

## THE LITTLE FOLK.

## GRANDMA'S NEW YEAR PARTY.

BY BARBARA YECUTON.

The children had had such a good time during the last two weeks. They said they had never enjoyed themselves so much at any Christmas season, and declared that of all places in the world for a holiday, grandma's house was the jolliest. In the first place it was very large, and full of unexpected staircases and landings and halls, leading to quaint shaped rooms of all sizes, where grandpa and grandma's children and grandchildren and friends were welcome to make as much fun and noise as they pleased and to enjoy themselves in their own fashion. There were a piano, a violin and a banjo for those who could play on them, games of all sorts, and books without number, fairy tales, travels, histories and stories of other boys and girls, interesting enough to please any body; best of all, however, was the garret, a large open space, lighted by some funny looking round little windows which the boys called "port-holes."

Here, at the top the house, the children had good times indeed, here they played "Indians," "Desert Island," "Tug of War" and gymnasium, held receptions, made stump speeches, fired off guns loaded with caps, and shot arrows out of the "port-holes" at imaginary foes.

There were ten children, including tall Murray, fresh from his military school, and baby Karl, who was just eleven months old, so, as Uncle Rollie said, it was a fortunate thing that they had the garret and the yard in which to work off some of their exuberant spirits or there would have been no living in the house with them.

The days between Christmas and New Year passed very swiftly and pleasantly to the young people; picture galleries, public buildings and museums came in for a share of their attention, and the days and evenings passed by on golden wings, until New Year Eve (or as grandma and grandpa called it, Old Year Night) came round. A whisper had gone abroad, how it started no one could tell, that grandma intended giving a New Year party, though the children had heard of no invitations being issued, but when on Wednesday morning at breakfast the old lady said, "Children I should like to see you all in my room, in half an hour, I want to tell you of something which I have planned for tomorrow evening," a delighted smile flashed round the table full of children, each one looked at the other, and nodded as much as to say, "Didn't I tell you so!" while Donald waved his napkin over his head with "Hurrah for grandma!" a cry which the children, the uncles, aunts, and grandpa himself joined in, until the room fairly rang. "Oh! hush! you foolish children," cried grandma, smiling and blushing all over her still pretty face, "or you'll bring a mob about the house."

Before the half hour was up, the children were all in grandma's room. Uncle Rollie was there too, he was the youngest of the uncles, hardly more than an overgrown boy, and a great favourite with every one. The children grouped themselves about the old lady with an air of expectation.

"Children," began grandma, "I intend giving a New Year party."

"A-a-h!" breathed her delighted audience.

"The guests will be strangers to you all," continued the old lady, "and I must ask your kindly help and courtesy in entertaining them. They are little cash-girls and cash-boys, who are employed in stores on this street and on the avenue near by. They are honest, hard-working children who seldom have a holiday, and never such good times as you have had the past week. God has been very good to us all, and while the joyfulness of the Christ-Child's birthday is still with us, I thought we would pass along to these brave little workers, some of 'the jolly times' as well as the 'good will' of which we may have more than our share. Will you help my New Year party to go off well, girls and boys?"

There was a moment of surprised silence, this was not what they had expected; then before anybody could speak, Uncle Rollie left his chair by the window and going swiftly to grandma's side took her hand and kissed it. "I'll be glad to help you, mother," he said, and Hope told Nannie afterward that she knew there were tears in his eyes.

"I'll help you too, grandma," cried Murray standing very straight and tall before the old lady.

"And I," cried Elsie.

"An' I too, gramma," put in Russell.

"And I! and I! and I!" cried a chorus of voices, and as grandma unfolded her plan their interest grew as deep as even she could have desired.

At four o'clock on New Year afternoon, the little guests began to arrive at the big house, in twos and threes; painfully shy at

first, but Uncle Rollie and Elsie answered the bell themselves greeting the little people with kindly speeches, while Aunt Nora Helen and Donald had such pleasant funny things to say while hats and hoods and caps were being taken off, that only needed grandma's bright smile of welcome to set the newcomers quite at their ease.

