

and unload on you the burdens which they should themselves carry."

"Oh! well, I don't consider such burdens onerous, they are my pleasures. In this case Esther's illness is the reason for my assuming double duty. Father has reference to a promise I made this afternoon to play at a concert to-morrow evening."

"Why, Cousin Mary, you speak as if it were an everyday experience."

"I anticipate a very indulgent audience, Kathleen. These entertainments are given by a charitable society called 'Our Neighbors.' It is for the amusement of the very poor people, in a part of the city where there is much sin and suffering. A reading-room has been opened, in which short lectures are given, in familiar style, on subjects useful to 'Our Neighbors.' Cooking and nursing are remembered in the course. The women are taught to prepare good meals for their families at small expense. The members of the committee visit from house to house, and become acquainted with the necessities of each family. You would enjoy some of the results. The tidy maids, whose neatness and handiness you admired in the dining-room this afternoon, came from 'Our Neighbors.'"

"Who trained them, Cousin Mary?"

"I will spare Mary's modesty," replied Mrs. Murphy. "She induced me to allow them to come when we needed extra help. She thought it a good work to teach them, and I am often grateful to her for the comfort they bring the family, when sickness or company make their presence necessary."

"What will you wear at the concert, Cousin Mary?"

"The plainest dress I have, dear. You know it would not be in good taste to sport my finery among the poor."

While she was speaking the door bell was rung very gently.

"That is an unusual ring. I think it must be some poor fellow in search of a meal."

"Right you are, Dan, every time," cried a manly voice in the hall. "I hope you have one ready for me."

"It's brother Edward," exclaimed Mrs. Redmond.

"All that's left of him," said the traveler, affectionately embracing her.

The remainder of the group, rallying from their surprise, welcomed the new arrival in characteristic fashion.

Fondly the traveler gazed upon them, noting the development of the girls and the happiness of their parents.

"I declare," said he, "I think I'd go back to the ranch. I came to see the children, and lo! they've vanished, and left fine ladies in their places, I have nothing to say to such."

"Never mind, Uncle Edward, you will find we are—Not too fine nor good for human nature's daily—" replied Mary.

"Give me your overcoat, Edward," said Mrs. Murphy. "You must be ready for supper."

"What delayed you, uncle?" asked Margaret. "We were quite disappointed when you did not appear at 'The Tea.'"

"I came near giving you a funeral," he whispered, "but mum's the word now."

How much there was to tell and to hear. Five years had passed since Mr. Dillon left Philadelphia for Montana. The bashfulness he alluded to was not altogether feigned.

From the lonely life at the ranch, where he was his own cook, and without companionship, save that of the men who cared for the sheep, to this scene of comfort, which appeared magnificence, by contrast, was indeed an abrupt transition. The accident that wrecked his train had brought death to some of his fellow-passengers; his own escape filled his soul with grateful awe. The loving hearts that welcomed him appeared newly created for his express delight. To hide his emotion he drew Margaret from the parlor, saying, the others would give him no chance to talk or eat. "Daisy always did give me a hearing, and she's not her mother's daughter, if she does not know how to administer the commissary department."

After they were seated in the dining-room, he said: "When I rang the bell, in a whisper, I thought I should gain admittance without informing the whole family. The truth is, I am somewhat shaken up by an unpleasant experience I had on the way."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Murphy, who had entered unperceived.