

LITTLE FOXES.

Among my tender vines I spy,
A little fox named "by-and-by."

Then set upon him, quick, I say,
The swift young hunter "Right Away."

Around each tender vine I plant,
I find the little fox "I Can't!"

Then fast as ever hunter ran,
Chase him with bold and brave "I can."

"No Use in trying!" lags and whines.
This fox among my tender vines.

Then drive him low, and drive him high,
With this good hunter named "I'll Try."

Among the vines in my small lot,
Creeps in the young fox "I Forgot."

Then hunt him out and to his den,
With "I-Will-Not-Forget-Again."

—Children's Hour.

WHILST THE SNOWFLAKES
FELL ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

(Concluded.)

"Before invading the store-room we should settle on what we shall each contribute to the basket," said Annette.

"It will be like the game of the 'Alphabet Basket,'" exclaimed Effie. "Such fun!—and we can do it here beside Cousin Charlie. Let us begin at once. It is a Christmas basket remember. So everything must commence with C— Now what will each put in the basket C—?"

Cake, candles, clothes, coffee, confectionery, were spoken in quick succession. "Christmas cards," added Ronald. "I've a lot over from last year."

Effie demurred, but cousin Charlie permitted the contribution. The "cards" would be certainly "new" to Martin, and probably, therefore, welcome. So the collection proceeded animatedly, till every available C— was exhausted, and the girls' pocket-money anticipatorily invested to the last farthing. Then they departed to tell mother, and gain her permission to turn the store-room into a shop. Mrs. Dermott acquiesced, half-amused, half-puzzled, by Effie's vehement, rather confused explanation.

"Better, perhaps, send the little boy half-a-crown," she suggested.

"No; a crown, mother! That will be your C—," returned Annette energetically, as off she and Effie set again to seek Mrs. Evans, the housekeeper, and from her to make the necessary purchases. The weighing, measuring, and selection of articles took some time. Effie being very anxious Martin's Christmas "candies" should be "wax" ones, and quite unconvinced on the point that a large plain plum cake was more suitable and better value than a small exceedingly "rich compound," because the latter was "frost-ed and looked prettier." At last the great business was satisfactorily completed, and the chosen "merchandise" together with a "big, big basket" to hold the contributions, dragged into the sitting-room, so that cousin Charlie might superintend the packing.

"We have everything but the clothes," announced Effie breathlessly. "Mother is sending an old but warm cloak for Martin's grandmother; but for himself, what shall we do?"

However, this apparent difficulty was dissipated by the discovery of a whole suit of garments, all ready for Martin's wear, having been mysteriously provided by cousin Charlie, who now slipped the package into the basket. So none of the promised C—'s were missing: even Ronald's last year's cards all went in.

"Charity will bind the heterogeneous assortment together. That C— is, or ought to be, the capital letter to the whole thing," added cousin Charlie, as the final little "Christmas-box" disappeared and a protecting string was tied round the osier receptacle.

"There, it is done!" cried Annette, springing up from her kneeling position as jacker. "And there is not a ray more daylight. How the tin. has run away!"

"Then, in spite of the 'horrid snow,' the 'entire day' has not been lost!" half-smiled cousin Charlie, in a manner, and his words uttered in a tone, that showed he had not been "dreaming" all the morning quite so abstractedly as was opined by Ronald.

Annette colored. "It was very wrong and wicked of me to speak and feel as I did," she said after a little pause, "when I ought to have been grateful my place in the world did not oblige me to go out in the storm to earn a shilling like poor Martin; but I shall try and not forget that lesson in position the snowflakes taught me."

"Nor forget, either, that one of the greatest privileges owned by people 'well placed in the world' is their consequent ability to assist and soften the condition of their lower and poorer brothers and sisters. That is an advantage human beings have over snowflakes, who cannot by any means alter or improve a less favoured neighbor in snowflake's position. However, luckily, these latter do not feel their harder lot."

had sent him a snilling—a whole shilling! Such easily earned money it seemed to him, and nearly twice as much as his usual day's wages. It was good of her, and granny would be so pleased. And on he trudged with quickening steps to the cottage beyond the wood, where he lived with his grandmother. It was a low mud-walled cottage, with a faint curl of blue smoke rising from its one chimney against the rising wintry sky, and as Martin lifted the latch and entered, the aspect inside was as humble as that without. No warm, soft carpet; no polished grate heaped with blazing English coals; no easy chairs; no sofas. Only an earthen floor, black rafters, and a few pieces of deal furniture dimly conspicuous by the flickering beams of a turf fire, over which, superintending some cookery, bent an old rheumatic woman, who turned slowly as the door-latch clicked, and her grandson stood within the threshold.

