

them any time they may be of service to you."

Oh, my! Ruth was always so good! Always finding some way of exercising her spirit of kindness. And such good nature is so often imposed upon in this world.

I peeped at Frank without seeming to look off my book, and if his face didn't shine and his eyes sparkle with gladness, then snow isn't snow, and sunshine isn't sunshine when they meet on a clear winter's day.

Ruth was looking at him too, and I could see that she just then discovered, for the first time, that he was a very handsome young man.

The feeling came over me, right then, that Frank, generous and honest as I believed him to be, would take advantage of the broad opportunity my sister had given him.

And my suspicions proved to be correct. For a week that wrist had to be attended to every evening. Two or three times Frank stayed an hour or so, and read to us. And we were more and more charmed with his style of reading as he became familiar with us, and we with him. Father went with him several times to see his aunt Minnie, who continued to get better from that time on.

Frank did not depend on me any more for taking messages; he and Ruth made their own appointments without consulting me. And so, on Washington's birthday, it was very sudden news to me, when Ruth told me that Mr. Wilber had invited her to go to the theater that evening; and that, as father did not object, she was going.

A great longing to accompany them seized me; there was no other amusement that I enjoyed like going to the theater; but, for the first time in my life, on such an occasion, I controlled my tongue. Instead of saying anything to indicate my own desires, I tried to look very pleased and said I was so glad she was going out for an evening's enjoyment, a thing she had not done since the death of our dear mother.

I promised also to take good care of the babies, so Ruth need not feel the least uneasiness about them. In giving utterance to these pleasant things I felt quite manly; felt as though I was beginning to learn of my gentle sister, the noblest of all lessons, to be forgetful of self in the richer enjoyment of helping to increase the happiness of others.

Ruth put her arms around me, kissed me, and smiled upon me tenderly. I returned her embrace, and for awhile we stood thus, thinking of mother, believing that she could see us and was happy.

Then Ruth had to go to the babies, as father had been playing with them, and they were going to cry when he got up to leave them; and I went into the kitchen to finish up some work I had been neglecting there.

Before father went out, I heard him say to Ruth. "Frank Wilber's visits here, seem to be doing Mark a world of good; I'm glad he has taken to calling. It's queer though, with such a difference in their ages, that he should chum with our little Mark." Ruth shut the middle door, and I did not hear her reply.

My! but didn't I feel manly then? Frank Wilber "chumming" with me! And father seeing it, and saying so to sister! No New Year's resolutions with me, ever came up to the many good resolutions I formed on the twenty-second

of February. I would never think again of wanting to go out evenings with noisy, rowdy boys, to disturb people with ugly valentines, or any other way. I would read aloud to Ruth as often and as much as she would let me, until I should be able, like Frank, to charm and delight people with my eloquent reading. I would do whatever I had to do, willingly and cheerfully, after that, as both Frank and Ruth did. I would never shirk or complain any more, over anything.

Towards evening, father came home after a short absence, bringing with him a cheery, chatty old lady. It was Frank's Grandma Wilber; and she soon made us understand that her daughter Minnie was so much better of the cold she had been suffering with on her lungs and in her head, that she could do without her very well; and she had come to stay with Brother Price and the children while Ruth would be at the theater, so she could feel perfectly easy, and have a good time.

Ruth said how kind it was of her; and I acknowledged that I should be glad to have her there, but believed I could take care of the babies all right, as they were both good natured, and both very fond of me.

"But you are going to the theater with Brother Wilber and me, Mark, dear," said my sister with her prettiest smile.

I don't think I had ever heard anything that sounded quite as sweet to me as those words did. I could have burst into tears and cried hard for joy. But instead, I threw my arms around Ruth's neck and kissed her with all my might, just as Frank came in. They all laughed at me, but I didn't care, I laughed too.

We had as good a time as I ever spent at the theater that evening; I never want to forget it.

Well, it did seem as though Frank's wrist never would get well. I forgot whether it was three weeks or a month that it required almost daily care from Ruth. If anything happened that prevented Frank's calling as often as every other evening, he would say he had been dreadfully uneasy, hardly able to wait for his doctor's opinion as to how his case was progressing and liable to terminate.

Then, when there was nothing left of the sore on his wrist but a little pink scar, and it was wasteful to use medicine and bandages on it any longer, he worked so late one evening, and it got so near dark that he mistook his thumb for a bolt, and struck it such a hard blow that he smashed it pretty badly; and that had to be doctored for about six weeks. And with this second case, Ruth became so much like a real physician that she worried about her patient if she did not see him every day or two; fearing her applications might not be just what was best suited to the case.

We had pleasant times, all the same, reading to each other evening after evening, as times and circumstances would permit; and occasionally going to places of amusement for a change.

Thus, with little variations, a year passed, a whole, long year. It was again the evening before St. Valentine's day.

Father was away from home somewhere; Joseph and Mary were both sleeping quietly; I had been troubled with tooth-ache during the day, and had

gone to bed early. So Ruth sat alone by the fire, darning stockings, and looking rather sober, (I could see her face as I lay very still in my bed,) for Frank's last ailment had been an inflamed eye, and he hadn't been in for two days to say how the wash she had prescribed was affecting it.

There came a very soft knock at the door. Ruth's face brightened; she knew whose knock it was, so did I. She went noiselessly to the door and opened it, holding up a warning finger, and Frank followed her back to the hearth, stepping as cautiously as she did. She motioned him to a seat, hung up his hat and then asked in a low tone how his eye was.

"It is all right, thanks to you, my good physician," said Frank in a low but earnest voice. Then he asked where I was, and Ruth told him about my having the toothache. I saw by his face he was glad I was out of the way. My tooth had become easy, and I didn't want to disturb it by speaking. So I kept still, and they, thinking I was asleep, went on talking softly. In a few moments, some wonderful things had been opened up to my mind.

"I know where your father is," said Frank, "I just left him with aunt Minnie. They were glad to be rid of me. You know, don't you, they are planning about their marriage, which, I suppose comes off soon." "Yes, I know," answered Ruth.

"I had not known it before, but had suspected something of the sort, and felt relieved to learn the true state of affairs."

"Ruth," said Frank, "it's a year now since you began doctoring me. There has been something the matter with me nearly every day from that time till now. Of course, as you know, most of the time it has been merely an excuse, to get to come and see you. But I have lately discovered, unmistakably, what my true ailment is. It's real this time, no sham about it; and as your father says you may cure me if you can, I have come to you this evening for a decision of the case. It is an extremely delicate one, and I hope you will treat me with much mercy; and be willing to apply the curative as speedily as possible. It's my heart that's affected now; and I know what the true remedy must be. There must be another heart 'to beat as one' with it; will you find me that other, Ruth?"

They were both standing in front of the fire now; Ruth with her head turned partly away, so that I could not see her face; but I knew she was trembling, and blushing the same as she did while dressing Frank's wrist the second time, only, I imagined, looking still rosier and more beautiful. And Frank was watching her as eagerly as if his whole life really depended upon her decision.

She waited a moment or two after he ceased speaking. Then, without turning her head or raising her eyes, she said, "You have referred to a year ago tonight, Frank. Do you not remember also a year ago tomorrow night, when I told you that, as my father's and my brother's friend, you were perfectly welcome to any medical service I should be able to render? Now, if your heart troubles you, and it is in my power to give you relief, tell me what to do."

She looked up at him suddenly then; he opened his arms and received her, as she threw her's around his neck. I