

Lord will provide, the Good Book says, but it's mighty dark days, and it's hard to believe."

Entering the house, Ann sat down silently before the expiring fire. She was tired, her bones ached, and she was faint for want of food.

Wearily she rested her head on her hands, and tried to think of some way to get a few cents. She had nothing she could sell or pawn, every thing she could do without had gone before, in similar emergencies. After sitting there some time, and revolving plan after plan, only to find them all impossible, she was forced to conclude that they must go supperless to bed.

Her husband grumbled, and Katey—who came in from a neighbour's—cried with hunger, and after they were asleep old Ann crept into bed to keep warm, more disheartened than she had been all winter.

If we could only see a little way ahead! All this time—the darkest the house on the alley had seen—help was on the way to them. A kind-hearted city missionary, visiting one of the unfortunate families living in the upper rooms of old Ann's house, had learned from them of the noble charity of the humble old washer-woman. It was more than princely charity, for she not only denied herself nearly every comfort, but she endured the reproaches of her husband, and the tears of her child.

Telling the story to a party of his friends this Christmas eve, their hearts were touched, and they at once emptied their purses into his hands for her. And the gift was at that moment in the pocket of the missionary, waiting for morning to make her Christmas happy.

Christmas morning broke clear and cold. Ann was up early, as usual, made her fire, with the last of her coal, cleared up her two rooms, and leaving her husband and Katey in bed, was about starting out to try and get her money, to provide a breakfast for them. At the door she met the missionary.

"Good morning, Ann," he said. "I wish you a merry Christmas."

"Thank you, sir," said Ann cheerfully, "the same to yourself."

"Have you been to breakfast already?" asked the missionary.

"No, sir," said Ann, "I was just going out for it."

"I haven't either," said he, "but I couldn't bear to wait till I had eaten breakfast before I brought you your Christmas present—I suspect you haven't had any yet."

Ann smiled, "Indeed, sir, I haven't had one since I can remember."

"Well, I have one for you. Come in, and I'll tell you about it."

Too much amazed for words, Ann led him into the

room. The missionary opened his purse, and handed her a roll of bills.

"Why!—what!—" she gasped, taking it mechanically.

"Some friends of mine heard of your generous treatment of the poor families up-stairs," he went on, "and they send you this, with their respects and best wishes for Christmas. Do just what you please with it—it is wholly yours. No thanks," he went on, as she struggled to speak. "It's not from me. Just enjoy it—that's all. It has done them more good to give, than it can you to receive," and before she could speak a word, he was gone.

What did the old washer-woman do?

Well—first, she fell on her knees, and buried her agitated face in the bed-clothes. After awhile she became aware of a storm of words from her husband, and she got up, subdued—as much as possible—her agitation, and tried to answer his frantic questions.

"How much did he give you, old stupid?" he screamed; "can't you speak, or are you struck dumb?—Wake up!—I just wish I could reach you!—I'd shake you till your teeth rattled!"

If his vicious looks were a sign, it was evident that he only lacked the strength to be as good as his word.

Ann roused herself from her stupor and spoke at last.

"I don't know. I'll count it." She unrolled the bills and began.

"O dear!" she exclaimed excitedly, "here's ten-dollar bills! One, two, three, and a twenty—that makes five—and five are fifty-five—sixty—seventy—eighty—eighty-five—ninety—one hundred, and two—and five are seven, and two and one are ten, twenty—twenty-five—one hundred and twenty-five! Why, I'm rich!" she shouted. "Bless the Lord! Oh, this is the glorious Christmas day! I knew He'd provide. Katey! Katey!" she screamed at the door of the other room, where the child lay asleep. "Merry Christmas to you, darlin'! Now you can have some shoes! and a new dress! and—and breakfast, and a regular Christmas dinner! Oh! I believe I shall go crazy!"

But she did not. Joy seldom hurts people, and she was brought back to every-day affairs by the querulous voice of her husband.

"Now I will have my tea, an' a new blanket, an' some tobacco—how I have wanted a pipe!" and he went on enumerating his wants while Ann bustled about, putting away most of her money, and once more getting ready to go out.

"I'll run out and get some breakfast," she said, "but don't you tell a soul about the money."

"No! they'll rob us!" shrieked the old man.

"Nonsense! I'll hide it well, but I want to keep it