

THE QUIET HOUR.

A Christmas Revolution.

"God, who registers the cup
Of mere cold water, for His sake
To a disciple rendered up,
Disdains not His own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered;
And because my heart I proffered,
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow Him
Forever!"

"There is more selfish unselfishness in the month before Christmas than in all the rest of the year together!" Johnnie jerked her long limbs up from the hearth-rug, and flashed round on us, with a fiery spot in each cheek. We started nervously, then settled quietly to work again. It was only Johnnie, and she often fired unexpected artillery off in our midst. Yet we all knew it was Johnnie who looked most fearlessly on the under side of things, and weighed questions with scales that were uncomfortably accurate.

"I think it is an awful shame, the selfishness we sew into our Christmas gifts!" Johnnie's cheeks grew redder, and we laid down our work to listen. Our Don Quixote often charged harmless windmills, but now she seemed to be tilting with a veritable giant.

"I've been looking it squarely in the face, as I lay here blinking at the coals, and the shame at my heart grew bigger and bigger. There's that cape I've been crocheting for Mamma, do you know how much selfishness has been worked into that? Three long weeks of it. My whole mind has been intent on finishing it before Christmas, and I have jealously hoarded every spare minute. I never dreamed of the selfishness I was crocheting into it, but this evening I have been counting up. I have put off visiting little Lena Swartz, whom our King's Daughters visit since she was hurt. I have put off my weekly letter to Grandmother, and to-day a letter reached me saying she was hurt at my long silence. I have refused Alfie, evening after evening, when he has wanted me to play chess, and to-day, when I offered, he said he didn't want me. Last night I was pettish with Papa, when he asked me to help him with his accounts; and, to crown all, I have been cross with Mamma herself, when she has called me for odd jobs, and I have had to put down my work—a present for her! It is such a horrid farce, this making everybody uncomfortable in order to make them presents!"

Johnnie's cheeks were hot, and her eyes suspiciously bright; but I did not think of her; I was looking into my own heart, with startled eyes, from which the curtain had been drawn away.

In my hands was an invalid sack I was making for Auntie; a dainty thing, with trimmings of lace and ribbon. It would just match her blue eyes; but I was thinking of those eyes, and of how wistfully they had looked into mine after I had tucked her into bed the night before. She would not sleep for hours, I knew from that feverish glow on her cheeks, and I knew she longed for me to sit beside her, and read in low, soothing tones from her little "Imitation of Christ." But she had not spoken the wish, and I had kissed her, and hurried guiltily away, to work for long hours on a present for her. Which would she rather have had, the gift or the restful readings? Dare I look at the question honestly? There was the muffler I was knitting for Alfie, a harsh speech to little Helen was knitted into that, when she teased me to take her walking. There was Edith's work-bag. I raised my shamed eyes to Edith's face, as she sat across from me.

Her cheeks, too, were consciously flushed, as she looked down at the half-worked slippers in her lap. For those slippers, evening after evening, father had had to do without the bedtime music he so loved.

The three of us looked at each other with shamed faces. Johnnie lifted her head with a little faltering laugh. "Is it not shameful? It is the love that is worked into a gift that makes it precious, after all, and when we are actually cross and selfish to our loved ones, in order to sit down and make them presents—oh, what a farce it is!"

Thus was begun Johnnie's revolution. It was not announced with gun shots and long declarations, but was wrought all silently, by three conscience-stricken girls.

"I wonder how cousin Lilla is?" Mamma said, anxiously, at supper. "I wish—but you girls are all too busy, I know, to call and see," she ended rather wistfully.

"I can go, Mamma," Johnnie answered, promptly, "and I can match your Saxony for you on the way."

"Are you sure you have time, dear?" Mother asked, eagerly. "You girls are so busy with your Christmas work."

"Oh, the Christmas work can wait," Johnnie answered, lightly, as she shot a glance across the table at her confederates.

"What will you have to-night, Papa? 'Carnival of Venice,' or 'Thalberg,' or 'Monastery Bells'?" Edith looked up brightly from the music table, with the loose sheets of the old-fashioned music he so loved in her hand.

"Why, can you really spare the time, child?" Father asked, quickly. "Mother says you are all so hurried with your Christmas work."

But Edith slipped her arm through his, and drew him to his big chair, where he lay back happily, with closed eyes, as the first strains of Thalberg's "Home, Sweet Home" stole through the room.

