

The Inglenook.

Against Her Buryin', Or Miss Cynthia's Patch.

"Against my buryin'! Well I never!" Miss Cynthia leaned forward eagerly, and stooped to pick up the check that had fluttered out from the great blue envelope in her hands. One hundred and fifty dollars! There it was and no mistake. With trembling fingers she turned it over and over again. "Against my buryin'!" she exclaimed aloud a second time, as she sank back limp with emotion in the old split-bottomed rocking chair, "and to think! What a reward for a little act of kindness, such as any one would have done for a poor, lone body who was took with rheumatiz in a strange place without money. I didn't expect anything, and yet if it could have been!"

Her face flushed, and the dim old eyes almost lost their cheery light in the wistful expression that crept into them.

"It must 'ave been the thought of his own buryin', with no near kin to do for him that made him think of willin' this money to me in this way," she continued at length, straightening her spare little form, and resuming the patchwork upon which she had been engaged when the important document had been handed to her. "I'll not spoil my day and my gift by wishing it had been different. The good Lord knows when I'll need it worst, and no doubt he's laid it out just as it ought to be. Life is very much like this piece of patchwork, after all," holding up critically a central square, "who would 'ave thought, when all these dark pieces were a goin' into it that right in the middle would be this beautiful sky blue cashmere. Just so, perhaps, it will be with me; when all's dark and dreary, and sickness and poverty makes a black rim around my partin' moments, there'll come the thought of Mr. White's legacy, and I'll say to myself, 'Never mind, Cinthy, if you can't pay your honest debts right now, as you have always done, you can do it just as soon as ever you get to work again, an' if it's the Master's will to call you hence, there's that legacy like a great big piece of blue sky shinin' out after the storms is past. No one shall think from any word of mine that I am ungrateful for the gift, or repinin' that it can't be used in the way that I might have wished.'"

The summer afternoon passed slowly by; the patchwork momentarily grew. Miss Cynthia never ate the bread of idleness. Hour after hour she stitched and planned and wove her little fancies, as her nimble fingers sorted the varied colors. At last sunset, with deep yellow lines began to blend the pieces confusingly, Miss Cynthia paused.

"I must put up my work now," she said softly, "and there! it's time, for of all thing! not a bit of dark in anything that I have made to-day. I'm afraid these squares will look too bright, and yet for once poor things, I fancy that they like the scarlet and green and white; for one day I'll let their brightness be unclouded. With a soft little laugh, she smoothed out the pile of patchwork, and set about preparing her tea. She must take it all alone to-night, as Alice would not be home until to-morrow. How surprised Alice would be, and how pleased to know that the sky blue legacy was in readiness for the hour of sickness and suffering.

"Dear child, she would do for me to the last without the legacy!" thought Miss Cynthia, "if only—"

She checked the thought that had come unbidden into her mind, and going out into the porch sat down to meditate, and as was her custom, to recount her mercies.

The clock struck nine, then ten; the silvery moonlight flooded the low window seat, and rested on the grey head that was bowed upon it; a breeze stirred gently the vines upon the trellis work around her, but Miss Cynthia did not move; she had fallen asleep, and as the distant sound of the town clock striking the hour fell upon her ears, she smiled. She was dreaming that Mr. White's legacy was her own, an unconditioned gift; and to her the strokes of the clock was the music of the organ that she had wished to buy for Alice. Fancy after fancy surged happily through her tired brain, and under the pale moonlight the thin features grew young with the light of a great joy.

With a start she awoke as a footstep crossed the threshold.

"Alice!" she cried; then her face fell, but Alice did not perceive it.

"Yes, Aunt Cynthia," she answered gaily. "Here I am safe and sound. I couldn't stay away from home another day, and I persuaded Mrs. Brown to let me come with her. But what are you doing up so late? I thought you would have been asleep ere this."

"I was asleep, dear," replied Miss Cynthia quietly; "I was dreaming," and then Miss Cynthia never knew how it was, but sitting there in the shadows with the memory of that longed-for organ in her heart, she sobbed out the story of Mr. White's legacy and her dream.

