

Uncle Jared's Gift.

"Another ring at the bell—and another present, Nannie. It is very nice to be a bride!"

Alice Dupre spoke a little reproachfully, and she was Nannie's first bridesmaid, and was treading the borders of that debatable land where girlhood has died out and sage middle age has hardly yet commenced.

"Nannie, you are doing remarkably well," said Mrs. Cheswick, complacently surveying the table spread with wedding gifts. "That silver tea service of your cousin Dudley's is really splendid."

"Yes, and the pearls Miss Aubrey sent," added Alice.

"Your present is very neat, too, my dear," said the old lady kindly. "But I wonder your Uncle Jared's has not come. He asked me about the wedding a week ago, and he said he should send some remembrance."

Again and again in the course of the rapidly darkening winter afternoon the bell pealed, and fresh presents were brought in.

"But where is Uncle Jared's present?" Nannie kept repeating, and nobody could tell. Not until half a past eight did the much looked for testimonial arrive, when Frank Vavator, the young bridegroom that was to be, was in the drawing-room admiring the presents.

"From Uncle Jared! I know his cramped handwriting," exclaimed Nannie as the servant brought in a square, gold-looking package, wrapped in brown paper and directed to "Miss Alice Cheswick." "What can it be?"

"A set of gold spoons, perhaps," suggested Alice.

The girls held their breath as Frank removed the brown paper wrappings. Alas for the vanity of human expectations, it is no velvet or morocco case, satin-lined and veiled with gold and silver, it was only a quart volume bound in a common brown, and apparently well used.

"A Bible!" ejaculated Alice disdainfully, and an old one at that.

"Here's a note," said Frank, "let us see what he says."

"My Dear Niece: At this important juncture of your life I cannot give you a more fitting offering than the Bible, which was your grandmother's. You will probably have trinkets and jewels in abundance, but this book will be more precious than all. Your affectionate uncle, JARED LEE."

Nannie had burst into tears of mortification.

"Oh, Frank, a rusty, old, second-hand Bible!"

"You can never put that on the table," said Alice scornfully. "What an idea!"

And Uncle Jared's present, long-looked for and loudly heralded, was put in an obscure corner, where a pair of statuettes concealed it from view.

"The mean old miser!" was Mrs. Cheswick's indignant comment, while Nannie, who was really fond of her uncle, wept.

Ane here we close the volume of Nannie's life to be opened ten years afterwards.

There are few homes in which the lapse of ten years does not make a wide difference—and in that of Mr. and Mrs. Vavator the change was perhaps greater than the average. They had lived too fast—a common mistake—and when once they began to retrench, ill-luck seemed to follow them. Nannie, the spoiled daughter of a luxurious home, was learning all the bitterness of poverty now! And Frank—nobody exactly knew how—had retrograded in the world until the humble situation of a bank clerk at a salary pitifully small, was all the dread winter left to him.

And when they brought him home one night with his arm fractured from a fall on the icy pavement, Nannie felt that her cup of bitterness was indeed full.

"I don't mind the pain for myself," Frank said, "but to lie still for nobody knows how long, and my wife and little ones with not a cent ahead! The rent must be paid and the grocer's bill, and the children must wear clothes—God help us! I don't know what the end of all this will be!"

But Nannie knew—and towards twilight when Frank had fallen into a troubled slumber, and little Annie sat watching beside his pillow she put on her hat and stole unseen to an employment bureau.

When she returned it was with a bundle under her arm—sewing which she had obtained.

"Oh, Nannie, have we come to this?" her husband asked slowly, as she sat down by his bedside to commence her task.

"We cannot starve, dear; and there is just a dollar and a half in your purse!"

"I know it, but—"

He stopped abruptly and turned his face to the wall with a groan.

Little Rose came to her mother with pleading eyes at this moment.

"Mamma, can Harry and I have Uncle Jared's Bible to look at the funny pictures?"

Nannie rose, reached down the dusty book from its obscure resting place and placed it on a chair where the children could turn over the leaves at their leisure.

