

A Rough Way Home.

It was a bitterly cold day in February, 1865. The sky looked like a leaden surface, and the bitter ungenial influence of the keen air without seemed to make itself felt even in a bright, warm kitchen where two girls were earnestly talking.

The younger, a fair haired, soft-eyed girl of sixteen, was standing by the window, ready dressed for a journey, with a little bundle in her hand, her blue eyes fixed on the sky without. The other a few years older, was earnestly expostulating with her.

"Indeed, Janie, it's far too cold a day. Mother would never want you to go such a bitter day. And it might come on a storm any minute. You never can go."

"I may get a 'chance,' you know. Most likely I shall. There's almost sure to be a sleigh going that way. And, any way, I know my mother wants me. I must go."

"There's the bell, and I must answer it. Wait till I come down, any way." And the elder sister hurried away up stairs, hoping to get her kind master and mistress to enforce her own expostulations and entreaties.

For the first two or three miles she trudged bravely and lightly on, warm with the glow of her resolution to hasten home to her invalid mother and protected by her manifold wrappings. But by-and-by the sharp, searching blast made its way even through these, and shivering she looked around in hope of seeing the familiar sleigh of some neighbor which would take her up and carry her on her way.

The first half of the journey had not been accomplished, and she seemed to feel the wind growing keener and more piercing at every step, when a few sharp snow-flakes struck her cheek. They were the heralds of the storm which had been sullenly gathering in the darkening sky.

The day began to close in, and in the scattered farmhouses that she passed she could see faintly through the white mist of snow tempting lights glimmering in the windows.

But if Janie's earthly path was stormy it was not destined to be long. Her physicians thought her doing well, and saw no reason why she should not recover. But even as she had felt as if her mother were calling her home when she took that last fatal journey, so now she felt in her heart the voice of her heavenly Father calling her to her heavenly home, and she was ready and willing to go at once.

of the storm had made her mother hope and believe that Janie was still safe in town with one of her sisters. But the dog's joyous greetings had startled them into expectation, and then the faint echo of her despairing cry struck the mother's quick expectant ear. The little brother and sister rushed to the door. So did Rover, but he rushed out into the darkness, and soon was standing over Janie's prostrate figure, licking her face and hands, and whining inartistic lamentations over the helpless girl. The mother, sick and weak as she was, was soon out in the deep snow beside her exhausted child, and the three together—the only helpers within reach—managed to get Janie safely into the house, home at last, after her desperate journey.

The fatal consequence followed only too surely. Instead of recovering their ordinary circulation the feet mortified, and a day or two after, Janie was taken back to town to be placed in a hospital, there to undergo amputation of the greater part of both feet which, through her mother's mistake of applying warm instead of cold water, could never be restored, and must be taken off in order to save her life.

Then came a sad, weary time, during which she lay unable to move from her narrow little hospital bed, the mutilated feet wrapped in rags which were kept constantly wet by water dripping from a pail suspended above them. Janie was as patient and uncomplaining now as she had been brave in the storm; but it is hardly to be wondered at if her heart often sank at the prospect of a long life before her as a cripple, unable to run as she had been accustomed to do, still obliged to walk on crutches, like an old man she had been wont to pity, as long as she should live.

But there was a kind gentleman who came sometimes to the hospital who brought great help and comfort to Janie. He was a very wise and learned man, a professor and a clergyman, a very busy man, too; but he found time to remember his Lord's words, "I was sick and ye visited me." "In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." And, therefore, busy as he was, he found time to visit the sick and lonely sufferers in the hospital, and many a time did his radiant smile and genial face and kindly tones of Christian love not only "make a sunshine in a shady place," but helped those to whom he spoke to realize, as they had never done before, the loving kindness of the unseen divine Friend of whom he spoke to them.

In Janie, with her gentle child-like face and uncomplaining suffering, his kind heart was at once deeply interested, and he sought to draw her thoughts from this life below, which had become so darkly clouded for her, to the life eternal in the heavens, to the Saviour who had gone before to prepare a place for her. He showed her that, though the path that led thither—this earthly life—might seem to her as cold and stormy as the path that had led to her mother's house that dreary February day, still the Father's house and the Father's love at the close of the journey would be an ample recompense for all the toil and all the dreariness at last. And by degrees the blessed faith and assurance that sprang out of his kind and true words shed a light and peace into her heart and into her gentle blue eyes which had never been there before.

But if Janie's earthly path was stormy it was not destined to be long. Her physicians thought her doing well, and saw no reason why she should not recover. But even as she had felt as if her mother were calling her home when she took that last fatal journey, so now she felt in her heart the voice of her heavenly Father calling her to her heavenly home, and she was ready and willing to go at once. The messenger He sent for her came unexpectedly, at least to all around her. She passed away in a moment, from some affection of the heart, brought on by the nervous strain she had undergone, and without a word or, apparently a parting pang. The Father she had learned to love had called her, and these who looked on the pale and lifeless frame knew that she was safe at home, though she had been led thither by a stormy path; led as he so often leads his people, "by a way they know not."

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