

She did not answer. "We'll begin," she said, "with yesterday's lesson again. You'll have to make better progress Donald, or Frankie'll catch up to you."

He made no progress that morning; and when the lessons were finished and Miss Morris had gone, he found himself fallen on a withered day. All the witchery and surprise of his Christmas were threatened; and his mother's "Leave the child his Santa Claus" was as humiliating as Miss Morris's cold smile.

He spread the rug on the floor in the accepted configuration of a battlefield, but he lost heart for the game before he had his first fort built and his soldiers drawn up in rank for Frankie's cannonade of marbles. He took hold of the end of the rug, and tossed the whole campaign into the air with a jerk that threw his brother off his balance and bumped the back of his head against the table leg. Frankie went bawling down the stairs; and Don locked the playroom door against the visit of any avenging Nannie.

No one came. He was left to fret about the room in aimless discontent.

Now before every Christmas in the past, he had sent letters to Santa Claus with Nannie's help—letters that had been meaningless scrawls of lead pencil, because he had not then learned to write. He had "posted" them in a crack of the attic floor at the foot of a large post that supported the beams of the roof; and on every Christmas, the toys which he had