"Be careful not to tear it, dear," she said, thinking sadly how all the other wedding presents had vanished

and how this alone remained a relic of the days of prosperity. Uncle Jared was dead long ago and his money had gone to a hospital.

She was thinking of all the sorrowful change ten years had brought as she stitched away.

"Mamma," cried Rose from the chair, "there are two leaves stuck together."

Nannie leaned over to see and the child was right. Two leaves in the Book of Psalms were pasted together on all sides. She took up the scissors to separate them with a vague indifferent sensation of curiosity. To her astonishment two thin slips of paper fell out.

"What are these?" said inquisitive Rose, stooping to pick them up. And Nannie, scrutinizing them more closely, saw that they were bank notes for \$500 each.

She sat a moment in a sort of bewilderment—and then, like a sudden inspiration, came back to her the stories she had always heard of Uncle Jared's strange eccentricities. This was one of them, the bridal gift he had intended to bestow upon her, had been hidden away in this strange casket. And, now like a special Providence, it came to supply her utmost needs.

"I have been asleep," he said, looking confusedly at her with that strange mingling of reality and fancy which sometimes follows us out of a slumber. "I have been dreaming that we were rich."

"We are rich," she said in a voice that trembled. And she told her tale.

"A thousand dollars! We are rich, indeed!" he exclaimed. "It will support us until my arm gets well again."

"It will do that and have a little to begin the world again with," said Nannie, with tears in her eyes. "Poor, dear Uncle Jared—if he could only see how very happy he has made us both."

When Vavator's tenuous recovery was complete, there were four hundred dollars left out of Nannie's carefully hoarded funds—and that four hundred dollars fortunately invested, was the germ from which sprang first a modest little competence, then a fortune.

Vavator is a rich man now, but he dates his prosperity back to Uncle Jared's bridal present.

A Much Bejaded Man.

"And so here's old Charlie back again. How long is it for this time, Charlie?" This is the greeting that Charles Graham has heard down at the bridewell some fifty or sixty times. He himself says it's more than sixty, but he can't tell exactly how many. There may have been several periods during the last twenty-five years when Graham has been stopping off and on at Chicago's house of correction that have slipped his memory and there is now no longer any one here who remembers the first time that Charlie first entered the institution.

Without belonging to the hobo class, the barrel-house loafer class, and without the slightest criminal instinct, Charlie Graham is probably the most arrested man in Chicago. In appearance he is almost the counterpart of Edward Payson Weston, the pedestrian, and he is exactly the same age, sixty-nine years. The day that Edward Payson Weston entered Chicago Graham had completed his last term of four months or so at the bridewell and was about to leave the penitentiary for his final term. Among the 2,000 odd prisoners who put in time out there by the drainage canal Graham is neither a unique nor an unusual character. But he differs from most of the habitual inmates in that he does not take pride in his residence at the institution, nor does he ever wilfully do anything to get himself incarcerated there. Yet the guards know that just as surely as the sun shines, or that the waters of the Chicago River run down to join the Mississippi, so surely will Charlie Graham come back to the institution within a week or so after his release.

There are men in the institution whose sense of self-respect is entirely gone, who are without the power to take care of themselves if they are drunk of whiskey and then speedily fall the desire to do so, and who will gladly seek to be set back there or voluntarily ask for sentences at the hands of an accommodating court. Some of these boast of as many as 150 sentences to the institution. But these cannot be said to be regularly arrested by the police. The difference between them and Charlie Graham is that he is willing to work, can obtain work, and make a sufficient wage to support himself despite his sixty-nine years, but, nevertheless, in spite of his industry which may have been put forth conscientiously for a week or more after his release, he is sure somehow, to take him to the first policeman who comes along and finds him hopelessly intoxicated. It is a swift journey for him the next day to the nearest police court, and a question of the personal feelings of the judge whether he gets thirty, sixty or ninety days or six months at the bridewell—Chicago's Inferno.

