

Youth's
Keepsake;
A Christmas And New Year's Gift
For Young People

"Take it- 'tis a gift of love,-
That seeks thy good alone;
Keep it for the giver's sake,
And read it for thine own."

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The Canary Family

I paid a visit to my friend Sophia, yesterday. I could describe her; but if the portrait did justice to her peculiar loveliness, every one who knows the original would know it, and that she would not like; for she is not a subject for an exhibition picture, but for an image to be worn next the heart. I may say of her, for in this feature of her character I trust that many of my young friends resemble her, that she has certain delicate chords in her composition that vibrate to whatever is beautiful and loveable. Her first glance and smile win a child's love; the most delicate flowers thrive under her culture as if they were in their native atmosphere, and the most timid birds are soon tamed by her gentle usage, and seem to make her their intimate and confidential friend.

Her favorites, at present, are a little family of canaries. She gave me their history, and it is evi-

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-dent that she has observed their conduct, and studied their characters, with an interest similar to that which a tender mother feels in her offspring. She, who watches over her little dependents with such love, must be a more accurate observer than the bird-fancier, who rears the bird, as the slave merchant trains his captive, for the market. We, therefore, request our readers will

believe our story, and we pledge them the word of a faithful biographer that we will not add a single fictitious circumstance to embellish it.

Sophia being much alone procured a canary, as an innocent and pleasant companion. She preferred a male, because the male birds are gifted with the sweetest song. The little creature soon seemed to feel quite at home in Sophia's boudoir, and attached to his gentle mistress. As far as he could, he made his society agreeable. He seemed never tired of singing to her; would flourish quite a pretty little accompaniment when she played on the piano; would perch on her shoulder, for she allowed him the liberty of the room; and sometimes daintily pick from her plate when she was eating. In short, he did his best to be happy in his solitude, but after a while he got the blues, became silent, and drooped, and Sophia said it was not good for birds any more than man to be alone, so she went to Lawrie Todd's, the immortalized florist and bird-fancier, and selected the prettiest little damsel in

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the aviary to be a companion for our sighing bachelor. Some persons have thought that if the President of the United States appointed all the matches in the country, they would prove full as happy as they now do. Certain it is, that if our little friend had had the pick of his own bright isles, he could not have been better satisfied, than he was with the selection his mistress had made for him. He and his helpmeet were the picture of conjugal harmony, and she, a thrifty little wife, soon began to build her nest, and thus prepare for the expected wants of a young family.

Sophia took care that she should not lack materials. She hung within the cage a net-bag, containing hay and hair. The husband seemed anxious to aid her, and certainly did his best, but he was clumsy at house-work, and Sophia observing that the little lady hardly gave herself breathing time, and afraid that she would overwork herself, contrived, dexterously to intertwine some of the hairs in the nest. But even Sophia's delicate fingers were not equal to the art of the bird. At first glance at her nest, she lost her sweet temper, flew into a violent passion, went to work like a little fury, and in half a minute she had extricated every one of the hairs inserted with such pains, and then arranging them with the nicest skill, she seemed to say, 'Shall a mortal presume to mingle her coarse labour with

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that of a heaven-instructed bird?' Her mate stood by, the while, and it may be, laughed in his feathered sleeve, to find his little wife a lady of such spirit, and, like a prudent husband, resolved to never provoke it.

Sophia placed feathers within reach, aware how very carefully the bird prepares the inside of the nest, the part that is to come in contact with the unprotected skin of the young bird. It was affecting to see with what pains the little creature cut off, with her bill, the quill of the feather, as we have often seen a careful mother remove every pin and needle that could possibly scratch her child.

Sophia once more interposed, and with better success. She scraped some very soft lint and put into the cage. This service, Mrs. Canary very thankfully accepted, for thanks are certainly best expressed by using well the gift. She instantly caught up the lint, and in a very

short time completed the nest. Sophia says, and she has a right to know, that there is as much difference in individual character among birds as human beings; and that lady-birds sometimes, as well as ladies, make very indifferent house-wives. But our heroine was not one of these. She was a pattern. Her nest was as exactly formed as if it were done by a mathematical rule, and the entire labour of constructing this beautiful little edifice was performed in one day.

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In the course of a week four eggs were deposited in it; and in eleven days, or one fortnight after, I have forgotten which, four birds, three males and one female, made their appearance. And now the young husband, became a father, was more devoted than ever. He was an epicure for his wife; selected all the delicate morsels for her, and aided her in feeding the young ones. She, like all good wives, was keeper at home. He, was a pattern of conjugal kindness. Except when employed in procuring food, he laid his head beside his mate's, and if any stranger came into the apartment, he would start up, sit on the side of the nest, half extend his wings, and fix his eye on the intruder, as much as to say, 'If any discourteous knight disturb my lady-love, I will do battle in her behalf.' But his chivalric spirit was not called into action. Sophia took care that no one should rudely approach the cage, and the happy little family was unmolested.