Grandma's children and grandchildren were always very much in earnest over whatever they undertook to do, and none the less so on this occasion, so the big parlours soon re-echoed with shouts of merriment and laughter. They danced, those that could, they played all sorts of games, even "Oats, Peas, Beans" which grandpa started as "the farmer," taking in grandma as "the farmer's wife," and they "clapped their hands and stamped their feet" after the most approved fashion, amid peals of laughter from everybody.

About half past six o'clock, aunt Kate played the "Wedding March," and grandpa led off the procession with a small bright-eyed little cash-girl of twelve years, grandma followed on the arm of a delicate boy of about the same age, the children of the house each offering an arm to a boy or girl visitor until all were in line, Murray and uncle Rollie being last with the smallest partners they could find, which increased the fun and laughter. Round and round they went keeping time with the music, then through the hall to the dining room at the back of the house.

I wish you could have seen the tableful of good things which grandma had provided for her little "children of the poor." Such roast beef and lamb! such richly browned turkeys and chickens! such rosy ham! such celery and cranberry sauce! such delicious home-made bread! The children ate as if they thoroughly enjoyed every mouthful—as very likely they did—and grandma whispered to grandpa, "It is really beautiful to see the way those grandchildren of ours are waiting upon their little guests, I feel proud of them."

After the solids came oranges, jellies, wholesome cake, apples, nuts, raisins, and favours, which last created much fun among the children. Another procession was formed and all marched back to the parlors where a surprise awaited them. On a raised platform at the end of the back parlor stood a fat rosy Santa Claus, whose eyes twinkled, and whose generously-sized mouth laughed over his long snowy beard in a fashion that was infectious. Santa Claus carried an immense pack on his back which appeared to be well stuffed. A table back of him was also piled up with things which were half concealed under a cover. Near Santa stood a youth about fifteen, whose erect bearing reminded one of Murray. He was enveloped in a loose white robe, gracefully drawn up on one shoulder: he wore a little white mask, and on his head was a narrow crown on the front of which were the figures 1897.

As soon as the children were in order, Santa Claus made a speech; he said he was sorry to have come after Christmas, which was his special season, but he hoped that the young people were glad to see him, nevertheless. He had travelled some distance since morning, and at his time of life, a journey was a journey, even with fast reindeer and a comfortable sleigh, soon that account as well as out of compliment to the New Year on whose time he had encroached, he would ask young 1897 to hand out a few parcels which might be of interest to some of the young people present. Then he untied his pack, and you never saw such a lot of packages and queer-shaped bundles as it contained! Santa gave each package to the graceful New Year who read off the name written on it, and then handed it to the little boy or girl visitor as they approached.

One could scarcely hear for the babel of eager voices which filled the room. For once the small business men and women had forgotten the stern realities of life which had crushed so much of the buoyancy of childhood out of them, and were as happy as children could be over the toys, games, books, and candy, to say nothing of the innumerable useful presents, which Santa Claus had so freely bestowed by the hands of young 1897. Overcoats, warm flannels, dresses, capes, hats, caps, shoes—it would be impossible to tell you of all, but I know this, Santa Claus was so tired by the time the presents were all distributed, that after singing a funny little good-night verse he was glad to accept the New Year's arm, limping off the stage with an exaggeration of lameness that vastly amused his audience.

While the little folks were getting cooled off, grandpa told them a story about New York city as it was in his young days. By the time the story was ended the new possessions which Santa Claus had brought, were made up into bundles and packages by the older folks, then hats and cloaks were donned, and after thanking their kind entertainers for the "good time" they had had, the little cash girls and cash boys went home to relate the wonderful events of the evening, and to cheer the hearts of tired, dispirited mothers and fathers with the sight of the warm comfortable clothing which had been given them, lifting a weight of care and anxiety off more than one overburdened heart. So grandma's party accomplished two ends, it gave the children a bright spot in their lives to look back on, and it touched the hearts of the parents as well. As to the grandchildren—Donald voiced the sentiment of all when he declared—"Well! I enjoyed Christmas Day 'meanly' but I do think grandma's New Year Party went ahead of anything we've had before—and I hope she'll have another one next year."