

MISS TANSHAW'S TEA PARTY.

"What a beautiful snow storm," thought Milly, as she stood looking wistfully out of the window. She did so wish to be out! If she, too, were only a little street sweeper! It was so hard to be kept carefully within doors, so hard! She was silent for full ten minutes—busy with her thoughts. At last a happy one struck her, and she turned quickly to her mother, a pretty-faced young woman, who was deeply interested in retrimming a last year's bonnet, and who at this moment exclaimed, triumphantly:

"Really, it will be as good as new."

"Mother," interrupted Milly.

"Well!"

"Then I cannot skate?"

"No," deeply engrossed in the bonnet.

"Nor slide down hills?"

"No, child, not in this snow storm."

"But I can put on my cloak, and new fur tip-pet, and gloves, and take an umbrella, and fill a basket with goodies for poor Miss Tanshaw. Can't I? For she is so poverty poor, you know."

Milly had one thought for Miss Tanshaw and two for herself. For in reality, she thought herself very hardly used to be kept in doors while she deemed it rare fun to be "poverty poor," like Miss Tanshaw, in her little play-house room. Her mother smiled wisely and gave her permission to go. So Milly, like the little woman that she was, equipped herself for the walk. She then went into the store-room and put into a willow basket a loaf of bread, a jar of sweet-meats and four red apples. After which preparations she started forth with as happy a face as one could meet in a day's walk; and the face was no happier than the little warm heart beating beneath the warm cloak. No wonder the snow was not cold to her.

"Oh, the snow, the beautiful snow!" the little heart kept chanting to itself, as she watched the starlike crystals alighting on her dress and gloves. Even the old board fence with its clinging vines, shorn of their summer beauty, was draped in the beautiful snow. Oh, it came down so quietly and comfortably as if it had a world of leisure, and a world of its wealth to bestow. All too quickly she was at Miss Tanshaw's door. In answer to Milley's "rat-tat-tap" at the door, it creaked and wriggled and groaned a little, and then swung wide open; and there stood Miss Tanshaw, a little shriveled figure, the shoulders pinned tightly up in an antiquated baby-blanket, embroidered all around in "herring bone," and various other marvelous stitches. From under the shawl peeped two arms, clothed in the neatest "leg-o-mutton" sleeves. On one finger was a—ring? No; something just as dear to her, and it be-tokened a life-long engagement, too! It was an old brass tinkle, worn full of holes, and as bright as gold itself. But I must not forget her face. A white face, with white hair, white eye-brows and eye-lashes, and two deep-blue, bright, twinkling eyes, which seemed to say, "Ah me, what a dear, delightful, busy world it is; and I've a young heart for it yet, if the wrinkles are in my face."

"Bless the child," she cried in her short, crisp way. "Did she come down in the snow?" And she drew Milly in and took the long broom and swept her from head to foot. "Now, my dear, I've swept the way to your mouth, I must have a kiss." So giving her an emphatic embrace, she whirled her along the hall of the tenement house, into the least atom of a room—not half as big as your play-room—and perched her up in an old arm-chair.

If any one ventured to suggest that Miss Tanshaw might be more comfortable in a large room, she laughed within herself, exclaiming: "No, no, my dearies; you see I have only to

sit in the middle of my room to reach everything. There's my Bible, and there's my bread-jar, and there's my work basket, and there's my cutting-board, and there's the stove with the teapot—so handy." And her hand pointed round the room as if it were a hand on a clock pointing to the hours. "Besides, as for wood, I'm warm as toast with burning two sticks and a few kindlers a day. Then I can tidy up the room, bright as a basket o' chips, in less than a wink o' time."

Milly thought this house-keeping was a wonderful affair, and Miss Tanshaw a sort of divinity. A happy thought struck Milly as she sat perched in the arm-chair, and Miss Tanshaw flitted like a humming bird about her.

"Miss Tanshaw."

"Well, dear?"

"Let's play tea."

"Bless the child! Play tea? Of course you shall." And she buzzed over to a little cupboard, and brought out a tiny, shining tea-kettle, and put it on the tiny stove, over the blaze. It began to sing and sing. She then whirled a little round table—resting on one leg with three carved claws—into the centre of the room. Over this she spread a strip of old white, home-made linen. Upon this she placed one plate with a dot of butter, and another plate with a dot of cheese, and another with a dot of "sassa." Then she brought out a crusty piece of bread, two marvelous little china cups, and two ancient plates, figured with red.

Then came Milly's turn. She climbed down from her perch; drew the basket under her cloak, which she had declined removing; put the loaf on the table, then the jar, and then ranged the four apples beside them.

