

Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXVII. No. 18.

MONTREAL, MAY 2, 1902.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid.

Out of the Storm.

(By Annie Hamilton Donnell, in 'Christian Endeavor World'.)

Little Mrs. Nye kept away from the window till the limit of her strength was reached. Then she looked out. Luke was just disappearing down the sunny street. In the distance his stooping, old-mannish figure was indistinct, but she thought she could



'THEN SHE LOOKED OUT.'

distinguish how much straighter it was than usual, and she smiled bitterly. That was because Luke was angry.

'He always straightens up when he's put out,' she said aloud.

At the corner, Luke stopped, and in spite of herself his plain little wife, Phoebe, held her breath. He was nearly there, he was at it now,—the place where he always looked back and waved his handkerchief. Phoebe had watched for that dim glint of white on every week-day for six years, and always she had seen it.

But Luke Nye, though he stopped mechanically to-day, did not turn round. There was no glimmer of white. For an instant Phoebe tried to think it was because he had forgotten his handkerchief; then she laughed at herself with a shrill, discordant little laugh. As if she were not angry, too! As if she wanted Luke to look back!

Tottie was fretting on the floor, and Phoebe picked her up and tramped back and forth, back and forth, with her until she fell asleep. It was something to do to keep from thinking, and she did not want to think. All day long the pain was in her heart.

'He never went away without kissing me good-by, before,' her thoughts kept repeating with dull monotony; 'Luke always kissed me, and he always waved his handkerchief down on the corner. We never parted angry before.'

She went about the little flat with restless activity, finding necessary things to do and doing unnecessary things. She held Tottie during all her naps, and rocked her incessantly. The creak and jolt of the rocker kept accompaniment with her thoughts—discordant accompaniment, but Luke Nye's little wife's thoughts were discordant. She

would not let herself forgive Luke all day long.

And it was so little a matter to kindle so great a fire! Phoebe could almost count the words on the fingers of her two little work-roughened hands, with perhaps an extra word or two for the finger that wore a plain gold band.

'Luke was the most to blame,' she told herself many times, stubbornly. 'He had no right to get angry at what I said. I only said I was tired of having his mother keep advising me and treating me like a little child. I had a right to be tired of that. Just as if I was Tottie! "My child," this, and "my child," that,—I told him I was tired of it, and I am!'

Phoebe stopped rocking Tottie, and spoke the rest aloud, like a sharp little cry.

'And he took sides with his mother instead of me, his wife! Luke chose his mother instead of me!'

That was the bitter poison that kept the wound rankling. In her anger Phoebe refused to be just.

At noon the sun disappeared behind leaden clouds, and the air grew sharper. Passers-by sniffed snow in it, and turned up their coat-collars. As the afternoon grew older, the signs grew more definite to the initiated, and occasional spits of snow whitened the pavements momentarily. Phoebe was uneasy when she found Luke's rubbers in the hall.

'His boots are getting so thin and old,'



'PASSERS-BY TURNED UP THEIR COAT COLLARS.'

she thought, 'and Luke catches cold just like a baby.'

Across the street Luke's mother sat at her window, knitting mittens for Luke. She was a little uneasy, too, as the afternoon crept on. Every little while she glanced up at the narrow sky-line between the curbing of the street. It was a cramped little street and the sky-line was pinched to meagre proportions.

'There's going to be a blow sometime,' Luke's mother murmured, 'if I'm a weather-prophet; and I am. I could always see storms coming. Luke's overcoat's dreadful

thin, and I've no idea that child Phoebe thought to fold a newspaper across his chest, under it. I always remembered to.'

At five o'clock it was virtually night, and Phoebe drew the curtains and lighted the lamps, Luke liked to come home to a bright little flat. He always said he could economize in overcoats and under-coats, but not in lamplight. To-night Phoebe took a fancy to be prodigal with her lights. She and Tottie got supper and waited.

But the footsteps that sounded outside at last were not Luke's. Luke's never lagged, coming home. It was a little messenger boy that looked up at Phoebe out of the darkness. He had a message for her from Luke.

'Dear Phoebe,' she read, with a queer feeling in her throat, 'Dear Phoebe, I'm off



'THE PORTLAND HAD GONE DOWN.'

for Portland—no help for it. The firm's got to send somebody down to-night, and I'm the somebody. Will be back on return boat. Too bad; can't be helped. LUKE.'

Phoebe Nye read the note through three times before she saw the fumbling little words, 'I'm sorry,' crowded into one corner. They sent the warm red blood into her sweet, plain face and out again, leaving it very white. Phoebe was 'sorry,' too. If she could only tell Luke so.

Tottie stayed awake long into the evening, and Phoebe was glad. She frolicked and played with her in a wild little frenzy of pretended glee; and, when at last Tottie's eyes shut, she went to bed with her. It was terribly lonesome out in the brightly lighted little sitting-room without Luke.

The wind rose higher, and it grew a good deal colder. Phoebe kept remembering how thin Luke's clothes were.

'It'll be dreadful cold on the water,' she worried. 'And it'll be rough, too, in such a high wind. I wish Luke had his big blanket—O, I wish I had Luke!'

But she went to sleep at last, and slept mercifully through all the terrible fury of the storm and wind, as it increased with the night.

In the morning the wind had abated a little, but the world was drift-deep in snow. Phoebe kept away from the window stubbornly—the drifts seemed to loom up so between her and Luke. But Luke would be at home after another day, 'on the return boat,' he had said. Another day could not last always.

But before the day ended the whole city was full of the news of a terrible disaster on the sea. The steamer to Portland had gone down with all on board. Hundred