

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Polly's Christmas Inheritance.

(By Emma Huntington Nason, in 'Forward'.)

'Two letters, and both for me!' called Mabel from the hall.

Mrs. Ingraham and her younger daughter Madge looked up with inquiring interest.

'One's from dear Mrs. Aldrich, and the other—oh, the other's from Nova Scotia—just from Cousin Polly, of course! I'll read Mrs. Aldrich's letter first.'

Mabel carefully opened the envelope at the end that its dainty seal might not be broken.

'Oh, what a lovely monogram!' she exclaimed, and then added, as she glanced eagerly down the page:

'Dear Mrs. Aldrich! This is just like her! She knows we are always as poor as poverty, and a little poorer this year, if possible; but she would not intimate that we girls ought to be earning a little money for ourselves! She just puts it in this way.'

'Oh, tell us! tell us!' cried Madge. 'If there is a heaven-sent chance for us to earn an honest penny, don't stop to break it gently!'

'I believe I am not the member of this family who is most addicted to making superfluous remarks,' replied Mabel. 'If my loquacious little sister will be silent, I will proceed.'

'I am silent as the sphinx!' humbly responded Madge.

'Well, dearie, Mrs. Aldrich writes that a woman's exchange has been opened in town, where all sorts of needlework, embroidery, and a long list of other things, will be received and sold for the contributors, only a small percentage of the price being retained by the exchange, and Mrs. Aldrich thinks that you and I might enjoy doing some of our pretty and artistic work for the Christmas sale, this year.'

'Oh, yes! simply for the pleasure of it, of course!' replied Madge. 'What a perfectly transparent blandishment!'

'But just think,' said Mabel, 'this is the very opportunity for which we have been sighing, but which we thought would never come to us, living in this little town. Now don't you think, Mother, that it is very kind in Mrs. Aldrich to write us about this exchange? She really knows what our work is, for we each sent her a fair sample for a Christmas gift last year.'

'Making acceptable Christmas gifts is a very different thing from making salable art work,' interrupted Madge ruefully.

'That is very true,' replied Mrs. Ingraham. 'Still, as Mabel says, Mrs. Aldrich has seen your work. She must consider it of some merit; and I should be very glad if you and Mabel could earn something toward your winter outfits this year. The funds in the "ginger jar" are rather low,' added the mother with a faint smile.

'Dear Mardie,' exclaimed Madge, jumping up from her chair and giving her mother a loving little hug. 'I'll go right to work, this very day, and paint some water colors in the highest style of modern art. Of course, none of them will sell; but Mabel's beautiful embroidery must and will. But why don't you read Polly's letter, Mabel? You have forgotten all about it.'

'I had, actually,' replied Mabel, hastily tearing open the envelope bearing the familiar cramped and crooked handwriting which they all recognized as Cousin Polly's.

'Of all things! Isn't this vexing?' cried Mabel. 'Polly's father is going to

Chicago, and she wishes to come on with him, and make us a little visit, while her father is at the West.'

'Dear little Polly,' said Mrs. Ingraham, 'how glad I shall be to see her.'

'Yes,' assented Mabel, 'but what can we do, just now, with Polly? There are only six or seven weeks before Christmas, and we shall be just as busy as we can be, especially if we do this work for the Woman's Exchange; and then there is Christine Stuart's tea party; and Polly—well, Polly—is so—provincial, you know! Of course, she would be, living always in that

economy had the mother been able to keep her home and educate her daughters; and her slender income was this year materially reduced by a recent unfortunate investment.

Mrs. Ingraham, therefore, would have been very glad if her daughters, by the talents which they undoubtedly possessed, could earn something towards their necessary expenses, to say nothing of the hundred and one little trifles so dear to the girlish heart, but seldom afforded for their personal gratification.

About Polly's visit, however, there was no question. So Mabel sat down imme-



THESE WERE BUSY TIMES IN THE INGRAHAM HOUSEHOLD.

little out-of-the-way place, in Nova Scotia.'

Mrs. Ingraham looked up in pained surprise.

'Forgive me, Mother,' said Mabel, penitently. 'We will make Polly have a good time, and we will do the work for the Christmas sale besides.'

Mabel and Madge both believed that they understood and appreciated the love and self-sacrifice of their devoted mother; but they really had no comprehension of the care and anxiety which this same 'dear little Mardie' had known since their father's death. Only by a very rigid system of

diately and wrote a most cordial reply to her cousin's letter.

A week later Polly came, and they all were very glad to see her. In fact, they could not help being glad, for Polly was such a joyous, sunshiny girl herself that happiness radiated from her very presence. She was not a pretty girl, but she had a bright, fresh face, dancing blue eyes, and fluffy, curly hair, that was always flying about in a breeze which Polly seemed herself to create.

Her new navy-blue serge suit was very evidently 'home-made.' Her hats were