy he wants to git up 'nd come to the Kindergarten."

"Dear little lad!" I said, trying to keep back the tears. "Here, Jim, take the school keys to Miss Helen, and ask her to take my place to-day. I'll start in ten minutes for Patsy."

"Thank yer, miss. I tell yer, he's a crooked little chap, but he's as smart as they make 'em; 'nd annyhow, he's all the folks I've got in the world, 'nd I hope we kin pull him through."



"HE SAT SILENTLY BY THE WINDOW."

'nd want to git out—git out—'nd keep hollerin' 'nd a-hollerin', and nobody come to fetch yer, cause yer's dead!"

"Oh, Patsy, child, stop such fearful thoughts! I hope people are glad and willing to stay when they are dead. The part of them that wonders and thinks and feels and loves and is happy or sad—you know what I mean, don't you?"

"Yes," he said slowly, leaning his head on his hand.

"God takes care of that part; it is his own, and he makes it all right. And as for our bodies, Patsy, you don't care about keeping your poor little aching back, do you? You talk about the cold, dark earth. Why, I think of it as the tender, warm earth, that holds the little brown acorn until it begins to grow into a spreading oak-tree, and nurses the little seeds till they grow into lovely blossoming flowers. Now we must trot home, Patsy. Wrap this shawl over your shoulders, and come under my umbrella."

"Oh, I don't need any shawl, please. I'm so orful hot!"

"That's just the reason," I replied, as I looked with anxious eyes at his flushed cheeks.

I left him at the little door on Anna street, and persuaded Mrs. Kennett to give him some hot soup at dinner-time.

The next morning I was startled from a profound sleep by a tremendous peal of the

I paused, for in my grief I could think of no simple way of telling that ignorant little child what they did pray for.

"They will pray for you, dear," I said at length, "because they will want to talk to God about the little boy who is coming to him; to tell him how glad they are that he is to be happy at last, but that they shall miss him very, very much."

"The priest lives clear out Market street, 'nd he would n't git 'ere 'fore God knew the hull thing 'thout his tellin' of it. You pray, Miss Kate."

"O thou dear, loving Father in Heaven, Patsy's Father and mine, who givest all the little children into their mothers' arms, if one of them is lost and wandering about the world forlorn and alone, surely Thou wilt take him to a better home! We send little Patsy to Thee, and pray that his heart may be filled with joy and thankfulness when he comes to live in Thy house."

"Tell 'im 'bout them three years what I lost, so 't he'll mako 'lowance, jest as you did."

"O God, who saw fit to lay a heavy burden on Patsy's little shoulders and take away his three years, make them up to him in his heavenly life."

"Yer never said Amen! 'Tain't no good 'thout yer say Amen!"

"Amen!"

Silence for many minutes. The brain was alive with thoughts, but the poor tired body was weakened already with the labor of telling them. When he spoke again, it was more slowly and with greater difficulty.

"I guess—Heaven—is kind o' like—our Kindergarten—don't you? 'nd so—I ain't goin' to feel—strange! There'll be beautiful places, with flowers bloomin' in 'em, 'nd birds 'nd brooks mebbe, like those in the stories you tell us, and lots of singin' like we have; and the peoples are good to each other, like our children, 'ceptin' Jimmy Battles,—'nd they'll do each other's work, 'nd wait on the angels, 'nd run errands for God, I s'pose—and everybody 'll wear clean—white—aprons—like in the picture-books; but I sha'n't like it much 'thout you git there pretty quick, Miss Kate; but I ain't going to cry!"

"Oh, Patsy, my boy, it is for those who are left behind to cry. It must be better to go."

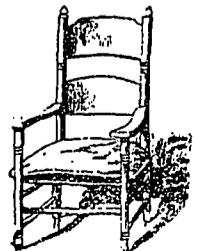
"Well, I'm willin.' I've got enough o' this, I tell yer, with backaches, 'nd fits, 'nd boys callin' sassy names—'nd no gravy ever on my pertater;—but I hate to go 'way from the Kindergarten—only p'raps Heaven is just like, only bigger, 'nd more children—'nd no Jimmy Battleses! Sing about the pleasant mornin' light, will yer, please—Miss Kate?"

And in a voice choked with tears, as Jim came in and lifted Patsy in his arms, I sang the hymn that he had sung, with folded hands and reverent mien, every morning of his life in the Kindergarten:—

"Father, we thank Thee for the night,  
And for the pleasant morning light;  
For rest and gladness, love and care,  
And all that makes the day so fair!  
Help us to do the things we should:  
To be to others kind and good;  
In all we do, in work or play,  
To grow more loving every day!"

The last lingering, trembling note fell upon the death-like stillness of the room, as with one sharp, brief struggle, one look of ineffable love and peace, the tired lids dropped heavily over the eyes never to be lifted again. Light had gleamed upon the darkened pathway, but the silent room, the dying fire, the failing light, and the falling rain were all in fellowship with Death. My blessed boy! God had given him back his three lost years!

"Oh, it is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, from every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes."



THE END.