Stanford Diamonds Sold. Almost all the diamonds belonging to the estate of the late Mrs. Jane L. Stanford, widow of Leland Stanford, have been quietly disposed of, and the proceeds will be devoted to the Leland Stanford (Jr.) University, in compliance with the terms of the will of the owner. Most of the gems were sold in London.

Bertha and the River Fairy.

By Maud Walker.

Bertha Lewis was the child of very poor parents. Her home was in the country, about a mile from a large and prosperous town. During the summer months Bertha's father earned a livelihood by mending fish in the river, on whose banks his small farm extended. And Bertha's mother made a garden in the spring, and during the summer she and Bertha peddled fresh vegetables about the village, thus adding a trifle to the small income of the husband and father. But when the winter set in the Lewis family of three, found themselves in dire need of the necessities of life. Mr. Lewis cut wood from the timber on his land and sold it to the dealers in the town, but the proceeds from this source were very meager, and sometimes the cupboard was empty at meal-time and Bertha went to bed crying for food.

The beautiful river near to which sat the cot of the Lewises, was the scene of many a gay festivity during the winter time, for crowds of young people from towns came there anxious to skate on its smooth frozen surface. Sometimes these skating parties would have a night carnival, and then the river would present a gorgeous sight with its hundreds of Chinese lanterns fastened and hung from the bare branches of the trees bordering the banks. And all along the line of skating would gleam merry bonfires, built for the purpose of warming the participants in the carnival.

From the window of their cot Bertha Lewis could see the merry-makers on the river and for hours at a time she would sit there shivering, watching the happy throngs that made the cold air ring with their laughter and song. And often tears of disappointment were in Bertha's eyes, invoked by some of the merry-makers to join them in their sport. And at times a longing would come over her to change places with one of the many girls who were luckier than herself in the matter of pleasures.

Bertha was only twelve years old, but she had known all the hardships attending poverty, all the heartaches that accompany unsatisfied longings, all the miseries of the poor. Her mother was kind and loving, and her father gave to her the very best he could manage to possess; but poverty seemed to be the poor man's lot, and he could not rise above it. Often in his despair he would cry out: "Oh, if I could but give comfort to my dear wife and innocent child!" And at such times Bertha's little heart would respond with deepest sympathy, and, putting her arms about her father's neck, she would whisper gently, encouragingly: "Maybe the good fairies will come some day and bring us wealth. Then we'll have everything we need."

One evening there was a great skating carnival on the river. A gay throng of boys and girls filled it from bank to bank. Their skates gleamed like silver in the light from the lanterns and bonfires. Their faces were radiant with health and happiness. Their voices rang out like music, and their warm attire was most beautiful and elegant to behold. There was one little girl—about Bertha's own size—who caught and held Bertha's attention. She was a dainty miss with brown curls blowing from beneath her pretty boggan cap, which was worn well over her pink ears to keep Jack Frost from nipping them. Her little frock and skirt were of soft red velvet, trimmed about with bands of brown fur. She wore soft, warm, well-fitting leggings of brown broadcloth, which matched in that the fur on her garments and the leather of her shoes. Her hands were slipped into a cosy muff of brown fur. She skated easily, laughing and chatting with her comrades. Bertha singled her out, watching her with glowing eyes and whispering to herself: "Ah, if only I could be like her! What beautiful clothes! How red her cheeks are; and she is so happy that I'm quite sure she never suffers from hunger and cold."

Bertha's mother and father had gone to visit a sick neighbor that evening, telling Bertha to go to bed when they felt sleepy and not to wait up for them, as they might be called upon to sit till midnight with the sick woman. So Bertha sat as long as she wished by the window, watching the gay carnival crowd at their sport. But when the clock struck eight she rose and put on her cloak—a threadbare garment that could barely hang together—and wrapping her head in an old shawl, she went out to get closer to the gay children on the river, but fearing that she might be seen by them should she go directly down the bank in front of the house (at that spot a big bonfire burned, throwing out light, she crept off through the darkness to a point below a bend in the river, where, unobserved, she might look around the point of bank and watch and listen to her heart's content.

She found a sheltered spot behind a clump of evergreen bushes. And there, right on the river a few feet

from where she sat, flowed a great lake in the ice, ice of thin pieces which in some rivers never seem to freeze.

