

THE BACHELOR'S CHILD.

He tosses her above his head,
He romps until his face is red,
He holds her arm's length just to see
The wonder of her wicker
He talks in language soft and slow
That only babies know,
He passes now and then to gaze
Far off, as if 'twere in a maze,
And then with sudden sigh and start
He presses her unto his heart.

He lets her sink upon his breast,
He sings her little lays of rest,
And when her little eyes are closed
And all her baby grace reposed,
He sits beside her little cot
Thinking of things so long forgot,
So far above the long ago
Wherefrom the tender echoes flow
Of songs he heard, of gay love-rhyme,
On lips whose roses fade betime.

He sits her high upon his knees
And hums her nursery melodies,
He shakes her rattle, jingles bells,
And, oh, such wondrous wiles tells;
He lifts her little face to lay
His softness on his own, and play
Her dimples were the deep wherein
A thousand drops of dew had been
And with his lips upon the brink
He'd lean to them to kiss and drink.

By AGNES LOUISE PROVOST.

"Isn't there going to be a storm, captain?"

"Humph! I guess there is, but I'd be much obliged if it would wait until next week."

Captain Japhet Trill stood in the doorway of the little life-saving station and surveyed the weather indications with disapproving eye. A rising wind was blowing in from the sea, whistling a low note among the dead grasses and patches of scrub pines. Out at sea it whipped the sullen green expanse into ominous little whitecaps; on shore the boom of each wave striking the sand was heavier than it had been two hours before, and the undertow which sucked back the swirling waters was perceptibly swifter. On the captain's right was a huge beam, once part of a vessel, half-buried in the sand, and on it a young girl perched comfortably, watching the head of the life-saving crew with interested eyes.

She had just come down here, a good two miles from home along the wind-swept beach, but Jean Redfield was a good walker, and only her red cheeks and tossed hair showed what a fine struggle that strong east wind had given her.

"Why next week?"

"Don't want any wrecks now," he said, briefly. "I'm short-handed. Won't you come in and get warm?"

Jean hopped briskly down from the beam and followed Captain Trill into the hospitable warmth of the life-saving station. It was always a fascinating place to her. Her host was silent for a few moments, and then started his remarks where he had left off. The station was isolated and lonely, and he enjoyed the girl's daily visits.

"Peter is away," he volunteered. "Billy's got the lumbago, and there's nobody but me and the Prices and your folks that can get together in any kind of a hurry."

"But we don't often have wrecks?"

"M-m, no, they don't often come close enough to shove along here, unless they lose their bearings. That's safe. But there was the bark Polly Saunders, that was beat to pieces right before folks' eyes four years ago, and every soul on her drowned. It was the next summer that the government built this station, and 'long in November comes another tearing big storm, and a wreck with it. We saved every life on that one, down to a cat that came ashore clawing tight to a keg, and was fished in by Eh Peters. You were away to school then, I recollect. That was the last, sissy, but we ain't anxious for any more. These February gales is mean things to deal with."

Jean's eyes were big with attentive interest. She had heard the same thing many a time, but it was ever fresh to her. She had never seen a wreck in her life. Her father had moved here from an inland village a few years before, but each succeeding winter she had been away at school, and only the letters from home told her what terrible things the sea did in the winter months. She walked round slowly, examining for the fiftieth time the simple appliances of the life-savers.

"It must be wonderful to rescue people like that," she said, impulsively. "Being a girl is dreadfully humdrum, Captain Trill. I think I should be happy all the rest of my life if I could do some of the things you do."

"You'd get most awful wet lots of times," remarked the captain, practically, and pounded black and blue with the waves, and froze stiff as a board. Don't you fret about being a girl, sissy. We can't get too many of the right kind. Must you not?"

"Oh, yes, mother is still away, you know, and I must get home in time to have supper ready for father and the boys. You have no idea how hungry they are when they come home these cold days. Come up to supper some night, and I'll show you how boarding-school girls can cook."

She was gone with a bright nod of farewell, bending her head before the blast of wind which struck her as she opened the door. It seemed to have increased in violence in the last ten minutes. A fine spray was flying in with it, the clouds were gray and hung low, and the bare field stretching inland looked bleak and chilly.