After I had tucked Auntie into bed, and her tired eyes had looked their wistful good-night, I drew the shaded lamp close, and, sitting beside her, with her thin, nervous hand in mine, opened her beloved Thomas à Kempis. Her eyes shone with wistfulness, even as she protested. "But you have not time, dear; it would rest me, but I know how eager you are to finish your Christmas presents." As I bent to silence the sensitive lips with a kiss, my own were tremulous. "The presents are almost finished now, Auntie, and there is plenty of time." And she nestled contentedly back on her pillows.

Much simpler gifts than usual were exchanged in our home that year. When the larger gifts, some in an unfinished condition, were exhibited, and our revolution explained, there was a merry laugh at our expense. But there were tears in Mother's eyes; for she knew what self-denial was needed to refrain from such "selfish unselfishness"; and Father, looking contentedly at his worn old slippers, said, softly, "I think you have found the key to true Christmas giving." HATTIE JOOR.

"I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes,
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize."

MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NIECES,—

Probably nine-tenths of my young friends have a fancy for collecting curiosities in some shape or other, and possibly you will be interested in hearing about the collections of other girls. These collections vary in importance and usefulness—some are curious, others are instructive, while not a few are perhaps frivolous; but all are at least interesting. Everyone knows the little schoolgirls, with their precious strings of buttons, picked up here and there, and the boys with their equally valuable (to them) stamp albums. Who has forgotten the old-fashioned birthday book, which every girl possessed, and in which everybody was asked to write his or her name? This fad for collecting is not confined to children; everyone possesses it more or less. Monograms, crests, and autographs are about the commonest collections, except, perhaps, stamps. Considerable taste is sometimes displayed in the arrangement of these. They are cut out and placed on fans, photograph frames, etc., in various designs. A pretty and useful way of using autographs is to put them on tea-cloths. One niece has what she calls an Egyptian tea-cloth, on which are inscribed the names of people whom she met while in Egypt. Another has a sofa pillow with the name of each member of her graduating class upon it. Sometimes these autographs are written first in pencil, and then sewn in silk for permanency. Another sofa pillow is made of colored cigar-ribbons, collected from one's smoker friends.

Here is a description of a whip collection: An ordinary English hunting crop; a whip from Bermuda, black and glossy, made of seaweed; a long wooden-handled whip from Jamaica, made from the "lace-bark" tree; a Cingalese whip, of red and yellow fiber, for driving cattle; a cowboy's *cuerito*, with a short wooden handle and nine leather thongs; a long black-snake whip, used by the old-time Southern overseer, has lash and handle of braided rawhide.

Among the latest fads is that of collecting baggage and hotel labels. One young lady has specimens from persons who have travelled in China, Japan, India, New Zealand, and Samoa. Her collection is really interesting and varied.

Another lady has a number of dolls—do not laugh, my dear girls, you all had dolls too, once upon a time. This niece has a splendid purpose in her collection. Each doll comes from a particular country and is dressed in the costume of that country. Quite a lesson in "National Dress," is it not, besides giving hints for fancy dress parties, if necessary?

Another has a number of valuable specimens of hand-made lace. These are fastened on velvet, making long wall panels for her sitting-room. Underneath each specimen is a photograph of a woman peasant of the country where each piece was made. There are pictures and laces from France, Spain, Italy, Armenia, Ireland, Persia, etc. It is a most interesting collection.

One young girl has a very whimsical fad; she has secured buttons worn by distinguished men, such as Sampson and Schley, Washington, Bismarck, Dickens, Scott, and many more. She intends to have a set of musical buttons—that is, buttons belonging to musicians; literary buttons; artistic buttons, and actors' buttons!

Still another collection is one of butterflies, and another is of beetles. These are very instructive and interesting as well, and repay one for one's trouble. One of my friends has a lovely collection of Canadian ferns. Who has not at one time had a hobby for collecting old and foreign coins?

A young Bostonian has an odd collection of pitchers. Several show the arms of different cities and counties in England; some bear a legend or a couplet. One dainty little flagon of silver fligree came from Madeira, while a few grotesque ones came from London. There is a green one with two faces. Standing normally, the face is very jolly, and has the words "full jug" over the head. When turned upside down the face is drawn and woe-begone, and the words are "empty jug." This collection consists of over 300 jugs and jars, the largest one being only five inches high.

