

wearing strain. She looked everywhere, again and again, every place she had ever hid it and where she would never have dreamed of putting it. She was ever moving about the house and out of doors, with wandering eyes, her little sister following her, but asking no questions; her little mind was dulled by the shock it had received; they were continually going about, sometimes hand in hand, but there was no play or gladness. The poor mother took little notice of them, she, too, was stunned by the terrible change in her life, and anxious and distressed at receiving no word of her husband and son.

The old servant saw Mary's strange way of always looking about.

'What you huntin', child?' she would ask, 'what you always lookin' for,' when she would see Mary's wide eyes roving about. But the little girl never answered, but would move away. She longed for her father's return, yet dreaded it, for she did not know what she had lost.

At last he came, but not to claim the letter, only to be laid in a lonely grave, in the silent wood behind the little cottage.

Her brother came, too, but only for a few days, when he was again off to the front. He had tenderly comforted his heart-broken little sister. She had clung to him, and tried to tell him her own trouble, but she was not quite strong enough to make the confession that she had lost her father's last message, lest she awaken his displeasure, and she felt she could bear no more. She remembered the bright brave boy, in his soldier blue, so tender to her, and so hopefully promising to come home when the war was over to take care of her and little sister and their beautiful mother. But he never came. Whether he was killed in battle or died in prison they could only wonder.

An old friend of the family came one day to comfort the sorrowing widow. Mary sat by hearing with little interest what was said, until the gentlemen asked if they had money and supplies for their wants. She heard her mother reply that they had enough for present needs; but that, though she knew her husband had taken gold from the bank at the beginning of the war and had also taken the family jewels and other valuables and hid them somewhere, she had no idea of their hiding place, and she wondered he had left no clue in case he never would return.

The little girl shrank back in her chair, sure that was the secret her father had entrusted to her keeping. She did not answer when the friend bade her good-bye, and he inquired if she were ill. Then for the first time her mother noticed the change that had come over the child. Her little face was thin and white, with a hopeless look.

'Why, Mary dear, what is the matter?' asked her mother when the friend departed, bending over her with solicitude. The little girl looked at her with frightened eyes. Her mother drew her into her arms and sat down with her in her lap, caressing and soothing her. Mary lay on her breast receiving the endearments with eagerness, fearing they would be the last and that she would be sent from her mother's arms when she learned what she had done. Brokenly she sobbed out her story, telling of the letter, its loss and of her fruitless search. Her mother did not thrust her away from her or utter a reproving word; she held her closer and kissed her more tenderly, begging her not to grieve, as she had sorrow enough and could not bear that her dear little girl should worry herself ill, besides, the letter might yet be found. Mary was sure it never would, but her head sank heavily on her mother's shoulder and she looked into her face with great love in her eyes. Never from that day did her mother utter an unkind word to her or make a complaint because of the suffering and hardships the loss of the hidden treasure brought upon them. Her other sorrows were partly forgotten in her endeavor to bring back the happy child life to her little girl.

Mary was never a child again. She was a helper and burden-bearer. No trace of the lost letter was found, nor of the hidden treasure, and feeling she was responsible she tried to do what she could to make amends.

When the war was over the estate was sold, except the little cottage and a few acres of woodland about it, where was the precious grave. The money had given them a small income and enabled her mother to give Mary a year or two at a good school to fit her to

be a teacher. She obtained a position in a nearby town, and her mother and little sister went with her that the little sister might attend school, too. Every summer they returned to the cottage in the woods, until the little sister was married, then the place was abandoned as a home.

But now, after more than a dozen years of joy and sorrow they were back in the little home,—Mary and her mother, and Mary was a widow, with two children, and the little sister had gone long ago to the mansions in the Father's house. When her husband died after a long illness the small savings were going fast, and there was need of bread-winning. Mrs. Wayland had tried to find work for which she was fitted, but there seemed no opening at that time. Then her mother, who made quaint old-fashioned rag dolls for her grandchild, Blanche, was begged by a friend to make several for her children, and let her pay for them. Then another came, and another, until grandma had her hands full. She called on Mary for help, and before Christmas they found themselves with quite a profitable business.

After the holidays Mrs. Wayland worked up a trade for the coming year, and their new business seemed quite promising, but did not bring as quick returns as before Christmas, and they were obliged to live very economically.

Then grandma began longing to return to the little old cottage in the woods.

'We can work there just as well, Mary dear,' she had argued, 'and there will be no rent to pay and we can live as well as we used to do; there will be the garden and the berries in the woods and the children will be happy and healthy.'

So they returned to the cottage, and grandma and the little girl and boy were as happy as the birds that first day, but Mary had seen the warped-up shingles on the roof and the cracks in the shrunken doors, and she was troubled.

