

Chapter 3 - Angie's Power (Part 1), December 1922



POOR little Angie had many days of pain, when she would lie on her tiny, white bed, her face thin and drawn, All the family, at such times, tried to show their love and sympathy. Even Teddy and Mick would tip-toe in with a picture or a flower or a home-made toy to awaken her interest, and Baby Bet would toddle after them, her eyes like two big, blue O's, her mouth like a pink one. She would place her beloved, battered old dolly on Angie's pillow. "There, Angie, Polly Dollykins will make 'oo better. Polly Dollykins always makes Baby Bet better." Bet had had "lots" of dollies during Polly Dollykins' life, but she always went back to the old love: Polly Dollykins had been all but killed with kindness.

Angie bore her sufferings patiently; not once did she grumble or complain, not once did she ring the little bell Mother placed by her bedside, when the children were away at school, and Mother could not stay very long with her. Angie expected no "waiting on," and, consequently, the family were one and all anxious to serve her, and to sit with her whenever possible.

She was a most obedient little patient, and no medicine was too nasty if Mother explained it was to do her good. In fact, Angie, as you have guessed, was a most extraordinary little girl. I think she was a saint.

During hot, summer days it is hard for a little girl to lie in bed and be "good," but Angie did it. She had learnt to bear her sufferings for Our Divine Lord's sake, and to offer them for herself and for others. Every moment of the hot, weary, pain-laden days she offered now for the Missionaries in China. She could never hope to grow strong enough to go to China to help them, but she could help them by her patient sufferings.

When Angie had a "bad turn," Dr. O'Sullivan used come to see her, but during his absence on holidays a new doctor came. He had not Dr. O'Sullivan's genial manner - he was older, and silent and stern-looking.

Dr. Chester attended her regularly, and tided her over one more "bad turn." All the Dalys knew - even Baby Bet seemed to understand - that one day (and perhaps very soon) a "bad turn" would come that no doctor could conquer, and that it would take Angie away from them

forever.

Mother had thought Dr. Chester very reserved in his manner, but one day, instead of hurrying off, as was his wont, he lingered a moment talking of the child's recovery, and then he said: "She is very patient - the little one. I suppose" - he waved his hand towards Angie's oratory, with its sweet, white roses and twinkling blue lamp - "that has something to do with it."

"Yes," Mother replied, "that has everything to do with it."

"I wish," he said, and then paused, and Mother knew he was wondering if he should tell her something, ask her something; but his natural reserve made him think the better (or worse) of it. He said "Good-morning," and went away.

Angie would be well for Christmas Day, was the grateful thought of the Dalys. Christmas with Angie in bed would have been dull indeed. Mother thanked God that the child was with her for another Christmas. "We must all be very, very happy."

Holidays came - and went by electricity! Press a button - and a day was done! Such busy, well-filled days they were. Such cleaning and brushing and polishing of the old house. All the children helped and enjoyed it.

Everyone had "a stir" of the pudding and the cakes. The boys brought in loads of greenery and decorated the hall, the verandahs and the dining room. There was much mysterious shopping to be done; presents to be bought secretly and hidden away. There was the St. Vincent de Paul hamper to be filled with Christmas goods, and sent down to Mr. O'Grady, who would see to it that some poor family received it, and had Christmas cheer for the festive days.

All the children provided something, from their savings, for the hamper.

Mother's donation was a pudding, cakes, eggs and lollies. Father sent a ham and some tinned things. Mary, being practical, bought packets of flour and porridge foods. Teddy and Mick scoffed at her purchase. "Flour! If there are children - and poor people always have children - they will be disappointed when old, common flour and porridge are unpacked." So they put in packets of jelly (the common kind that all little boys love to make and eat) and pea-nuts and an assortment of popular, gay-looking sweets from their own particular shop. "The kids will cheer up when their mother opens our parcel."

Angie bought three tins of strawberry jam - her own favourite; and Mack (wise, like Mary) invested in rice, sago and golden syrup (for the very little ones, that Teddy said were sure to be in the house). Baby Bet favoured condensed milk. She was partial to it herself - could eat it with a spoon! Indeed, she had been known to appropriate a tin, just opened, to provide "a party" for herself and Shamie.