Another collector has a taste for teapots—costly and cheap, common and beautiful. She has an expensive teapot of Sevres ware, a penny pot from a Japanese bazaar, a puzzle teapot—birds, animals, faces, and so on. There are delicate egg-shell china things, both artistic and grotesque; one bears a Japanese mask. One is the little blue and white right-angled pot of the coolie of Japan. Many are decorated with monkeys, cats, dwarfs, etc.; in each case the mouth of the creature is the spout. One charming little teapot is shaped like a duck with bill open and having a handle on its back.

A young lady who has returned from a course of study and travel in Europe has a wonderful collection of bells. In size they range from the ordinary cow-bell to a tiny one which she wears on her bracelet. She has sleigh bells from Russia, goat bells from Switzerland, blue delf dinner bells, church bells, temple bells, pagoda bells, and tiny ribbon-strung wind-bells, which give out sounds with the moving of the breeze—all telling a musical tale.

Still another girl has a collection of fans from Japan, revealing much of the ancient history of that country. "In olden times there were fans for men, for women, for young ladies, for children, fans for outdoor use, and for indoor use, fans for the married, fans for the single, fans of awful portent which came from the Mikado and which told the receiver to prepare for death. There were fans for winnowing grain, and for blowing smoldering charcoal embers into flame; and, finally, a small fan such as is laid in the coffin of every dead Japanese woman."

Just one more description. One young girl in the United States has begun a collection which in time will be valuable. It is composed of patriotic emblems of the late war. She has pins, brooches, belts displaying the American and Cuban flags; others showing the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes floating merrily in the breeze. Uncle Sam's sleeve links, shirt studs, hat pins, army and navy buttons, form a goodly part of this collection.

Truly the name of selections is legion. One may make a hobby of almost anything; but I should advise my dear nieces in their collections to aim not so much at what will be unique or simply useless, as at what will prove educative and instructive.

Your loving old Auntie,

MINNIE MAY.

Recipes.

COOKING WITH HONEY.

There seem to be but few cooks that ever use honey other than in its natural state, or strained. There are many ways in which it can be used other than as above.

Baked Apples with Honey.—Wash as many apples as desired, cut them in half and remove the core. Into the hollow made by removing the core, put a little butter and a teaspoonful of honey. Pour a little water in the pan, and when done put a little more honey into this juice, and cook until thick. Pour over the apples.

Honey Muffins.—Sift together 1½ pints flour, 2 teaspoons of baking powder and a teaspoon of salt. Rub into the flour 2 tablespoons of butter; add 3 well-beaten eggs, 1 cup strained honey and 1 pint of milk. Beat well until thoroughly mixed, and bake in gem pans in a hot oven.

Honey Cake.—Mix 1 cup each of honey and granulated sugar, ½ cup soft butter, and 2 well-beaten eggs. Sift together 1 pint of flour with a heaping teaspoon of baking powder and a little salt, and stir into the above. Bake in a moderate oven a half hour or more.

Honey Ginger Snaps.—One pint honey, ½ lb. of butter, 2 teaspoons ginger; boil together three or four minutes, and when nearly cold add a well-beaten egg and flour to make stiff enough to roll. Into the flour put a teaspoon of baking powder.

A YANKEE BOILED DINNER.

Put the kettle on the stove with two and a half pints of water in it. Get a medium-sized cabbage head, wash and cut in two. Take out the heart (or stalk), lay the halves together and put them in a kettle. Prepare as much pork as you want for dinner and put in your cabbage. Next get a good-sized, white, sweet beet (red will do, but it is not quite so nice); wash, peel and cut lengthwise in four pieces. If desired, put in turnips with the beet, cut crosswise. Boil slowly for two hours, and then put in your potatoes and slices of squash. If the pork is not salt enough, season with a pinch of salt. A red pepper pod is an improvement also. Boil till the potatoes are done.

CRACKLING BREAD.

This is something like the corn meal suet cake of New Englanders. Into the plain corn-bread dough is stirred the scraps left from frying lard or "cracklings," and baked in a hot oven. This bread is very rough in its outward appearance, but is like some people, much better than it looks.

CHEESE PIE—AN OHIO DISH.

A cup of curd (obtained from sour milk by draining off its whey) is beaten with two eggs, a little sweet milk, and sugar to taste. Flavor with cinnamon and bake in a crust in a deep pie plate.

Chance for a Rest.

Collector—"This account must be settled, Mr. Shorts. It has been running a long time."

"Well, let it stand awhile."—Truth.