She walked more rapidly going back, for, as she had said, there was a generous hot supper to be prepared for her father and brothers. This was her first winter at home after all the fun and business of boarding-school days, and had it not been for the manifold duties of the house she would have been sadly lonely at times, for the dear little mother had broken in health, and was away for a long rest.

In spite of her warm wraps, Jean began to feel chilled before the first mile was covered. As she reached home, a few scurrying snowflakes began to fall, and she looked anxiously out at the heaving sea, remembering what Captain Trill had said.

Jean found it almost impossible to sleep that night. The noise of the sea had deepened into a heavy roar, and the wind buffeted the house until every timber seemed to be squeaking a protest. Half a dozen times she awoke, and the last time, about 4

o'clock in the morning, it was with a new sound in her ears, a muffled boom, which was neither sea nor wind. As she flew out of bed she heard it again, and a moment later her brother Dick pounded on her door.

"Hey, Jean! Did you hear the signal-guns? There's a wreck! We're going!"

"Oh, wait for me! I'll be there in two minutes! Do wait!"

"Well, you must hurry! We have work to do."

Dick pounded down the hall to complete his own hasty toilet, and Jean's fingers flew. Every hook and button seemed to escape her excited grasp, but nevertheless she was downstairs in an incredibly short time, bundled in her warmest wraps. She clutched at her father's arm as they started out, half-frightened by the blackness and violence of the storm. Dick and Will were running ahead, and they gave a shout as a rocket suddenly shot up offshore.

"She's right off here!" Dick called back. "Captain Trill has two miles to come! Let's go meet him and help drag up the stuff."

They turned abruptly down toward the life-saving station, but they had not gone far before they met Captain Trill and the two Prices, dragging the little mortar as they ran, panting with haste and looming up like huge bears in their oil suits. Captain Trill shook his head as Mr. Redfield shouted a question to him over the tumult of wind and waves.

"It's pretty bad!" he roared back, hoarsely. "There ain't a boat made that could be launched or landed in that surf. We've got the breeches-buoy, but I don't know how we're going to get a line to 'em in this wind! Come on, she may go to pieces any minute."

Jean shuddered, but in spite of herself her heart gave a leap of excitement. The breeches-buoy! How many times she had hovered around it in the life-saving station, getting Captain Trill to tell her how it was that people came ashore in that little thing, with only a rope above them and a black and boiling surf beneath! She would see it! If human hands could do it this night, she would see that shipwrecked crew come ashore in it, one by one, over that howling tumult of waves. She was almost crying with excitement as she looked over toward the dim figures of her father and the boys, and thought that they were lending a generous hand to this fine work.

Another rocket went up from the distressed vessel, and Captain Trill sent up an answering signal from the shore, volunteering the shouted opinion that she was a three-masted schooner, and that her location must be grounded, and in momentary danger of being pounded to kindling-wood, but to Jean there was nothing but a shapeless blot against the darkness. Ugh! How cold it was!

With terrible earnestness the men on shore bent to their work. In the gloom their faces were strained and anxious, and Captain Trill's quick orders showed him an entirely different man from the bluff, good-natured sailor of the afternoon before. One—two—three—four—five life-rockets soared out one by one toward the vessel, but each time the wind sent the rescuing line wide of its mark. Captain Trill shook his head impatiently, and tossed the sixth life-rocket aside, turning his attention to the look-out for the vessel which the life-saving mortar threw out. Perhaps that would do better.

Jean shivered and drew her wraps closer. The darkness was slowly beginning to lift, although she could not yet distinguish the outlines of the unfortunate vessel.

The snow of the afternoon before had turned to a fine sleety rain, which froze as it fell; the waves were mountains of angry foam, and a flying spume cut the face like needles. Little icicles dripped everywhere. How terrible it must be for the poor souls out there!

Suddenly the slender line was shot out over the waves, and Jean strained her eyes to follow it, but it was lost in the gloom. It fell short, and at the same time the wind bent it back like a feather; but Captain Trill set his teeth and waited for a momentary lull. Then there were a few seconds of aching suspense, followed by a lusty cheer from the shore as the tightening of the line showed that eager hands were fastening it to the mast. A little more of the good work and the first sailor would be making that wonderful journey toward land.

