

THE LITTLE FOLK.

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE.

Christmas was coming! but Mr. Eaden was gone, and the family had moved into a cottage by the river side, and many things were so different with them that not only the children, but mamma and Aunt Mary felt some anxiety about the coming festival.

"I don't believe we shall have any kind of a time Christmas," said Frank to his sisters. "Pa's gone, and mother says she cannot get much for us—only things to wear, that we should have any way."

"But danma's toming, and danpa," said Fannie, "and danma 'll tell 'tories, and I'll yide on danpa's foot."

"Yes," said Annie, "and drandmamma will make wag babies—ever so many; and funny bonnets—beautiful—with capes!"

"Papa used to fill up our stockings," Emma said, "and he'll think of us, I know, and Uncle Winchester will bring us some books. I'd rather have books than anything."

"Oh, yes! and grandma Eaden sent us a box last year and year before—oh, we shall have a merry Christmas! I'm not afraid. I'll go and ask mother if the box hasn't come already. She's always keeping it so private."

"Mother," said Frank, "won't Grandma Eaden send us something for Christmas?"

"I think so, Frank, but I would not count on it—we may be disappointed."

"Mother," persisted that young gentleman, "hasn't grandma sent the box?"

"No, my boy, but there is plenty of time. Christmas will not be here for a week."

For several days, every time Frank came into the house his first question was, "Mother, has any box come from grandma?" and he and the girls would have given up all hope of it if mamma had not always said, "I think Grandmamma Eaden will remember her grandchildren."

The box arrived at last, two days before Christmas, and it so happened that Mrs. Eaden was the only one who knew when it came; and she told only Aunt Mary. It happened, also, that master Frank on that day, omitted to ask his usual question, and began, instead, to peep about in the dark closets and private nooks to see if it had been hidden away, and as the time drew near he stopped talking about it, thinking there was no box coming.

"How should you like having your presents in the sitting-room on Christmas eve?" asked mamma when the children were together at dinner the day before. "Then you need not keep yourselves awake, or be feeling after your stockings in the dark, cold morning."

"First rate, mother!" said Frank, "and couldn't we have an illumination?"

"What is a numination?" asked one of the little ones.

"Oh, I know. It is lights in the windows," answered Emmie, to whom Frank had described the lighted windows he had once seen at Grandma Eaden's when on a visit there with papa. "Can we have it, mamma?"

"I think Aunt Mary and I will be able to illuminate one window. Which shall it be?"

They talked the important matter over, and decided on the one window at the side, rather than one of the front windows. It could be seen by people coming down the street, and the Leonards, who were the nearest neighbours, would have a good view, and that would be pleasant.

It chanced that in moving to the cottage, Mrs. Eaden had found a forgotten box of wax candles and tin holders that had been used for a similar purpose and might now be used in giving pleasure to the children. These were brought out and put in order, and Frank and Emmie helped in putting them into the window frames, talking all the time, while the younger ones looked on and wondered.

"I want you to stay in the dining-room, now, and

you may have a good game till it is time to set the supper table," said mamma. "Aunt Mary and I are going to arrange all the Christmas presents on the table before the illuminated window."

"Oh jolly!" said Frank. "But mother, is there anything from Grandma Eaden?"

"Yes, indeed, the box came yesterday."

"Where did you hide it, mother? I've looked everywhere."

"Only, when you ransacked the closet in the entry, you did not look under the baby-carriage, which is the first thing you could see."

"There? Well, I noticed that the carriage stood up higher than usual, but I never thought of that."

The little girls went dancing away in noisy glee, talking of things they hoped to have, and Frank soon joined them, leaving auntie and mamma to sort out and label the numerous packages.

Supper time was a festive occasion. Aunt Mary had prepared some favourite cakes and custards, and mamma brought out her best china and nicest preserves, and while they lingered at the table after auntie had excused herself, and mamma read the beautiful story about the shepherds watching their flocks by night on the hill-sides near Bethlehem, when the angel suddenly appeared and told them of the Saviour that was born; and of the glorious song that was sung by a multitude of heavenly beings who joined the angel as he talked with the shepherds.

Then Aunt Mary opened the door of the sitting-room, and the blaze of the candles filled them with astonishment. Emma and Frank almost tumbled from their chairs in haste, and mamma carried Fannie and led Annie after them to the table before the window, and showed them all their places.

Never before had the children received so many presents. Frank had a book from papa, which was so unexpected that he was half wild, and Emmie was to receive "The Little Pilgrim"—that dear, delightful paper—through the year; Annie had a lovely little willow carriage for her dolly; Fannie had a doll that made her breathless for a second, and then she broke into smiles all over face—all from papa whom they dearly loved.

From grandma's box had come skates, and boots and striped stockings, and mittens, and cakes, and confections, and picture-books, and ruffles, and aprons, and gloves, and games; and from the other dear friends were hoods, and scarfs, and handkerchiefs, and dresses, and neckties, and—you must go into the shops at Christmas time to find out the rest.

There is no telling how pleased the young people were. Their voices made a merry noise in the house, to be sure; and if you had been at the window of the next neighbour's house, and seen Frank trying on his skates, and Emmie laying her things in order on the table, admiring each with all her heart, and Annie, with beaming looks, taking her doll to ride about the room, and Fannie affectionately wrapping her new scarlet scarf about her beautiful new doll, you would have said it was as pretty an illumination as you could wish to see.

The children were to sit up longer than usual, and they were very full of pleasure and full of curiosity about each other's presents, and of joyful anticipations, too. But they became calm after awhile, and talked about papa and their other friends; and after mamma had told them how the shepherds went to see the infant Saviour, they went quietly away to their beds.

Then mamma sat down and wrote papa a true and particular account of all the proceedings; and so passed by one Christmas eve.—Zion's Herald.

Low lies Thy cradled head,
Thou blessed Child Divine;
The wreath of thorns most twine around
That tender brow of Thine:
But love and life and home
Through Thine are dearer far,
And lives of mortal men may be
As pure as angels are.
Then join their angel lay,
With heart and voice rejoice,
Your Lord is born to-day!