In the morning Mrs. Wayland was awakened by the squeaking floor above and she knew her son, a large boy of eleven years, who had chosen the loft for his room, was up and ready to begin the new life. He was called Horace, after the lost soldier boy, and was so like him that his mother and grandma often felt that they had their lost hero back, and Horace the second was proud of the comparison and eager to fill the place of both.

He went to work with a will, and soon had fresh bright-leaved little plants in his garden, smiling at everybody who came and looked over the vine-covered old garden fence, and many a relish and substantial dish did he prepare for the table from the vegetables.

The doll business went on briskly, the sewing machine running many hours a day, Mrs. Wayland sewing the funny bodices and quaint dresses her mother's skilful fingers cut. She developed quite a genius for painting rag-doll faces, making round wonder-eyes and sweet rose-bud mouths, so that the little girl Blanche said she just loved every one. She and Horace could help at the doll business, too, and had great fun filling out the flat doll bodies into roly-poly babies; and it was play to dress them and carry them up to the attic and stow them away. A stack of them grew almost to the roof in one corner, where there seemed to be no leads, yet they were carefully covered with a waterproof cloak to prevent any accident from a possible dripping if a hard rain came.

The summer was fast passing away. One evening Mrs. Wayland said: 'Next week I will fill Dale & Hilton's order. They said they would take the dolls and pay for them any time. That will give us quite a sum of money. I must get some material for our work, and supplies for the house, and I hope to have enough left to get the roof mended, if it can be mended. A heavy rain would nearly deluge us.'

'And me a saw and plane,' said Horace, eagerly; 'I could fix lots of things if I had them and a few boards.'

'Yes,' said his mother, 'I will try to get them, too. I am sure you have earned them.' They were all sitting before the grate, where they had a little fire, burning fagots the children had gathered in the woods. It had been raining through the day, and the evening was just cool enough to make a fire enjoyable. When work was put away Horace

had thrown on a fresh supply of fagots, and drawn up the rocking-chairs for grandma and mamma, against whose knees Blanche and he leaned as they sat on the floor in front of the blaze.

The roof had leaked, pails and basins had been rushed to the attic to catch the drip, and that was what had made Mrs. Wayland so anxious to see about having it repaired as soon as possible. Then she and her mother talked of the cottage as it was in the by-gone days. Grandma told what a bright little place it was when she came a bride to the big house on the hill. It had been the 'den' for the men of the family. Mary sighed and wished it had some of its smartness yet; she could not forget the cracks and leaks and winter coming on so fast. She had still her old way of taking things hard, and could not hope for the best at all times, as her mother did.

'Don't worry, Mary dear,' said her mother. 'God does not forget we have need of these things.'

A breeze had sprung up and blown the clouds away, and now it sang around the old chimney and whistled through the cracks of the doors and windows in a lively way. They were a happy little family when they kissed each other good-night, after having kneeled before the fire while grandma thanked their heavenly Father that he had always taken care of them and would always care for them. After several hours' sleep Mrs. Wayland, who made her bed on the couch in the living room at night, woke and saw a strange fitful light playing about the room, and there was a noise that was not the sound of the wind in the chimney. Then she became conscious of a smell of burning wood and she was on her feet wide awake. There was a snapping, crackling and roaring about the chimney, a light flashed down it and glared through the windows. In a moment she was arousing her mother as gently as possible.

'Come, mother, get up quickly and get dressed,' she said, helping her out and pulling little Blanche out, too. 'Hurry, Blanche, mamma wants you to dress as quickly as you can. Hurry, hurry.'

Then she ran out and upstairs. The sound of the fire burning the old shingles and more vivid flashes of light through the windows made her fly to Horace's bed. He was harder to wake.

'What's up? 'Tisn't morning yet,' he complained, sleepily.

'No, fire, fire! The roof is on fire. Dress and come right down.'

The boy, wide enough awake then, jumped out of bed and stared around.

'Can't we save things,' he cried, 'can't we save the dolls?'

'No, no,' replied his mother. 'Get your little trunk and come immediately. It is too late for the dolls, they must go.'

When she was sure he understood she rolled up his bedding and ran down with it. The rooms were lighted by the flames. Grandma and Blanche were dressed and grandma was filling a pillow case with what she could lay her hands on about the room.

Mrs. Wayland rushed outdoors with her bundle to get a look at the fire. It was on the side of the roof toward which the wind blew, so it burned back slowly; also the shingles were damp with the rain, yet there was no hope of putting it out. The house must go, but there would be time to save some of the things on the lower floor, but the dolls must all go, too. Horace was downstairs now, dragging his little trunk that held most of his belongings.

(To be continued.)

If you want to be a popular boy, be too manly and generous and unselfish to seek to be popular; be the soul of honor; love others better than yourself, and people will give you their hearts, and try to make you happy. This is what makes boys popular.—'Apples of Gold.'

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