

JANUARY 8, 1914

## THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE.

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perhaps you'll like to see the picture of my—Arthur's son!"

She turned to the open suit-case, and taking from it a leather-framed photograph, stood it proudly on the dressing-table. "There he is!"

She well might triumph in their gaze! Photographs, often so obliterating, so concealing of the real person, have their magic moments; the soul of Cousin Minnie's boy stood revealed in this portrayal of him, in the sturdy set of his shoulders, the gallant poise of his bonny head, the sweetness of his curved lips, the high-heartedness, the divinely youthful courage of those straightforward eyes.

"Oh, isn't he a dear!" cried Katherine, with a gasp, and Mrs. Fairlie put her arms around the little mother as if feeling the latter's loss for the first time.

"How you must miss him!" she exclaimed, and Cousin Minnie's eyes brimmed pitifully; two great tears fell and ran down her cheeks, while she tried to smile unflinchingly through them.

"He's so glad I'm with you!" she said.

Preparations for Christmas went on with a new ardor, a new facility of completion, after Cousin Minnie's arrival. There seemed nothing about her to justify their harrowing anticipations save the fact, artlessly announced, that writing letters, except to Evan, frightened her to death: she was such a poor letter-writer, she never knew what to say; her morning's epistle to the matron of the institution seemed to have been, from her own version of it, filled with accounts of the cook's toothache and the lameness from which Mr. Fairlie had suffered before she came, as matters of polite interest. For the rest, as an inmate of the household, she filled in chinks with a velvetlike ease and cheerfulness that was the most soothing thing in life. Her coaxing, "Now let me do this for you," witched care from the soul and work from the fingers, whether it were sweeping or dusting or mending or tying up those endless parcels in tissue-paper, and writing on innumerable little square bits of note-paper:

"Lucy, with love and a Merry Xmas from Katherine."

"Ethel, with love and a merry Xmas from Jean."

When young Mr. Letter came to dinner it was Cousin Minnie's decorations that made the table so lovely, and her tact afterwards that blessedly kept "father" playing checkers with her all the evening; it was she who listened to Jean's and Katherine's confidences long after the tired mother was in bed, and she who listened at every chance the next day to that mother's intensely interested converse about her children. Mrs. Fairlie would have been very happy with this sweet help and sympathy if—

Oh, deep in her soul was the corroding anguish of Minnie's deprivation! If she hadn't combined her money with the children's for the rug—if she could only have surprised Minnie with the gift of her dear boy's presence on Christmas day! There were moments when the thought of all her blessings compared with Minnie's poverty was almost more than she could bear. She tentatively opened the subject with Richard, only to receive his sympathetic assurance:

"I'd like nothing better than to send for Evan—I'd like nothing better, for Minnie's sake. They seem to be a plucky pair—Arthur might be proud of them, poor fellow! But I absolutely haven't any sixty dollars to spare just now, that's the truth—and it would take all of that to get the boy here and back again. You'll have the house pretty full, anyway, won't you, with Jack and his friends?"

Yes, the house would be full. As for the new rug, Cousin Minnie was as deeply interested in that as in everything else that concerned the household; she had acquiesced deeply in the crying need for it, and exclaimed consentingly over the amount appropriated for it as little enough. No one would have dreamed that she herself made coarse denim overalls in an institution for a pittance of a wage, she put the fact so magnificently out of sight.

"Mother will go without everything she really wants unless we look out for her," Katherine proclaimed to the sympathizer in public. "Now, mother, I'm not talking to you!"

"My dear, I've been thinking how very pretty some of the grass rugs are," said Mrs. Fairlie, diplomatically. "Those large Oriental ones are so heavy, and they require a great deal of care. I really don't know that I feel quite up to it. A cheaper kind now, for a few dollars—"

"Now, mother!" Katherine's arm went around her parent protectingly. "You know perfectly well that you hate cheap things. She does, Cousin Minnie, she never uses them after she gets them! She won't have anything but what is 'good.' Her eyes flashed meaningfully in denial of her mother's dumb appeal. "And you're going to have it! Jean and I are not going to let you go without it for anybody! Jean and I are looking out for you."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Fairlie, with, after all, a thrill of pride in their care for her—she had no right to gainsay it. But how she hated that rug! To her intenseness the idea of stepping on it was like stepping on Minnie's heart.