"Bless the child! bless the child!" cried little Miss Tanshaw, lifting her two hands, and rolling up her two bright eyes. Then she chattered and hummed like the tea-kettle, as she took Milly's wrappings and hung them on a peg, and filled up her teapot, and then sat down to the table. There was a deep silence in the room—even the kettle forgot to sing; all was silent but the old ticking clock. So, in the silence, Miss Tanshaw's laughing eyes closed; and her fingers, pricked with a score of needles were now crossed devoutly on her breast, and her lips moved with the words: "For our blessings, Lord make us truly thankful. Amen." Milly's eyes grew larger and rounder than ever. When Miss Tanshaw lifted her sweet face, it was as light as if in some way the Lord himself looked out of it.

"Miss Tanshaw."

"What, deary? Will you have a sip of tea?"

"Do you always say it?"

"Why, to be sure I do,—have a lump o' sugar in it—only I usually say I and me. Now you know it's we and us."

"Why do you say it? Our folks don't."

"You see, Milly,—have a bit of butter? there's more on the shelf,—you see, I have so much to be thankful for. Bless your heart! Why, I keep singing within me all the time, I'm so thankful."

"What for, Miss Tanshaw?"

Milly had forgotten to eat.

"What for? Why, if it ain't one thing, it is another. If it ain't the broken candles the grocer gives, it's the liver from the Grimes's in killing time; and if it isn't the liver, it's the shirts to make from the Puckaniff's; and if it is not the shirts, it's sitting in Miss Markham's pew; and if it isn't the pew, it's the chips from the new barn-a-building; and if it isn't the chips—have a bit of cheese!—why the beautiful snow comes down for me to look upon; and when I'm thinking of the poor woman round the corner, who should come in but little Milly, as if she snowed out of the clouds. So now I shall have a feast to take to the poor hungering woman I was a-thinking of. Don't you think I ought to think of the giver, Milly?"

Milly's face was full of shame and awe. "I say, Miss Tanshaw, don't you ever say me any more. You just play I'm here, and you say (lifting up her little hands), 'Lord make us truly thankful.'"

A tear came into Miss Tanshaw's eye.

"Yes, deary, it shall be us after this. Any way, all that love the Lord are 'us.' It's just like the 'ring-around-a-rosy' in the school play. We all have a-hold of hands, and are 'us'—only the ring goes all around the world."

Miss Tanshaw and her little guest finished their tea, and cleared away the dishes, and gathered up the fragments; that nothing might waste, then put them in the basket, and went forth in the snow and the growing darkness to carry blessings to the poor woman around the corner.—*St. Nicholas.*

BOTTLED SUNSHINE.

When the cloudy winter days followed by the long chilly evenings have come, how pleasant to gather around the cosy fireside and give ourselves up to the enjoyment of social converse. Contented with the home atmosphere, we care not for the lack of sunshine in the outer world, and agree that we are more than compensated for its loss in the luxury of a delightful wood fire. If the weather is stormy, our pleasure is correspondingly increased. We contract the cold and gloom without with the warmth and brightness within, and wonder how any one can prefer the heat and glare of a summer's sun to enjoyment like these. Summer may be a "glorious season," but winter, too, has its pleasures, and for true comfort we would not forego the present for the brightest days of summer.

Just here a quantum obtrudes itself and disturbs the current of our meditations: "How is it that we have the temperature of mid-summer when the cold winds and driving rains are reminding us that it is mid-winter?" We are rather puzzled at first, but the answer soon flashes into mind: "Our firewood is but a repository of sunshine stored up during the long summer days." In other words, we are using "bottled sunshine." This may seem a strange idea, but let us trace the history of our fuel and see from whence comes the heat. Many years ago a little acorn moistened and warmed by the rain and sun burst its shell and sent a tiny root downward to take nourishment from the earth. At the same time the little stem surmounted by its plumule shot upward into the air. Then the leaves—its lungs—appeared one by one, and the oak, though so small, was an independent tree and able to gather its own food from the elements. Year after year branches and roots were added and multiplied until at last it became the mighty tree of the forest. And so the old oak stood, while generations perhaps were born and buried, defying the storms of winter, drinking sunshine all summer long through every pore and storing it in the wood and bark, only to fall at last by the woodman's ax. And all that we might be comfortable to-night. No wonder we can laugh at wintry winds when we have a store of heaven's own sunlight.

If natural sunshine is so necessary to the comfort and well-being of our physical lives, how much more essential is the sunshine of cheerfulness to our moral lives. 'Tis true we may exist without it, but it could only be a diseased vitality at best.

How shall we be able to meet the cold, dark night of adversity, should it come upon us, if we have not stored up cheerful sunny beams during the summer of prosperity? Some may be growing in dark places. The sun of happiness may not shine on them, and it may seem a difficult task to store up beams of cheerfulness and contentment under such adverse circumstances. But if you will always turn towards the light, and are ready to appropriate every stray gleam of sunshine, it will be possible. Remember that to whom little is given, little will be required.

So bottle the sunshine, and in large quantities. Some persons keep a supply, but it is so small they only have enough for visitors. Let us be wiser than they, and put up a sufficiency for family use. Bottle the sunshine!—*Norma Robinson, in Pacific Rural Press.*