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OUT OF GRATEFUL HEARTS.

"Such a thing would not only be foolish, but positively ridiculous! To adopt an infant at your age! I gave you credit for more sense."

Miss Campbell, the president of St. Argenta's Society, an organization whose principal object was to look after and provide for neglected children, spoke with unusual warmth.

"And why? It is not a sin or a disgrace."

Such a show of spirit from Miss Gilbert made the president gasp in astonishment. She afterwards confided to another member of the society that she had known Hester Gilbert intimately for thirty years and thought she understood her, but since that day she had concluded she was as strange as the Sphinx.

"No—it's no disgrace," she admitted reluctantly, "but it is certainly an unusual proceeding. Your day of general usefulness will be over. Now, you can do for a dozen children. If you adopt one, your whole time will be occupied with that one."

"I never thought of it in that way, but it may be true. I can give it up, I suppose."

Her tone was so sorrowfully resigned that Miss Campbell relented a little. "How did you happen to think of such a thing?" she asked in a milder tone.

"The idea came to me the other night. If you like, I'll tell you about it."

Every member of the society was present at the meeting, for it was the week before Christmas, and every woman dropped her needle and turned to Miss Gilbert. Her face took on an expression of tenderness and her voice a new gentleness.

"You remember that family named Grady in Platt street, where the father drinks heavily and the mother goes out washing?"

"Yes,"—there was interest, at least, in the president's voice.

"Well, I was alone that evening, and feeling unusually downcast. I got those spells ever since sister Lucy died two years ago."

Mrs. Ellis, the lone widow in the society, laid a sympathetic hand on Miss Gilbert's arm.

"I had finished all the pin cushions and dressed the last of my dolls and I had read every story in the 'Gems of Fiction,' and the December number of Fanshawe's Magazine. This last a friend had lent me, and my attention was drawn to a marked passage in a very interesting story. I read it so often that I have it by heart. 'No ten,' it said, 'so fraught with mysterious sweetness as the wailing dusk of eventide, when mothers rock their babes to sleep. One by one, the twinkling stars peep out and the soft radiance of the silver moon softens the hushed world. The prayers of innocence ascend to the throne of mercy and mingled with them are the petitions of hearts torn and grief-stricken. Could God be reached in any barren home, whose roof shelters not one of God's little innocents.' As I read, it came to me like a flash, the barren desolation of my life. I had a home perfect in its appointments. Polish-wood floors and glistening windows were unmarked by thy footprint or were unmarked by thy chubby finger. The furniture and bric-a-brac had a beauty of arrangement impossible in a home

occupied by little ones, so dear to the Divine Heart that He made them our models and gathered them to His bosom. I felt an unutterable longing for clasping arms and clinging baby-kisses."

Miss Gilbert shook her head. "No, I have no literary gifts and no desire to pose. I cannot help it if I dream by night and long by day. I hope the Grady baby will live to grow-up—I can send him to college and make him my heir."

"Perhaps he will be like his father," said Miss Willard maliciously.

"I don't believe in heredity," said Miss Gilbert, with a little smile of unconscious superiority. "It's an exploded theory. Training and environment are the things that count nowadays."

"There's one consolation"—sometimes there was venom in Miss Willard's stinging retorts—"in all probability you'll never live to know how he does turn out, or how he spends the fortune you will so generously bequeath him."

"Order!" called Miss Campbell, sharply. "We have already digressed unparadoxically long. Let us finish these articles and then make the final arrangements for the distribution of the Christmas gifts."

That night, tired but sleepless, Miss Gilbert sat down to read a letter from a distant friend of girlhood days. It contained a clipping from a letter written to his mother by her friend's son, who was a rising young physician. Among other things he said:

"What ministering angels are mothers—even the most ordinary among them. They are never called heroines, but daily they brave dangers from which a strong man would shrink. I never appreciated you before, mother, and I never can repay you before, mother, and I never can repay you. How faithfully you have performed woman's most exalted mission! You have nursed and reared, and lost, with love, patience and resignation. No wonder mothers inspire a halo on the artist's canvas, and tip the poet's pen with flame."

