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From the Hearth and Home.
No. 310.

CHAPTER I.

It was a four-story tenement house, only six months old the autumn of which I write, and was desirable for people with small incomes, because it was clean, it was healthful, and there were two fine maple trees in front. It was on account of the trees that the tall, tidy, fair-faced German tailor had taken the first floor. Boxes of vines, of portulaca and pansies, framed the pantalons and vests that graced his window, and it was such a pleasure, while doubled up on the table in the back-room, to gaze through the folding-doors between seams, and behold his treasures dangling amid blossoms and foliage, the blithe fellow would roll out an air from Der Freischutz with such jollity, the two Methodist dress-makers on the next floor were sure to stop the rumble of their sewing-machine to listen. One fine August morning Mynherr Karl sat on his table in a particularly good humor. He had received two unexpected orders, and his morning-glories were a wonder to see. It was all so exhilarating, the tailor suddenly dropped the light cloth pantalons, and sliding to his feet began the hunting chorus, emphasizing the staccato notes by a dramatic beating of the air with his right hand, between the thumb and finger of which his needle was retained, the long thread flourishing like the tail of a comet.

Presently there was a creak at the door, and through the aperture a brown nose thrust itself. The comet's tail came down from an uncommonly lofty flight, and the chorus ceased half a bar before the key-note. Back darted the brown nose, and two little hands clapped a vigorous *cacore*. Mynherr laughed, brought his polished toes on a line, bowed profoundly, and threw a kiss toward the aperture. Then a cheery voice said: "Please sing some more—please do!"

Mynherr at once complied by roaring the merriest of all the merry German songs he knew. "Shall mein little friend be so pleased as to walk in?" The aperture registered a mental struggle. It grew wider, as much as to say, "I like you very much and am coming," then disappeared altogether, declaring, "Oh! I dare not; I'm off, you see," then the door opened sharply and the brown nose came into full view. There were pleasant brown eyes above it, and a rather large mouth smiled below it, and a mass of wavy, tangled hair surrounded it. A clean green gingham dress, a pink apron, white stockings, and passable boots completed the picture.

"Vell, vat name shall I sipeak?" asked Karl, bowing again.

"I'm Betty," answered the child simply.

"Petty?" repeated Karl. "Vell, Petty, I pe hearty glad to see you. Vare you lif?"

"Oh! I live here," answered Betty. "Up stairs, you know. Mother she takes in washing, and father he's dead, and there's nobody but mother'n me. We moved here Monday."

"Ah! So—so," said Karl. "Didn't you see us move?" asked Betty, gaining confidence as she established her identity. "The man packed our things awful. The glass to our cupboard got broken, and a chiny pitcher was all smashed to bits, and our tin things spilled out of the barrel, and I'm so glad we come here, cause you sing!"

Tall Karl was very generous, and he was highly gratified at the genuine admiration of his new friend. Stepping to a shelf, he took up a terra-cotta pitcher of fanciful shape, and handed it to the little girl.

"Miss Petty," he said, "here is vome nice pitcher vat kom from Shermany. Dake it vor de vone vat was smashed, mit my most kind ree-spects."

"Oh! no, no," said Betty, blushing. "It's ten hundred thousand times prettier'n ours."

"Vell, vat of dat? It ish all right. Pe gut girl. Dake it, I say, and we pe gut neighbors now—always."

His face was so honest and so earnest Betty took the pitcher with a frank "It's the beautifullest one I ever saw," and ran up stairs. Later in the day she again entered Mynherr's apartment. In her arms she held a brown pot, in which a small button-rose was planted. The earth was dry and the leaves had grown yellow, but there were several courageous little blossoms still adorning it.

Her mother, though engaged in fluting at its most critical point, had found time to brush the child's hair smoothly from her forehead and to braid it in one tight little pigtail at the back, upon the end of which a faded blue ribbon, like some gigantic bug in low spirits, was

precariouly perched. With her pigtail and her button-rose, she joyously ran to Mynherr Karl.

