

## Children's Department.

## Patricia's Thank-Offering-

"And I may ask the Gwynn girls and Tommy Stevens, aunty?" Patricia Conway's voice was sweet and pleading, and her big blue Irish eyes—inherited from her lovely mother—were fixed entreatingly upon the delicate face of Miss Lorne.

The latter, who was presiding at a tea-table drawn close to the bed-side of her niece, waited to drop a lump of sugar into a dainty china cup before answering:

"Yes, your grandfather said we might do as we liked, and you may have all the children you wish, only by degrees. It will not do to tire you too much at first."

"Dear grandpa! how good he is to me!" said the girl lovingly, as she watched her aunt's slender white fingers moving among the dainty appointments of the table. "But then, you all have been, for that matter. And you know, aunty," lowering her voice and speaking softly, "I can't help feeling that mamma sees and knows all that you are doing for me."

"And knows what a comfort you have been ever since you came to brighten your grandfather's and my lonely home," said Miss Lorne, tenderly, as she raised the tea-pot preparatory to filling the cups.

It was many weeks since Patricia had stepped foot outside the home that had been hers from the time she had been left motherless, a long, lingering sickness having kept her a prisoner through the spring months. But now, with the first warm breath of summer, a decided improvement had manifested itself. For a few days, Patricia had walked feebly around the house, yet gathering strength. And then, the doctor had advised fresh air and sunshine. "Stay in bed in the

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mornings; and in the afternoons for an hour or so, you might have a place arranged under the big elm on the lawn, where you can catch a glimpse of what is going on in the outside world," he had said. And Patricia's heart leaped with joy at the prospect of the welcome change.

This was to be her last day spent wholly indoors—to-morrow, she was to be taken out to the cozy spot beneath the shade of the elm tree, from where she could look off to the placid water of the river that ran lazily along at the foot of the long, sloping lawn.

"But, aunty," said the girl, as, having finished her tea, she leaned back among the soft pillows, "I don't see why grandfather and you could have been so very lonely, with this big house, and the garden, and the park, and the flowers, and all the lovely things that are round you."

"Not lonely in that sense, dear, but lonely for someone to brighten the house with the sunshine of her loving ways, and whom we could love and say she is ours. But there, you must rest. Nora will take away the tray, and I must run off to my duties now," answered Miss Lorne, as she stooped over the pale face and smoothed the pillow underneath it more comfortably. "It is not long before to-morrow comes," she added, noting the wistful look in the blue eyes, "and then for the sunshine, and the little girls, and Tommy."

"You are such a comfort, aunty," said Patricia, following the slim, departing figure with a loving gaze.

A last ray of sunshine was making its way through the western window to reach across the foot of Patricia's bed, and turning, she looked off

through the casement to the peaceful scene without. She could see the trees, and the green lawn with its bed of geraniums in the centre, and by straining could even catch a glimpse of the nook where she was to rest on the morrow.

A sigh of contentment came from the girl's lips as she murmured, "How good He is to me! Can I ever be thankful enough?"

And then she thought over again all that she had been planning ever since the morning that Nora had dropped a word while dusting the room—a word that had set Patricia to thinking as she had never done before.

"And wouldn't poor little Molly Gwynn be giving her heart for such a beautiful room as this to be sick in, Miss Patty!"

"The girl who used sometimes to come and see you, Nora? Is she sick?" Patricia had asked.

"Yes, the same. And indeed she has been sick, in the stuffiest, tiniest hole you ever laid eyes on. She's getting better now; but poor child! its hard work for her," Nora had replied, feelingly.

"Tell me more about her, Nora please," Patricia had said, interestedly.

And Nora, nothing loth to talk as she worked, gave an animated description of the cheerless lives that most of the children led who lived in the tenement district about a mile away from the Lorne house.

"And do you mean there is no sunshine in their houses and they have no green grass to play on?" Patricia had asked with dilated eyes, as Nora stopped to take breath.

"There isn't as much grass as would feed a bird, and a sight of sunshine they never get unless it's away from their own home," had been the decided reply.

A wave of pity for the children came over Patricia's tender heart at this revelation of want and poverty. Sunshine and flowers were as essential to her nature-loving soul as the clothes she wore, and that one ill as she had been should be deprived of them seemed to her a very hard thing indeed. When Nora had left her alone, she lay very quiet, and a thoughtful look rested in her blue eyes.

A little later in the day, when her grandfather came for his usual visit, she talked long and earnestly with him, and some of Nora's words were related; and as she finished speaking, Mr. Lorne said,—

"Do as you please, dear—that is, if your aunt approves."

"It seems so good to be getting well again, grandpa, it makes me feel as if I must do something to show Him how thankful I am."

The grandfather's voice was slightly husky as he said, laying his hand tenderly on the girl's head,—

"We all feel like giving a thank-offering that we have you given back to health again."

No day could have been more beautiful than the one that was to see the result of the long talk that Patricia had had with her grandfather, and the little convalescent was full of bright anticipation.

Children whom Nora had selected with full knowledge as to their needs, were to spend the afternoon upon the green lawn as Patricia's guests, having a tea such as they had never even dreamed of, under the elm. And every week through the bright sum-



Mr. Chas. N. Hauer

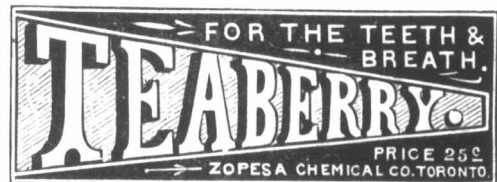
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mer, Patricia was to have children who needed just such outings, to share the enjoyment of her beautiful home.

"How lonely it has been!" said the girl, as she looked around her and drew a long breath of content after her guests had departed. "How they did enjoy it! I never want to keep it just to ourselves after this; the grounds are so big, so beautiful, so life-giving, it would be a shame not to share them with those less fortunate. If only I can succeed in making these children think this the most beautiful summer in their lives, how glad I shall be!"

And Miss Lorne, looking at the pale, sweet face, sent up a prayer of thanks that their dear one had been spared them, and resolved that not alone should it be Patricia who rendered thanks to the Father for His bountiful goodness.

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