The hamper was packed, blessings and good wishes filled all the corners, and it was sent off to Mr. O'Grady, and the Dalys never knew what poor family benefited by their kindness - they did not want to know. Every year, since Mother and Father had "set up house," they had sent a Christmas Hamper to the poor, and as their family grew, so did the hamper. Father and Mother looked on each child as a fresh gift from God, a new and precious possession, making them richer than they were before, and thus making it their duty to give more to the poor.

Christmas morning!

All up early and away to Mass! The whole family, except Baby Bet, knelt at the altar rails. What a happy family they were! On their return to the house there were presents to be exchanged and Baby Bet's "Santy-Sock" to be examined and admired.

The Peace and Joy of Christmas flooded the house, until even the very air felt sanctified. Being earnest little Missionaries, they did not forget their Big Brothers in China. They had remembered them at the altar; they remembered them now, and talked about them, and wondered what Christmas in China would be like, and whether the Missionaries would feel very lonely for Ireland and Australia.

"Wish we could fly over," Teddy said, "I'd take them the pudding. It's a knock-out pudding, all right!"

A knock - out?" Mother smiled.
"That does not sound complimentary to the cook."

"Oh, but it is. I mean it could knock out any other pudding in Australia in the whole world!"

Angie wondered if "Santy" visited the Chinese children.

"Oh, the little pagan ones don't know anything about Christmas or Santy. But I suppose the children the Sisters have in their care know all about good old Santy."

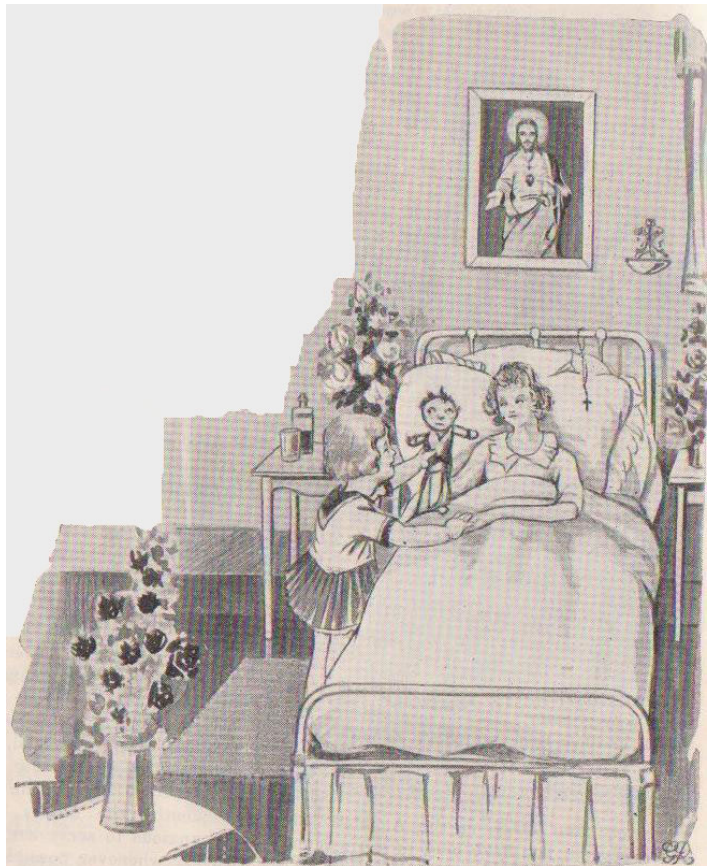
"I'd give them all my dollies - except Polly Dollykins," said Baby Bet. "I couldn't give them Polly. She would fret for me."

"Well, we can't send them puddings or dollies," said the wise, eldest sister. "But we can send them prayers. Remember them lots of times to - day. And don't forget the Mite Boxes are hungry, and want their Christmas dinner."

The happiest day must end, and that delightful Christmas slipped by into eternity.

Mother was very much surprised, one morning of the following week, when she saw Dr. Chester's car at the gate. He had not been to see Angie for some weeks. The child was well, as well as she could ever hope to be.

He came in, and as he said "Good morning," she saw again the look of indecision in his face,



as if he said to himself: "Shall I? Shall I?" He asked how Angie was, and the other children, and then said, abruptly: "I want to ask your help, Several times I have been on the point of confiding in you, telling you my troubles -"

Mother gave him a chair, and sat opposite him, her sweet face alight with sympathy and motherly kindness.

"Tell me," she said, softly.

To be continued