

Part II Chapter 17 Stitches Is Stitches

Dear Mama and Da,

August, 1834

Thank you for the news about the death of Mrs. Bradley. What a dear old lady. I am happy that her children were with her when she died—She always told me she thought they had all forgotten her. You ask if I've forgotten you; you know that couldn't happen. All is well—rest assured. I am well, yes, and Tom is well, Helena is well—she had us scared in the winter, but she's fine now. And wait till you hear our good news!—You may expect another grandchild next May. Pray that this one will come easy. And if it's another girl, I told Tom, she'll be Rosana, after you, Ma.

Helena is blossoming—I wish you could see her. She's a year old now and trying to walk. She's a good baby—doesn't wake up at night crying. She jabbars all the time—we can't understand anything but “Mama” and “Da”—we think that's what she's saying. We all spoil her, especially Tom. He rigged up a little baby sulky to pull her around in and says he plans to hitch it to the colt. I told him that's enough nonsense. What if Jack started and bolted away? Tom and his ideas! I'd rather Little Nell pulled the sulky, as she likes to do. —She's started school this past year, did I tell you? She's in the parish school, which isn't nearly as good as the public school, but if she goes there, she'd be forced to read from the King James Bible. I don't know if I would care about that. What do you think? We never read the Bible in school.



I'm back working for Mrs. Daly twice a week. She's been begging me to come—says she hasn't had a seamstress who pleases her since I left for my confinement. “They pay no attention to detail,” she said. The problem is I've been working for Mr. Leary—who's trying to keep up with the ready-made tailors. He's teaching me and Betty to be cutters and sewers of gentlemen's clothes. He says we're doing so well, no one will know they were not made by him. “Stitches is stitches,” Tim says, “no matter who makes 'em.” I don't quite agree, I don't see how anyone would not prefer fancy stitches. I embroidered flowers on a silk waistcoat, and Mr. Leary sold it right out from his shop. I think “ready-made” might be a good idea.

Mrs. Daly has found God, she says. She goes to the Chatham Chapel every week to sing hymns and listen to Mr. Finney and the other speakers—mostly abolitionists. It gives her consolation and strength, she says. She wants me to go sometime. Tom went with Tim once, but there was a riot that evening, so they left and say I shouldn't go as it's too dangerous. Ladies do go—Mrs. Green and the abolitionist ladies. I'm surprised Mr. Daly lets her go.

Tom had a scare with Dolly and Jack last month. He heard a commotion out back—whinneys from the horses. Tom was out there in a minute and found a man had broken into the shed and was pulling Dolly out the door to steal her and Jack. Tom punched the fellow and hit him with a board. Now he locks the shed. He sets so much store by those horses, and has such dreams for that yearling colt. I asked Mrs. Daly if Willie might like to have his own horse some day—a chestnut, and she said she'll ask Mr. Daly. Tom dreams of Jackson becoming a trotter, pulling a sulky, looked after with the Daly's horses in a livery stable. Other times, he imagines Jackson could make a winning race horse and dreams of going to the trotting track to watch him. And other times he says maybe someday Jack will take us for country drives along upper Third Avenue. Now I know he's a dreamer.

Yes, we do go to Church. Every Sunday morning we all go to the 9 o'clock Mass at St. Peter's across Broadway. I don't get much from it; we can't hear anything they're saying and since it's all in Latin, except for the readings and the sermon, we can't understand much. Since it's been this way for centuries, I guess that's enough for us—. We have made some nice friends there, yes. We can't invite people to visit us, no, as we don't have any place of our own but the one room. The rest belongs to the Learys, who have been kind enough to share whatever they have and invite us to eat with them, but we don't feel we can impose on them and expect them to entertain any special friends of ours. They do like Michael—he's always welcome and eats with us when he can get away from the saloon. Tom visits with him there, but women don't go—at least proper women don't. Michael's friend Peggy is often there, Tom says. Poor Peggy! I don't like to think about her. She's still after Michael, but we all know that's hopeless—he's not settling down until he's "got a stake." When you tell Tom's family what I've written, leave out that bit about Michael and Peggy.

This summer has been lovely in New York. Our favorite place is Battery Park on Sunday afternoons. Tim and Betty and Nell and Tom and I pull Helena in her little cart. We take picnic lunches and sit and eat and watch the bay and harbor—especially on July 4. I just wish you could have seen the fine tall ships and steam boats and ferries all decorated and parading. Really, Galway Bay has nothing to compare. I told Mrs. Daly that watching the water and the ships is what gives me strength and courage. Is that silly? I think Tom feels that way about his horses. He always says how much courage Dolly has.

I wish I **could** send you the passage for one of my brothers--Tom's family asks the same, but that so far that's beyond us. It took Michael three years to get enough for us, and even then it wasn't enough. Passage from Liverpool to New York is 35 guineas, Tom says. How blessed we were to have gotten here on the little we had. No, I'm never going to tell you how we managed. We're sending along a few dollars though. Tom doesn't earn much and I'm not taking anything from Mr. Leary for helping him with my needle. He's having a hard time as it is--keeping customers, competing with the ready-mades, and the rents going up

(though he hasn't asked us for more), and Betty's expecting too.

New York is growing without control, even in the short time since we've been here—so many new people arriving, and space is precious. I tell Tom I'm glad he decided to come and that we didn't wait any longer but came when we did, before all these newcomers, and that Tom has found a way of earning a living for us and enjoys it. He loves being outdoors with the horse and getting to know the city, delivering goods to customers in different neighborhoods. People all know him, he says, as "the cartman with the spare." Now Jackson is almost as big as Dolly. Helena is growing too—her hair is still little golden curls—She's such a darling—I hope our next looks just like her.

Give my love to all and tell Father O'Toole that we're doing well and have no regrets.

Your loving daughter,

Bridget