It was a scene of perfect domestic happiness, which, a poet says, (I do not believe him,) is the 'Only bliss that has survived the fall.'

Who would have thought that at this moment a cloud was gathering over this harmonious contented family!

Adjoining the house in which Sophia lives, is a public garden, one of the favourite resorts and prettiest embellishment of our city. I wish I could

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transport all my young friends there, that they might realize some of the beautiful visions that have floated around their brains when they have been reading the Arabian Tales. The garden is laid out with taste, enriched with plants of every clime, and filled with the delicious odours of Cape jasmines and orange flowers. Every thing is managed with taste. Before a saloon in the centre of the garden, is a pyramid of fragrant leaves and bright blossoms, formed by placing pots on circular benches around a pump, which but for this floral drapery, would have been a deformity. Every evening the garden is lighted by colored lamps hung in arches over the walks, illuminated columns, and fantastic transparencies. One broad avenue terminates at one extremity by noble mirrors, that multiply to apparent myriads the crowds that resort to this fairy land. At the other end of this avenue a painting is hung, in which the walk is so well represented by the art of perspective, that it seems to stretch as far as the eye can extend; a winding path leads to a grotto, embellished with shells and corals, and sparkling with crystals, a fit bower for the pretty naiads. In another secluded nook is a hermitage, which seems to be in a deep and

rocky recess, where sits a hermit, 'reverend and gay.' I would not advise my young friends to examine all these things by daylight, lest they should find they

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had been deceived by false appearances. There is no harm in an agreeable and innocent illusion.

But to return to our canaries, whom we left at the moment of impending evil.

Sophia as we said, had always allowed her first canary the liberty of the room. The weather had now become so warm that she sat with her window raised, and the bird, either tempted by the sweet odours that rose from the garden, or the love of liberty, and probably not aware of the danger of separation from his family, flew out of the window. Sophia was alarmed and distressed, and she immediately hit on the most probably expedient for recovering the wanderer. She had her cage conveyed to the garden. The little rover was skimming the air and perching on the green branches, but the moment he espied his mate and her little ones, he flew to his home again, preferring captivity with them to freedom without them.

The cage was again taken in hand to be reconveyed to the boudoir. Mrs. Canary seemed agitated and flurried with the sudden changes in her condition; her little head was turned with joy at the recovery of her mate. She flapped her wings against the wires of the cage, lighted on her perch, and on her nest, and finally, for the door of the cage had been carelessly left open, out she went. It was evident she was bewildered. The cage was set down in the hope that the instincts of the mother

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would bring her back, but I would have no doubt the poor little creature was like a person suddenly deprived of reason. She flew round and round, as birds are said to do, when fascinated by a snake. There was some wild sparrows flying over the garden, they hovered around her. This seemed still farther to alarm and distract her; the little vagrants encompassed her; enclosed her within their circle, and drove her off, and she was forever lost to her bereaved family.

I do not doubt her widowed mate felt all that bird could feel. He expressed his affection for his lost companion as good husbands should do, by the most devoted care of the little ones. She was a foster mother to them, and he was father, mother, every thing. It was really affecting to see his care of them. It was much as he could do, with all the aid Sophia gave him in cracking the seeds, to supply food to the hungry little fry; the poor fellow really became thin, while they grew apace.

Perhaps some of our young readers may not know how the parent prepares the food for the young bird. An egg, boiled hard, a lettuce leaf, seeds and water, were all placed by Sophia within the bird's reach. He would take a little of each, and appear to roll the whole in his mouth till it was formed into a paste. Then he seemed to swallow it; for when he was a distribute it to the birds, he made a motion with his throat, like that which

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is necessary to recover what is partly swallowed. While the birds were very young, one preparation would suffice for the whole; but in a few days, three of them would eat all their father could prepare at once. He was not discouraged at this, but went patiently to work again. Sophia was alarmed lest he should forget which was the unfed bird; he never mistook, but always, like a just and good parent, made an equal distribution to all his children.

Never did a nursery, under the care of the most experienced nurse, thrive better. At the end of the week, the female bird, the only female of the brood, was hopping off her nest. She was the most forward, knowing bird, of her age, ever seen. In a fortnight, she flew about the room, and lured her timid brothers to adventure forth. She continues to manifest the same bold enterprising, independent character.

A friend of Sophia's who had admired, from day to day, the devotion of the father to his young, very kindly sent him the best reward of his fidelity, another mate. When I saw the family last, his second wife had built her nest, though not half so well as her predecessor. She was sitting on her eggs, and was most affectionately tended by her husband. Sophia complains that he has become somewhat of a hen-hussy, and had rather be cowering over the nest than abroad on the wing, with his

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gay flock. They all live harmoniously with the step-mother, save the little vixen of a girl; and she pecks and scolds the lady-mama, who bears her pettishness with calmness and dignity, and will, I doubt not, in time, subdue the little shrew.

New York, 20 June 1830