

could have only slightly grazed her, as she was lying on the ground untouched by it; but as he raised the motionless figure, and noted a red mark on her forehead which was swelling rapidly, his heart sank within him. It did not take him long to carry her into the house, and he was met at the door by nurse, who wisely wasted no time in useless lamentation, but set to work at once to restore animation to her little charge. Her efforts were successful. Milly was only slightly stunned, but it had been a miraculous escape, and had the blow been an inch nearer her temple it might have been fatal. As it was, the child was more frightened than hurt, and when a little time after her uncle took her in his arms with unwonted tenderness, she clung to him and burst into passionate sobs.

'Take care of me, uncle! That nasty old Goliath! He tried to kill me, he did! I saw him coming on the top of me. God only saved me in time, didn't He?'

When the bruise had been bathed and dressed by nurse, Sir Edward still kept her on his knee, and after nurse had left the room, and the child rested her little head on his shoulder in a very subdued frame of mind, he did, what he had never done yet—stooped over her and kissed her, saying:

'You have been very near death this afternoon, little one, and I could ill have spared you.'

Milly raised her large dark eyes to his. 'If I had died I should have gone straight up to God, shouldn't I?'

'Yes, you would.'

'I should have liked that. I suppose He doesn't want me yet, or He would have sent for me.'

When she came down to her uncle that evening she raised a very sad little face to his from the opposite side of the table.

'Uncle Edward, have you heard who Goliath really did kill?'

'Do you mean the tree that came on you? No one else was hurt, I hope?' and Sir Edward's tone was a little anxious.

'She was killed dead—quite dead and mangled, nurse said. It was the poor little kitten, uncle, that I ran out to fetch.'

The brown eyes were swimming with tears, and Milly could not understand the smile that came to Sir Edward's lips.

'Only a kitten. Well, it was sad, I dare say, but there are plenty of kittens about the place.'

'But, uncle, I've been thinking so much about this one. Ford says she had run away from the stable. I expect she was going to be a prodigal kitten, perhaps, and now she'll never run away any more. It's so sad about her, and I think why it is sad is because nobody cares, not even nurse. She said she would rather it had been the kitten than me. Poor little kitty, her mother will be missing her so to-night! Do you think, uncle, the wind or Goliath killed her? I think it was Goliath. I just looked out of my window on the stairs before I came down. The wind has stopped now, and the trees seemed to be crying and sobbing together. I'm sure they were sorry for kitty. I think they were tired out themselves; too, they have been so knocked about to-day.—I wish so much I had been just in time to save the dear little kitten.'

'We will not talk about her any more,' said Sir Edward cheerfully. 'Have you seen Tom Maxwell lately?'

Milly's little tongue was only too ready to talk of him. 'He helped nurse and me to get some holly in the wood yesterday. I have nice talks with him often. He says he is very happy, and this will be the best Christmas he has spent in his life.' Uncle, I want to ask you something. I've been thinking of it a great deal to-day, only since I was knocked down this afternoon I've had such a pain in my head I left off thinking. But I've just remembered it now. You see it is really Jesus Christ's birthday to-morrow, and I was thinking I've been getting presents for every one in the house but Him. Nurse has been helping me with some of them. I've made nurse a kettleholder, and cook a needlebook, and I've bought a pen-knife for Ford, and a thimble for Sarah, and some handkerchiefs for Maxwell and Mrs. Maxwell, and some woollen gloves for Tommy. And I've nothing—no nothing for Him. If I only knew something He would like.'

She paused, and a soft wistfulness came into her eyes. 'I was thinking,' she went on, 'that perhaps I could put my present for Him outside the nursery window on the ledge. And then when we are all in bed, and it is

very quiet, I expect He might send an angel down to bring it up to Him. I think He might do that, because He knows how much I want to give Him something. But then I don't know what to give Him. Could you tell me, uncle?'

'I think,' said Sir Edward gravely, 'the only way you can give Him a Christmas present is to give something to the poor. He would rather have that. I will give you this to put in the plate to-morrow in church.'

And Sir Edward put his hand in his pocket and rolled a sovereign across the table to his little niece.

But Milly was not satisfied.

'This is your present,' she said doubtfully. 'What will you give Him this Christmas besides? Is money the only thing you can give Him, uncle?'

Sir Edward pushed back his chair and rose from the table. His feelings were almost getting beyond his control. With the one subject that was now always foremost in his thoughts, the child's question rang again in his ears, 'Is money the only thing you can give Him, uncle?' And like a flash of light came a reply:

'No, I can give myself back to Him, my soul and body, that have now been so long in the keeping of His enemy.'