"It's not that I am ungrateful for the gentleman's kindness, dear, nor to the good Lord who sent it, but I'm just a poor, foolish old woman, who still longs for the scarlets and blues along the edges of her patchwork, instead of the sober greys and blacks that are so much more suitable."

Alice patted the wrinkled hands gently.

"Dear, unselfish little auntie!" she murmured.

"Oh, no," said Aunt Cynthia, "it is a selfish wish, dear. You see, I've so often pictured it over to myself since you learned to play. I have thought how, on winter evenings, when the rain and the sleet and cold and the dark are out of doors, that I would light a warm fire on the hearth, and when you would come in from the store, we'd put the kettle on and lay out our little white cloth, and then while we waited for our cups of tea, what a cosy time we would have! You would sit and sing at your organ, 'All the way my Saviour leads me,' and then we'd read together over and over again, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits.'"

Alice's eyes filled.

Without a word she went in, lighted a candle, and carefully perused the lawyer's letter.

In a few moments she returned, and bending over the woman at the window seat, kissed her tenderly.

"Auntie, dear," she said, as she brushed away a tear, "you did not see the postscript, you are free to do as it seems best to you."

Miss Cynthia never knew how she got

through the long night that followed, although it was almost midnight when she laid her head upon her pillow. Sleep had scarcely visited her eyelids when Alice arose.

"It must have been my nap on the porch that made me so wakeful," she said apologetically. "Do you know that I got up in the night to make out a list of the things that I wished to buy. Do you think it would be foolish to spend it all to-day? I feel as if I should like to get it off my mind," she asked anxiously.

Alice smiled.

"Why, no, auntie," she said; "let's make a patch that is red and green and blue to-day, for once, with not a sign of a shadow anywhere unless your sunshine, which you will certainly need, can be made to do duty for such a thing. I've one more day for my vacation, and I'll take you wherever you want to go."

And so without let or hindrance, Miss Cynthia passed from store to store all that bright, happy day, and at nightfall, tired but happy, checked off her purchases:

Organ \$100.

Dress and hat for Alice \$15.

Fancy groceries that I never felt able to indulge myself in before \$2.

Peppermints such as I used to love as a child, 10 cents.

A cow for the Widow Blakely (that's my thank offering to the Lord), \$20.

A gift to Alice to spend as she likes, \$8.

Small balance left in the bank for my winter dress.

Two weeks passed by. The organ was safely ensconced in the snug parlor, and Alice's sweet voice was singing in the twilight, "We'll work, we'll work till Jesus comes." There was a knock at the door, and the postman handed in a second large blue envelope.

Miss Cynthia read:

DEAR MADAM:—I hope that ere this you have withdrawn your little property from the bank at N—, I suppose you have seen in the paper an account of the failure. Whatever was in it is entirely lost.

"Nothing but my dress," said Aunt Cynthia quietly, "and that I did not greatly need. It was providential that I didn't lay up my legacy for the day of my buryin'. Alice that was a very sweet piece you are playing, but wont you please sing to-night, 'All the way my Saviour leads me?' and as the clear young voice rang out in the words of hope and trust, the woman behind the tea kettle clasped both hands upon her beating heart, and murmured again and again, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," she repeated later, when she saw the beautiful winter dress that had reposed for her in Alice's trunk since the eventful day of Mr. White's legacy.—The Christian Observer.

The Boy Hero.

Till time shall be no more there can be no grander deed, in every sense, done by mortal soldier—let alone by a boy just out of school, a mere lad of seventeen, who yet was an officer in the Seventy-fourth Highlanders, now the "Highland Light Infantry."

Everybody knows the story of "The Loss of the Birkenhead"—how the troopship struck upon a rock; how the soldiers were formed in ranks to die, while the women and children were being saved; how the whole force—officers and men—stood at the salute while

"Still inch by inch the doomed ship sank low,