

Home, and their mother had been laid to her rest in the old suburban churchyard. Mary went to see the little orphans, she took them a cross of shining holly leaves to lay upon their mother's grave, and they smiled through their tears, and thanked the kind lady, and said it was what 'mother' would have best liked to have laid there. After that the days passed on much the same as before, only that in Mary's heart was a longing to give up more of her time to the service of God. In the meantime she fulfilled her home duties lovingly, was more than ever gentle to her father and the children, more tender than ever to Arthur, for she knew now what he had meant on Christmas Eve when he spoke of soon hearing 'faint fragments of the song,' she knew that her treasure was fast going to the far-off land. She was prepared for this, but the other blow was terrible in its suddenness to them all.

One day Mr. Mordaunt did not come home at his usual time, then he staggered into the hall and fell down. He never spoke again, never woke to consciousness nor to smile upon his children. Perhaps it was ordained in mercy, as all things are; for he was spared telling them what they soon had to learn from others; that their father had died a ruined man, that they themselves were beggars, dependent upon the charity of others for their daily bread. There was no stain of dishonor, no imputation of blame, cast upon Mr. Mordaunt's memory, the failure of the bank, in which he had risked his all was the cause of his ruin, but the ruin was complete.

Kind friends came forward with assistance. Harold and Gertrude were taken charge of by an aunt with moderate means, and a large loving heart; she said she should adopt them, and Mary could but thank and bless her. For herself there was but one alternative—she must go out into the world and work, self-denial and patience must be exercised, not indeed as she had thought, not in dispensing of her abundance, in visiting the sick, in clothing the naked: still in God's own appointed way, in the lot in life which He had sent her: 'holly leaves' were strewn along her path, but there was brightness beyond, peace in the real true joy which had come to her at Christmastide. But she could not begin her work yet, she must be with Arthur to the last; none could smoothe his pillow as she could, or read or sing to him as she did.

It was not for very long ; with the fulness of joy of Easter-tide Arthur Mordaunt died ; and Mary went forth a month afterwards to fight the battle of life.

She found a situation as governess in a family who soon learnt of her gentle worth. But there were many troubles to be fought against, many disappointments to be endured, many repinings to be brought into subjection, ere Mary could say from her heart 'Thy will be done.' But the lesson was learnt at last, and a quiet happiness came to the girl amid the sorrow of life.

Harold received a commission and went out to India, where they say his brave, fearless spirit must make a hero of him. Gertrude at seventeen married one to whom her sister gave her up without one fear or misgiving. And Mary has only herself to think of, and the old longing to give herself up to the service of God has come back to her.

It is Christmas Day again, eight years after the commencement of my tale; the beautiful Church is bright with flowers, the voices of the choristers rise up clear and sweet to heaven with the glorious message of the Angels' song, and there in the now well known dress of a sister of mercy Mary Mordaunt kneels. The way of the Cross is before her, but happiness untold, unutterable is beyond the darkness of the world; she can think of her loved ones at rest, and at most the years of her weary pilgrimage cannot be long.

Others go from that Holy Temple to their homes and to their families, and she passes out from among them and wends her quiet way to a hospital close by where her daily work lies. She passes through the wards with quiet, kindly greetings, and goes to a corner of the room where a sickly youth lies on his bed.

'How are you, Jamie?' she says.  
'Better, Miss, thank you, much better.'

'Yes, Miss, he's very much better the doctor says; he thinks he'll get well now, and it's all along of your kindness.'

It is a bright dark-eyed trim little servant girl who speaks, you would hardly recognise the squalid Ruth Hayward of eight years ago.

Miss Mordaunt turns round and smiles on the brother and sister; they take her back to the old days, to her father and Arthur, Harold and Gerty, but not a repining thought comes with that far-off memory, only unutterable thankfulness that she has in any way been the means of giving those two, some outward Christmas joy, of nursing Jamie through his long illness, and giving him back to Ruth on Christmas Day, stronger than he was before.

On the lad's bed are two crosses made of 'holly leaves;" he has formed them himself, and seems somewhat proud of his work. One is for his mother's grave, Ruth is going to take it there; the other he offers to Mary somewhat awkwardly.

'You said, Miss, your brother thought of them, as she did; if it's not making too bold, would you take it with you to the churchyard?'

Mary's heart was too full for words, but amidst lovely flowers that decked Arthur's grave, none was so prized by his sister as the crippled youth's offering of holly leaves.

**BIRTH.**

At Claremont, Douglas Dec. 14th, the wife  
of W. N. H. Clements, of a son.

**MARRIED.**

**RUFFE-FERRY**,—On 18th Dec., in the Parish of St. John, Cornwall, N.S., by the Rector, George Lewis Kufee Esq, of Bridge town, N.S., to Julia Maria Ferry, daughter of the late George Henry and Ruth Odella Ferry, of Cornwall.

**DIED.**

**RICHMOND.**—At the Rectory, Porter's Lake, on the 19th, Nov., Mary Isabel, daughter of the Rector, Rev. James A. and of Emma Louise Richey, aged 1 year, six months and five days.

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