"Here's something for you, 'cause you gave ma the pitcher," said Betty. "It's to be yours for always, and it's real nice, for ma gave twenty-five cents for it."

"O vat a price!" laughed Karl, and, watering it well, he placed it among his own thriving flowers.

Betty, being now equal with her benefactor, folded her hands behind her and began a conversation.

"Do you sing 'Shall we gather at the river?'"

"Shall ve gader at *carel*?" His great scissors had clipped the last word as well as the cloth.

"At the river," repeated Betty.

"Vat river do you mean—de Nort River or de East River?"

"Why, a river up in the sky. It's a song, you know. We sing it in Sabbath-school."

"Ah! so—so. No, I not know dat."

"Oh! you must learn it. It's beautiful."

"Vell, you teach me, and I sing it."

"O dear! I can't sing a bit good, but I'll try." Whereupon Betty started the hymn in the funniest little pipe of a voice that ever was heard. Mynherr's instinct for tune majored the wrong minors and cheered the melancholy flats; and presently the air, introduced by Betty in rags and tatters, was clothed by his rich voice as with a wedding garment.

"It ish a very pretty little ting," said Karl.

"I knew you'd like it," answered Betty, stopping to listen to something unusual going on up stairs.

The Misses Jones had been working all day on the side-pleating of two black alpaca suits. Their fingers being cramped and their eyes strained, they were feeling extremely nervous. In their cases, I can conscientiously say, *nervous*.

"I hate the very sight of a dress!" suddenly exclaimed Eliza, the younger of the two. "This sleeve's in wrong, and I've got to rip it out, the hateful old thing!"

"Eliza Jones!" said Mary Ann severely, "it's astonishing you dare to go on so! You ought to be praising the Lord for dresses to make and hands to make 'em!"

"I don't care!" answered Eliza, wholly lost to reason and gratitude.

"You ought to care! It's the devil seeking whom he may devour that makes you talk so."

"I don't care if it is!" repeated the wicked Eliza, contemplating the tightly-sewed sleeve.

"O my! what a sinful heart!" ejaculated Mary Ann. "How set up you were last Sunday! Verily, 'Pride goeth before a fall!'"

Poor Eliza, ashamed of her anger, burst into tears and sat crying for some time. At last, Mary Ann, forgetting the keen force of her last remark, burst forth vehemently:

"Don't tack idleness on to blasphemy, Liza. Snivelin' wont stitch on pleats nor pull out bastings nor—"

Mary Ann's teeth came together like a steel-trap, and, crossing the room, she gave her sister a vigorous shake, being so out of temper she could not speak. Verily, "Pride goeth before a fall."

At that moment the familiar music of the hymn was wafted to their distracted tempers. They listened, and all the wrath melted away from them.

"I wonder if it's that infidel German down stairs!" said Mary Ann.

"I'm afraid we'll never gather at the river if we go on at this rate!" whispered Eliza.

Mary Ann winced, but she stumbled on a great truth as she answered:

"I expect, Liza, we're just tired out, stitching and stitching! It makes one feel all on end, and grace sort of oozes out."

"Suppose we sing a little too. Seems to me 'twould rest us," said Eliza, opening a wheezy melodeon. Mary Ann felt some penance was necessary, and choked down her propensity to drive work. Thus, as the hymn was ended by Karl's dramatic flourish down stairs, it was immediately taken up by the asthmatic melodeon on the second floor.

"Isn't that funny!" exclaimed Betty rapturously. "I'm going up to see who 'tis."

The Misses Jones were somewhat startled when their "Come in" was answered by a little girl with a bright face, and hair dressed *a la* Johnny Chinaman.

"Do sing another. I couldn't help coming in, it was so nice."

"Why, child, who are you?" asked Mary Ann.

"I'm Betty, and live on the fourth."

"The washerwoman's daughter, you know," said Eliza to Mary Ann.

"Oh!" said Mary Ann, just a whit frigid.

"I came in to hear you sing," persisted Betty.

