

Happy Days

Vol. VII.]

TORONTO, OCTOBER 8, 1892

[No. 21.]

"TENTING."

BY KATE W. HAMILTON.

THE summer air was bright with sunshine and fragrant with blossoms; but Ethel, sitting by her open window with her hands dropped listlessly in her lap, looked out wearily upon all the beauty of earth and sky. Up the street a hand-organ was striding out "Sweet Home!" and the girl's eyes filled with tears as she caught the strains. She was not longing for her home—in other circumstances she would have enjoyed this visit but she was home-sick for her old strong self, for the old free, brave life before she became invalid.

Aunt Jane, Ethel's attendant and censor, was constantly reminding her that she ought to be thankful it was not something likely to last always, after having had such a fall, instead of an injury which the physicians thought a year of rest and quiet would wholly overcome. But a year appeared a great deal to take out of her busy young life just when—so it seemed to Ethel—she needed it most. No school for her in all that time, and the other girls would gain so much! No no-practice, no wandering through the woods with the eager botanists, no pleasant tramps over the hills with the geology class—no parties, picnics or pleasuring.

"It is so much taken out of my life!" sighed Ethel.

Scarcely came the organ, until it stopped before Ethel's window, and began playing "Sweet Home" once more, while its owner—whose coarse red face augured ill of the sweetness of any home with which he was connected—sent a dejected looking monkey round to collect pennies. The little creature ran here and there among the group on the sidewalk, and up the steps, then, espying Ethel at the window, he scrambled up the railing, clung to the shutter, and in a moment dropped

into her lap. So sudden was the movement, such a queer, old little face it was that looked with odd grimaces into hers, that Ethel laughed, though half frightened. But when she would have pushed him aside, the monkey chattered and whined and seemed begging to stay in the comfortable quarters he had so unexpectedly found.

"Many are the voices calling us away—
Calling to the better land.

"Once they were mourners here below,
And poured out cries and tears,
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With doubts and griefs and fears."

she hummed, softly, under her breath.

"Fears and griefs not so very unlike mine, either—some of them," she mused. "There were such long waiting places in some of their lives also—Noah in the ark, Elijah alone on the mount, and Moses—those forty years of keeping sheep in the desert must have seemed a dreadful large portion out of his life and after he had been waiting himself for such great things too. But then God was fitting him for still greater things, and by that very means though he could not know it then. It was not less it was gain. And the same was true of Noah and Elijah, and a great many others besides. When the great Captain calls a halt, it must be for some good reason. I wonder—"



TENTING

"Poor fellow. Has the music made you, too, homesick for the old free days?" said Ethel. "Do you wish you were back in the groves where you could swing from the leaves of the coconut tree all day, if you liked, and throw coconuts in peace?"

The monkey whined and laid his hand on his head as if he were trying to recollect old times, but an impatient twitch of the cord from outside reminded him forcibly of the present, and he departed as he had come.

The incident had aroused Ethel a little, and she leaned forward and looked from the window. The organ had changed its music to "Tenting To-Night," but the girl had heard the tune with the words of an old hymn, and these came back to her now:

The organ grinder had completed his list and moved on, but Ethel still sat busily thinking. She had been mourning over this enforced pause in her active employments as so much taken out of her life, she had never chanced to think of it as something put into her life instead—put into it by God and for a purpose. That was a different matter.

Aunt Jane, coming in a little later found Ethel gathering books and writing-materials about her and cheerily taking up what she could do. "Well!" exclaimed that worthy lady, "If I had known that a monkey and an organ grinder were all you needed to cheer you up, I'd have hired something of the sort long ago."

Ethel only laughed, but years after, in her busy, useful life, she traced her most efficient preparation and drill for her work back to that long season when she was "only encamped and waiting for marching-orders."