"Ah, Martin, my boy, you're home in fine time. But you're very wet; come and

hearts of the rich to be kind to the poor. An' thanks be to Him, too, for sending us a return of the Christmas," quoth Granny Daly, who, despite sixty-seven years of hard work and poverty, had not yet, it seemed, found Christmas "tiresome," but in her own way felt grateful for it, and enjoyed it; and although her "position in the world" afforded her neither the means nor the power to obtain the luxuries and pleasures rich people command at this season, she nevertheless had some little addition to ordinary life and fare for herself and her grandson this evening. A turf fire instead of a usual mill-seed, a dip-candle instead of a rushlight, and a bit of bacon for supper instead of the customary meal of dry potatoes and salt. All which unwonted "good things" granny had, out of her spinning earnings, carefully provided, as she expressed it, "in honor of the night." For with the dwellers by the Shannon as well as the dwellers by the Rhine, it is the Eve of Christmas, which is the social moment of the festival.

After supper the old woman of sixty-seven and the little boy of twelve had some more pleasant talk. Granny related to Martin the few bright things she could recall concerning the sixty-six Christmases she had already spent in the world, which were received with an eager attention as if they had been so many fairy tales. When their recital was over, and the two had read a chapter and said their usual simple evening prayer, Granny lay down on her stretcher, and Martin crept into his own little "flock" nest, where in five minutes he was in a sound, dreamless sleep, undisturbed even by any vision of Santa Claus or coming Christmas boxes.

CHAPTER III.

Christmas morning, bright and clear! Yesterday's dark storm-cloud all rolled away, and the sun shining on the crystallized snowflakes till their white expanse sparkled like a vast diamond field, with all the gems newly cut and polished. Little Martin rose early, but somehow the world, bright as it looked, felt more shadowed to him to-day than it had done under yesterday's gloom and sleet. Granny had awoke quite ill; the cold had got into her bones, increasing her rheumatism and obliging her to remain in bed, so that of course she would not be able to get to church or see the "green wreaths." However, poor Martin had not so much time as a rich child might command for indulging in sad or disappointed reflections. He had first the fire to light; then to prepare breakfast; then to make poor suffering granny eat some; then to partake of the meal himself; and then to wash up the bowls and plates and cooking saucepans. Then—a knock came to the door, a quick imperative tapping; he opened hastily, and there entered the two young ladies from the Castle, carrying between them a "big, big basket."

"We come from Santa Claus!" announced Effie.

"Santa Claus!"—Martin looked bewildered—never indeed (as Miss Dermott had supposed) having even heard of this liberal "gentleman," he remained perfectly mystified, until Annette explained more intelligibly the reason and motive of their visit, at the same time untying the cord and exhibiting the collection of Christmas-boxes. As one after another the divers C's rolled out, the riddle slowly solved itself to the mind of the astonished little recipient.

"Oh, granny!" he cried, rushing into the inner room, with the old warm cloak in one hand and a package of cake in the other. "Oh, granny! see what Christmas-boxes the young ladies have brought us!"

"God bless them for dear young ladies, and grant them many happy Christmases!" ejaculated old granny fervently. She little dreamt, poor simple soul! with what indifference that latter wish of hers would only twenty-four hours ago have been received by the "young ladies." Now, however they listened half-terrorfully as they gazed round the poor dwelling, and noted the joy and gratitude awakened in its humble inmates by this basket of "mere trifles"—common necessities of life.



GRANNY READING.

"Feel! Of course not!" Annette smiled too. "Now, how shall we get conveyed to Martin this little softener of his harder lot!" she continued in a gayer tone, pointing to the basket.

"You and Effie must yourselves in person bring it to him; but it will be time enough to-morrow. Santa Claus never goes round till Christmas morning."

CHAPTER II.

Meanwhile beneath the heavy white shower, little Martin Daly was wending his way homewards. The snowflakes saturated his thin jacket, powdered his hair, and dropped in soft masses on his cap, as he passed under the thickly laden fir boughs. He was wet, and cold, and hungry, but he was neither angry, nor disgusted, nor impatient with the weather or anything else. On the contrary, he felt inwardly very bright and happy on this outwardly dark "tiresome evening." For although he had been a bit disappointed Miss Dermott did not come downstairs to hear how "beautiful" her "wreath" looked in the church, still she

dry yourself."

"It's snowin' pretty hard," he returned, shaking off his dripping cap and jacket. He did not go and change his wet things for dry ones, for as yet he possessed but one set of garments in the world. However, being accustomed, young as he was, to brave all kinds of weather, and wear wet clothes, he did not mind either much, and they seldom gave him cold. Granny drew him to the hearth, stirred the fire to a brighter flame, lit a candle, and then, whilst she dished up the supper, he stood contentedly warming his little, cold, bare feet on the hot hearthstone, and telling all about his day's work in the church.

"It looks grand, an' you'll see it to-morrow, granny."

"Praise goodness, if the rheumatism doesn't catch me too tight."

"An' Miss Dermott sent me down this shillin' when I came back from the church—a shillin' for jurt keepin' the wreaths straight for the gardener to nail—wasn't that good, granny?"

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