

of the comforts, even the necessities, of life. Mrs. Wellwood was entirely one with her husband in his generous self-sacrifice, but was sometimes obliged to restrain his free-handed giving, which robbed their own little ones.

Their home was small and poorly built, and, set on an open prairie, was exposed to the full force of the cutting icy blasts. Wood was scarce and high, so they must practice economy in fires. The family rule was that no debt should be incurred, and it had never been broken, but it was only kept by such stinting in necessary food and clothing, as was often prejudicial to the health and comfort of the children.

In summer they were very comfortable. Mr. Wellwood and Leonard, the oldest boy, worked the garden, milked the cow, and attended to the poultry, and they needed to buy little. The children, barefoot, and scantily clothed, lived out of doors all day, and grew rosy and sun-browned. But since this unusually severe winter had set in, everything seemed unfavorable. The potatoes were almost gone, the cow had to be sold in order to buy food for the horse, which latter was a necessity to the missionary in his long expeditions over the prairies. The exposure, together with anxiety and privation, affected Mr. Wellwood's health so seriously, that his wife dreaded lest he should entirely break down, and Lucy had grown pale and thin, and coughed incessantly.

"Lucy must have flannels, and you must have an overcoat," said the mother, decidedly, a few weeks before, when the bitter cold weather first set in. "I think there are fifteen dollars left; when you go to town to-morrow, you must get them."

"My dear," was the deprecating answer, "I don't think you will find anything in the purse. You know the Millers lost a child last week, and I found they had no money for a coffin so—"

"Well," interposed his wife, hastily, "you and Lucy must wait until pay day." She uttered no word of protest, she knew that the Millers had been most bitter in their hostility to her husband's ministry, and she honored the Christ-like spirit that "of its penury gave all that it had" for the relief of wants greater than its own, but it seemed hard that Lucy and he should suffer. She did what she could, lined the wornout overcoat with bits of old dresses, and kept her daughter as warmly clad as possible, but her husband grew thinner and paler, and Lucy coughed more and more.

This morning he was sent for to baptize a sick child twelve miles away, and she had begged him to take Leonard with him. She felt more at ease about him, if the stout strong boy of fourteen went along. They were to stop at the nearest town four miles distant, and receive

the quarterly remittance, which was due to-day, and therewith purchase sundry necessities, together with the overcoat and flannel.

"Put in more wood, Lucy," said the mother, "we must have the room warm for papa," and putting down her work, she rose and commenced preparing tea, while Lucy set the table. A frugal meal it was; she had hoped for her husband's return with certain bundles which would add to their supper, but it was too late to wait longer.

At length, just as it was growing too dark to see far over the snowy plain, Bertie calls out "Here comes papa!" and Belle, as usual, echoed, "Here tums papa!" but baby Nell was asleep on the floor. Lucy gathered her up in her arms, and stood closer to the window, looking at the dilapidated buggy with its two inmates approaching through the blinding snow. Her slender form and fair regular profile, and the baby held against her breast, were clearly outlined against the bright back-ground, as the mother lighted a lamp. Mr. Wellwood, his artistic instincts surmounting his weariness and fatigue, stood for a moment after climbing from the buggy which Leonard drove around to the stable, looking at the pretty picture which reminded him of a painting of the Madonna he had seen; then with a deep sigh passed on to the house.

The children gave him an uproarious greeting. His wife looked at his face, and said at once; "The remittance did not come?"

"No," he said, wearily taking off the threadbare overcoat, and sitting close to the stove, spreading out his almost frozen fingers to the blaze, "there was a note instead, saying it would be sent in a month, the first of January."

"The Children's Christmas!" murmured Lucy to herself, but she did not speak aloud, and there was silence until Leonard came in, with his heavy boots and merry voice, and between him and Bertie and Belle there was a good deal of talk at the table.

"My dear," said Mr. Wellwood, after the little ones were in bed, and only Lucy and Leonard sat with them. "I must open an account at Mr. Hall's store to-morrow. I did not like to do it without consulting you, but we cannot let the children suffer."

"Oh, papa!" breathed Lucy, to whom such an idea seemed heresy, but Leonard said boldly; "I wanted papa to get some things to-day. Everybody does and we could pay when the money comes, but he would not."

"Yes, it must be done," said Mrs. Wellwood, but she said it with an effort. They had clung so persistently to the plan of avoiding debt altogether, that this seemed like a step downward. In the midst of the silence which fell upon them, came the sound of a loud halloo. Leonard threw open the door, and the snow-