

still sat by the open window waiting for two travellers; for it was close on six. Time passed on; still they did not come; nor did Ned come in to dinner. She did not feel anxious, for Mr. and Mrs. Winthorne had often taken this same journey and had frequently delayed till the late train and sometimes even remained away all night. So wondering at Ned's absence, she took dinner by herself and then studied her lessons. Still she was feeling anxious. A presentiment or coming evil seized on her.

At last, as the clock struck ten, the door opened and Ned came in. His face was ghastly pale and swollen with weeping.

"Oh Ned! what has happened?"

"There has been an accident—the train—" he answered as calmly as his quivering lips would allow.

"Father! mother!" cried Barbara with a bitter wail.

And he answered simply—

"Hush dear! They are bringing them home."

We will not dwell upon the sorrowful time that followed—the grief and desolation of the orphans when their parents were laid in the quiet graveyard. The old home was broken up and they three stood alone upon the threshold of life without one relative in the world, and alas! very little money; for Mr. Winthorne, though considered a wealthy man, had died, leaving his children barely provided for.

In this hour of adversity, an old friend of their mother's came and offered a home to Barbara and Louie until Ned was in a position to keep them. He had long wished to go to Manitoba, and Mr. Roslin—their guardian, approved of the idea. He wrote to a friend of his at Winnipeg soliciting his interest for Ned Winthorne. A favorable answer came and Ned started to try his fortune in the West, while his sisters went to their guardian's home in Toronto. And now began the hard realities of life for Barbara. Hitherto, life had been an eternal spring-time of love and happiness; now the spring had passed; summer had sighed itself away, and drear autumn had come.

Upon their entrance into their new home, they received a kind if not an affectionate welcome from Mrs. Roslin and an enthusiastic one from the children of whom there were five, Jack, Gertrude, Willie, Robbie and the baby, the latter about two months younger than Louie Winthorne who was eighteen months.

None of the little Roslins were pretty. Gertrude was a pale thin child of eleven with a rather vindictive expression about the eyes and mouth.

Another inmate of the house we must mention before proceeding with our story. This was Fred Mackenzie, a young half-brother of Mr. Roslin. A light-hearted, handsome youth of eighteen and a favorite with all in the house. He and Barbara became friends immediately; and indeed, but for him her life would have been unendurable in the time that followed.

"We will be happy here my pet," murmured the girl as she put Louie to bed that first evening. "They will be kind to us I'm sure" and baby laughed assent and putting her arms around sister Bab's neck, kissed her in her pretty baby way.

Barbara thought it no hardship to be put into a poorly furnished garret; she scarcely thought about it at all; all she wanted was kindness and a little love, especially for her little sister; it would break her heart to see Louie harshly treated. As time passed on and the novelty of their position wore off, she discovered that her path was not to be one of roses. Mrs. Roslin was one of those women who have no affections outside their own families. She was a weak minded woman too; no more capable of managing her household than was Gertrude. Her servants were continually leaving; and so, most of the time there was but one in the house, though they were supposed to keep three.

Barbara being a strong, helpful girl with a natural aptitude for work, willingly offered her services when one of the servants left shortly after her arrival. But she soon discovered Mrs. Roslin's difficulties with her domestics and foresaw that her services would be frequently in requisition. However, she owed a debt of gratitude to Mr. Roslin and she resolved to repay it by doing cheerfully whatever was required of her. Secretly, she did not wonder at the servants leaving; for Mrs. Roslin was a hard mistress, imposing far more upon them than they could manage. The standing

grievance, though, was the children's impudence; servants rebelled against it, while their weak mother upheld and encouraged their impertinence. Mrs. Roslin saw the advantage of having one like Barbara to assist in the housework; she was better than a servant, for she could not leave whether she liked it or not, and then—there was her gratitude, a great debt which she resolved Barbara should pay to the last penny. She dispensed then, with one servant and our heroine became virtually the nursemaid, though outwardly one of the family, and, as the children recognized her true position, she came in for all the impudence formerly bestowed upon the unfortunate servant; even from Mrs. Roslin she received many an insulting speech, that lady having conceived a great dislike to Barbara and Louie, and, seeing how any harshness to her little sister wounded the elder girl, she punished the poor child severely for little faults, which, coming from such a baby, were no faults at all. Her own children were never punished. It may be imagined how Barbara's heart ached with indignation and pain, when she saw little Louie who had been so petted at home, scolded, whipped and often sent supperless to bed, when the poor little thing had done nothing to merit such treatment. Her heart burned with fierce anger at the sound of the baby voice calling her and the sobbing cries that came from the sore baby heart up in that cold, dark garret, when sister Bab did not come. Barbara down stairs, giving the children their tea, was powerless to go to her sister. If she started to go, Mrs. Roslin called her back and bade her cut some bread for Robbie, pour out some milk for Willie and "for mercy's sake feed the baby and not let her choke herself." Barbara performed these duties as cheerfully as she could; but the bitter tears would have their way, and rolled silently down her cheeks, perceiving which, Gertrude and the two older boys amused themselves by pinching her arms as she passed their chairs. For a moment, abandoning the strong control she had hitherto kept over herself she permitted a great hatred of Mrs. Roslin, to swell her heart, with an inclination to defy her, to box those hateful children's ears and rush away to her lonely, hungry darling up stairs. But her better nature triumphed and she once more grasped the reins of self-control, gaining a victory which left its impress upon her character and stamped her a heroine, for what heroism is greater than that which can triumph over the evil passions of the heart? She asked leave to go, but Mrs. Roslin refused.

"Louie must be punished, she was growing bold and mischievous," and the poor girl, choking down her tears, tried to shut her ears to that piteous cry of "Babbie, Babbie," and went on with her work of clearing away the tea things. Sometimes on occasions like this, she heard the front door open and shut and soon afterwards a light step ascending the stairs; then Barbara's heart grew lighter, for Louie's voice was silent now. When Mrs. Roslin took the children to the library for the usual half hour before dinner, she ran lightly up stairs to find, as she expected, Fred, seated on the rocking chair with Louie wrapped in a blanket, sound asleep in his arms.

"How good you are Fred," she whispered gratefully, kneeling beside him to kiss baby's flushed face.

"It is a great shame to treat her so, and you made little better than a servant," said Fred indignantly. "I've half a mind to speak to my brother, only I hate complaining of his wife. Robert is such a dear, blind, generous fellow and such a believer in Susy's perfections, that I hate to annoy him, or I would tell him how you and Louie are treated."

"Oh! please say nothing. He has been kind to us. Don't make trouble between them on our account. If she would be kind to Louie, I would bear anything myself."

"Poor wee Louie!" Fred murmured tenderly.

As time passed Barbara's difficulties increased rather than diminished, and she wondered sorrowfully how it would all end. Ned's letters were her chief comfort; he wrote often, and hopefully of the future, when his dear sister would go to the home which he was making for them.

Her life was now one of constant toil for others; her greatest trouble was, that she could spare so little time to her sister, who—poor little maid—was left much to herself, Mrs. Roslin's dislike having turned the children against her and made them cruel to her.

Often, Gertrude, bidding her hold out her hand and she would give her something nice, would pinch the tiny fingers