For some time Miss Gilbert sat with bowed head, deep in thought. Then she said aloud:

"I'll do it. I'll ask her to give me the baby. Perhaps he will learn to love me, even as this young man loves his mother."

The next night she had her answer. She sat in a dejected attitude and the tears fell on the penciled scrawl.

"God bless and reward you, madam, for your tender heart and kind offer. I've five others, but I can't part with my own flesh and blood. But I tell you this: I'm not over strong and my heart is weak, and the doctor says, 'If anything should happen to me and the family's broke up, you can have my little Bob.'"

"God bless the poor woman and spare her to her helpless family," said Miss Gilbert, through her falling tears. "I shall add the whole six to my Christmas list and the mother, too. If I can't be a mother I can be at least a guardian angel to the Grady baby!"

It was Christmas eve. The twilight faded into gloom. Innumerable stars studded the purple sky and shed a soft light on the earth, covered with a winding sheet of white. As Miss Gilbert walked home in the starlight, her thoughts reverted to a Christmas carol she had sung as a child. Her eyes searched the heavens for that mysterious star that guided the wise men from the East and in fancy she heard the swelling angelic chorus that rang over the Judean hills.

"There's a song in the air,
There's a Star in the sky,
There's a Mother's deep prayer,
And a Baby's low cry;
And the Star rains its fire
While the Beautiful sing
That the Manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King!"

As she neared her home she started back, slightly alarmed. A figure emerged from the darkness and came toward her. A man carrying a white bundle revealed itself to her astonished eyes, and old Tim Carnes' voice said:

"It's only me, ma'am, and this is the Grady baby!"

"The Grady baby!" she reached out her trembling arms. "Come in, Tim, and tell me why you have brought it to me. Has something happened? Is Mrs. Grady ill? I saw her and the children only this afternoon."

He followed her into the house and stood respectfully, cap in hand.

"Yes, something has happened. It's poor Steve. No, ma'am, I'll not sit down. He happened late to-day while he was at work, a dreadful accident. He's home now, but sinking fast. He'll not see Christmas morning in this world."

"Poor man! does he realize that he is going to die? Is he prepared?"

"Yes, ma'am; it's beautiful to hear him pray. You know he took the pledge a few days ago."

"Yes, Mrs. Grady told me. She was so happy, and so grateful to think they were going to have such a pleasant Christmas."

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Synopsis of Canadian North-West

HOMESTEAD REGULATIONS

AN Even numbered section of Dom-
inion Land in Manitoba, Saskatchewan
and Alberta, excepting 8 and 26,
not reserved, may be homesteaded by
any person who is the sole head of a
family, or any male over 18 years of
age to the extent of one-quarter sec-
tion of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry must be made personally at
the local land office for the district
in which the land is situated.

Entry by proxy may, however, be
made on certain conditions by the
father, mother, son, daughter, brother
or sister of an intending home-
steader.

The homesteader is required to per-
form the conditions connected there-
with under one of the following
plans:

- (1) At least six months residence
upon and cultivation of the land in
each year for three years.
- (2) If the father (or mother, if
the father is deceased) of the home-
steader resides upon a farm in the
vicinity of the land entered for,
the requirements as to residence may be
satisfied by such person residing
with the father or mother.
- (3) If the settler has his perma-
nent residence upon farming lands
owned by him in the vicinity of his
homestead the requirements as to
residence may be satisfied by resi-
dence upon said land.
- (4) Six months' notice in writing
should be given the Commissioner of
Dominion Lands at Ottawa of in-
tention to apply for patent.

W. W. CORY,
Deputy Minister of the Interior.

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and am glad to say that I am cured en-
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all you claim them to be, and I advise
all kidney sufferers to give them a fair
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