From where she crouched she could see the merry skaters and hear their gay voices much better than from the window of her home on the bank. Here she almost felt a party of the happy throng. She even smiled as she heard the laughter floating to her on the icy wind. Being used to the cold, she did not mind the snow about her feet nor the cutting wind which went right through her cloak as though it was mere paper. Her eyes were feasting on youthful happiness—happiness that she might not have a share in other than watching it from a distance.

Suddenly from the crowd of skaters there dashed a little figure, a figure gay in red velvet and brown fur. Straight toward the bend in the river, toward the very place where Bertha crouched in hiding—it came. And Bertha's heart stopped beating, for she saw it was the little girl whom she had so much admired that evening. She drew herself deeper into the shadow, not wishing to be seen. It was evident that the little girl meant to come around the curve, leaving the bonfires of the skating ground behind her. No one had ever thought of coming down to that point in the river, for the ice there was never smooth, the water flowing so swiftly around the curve that it was freezing it became rough.

But the little miss in velvet and fur was wholly ignorant of the condition of the river below the curve, and as she of the merry-makers and noticed her withdrawal from their midst she was coming on unconsciously and unwarned. And she was coming at good speed, too, her eyes fixed behind her and her eyes dancing with pleasure.

For only a moment did Bertha remain hidden behind the evergreen bushes. Then, her eyes resting on the great yawning hole, she sprang to her feet, her heart throbbing violently. "She'll go right into that hole unless—" and Bertha forgot her own gay old garments, forgot that she was there, crouching like a thief, stealing what pleasure she could by watching the party to which she had not been invited. Right out upon the ice she ran, almost slipping down in her haste. And she was not a moment too soon. Like a bird on the wing the little girl in velvet came around the curve, headed straight for the hole that looked black and awful in the moonlight. When she was almost on it she saw her peril and her eyes became filled with terror. She opened her lips to cry out but made no sound. She tried to reduce her speed but she was going so swiftly that to do so at once was impossible. She clutched at her head, closing her eyes, for she felt that within another second she would be inside that hole that yawned to swallow her.

Then there was a sudden stop and two little girls lay rolling on the ice not five feet from the very verge of the hole. Bertha had leaped forward and caught the little girl as she was flying to her death. The suddenness of the contact brought both of them to the ground, and the severity of the fall stunned them for several seconds. As soon, however, as they regained their sense and got on their feet, Bertha told how she came to be there and how she had run out on the ice to save the little girl in peril. And in vain did the little girl beg of her to go to the place of merry-making, where she should be crowded and loved. Bertha refused herself on the plea of her ragged garments and the fact that she was a stranger.

"Then I shall bring my parents and come to see you to-morrow," declared the little girl, for Bertha had, in answer to her inquiry, told her where she lived.

The next morning, bright and early, a fine sleigh drew up in front of the home of Bertha Lewis, and a little girl in red velvet and brown fur sprang to the ground. She was accompanied by a lady and gentleman, who proved to be her parents. They were admitted to the house by Bertha's mother. They stayed a long time; in fact, the clock was striking 12 when at last they took their departure. And they left behind them three happy people. Bertha, her mother and father. During their visit to thank Bertha for her heroic act of the previous night—when she had saved the life of their little daughter—the lady and gentleman had learned of the poverty of the Lewises, and had arranged to succor them. The gentleman had a position in his great warehouse in town that he offered to Mr. Lewis. Mrs. Lewis was engaged by the lady to act as a housekeeper in her elegant home. And Bertha was to be sent to a fine school—the very school where their own little daughter went.

"And just think, mamma," said Bertha that day as she and her mother were packing up their things to move to town (where they would be so happy in their new employment). "I was just wishing that a fairy would come and change things for us, when round the curve came the beautiful little girl. She proved to be a real river fairy, didn't she?"

"Yes, my dear child," answered Bertha's mother. "But you were better off than a river fairy, for you saved a human life."

In Memory of Dr. de la Lanza.

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