



And he to whom they look for bread
Is filled with many doubts and fears,
For in the howling wind he hears
Of days that must be idly led.
And little ones must still be fed,
Though work be scarce and winter long;
And though the willing hands be strong,
They cannot thaw earth's frozen bed.

O Winter, Winter! bright and gay
To some, with what an iron grip
Thou holdest many a silent lip,
That cannot words of gladness say!
Then, while we feel thy brightness, may
We feel for those whose hearts are full
Of bitterness, that has no lull
Till winter days are gone away.

J. T. BURTON WOLLASTON.

Uncle Danny, slowly issuing from a heavy drunken sleep, had not overheard the children talking.

"I should think, Danny," said Mary, "that this would be a particularly good time to ask the Christ Child for what we want being it 's His birthday like."

"Tis," said Danny, positively; "specially for poor people. He came to poor people to kindly comfort 'em like, I reckon. Anyway, it did me, when Miss Moore told us about it. Ef it hed happened He 'd 's' came all decked out in gold an' things, wo'd 'a' been scared of Him."

"Yes, that's so," answered Mary. "Ise a-thinking' I wished Uncle Danny 'ud quit drinkin' an' be like folks. An' I thought this 'ud be a good time to ask to have him quit."

"Well—mebbe," said little Danny, a trifle doubtfully; "but you better not expect it too hard, sister."

"You must expect, if you ask," said Mary, her eyes alight with faith.

"Well, I don't mind, then," said Danny.

"Let's ask Him right before this beautiful Christmas tree that you fixed there," said Mary.

Uncle Danny, adjusting his somewhat swimming sight, was aware that the children had decorated an old branch of a tree, in one corner of the room, with advertising cards and tissue paper. Five cents of Danny's, earned at the Moores' had bought a tiny bit of candy, and it made the most of itself strung over the bare branches, each piece wrapped in a separate piece of red paper.

Before this tree the two now knelt, and the simple childish prayers sank deeply into the heart of the man listening to them, and for whose welfare they were offered.

Some days later later, Uncle Danny presented himself to Miss Moore, and told her the story. She, looking into his eyes, took courage, and in a few days he was, through her influence, reinstated as night-watchman on the railroad that passed through the settlement.

There were several turns in the road running round the mountains that needed constant attention. So the position was a responsible one. Uncle Danny was just the man for it, if he could keep sober.

New Year's Eve, Uncle Danny went up to the Moores' to consult with Miss Moore about the plan he had made.

"The kids, you see, didn't have no Chris'mas to speak of 'cept the things you give 'em; an' there both a-needin' clothes, an' things, an' I 'lowed I'd git 'em some things fur to-morry."

"That's right," said Miss Moore, heartily. "I will send the dinner over, for my part."

"Thank ye kindly, mum," said Uncle Danny.

But when, in the morning, instead of sleeping as usual after his night's work, he arose and said he must go to the settlement, the children were filled with forebodings.

"For he ain't been onct since he stopped drinkin'," said Danny and I'm 'fraid—"

As the day wore on, and the snow fell so fast that they could scarcely see an inch from the window, their uneasiness increased. By and by, Danny turned from the darkening window, and said:

"Mary, are you afraid to stay alone? I must go and find uncle. Rats can stay with you."

"Rats" was their little Scotch terrier, given them by Miss Moore.

"No, I ain't afraid," said Mary. "I'll make some strong, hot coffee, and have it ready for you w'en you get home. An' you take Rats with you, for he'll help you find uncle."

It was bitterly cold, and Danny struggled up the track in the tooth of a terrible gale, with his thinly-clad body shivering so he could hardly walk.

All along he could hear the snow sliding, and as he rounded the curve, a small snow-slide met him; and though he sprang aside, a rock struck him and laid him senseless, half buried in the snow.

At the same time, coming from the other direction around the foot of the mountain, came a man, running with all his might. All at once, he became aware of a tiny dog barking around his feet. He stopped and lifted him up.

"Why, Rats!" he cried, "is it you?"

Rats whined joyfully.

"Where's the children?" cried the man, anxiously.

Rats, at this, whined and struggled so that he let him go, and, following closely, came to where poor little Danny was lying. Half-distracted, Uncle Danny knelt and listened, with his ear on the child's heart. Yes, thank God! he was still breathing. So catching him up, he wrapped him in his own coat, and ran up the track to the cabin.

Mary met them at the door, and as her uncle staggered in with his burden, her heart stood still with fear.

"No, Lawd," said her uncle; "don't be scairt. I'm all right, and please God, Danny soon will be. They's a big slide between here and the settlement, an' I've been workin' there ever since I left here. They won't be no trains through for a day or so, 'cept a snow-plow and engine, I reckon. Towards night, I surmised as how you'd be uneasy 'bout me. So I started home, a little too late fur poor little Danny; but he's comin' around now, I think."

Presently, Danny opened his eyes and smiled into their faces. And the next day he was so much better that he was able to eat of the good things Miss Moore sent, and admire his stout and warm new clothes, and Mary's also.

But with it all, his eyes always came back to his uncle; and the look of loving tenderness in them clenched Uncle Danny's resolution stronger than ever, as he told Miss Moore.