After a few minutes' silence, he said, in a strangely quiet voice, 'Come, little one, it is bedtime; say "Good-night," and run up to nurse!'

Milly came up to him, and as he stood with his back to the fire warming his hands, she took hold of the ends of his coat in her little hands, and, looking up at him, said, 'Uncle Edward, you gave me a kiss like a father might have done this afternoon. Would you mind very much giving me another?'

Sir Edward looked down at the sweet little face raised so coaxingly to his, and then took her up in his arms; but after he had given her the desired kiss he said, with some effort:

'I want you to do something to-night, little one. When you say your prayers, ask that one of God's prodigal sons may be brought back this Christmas time. It is one who wants to return. Will you pray for him?'

'Yes, uncle,' replied the child softly. 'And will you tell me his name?'

'No, I cannot do that.'

Something in his face made his little niece refrain from asking further questions. She left him a moment later, and Sir Edward went to the smoking-room and seated himself in a chair by the fire. The chimes of the village church were ringing out merrily, and presently outside in the avenue a little company of carol-singers were singing the sweet old Christmas truths that none can hear untouched.

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'

A sense of the love of God seemed to surround his soul, and this verse came into his mind as he mused:

'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.'

Could he not trace in the events of the last few months the hand of a loving Father gently calling His wanderer home? Stricken down himself, placed on a sick bed for reflection, brought to the edge of the valley of the shadow of death, and then tenderly restored to life and health; the gentle voice and life of a little child pleading with him day by day, and that life having so lately been miraculously preserved from a great danger, all this filled his heart with the realization of the mercy and loving-kindness of God; and when again the past came up before him, and the tempter drew near again with the old refrain, 'You have wandered too long; you have hardened your heart, and God has shut His ear to your cry!' Sir Edward, by the help and power of the Divine Spirit, was able to look up, and say from the depths of his heart:

'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.'

They were sitting in the study the next afternoon, the child upon his knee, when Sir Edward said suddenly:

'Do you know that I have received a letter to-day about you?'

'Who from?' asked Milly, with interest.

'From my sister, your aunt, in Australia. I wrote to her when you came, and she wants to have you out there, and bring you up amongst her own children. She says a friend of hers will take charge of you and

take you to her next month. I must talk to nurse about it.'

The little hands clutched hold of his coat sleeve tightly, but not a word did Milly say. Sir Edward noted a slight quivering of the lips, and a piteous gleam in the soft brown eyes. He waited in silence for a moment, then said cheerfully:

'Won't you be glad to have a lot of boys and girls to play with, instead of staying here with a lonely old man?'

'Still the child said nothing; but suddenly down went the curly head upon his arm, and the tears came thick and fast.'

Sir Edward raised the little face to his:

'We must not have tears on Christmas day,' he said. 'What is the matter, don't you want to go?'

'I suppose I must,' sobbed Milly. 'Ford told nurse the day I came that you hated children. I've always been thinking of it, but you have been so kind to me that I thought perhaps he had made a little mistake. Miss Kent didn't want me, and now you don't want me, and perhaps my aunt won't want me when I get there. I wish God wanted me, but I'm afraid He doesn't. Nurse says she thinks He wants me to work for Him when I grow up. I think—I think I'm rather like the little kitten yesterday, that nobody was sorry for when she died. You said there were plenty more kittens, didn't you?'

'I don't think there are plenty of small Millicents in this world,' and Sir Edward's voice was husky. 'Now listen, little woman; I have been thinking over the matter, and have decided this afternoon to keep you with me. I find I do want you after all, and cannot afford to lose you. Supposing we dry these tears, and talk about something else.'

And as the little arms were thrown round his neck, and a face full of smiles and tears like an April shower was lifted to his, the 'confirmed old bachelor' took to his heart the little maiden whose very existence had so annoyed and distressed him only a few months before.

'Uncle Edward,' she said, a little time after, 'do you know if that prodigal son you told me about last night has come back to God?'

Sir Edward was silent for a minute, then very gravely and solemnly he said:

'I think he has, little one. It has been a very happy Christmas day to him, and you must pray now that he may not be ashamed to own his Lord, who has so mercifully brought him back through the instrumentality of one of His lambs.'

THE END.

Northern Messenger.

At the annual meeting of the Dominion W. C. T. U., which has just taken place in Toronto, the two following recommendations were unanimously adopted:—

'That we earnestly urge the most strenuous efforts to increase the circulation of the 'Northern Messenger,' and to secure a place for it in every home, and that the publisher be requested to print again scientific temperance lessons in its columns.'

'That in view of the approaching plebiscite campaign unions and Y's subscribe and do their utmost to circulate 'War Notes,' to be published at the office of the Montreal 'Witness.'

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