

"The letter may have been delayed," returned Mrs. Moran, as she spread the cloth and took down the dishes from the side-board. "Fred was always careful of his letter writing. Perhaps Margaret has received news from him?"

Just the faintest tinge of color overspread Margaret's face as she replied that no news had reached her. The mutual liking between Margaret and Fred was no secret in the household, and it was only the mother's confidence in the girl and her anxiety for news from Fred had led to ask a seemingly delicate question.

In fact both parents, in their unassuming way, were interested in everything connected with the welfare of their children. Happily all of them were settled except Fred and Frances. They had even kept Fred at college for some years, but finally, with reluctance, were compelled to withdraw from him any further assistance toward this end.

"However," said Mr. Moran, "the lesson of hardship may make a better man of him. I know that all his spare moments are employed in continuing his studies privately and in preparing for the government examinations. A letter for him arrived at my office only yesterday which perhaps may contain good news.

Frances here came running in, all flushed and out of breath, to announce Fred's coming as the latter entered the door. Frances had been on the way to visit the crib and the Babe of Bethlehem, along with some other children. As luck would have it, she ran into the arms of her brother; and, mind you, he went along with them to pray beside the crib and gave each of them a copper to place in the box for the poor little ones of Christ.

The greetings in the household were warm and hearty on all sides, as much so in fact that the Christmas dinner, the roast goose and pudding were forgotten for the time being. But these were in this account the better enjoyed when everyone finally sat down. There was much laughing after the meal when Frances brought down to Fred and Margaret the things which Santa Claus had left in their stockings. And there was great rejoicing, too, when Mr. Moran handed Fred the letter he had received, and which was found to contain news of his success in the government examinations and his promotion to a position home in Ottawa with a fair income.

"And to think Frances," said Fred, as his sister's large blue eyes feasted on his looks, "to think your letter is the cause of it all! Are you not glad that I won't leave you any more?"

"I am more glad that you won't leave Margaret, and she