Eliza, though of uncertain temper, was naturally good-natured and fond of children, and at once sang another hymn, and yet another, to the delight of the child.

"Do come in again, Betty," said Eliza at last, impulsively dropping a kiss on Betty's clean face.

"Don't be hasty, Eliza," said Mary Ann, with dignity.

Betty tripped up stairs, humming the last tune in her absurd voice. As she passed the partly-opened door of the back-room on the "third," she peeped cautiously in—and O deary me! the song flew away as though it had only come by a mistake. There sat a forlorn bit of a woman in rusty black, crying like a child.

"What makes you feel bad?" asked Betty, stepping in. Can't I do something? I'm real sorry."

"I was thinking of my poor, dead baby, that's lost and gone, little girl," said the woman. "Somebody was singing, and it made me think of her."

"Oh! do come up and see mother. We've got a baby up in heaven too, a little speck of a teenty-tawnty baby; and mother says he knows a great deal mor'n I do—mor'n she does, too. Perhaps he knows your girl baby, you see, if the angels let 'em play together. Do come up, and let's ask mother."

"Walk in! walk in! Glad to see ye," said Betty's mother, when Betty herself had explained.

"Perhaps I oughtn't to have come up, but your little girl said you'd lost a baby, and—life's so different!" she sobbed.

"So 'tis! so 'tis!" said Betty's mother, "but there's two ways lookin' on it, after all. I set great store on my Sammy. His father, ye see, died just as Betty'n I was calculatin' to go West and settle with 'im. Sammy's face was about all I had to keep his father's looks by. Betty's like my folks, the Calkines. But, la me! what a sinful creatur' I'd be mournin' for 'im, when the good Lord Jesus and lots of angels is takin' care of 'im. No danger of the Lord's lettin' 'im forget his mother scrubbin' down here! I've thought and thought on 'im sometime, when I've been a workin' *partikelar* steady, till fore I knowed what I was doin', I've laughed right out, thinkin' how grand he must be, and how he'd run to meet me, when Jesus called me to go too. It's a great thing for us wicked mortal women to have a darlin' mite of an innocent baby up in glory."

"I was so lonesome, I never thought of that," said desponding Mrs. Bent. "My husband and I haven't taken much comfort since baby died."

"I wouldn't on no account be discouragin', but seems to me that way of takin' it does no airtly nor heavenly good, and is unpleasant all round. It seems awful presumin' to think we ken fix things so much better'n the Lord, who knows everything, back'ards and for'ards."

There was a step on the stairs, and Mrs. Bent ran down with the hint of a smile on her face.

"I've seen everybody in the house," said Betty; "they're awful nice."

"What a cricket you be, Betty!" said her mother.

CHAPTER II.

The weeks went on, and the two maples in front of No. 310 held up their torches of pale gold to greet the autumn. The people in the house all knew Betty, and had grown to be very fond of her. Otherwise the occupants of the house were unacquainted with each other, if we may except the third and fourth, as Mrs. Bent had many times been up to be cheered by a quaint sermon from Betty's mother.

The little girl was in school most of the day, but every afternoon she called upon Mynherr Karl, who always welcomed her with a bright "Hi, mine Petty, how pad girl was you to-day?" and if the child really had trials and failures to report, his "Ah! vell, don't feel pad, all petter next time," was sure to bring hope to her heart again.

Occasionally she dropped in to see the Misses Jones, and every Sunday went to the new Mission-school with Miss Eliza.

The mutual relations or *non*-relations of 310 stood in this wise, and were likely so to stand, when one night Betty awoke in a high fever. The morning found her no better, and Mrs. Bent sat at her bedside until noon, when the child suddenly came out of a long sleep with staring eyes and a set face, upon which great drops began to gather.

Mrs. Bent knew by instinct that Betty's life was precious to every inmate of the house, and she flew like a flash down the stairs, bursting into the room where the Misses Jones were tranquilly sewing on two shades of brown popiin.

"Quick, quick! Betty is dying! Brandy—mustard—everything!"