How could you have any Christmas joy if you were knowingly keeping it from some one else? All this buying and tying up began to seem but a troublesome, heathenish custom without that heavenly something back of it all that made for gladness. Yet would it be any better if she made Minnie happy and hurt her dear daughters? If they only felt as she did! She half envied them their youthful habit of solid, concrete thought—she had so many varying thoughts! Still her simple soul, as usual, dug down to the root of the matter—she had no right to make others unwilling sharers in her own self-sacrifice.

Yet she hoped against hope during all those hours in which it would still be possible to get a letter to Evan in time; then on the evening of the twenty-second she finally gave up. It was too late now.

Jean came to her room as she was dressing, to say: "Now, mother dear, I hope you're not foolish enough to worry about Cousin Minnie. She's enjoying everything so much—she told me so to-day; and she had a lovely letter from Evan—he's quite contented where he is."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Fairlie, happily.

Minnie was enjoying herself. Mrs. Fairlie watched her that evening, noting her pretty wavering color and her merry laugh. Minnie was, looking so much better since she came to them.

Mr. Fairlie was away that night. Jack and his chum had come home with all sorts of schoolboy chatter and clatter. It was late when they all got to bed, and later still, nearly one o'clock, when Mrs. Fairlie, who had just dropped asleep, was awakened by the blaze of her electric light, and saw the night-gowned Katherine's wild eyes glaring at her.

"Mother—We can't stand it a moment longer!" A wild jerk over her shoulder indicated the ghostly-approaching Jean. "We saw a light in Cousin Minnie's room—Jean and I had been sitting up talking—and we opened the door softly to surprise her, and she was lying there with Evan's picture—crying—crying! Oh, mother, we never saw any one crying like that! Oh, mother—there, I'm going to howl myself now!"

"Hush! hush!" said the mother, warningly, with arms around both white-robed figures as they huddled together on top of the bed.

"I can't hush until we do something to get that boy here!" Katherine's voice moaned defiantly through her sobs. "We don't care any more about that old rug than you do! To-morrow's only the twenty-third—Mother, we want to telegraph the money and instructions to him the first thing in the morning, the way you did to me once—and he can take the afternoon train from New York and get here for Christmas eve—in time to help put up the greens—if you're willing!"

Willing! As Mrs. Fairlie lay there that night she had a soberness of joy, as one who had unwittingly set foot in sacred places. As of old, this was to be a festival of a mother and a child. And to have those you loved one with you in the Glory in the Highest!

It seemed as if she had been indeed "anointed with the oil of gladness above her fellows."—Harper's Bazar.

## Who Pays the Penalty?

Last April two of our representatives solicited applications for life assurance from a prominent Toronto wholesale merchant and his son.

They succeeded in selling to the father a policy for a considerable amount, but the son could not be induced to protect his dependents in this way against the financial loss which would result from his early death.

Less than two months afterwards the daily newspapers

recorded the tragic story of the younger man's accidental death. His failure to act when action was possible deprives his family of the insurance money which he could have secured to them so easily.

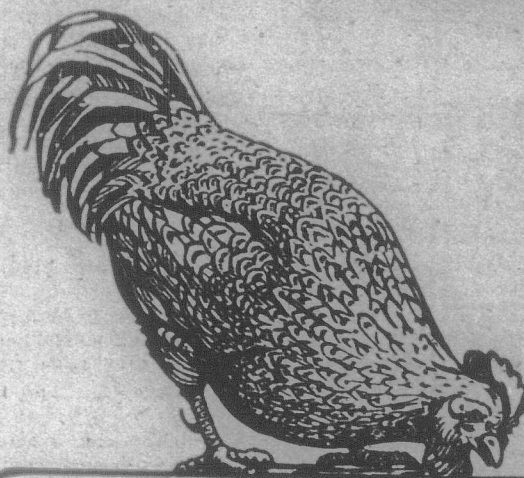
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