Jean's heart was pounding with excitement, but as she moved nearer she heard the words, "Perishing cold, poor souls!" jerked out grimly by her father as he worked, and a sudden idea came which nearly took her breath away. Less than an eighth of a mile away the light in their kitchen window shone like a friendly beacon. The sailors would be dragged to shore drenched, numbly exhausted. The limited hospitality of the life-saving station was two miles away on one side, and the village a mile and a half on the other. Her own home was the nearest, and she—she was hostess while her mother was away.

Hoisting her lips tight for fear the good determination would somehow escape, Jean turned and ran for home, not daring to look back again at the buoy, now bobbing out bravely over the crashing waves. It was still fairly dark, and bushes and shadows took on terrifying shapes, but there was no time to be frightened. Into the kitchen she darted like an impetuous young cyclone, threw her wet coat on a chair and commenced to work energetically at the fire.

It seemed hours before the fire would burn properly, and whole ages before the kettle finally began to sing, but all the time she was rushing busily about, bringing out extra blankets, and doing every thing which could minister to the comfort of half-frozen guests. Once she paused, between a sob and a laugh, and wiped her eyes.

"I know I am too greedy and selfish to live, but I did so want to see them bring the crew ashore. I'll never get another chance, never!"

When she hurried out again, the gray of a wintry dawn showed the dismantled hull of a vessel offshore, pounded by huge racing waves which seemed about to engulf her. The little group on the shore was now much larger, re-enforced by people who had hurried down from the village, and they all were gathered about a dining room, opening the blankets, and doing every thing which could minister to the comfort of half-frozen guests. Once she paused, between a sob and a laugh, and wiped her eyes.

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CHILDREN OF FLORENCE.

The Hospital of the Innocent, the Most Famous Foundling Institution.

From the Nineteenth Century.

The piazza outside the Church of the Santissima Annunziata, where for four and a half centuries childhood depicted in its most beautiful and at the same time its most pathetic aspect has looked down by, is perhaps the place of all others in Florence where the inveterate loafer unwilling to leave the sunshine and attired for the moment with the treasures of church and picture gallery may feel justified in lingering. It may be added that the steps under the graceful arcade which faces the Innocent Hospital offer an obvious and desirable resting place. An incessant stream of life flows daily through the piazza, trams laden with country people returning from market bound for the heights of Fiesole, and with city folk also, perhaps only going a couple of hundred yards, for nobody in Florence walks if he can drive; while long carts of the country rattle about a driving room, carrying two or three human beings as they are intended to hold. And yet this square, so the busiest in the city, retains a curious atmosphere of repose. Possibly it is because the traffic never passes or diverges from its course to disturb the harmony about it, but is rather like a stream flowing through a quiet meadow. At least this is how I have found it on weekdays. On Sundays and on festal days, when the fashionable folk flock to the Church of the Annunziata and to the Chapel of the Innocent, it is another matter.

Now children are generally playing, but in a quiet and orderly fashion, about the bronze and marble sea monsters of Tacca, which serve as fountains. Upon the right the great bronze statue of Duke Ferdinand the First seated on his horse gazes forever at a blank window in the palace, where once the bust of his lady smiled back at him. There was surely a meritorious dilatoriness, for had the woolen gown been conducted with the heat and fervor extolled by youth another bloody crime, such as have been added to the domestic history of Florence. So there he stands, a mighty monument to the negative virtue of delay! But it is the lovely facade of the Foundling Hospital, the Spedale degli Innocenti, which gives its chief beauty and character to the piazza. To all those who know Florence it is sufficiently familiar. The long harmonious lines of Brunelleschi's design, suggesting a rare combination of strength and simplicity, the wide shallow steps, the rounded columns, and, above the arches, the della Robbia medallions of the swaddled babies, the blue of the porcelain contrasting very graciously with the sad gray of the stone. Each exquisite detail, the helplessness of the babe, the heat and fervor extolled by youth another bloody crime, such as have been added to the domestic history of Florence. So there he stands, a mighty monument to the negative virtue of delay! But it is the lovely facade of the Foundling Hospital, the Spedale degli Innocenti, which gives its chief beauty and character to the piazza. To all those who know Florence it is sufficiently familiar. 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