

fond of birds. She had a big room full of them, at the top of the house, with written rules, telling how often they were to be fed and cleaned. She had thirty-seven birds in all; but she wanted another goldfinch to keep company with the old black bullfinch, with his standing-up white collar. So she clubbed two dollars for the fire-screen for her father and mother, and spent a dollar a-piece on Arthur and Florence, and kept the other five dollars. And now I will tell you what Bertha did with her money. She told her mother she wanted to give it all to the poor. Her mother said: "No, my child. Give some of it, but keep the rest. I don't want you to be unhappy at Christmas time, when everybody else is bright and cheerful. I don't want you to get ideas in your head. Why won't you be like other children?"

Bertha was eleven years old, and was a very quiet, thoughtful child. Her father and mother were good, kind people, but they did not go very often to church and did not call themselves Christians. Bertha went to Sunday-school and was perfectly wrapped up in her teacher. She went to the sewing-school, and to the meetings that used to be held for the poor mothers in the church. She had seen them come to these mothers' meetings, with their little babies, and put them to sleep in the big clothes-baskets, which were kept in a little room to one side, and then sew upon different garments, while some of the ladies in the parish read to them and sang to them. The poor women loved to come to these meetings above anything else. And Bertha used to go there with her Sunday-school teacher and help to give out the work.

So this year she had made up her mind to give all her ten dollars to these poor women.

"Now, mother dear," she said, "do let me have my way about this. I will not be unhappy. I have made up my mind ever since Thanksgiving Day, and please do not say No."

"Well, Bertha," replied her mother, "I will talk to your father about it; and if he says you can do it I will have no objections."

"But I must know now. There is no

time to be lost. Let me run down to father's office."

So she got into a horse-car, and in twenty minutes she was beseeching her father to say Yes, as he sat by his big office fire.

"Well, my darling child," he said, "if it will make you so happy, why, do what you please with your money. Only remember, you mustn't come to me afterward for another ten dollar note when you see the other children happy with their Christmas things."

"No, indeed, father," said Bertha. "I would not do such a thing. And, dear father," she added, throwing her arms around his neck, "you will know why I did not give anything to you and mother. It was only because I was so anxious to give my whole ten dollars to the poor mothers at the mothers' meetings."

And then she kissed her father and went out of the office with the clerks all looking at her, as she hurried away with her pocket-book clasped tightly in her hand.

III.

WHAT THE MINISTER THOUGHT.

Now came the hard part of the business. It was two o'clock, and whatever was to be done for the poor women must be done quickly, for it would soon be Christmas Eve. So, with her heart in her mouth, little Bertha went to see the assistant minister of the church, who looked after all the poor people and knew where they lived. He was in the church, up on a ladder, helping to dress the church with Christmas greens.

"Please Mr. Martyn," said Bertha, "I want to speak to you for a moment."

"Certainly, my child, I will come right down."

So down he came, and they went into a big box pew together, right by the place where the warm furnace air came up; and then Bertha, looking down at the buckles on her overshoes, began:

"Mr. Martyn, here are ten dollars I want you to give to the poor women who come with their little babies to the mothers' meetings. I don't want anybody to know that it came from me. Won't you keep it a secret, and do what is best for the women? That is all."