

Mildred's New Year's Resolution.

By L. A. S.

(CONCLUDED)

When Mildred and Stevie entered Miss Gaines' pleasant sitting room, they found five little girls and Stevie's friend, Bert Gray, already there. Lill Hardy drew down the corners of her mouth, and said, rather scornfully, "If here isn't Miss Benson!" I didn't suppose she would condescend to come to our meetings again."

But Miss Gaines clasped Millie's hand warmly, wishing her a "Happy New Year," and patted Stevie's red cheek as she said; "Here's the boy I can always depend upon," which made him feel proud as a peacock.

Pretty soon Tibbie Larkins came in, making nine in all. The girls sewed patch-work, and the little boys drew maps of Africa, which would have made Stanley or Bishop Taylor laugh "out loud." When they began to grow restless, Miss Gaines read a letter she had received from a lady who was much interested in a certain girls' school in Japan. She had sent a box of dolls and other presents for Christmas, and was already making plans for the coming year. "And she has written to me, girls," said Miss Gaines, "because she knows how well our Band worked last year. She seems to think you started as if you could hold out; so she wishes to know if we can furnish a dozen dolls neatly dressed." "O, I am sure we can," cried Mildred, impulsively, "We can fill a box just as easy. Why I'd just love to dress dolls for those little Japan girls." Lill Hardy and Tibbie Larkins exchanged meaning glances, while Beth Mason giggled. "If you come to the meetings once in eight or ten weeks, I think you might dress one doll, perhaps. if it was a very small one," remarked Lill, in her high, thin voice. The girls laughed now outright, and Miss Gaines smiled even while she was shaking her head at them. Mildred's face flushed, and her eyes filled with hot, angry tears; but she was too honest to deny her faults. "I know it," she faltered, "I know I've stayed away—I don't know why; but I'm not going to any more—that is unless some folks are too provoking to live with." Here she gave Lill a crushing glance. "And I made a resolution the other night, though I had a cold and couldn't go to church, but perhaps it's just as good; that I would come to the meetings every time I possibly could, so there now!"

Mildred's voice grew steady as she talked, and when she closed her remarks she was sitting very straight, and broke the thread from her patchwork with a snap, for a period. "Good for you!" piped Stevie, with head bent low over a very crooked Congo river. The girls were evidently impressed, and Miss Gaines' face glowed with pleasure. "If we all join in that resolution; I think we can 'resolve' to help fill that box," said she. "Let's" said the girls, and the next minute, they were discussing how many dolls to buy, how large they should be, how they should be dressed, and all other matters that have to be decided. But this was not the end of it.

When Mildred was ready to go home, Miss Gaines called her aside and said: "Milly, you don't know how much good your resolution has done. I was feeling very discouraged about the Band, and had decided that I could not keep it this year. The girls were losing their interest, and, Millie, it was because you stayed away." "Because I stayed away?" repeated Mildred, opening her eyes very wide. "Yes, for you were the first to join, and the first to work for members. You held the other girls as a little magnet holds a lot of needles; but when the magnet lost its zeal, the needles fell off. Don't you see?" "Why, I didn't mean to. I never thought," said Mildred soberly. "No, of course you didn't; and now you are going to swing right about, and be a good little magnet again, to draw all the others toward the heathen, and toward mission work, and toward God." "But what makes you think—I don't think I have any more influence than the rest," persisted Mildred, quite unwilling to take the burden that seemed ready to fall upon her young shoulders. "But you have. God has given you that gift. You can think of things, and plan, and get others to help you. It is a great gift, so be careful how you use it." Mildred drew a long breath. "I'd have felt awfully if you'd left us, Miss Gaines, and you'll see me here every time this year, honest and true. Why, what if I'd killed the Band?" "Surely, what if?" repeated Miss Gaines, as she gave Millie a parting kiss.

"Did you find the Band alive, Millie?" inquired Will at the tea table that night. "Yes indeed, it's as live as can be," replied Mildred with old-time enthusiasm. "And what do you think? We're going to dress a lot of dolls, and send a Band box to Japan!" "Send a band-box