On she sped. Mynherr Karl was at that instant measuring a customer's "Dirty-six inen—now de back, and dat is all," when Mrs. Bent cried, "Betty's sick—brandy—quick!"

Mynherr grasped a bottle, and rushed up the hall three stairs at a bound.

Betty was dosed with brandy, rubbed, poulticed and immersed in mustard-water, while off strode Mynherr, with a very red face, after a doctor. The first one was out, the second was occupied with a patient.

Poor Karl! The tears sprang to his eyes. "Oh! vat if Betty shall die in dis place full of doctors." The third was in, and Karl nearly carried him through the street and up the stairs.

As they entered the door, somebody said in a happy, hopeful voice: "There, she's better, don't you see! Her lips move and she knows us." Mrs. Bent was really giving back some of the sweet hope Betty's mother had bestowed upon her.

The doctor talked profoundly, but everybody understood that Betty had suffered from some kind of a spasm, and was out of danger.

As the dear child lay there bundled in blankets, nobody could help laughing and crying at once; even Mary Ann sniffling suspiciously as she gave Betty's neck a tender little tuck-up. The ladies sat together all the afternoon, the Joneses bringing some hand-work, and Mynherr Karl tripped up every half-hour to see if all was well.

The Misses Jones began thinking the infidel German might not be so bad after all, as he appeared time after time with a few flowers and many pleasant words.

Eliza's missionary spirit began to be fairly aroused in his behalf.

The last call before tea, he sat down and chattered with the ladies. At last he turned to Betty, and said:

"Now, Petty, vat shall we do for you 'cause you get petter—vat you like, say?"

"I know what I'd like mor'n anything else."

"Vell, sipeak out. Ton't pe pashful," stroking her brown hair kindly.

"Well, I'd like a Thanksgiving dinner up here—all together, you know," said Betty.

"A Thanksgiving tinner! Vell, vy not? We be thankful, all of us, dat you get vell. Vat you say, ladies?"

The ladies were charmed at the idea. A family holiday is so tedious to people who *have* no family worth speaking about.

Betty's mother declared that *she* meant to have a "reglar Thanksgiving anyhow," and if the rest was a mind to come, they "was sure of a welcome."

It was a wonder that 310 didn't toss off its roof and shake its young sides and caper across the square in pure exhilaration over the convivial preparations that went on under its eyes for forty-odd hours thereafter. You would never have recognized those bustling, cheery spinsters as the Misses Jones of two days before. Mary Ann was a born housekeeper, and people can be quite angelic in their spheres, you know, who are much more like porcupines than angels out of them. After the long routine of stitching and picked-up dinners, the coming feast was as refreshing to her as the sea-breeze to an invalid, malarious patient. Deftly she turned out the graduated row of cakes, as light as a feather, destined to develop into a most imposing pyramidal centre-piece, and skillfully she adorned it, wielding a mysterious paper horn, out of whose marvelous insides came miracles of sugar-laced railings and fringes and initials and unicorns and eagles and designs exceeding description.

Mrs. Bent also resolved to exhibit her culinary abilities, and doomed two chickens to the disastrous fortunes of the press, besides concocting an Indian-pudding of such enormous size, her husband declared there would be a panic in Indian affairs, to which she replied that they had gone into a big pan—ie already, a kind of nonsense that was a healthful sign in the Bent family. Cheerful conversation, we have perhaps all observed—like colts and boys and most vigorous things—is inclined to occasionally frisk off into foolish antics of speech.

Mynherr had sent up a very fat turkey, that seemed bursting to moan, as it lay meekly on its back, "Pomposity I was, humility I am—beware! beware!"

What else he had provided was not apparent until the hour appointed, when three most elegant bouquets were brought up, with Karl in a dress-coat and white kids beaming behind them.

Nor was this all, for lastly he bore his crowning glory to the feast, a basket of Rhine wine. Miss Eliza blushed scarlet, Miss Jones looked severe, and braced herself to speak her mind.

Poor Karl, in the mean time, was lift-