

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

"Thou hast with thoughtfulness prepared
The gifts for friend and kin;
Yea, thou has hoped, by deeds of love,
Thine enemy to win.

"For Me alone, of all thy friends,
No ready gift I see,
On this My Birthday, has thou nought,
Child of My love, for Me?

"My board is spread with dainty dish,
My friends will welcome be;
But hast thou kept among them all
A place—a seat—for Me?

"Bright gifts and offerings gleam upon
The taper-lighted tree;
But what hast thou upon it hung
For simple love of Me?

"What hast thou done to glorify
The God of earth and Heaven?
What 'peace, good will to men' hast thou
By word or token given?

"What broken spirit hast thou healed?
What tear or sorrow dried?
What stranger heart has thou rejoiced?
What need hast thou supplied?"

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O blessed Christ-Child, on this day,
First be our gifts to Thee;
And second in our hearts and thoughts
Let friends and kindred be.

On every tree, weighed down with gifts,
That tenderest memories wake,
Oh, may the choicest and the best
Be hung for Thy dear sake!

And be Thou at each festive board
Most honored guest to-day;
And by each happy hearth-stone may
Thy sacred Presence stay?

—F. H. Marr in Parish Visiter, N. Y.

A Christmas re

BY PAULINE.—Continued.

At the school room door he encountered his brother looking for him, and asking why he had not been at dinner.

"I have a letter from home; wait for me here when you are dismissed," Ernest whispered and Murray nodded as he went to take his seat among the boys of his own class.

All the afternoon Ernest kept making blunders in a way which astonished every one, for he was a studious boy, well advanced for his age and a favorite with all the masters.

Much as he tried he could not fix his attention on his tasks. In spite of his decision the temptation came to him again and again, to give Murray his choice about staying, and each time he resolutely put away the idea, for he knew his little brother was very generous hearted and all his pleasure of going home would be destroyed if he suspected the true state of affairs. Ernest was detained after hours to rewrite an exercise full of mistakes, and when he returned to the school room he found it deserted, all the boys having gone out for their usual recreation. He sat down at his desk, feeling vexed at the thought of his imperfect recitations, and the rebukes they had called forth, which to him was something unusual. He would much rather have gone to his room, but it was contrary to the rules for the boys to be upstairs at this hour.

In a few minutes the door flew open and Murray Kingdon came in.

"Hello! there you are at last! I've been in three times to look for you," he cried, aiming the rubber ball he was tossing about in his hand at his brother's head.

"You'd better look out Murray, if you get caught in here with that you'll lose it," Ernest said without moving.

"All right, but what makes you so late, mon frere? I declare you look as if you had been kept in!"

"Well, I have," Ernest growled, more to put off the other subject than anything else.

"Ernest Kingdon! are you speaking the truth. Can these ears have heard aright?" Murray was unfeignedly astonished. If it had been he, no one would have wondered—but Ernest!

"Master Kingdon, I sorrow much for you. Why take you not pattern by your good brother?"

Murray had mounted the platform and stood addressing his brother with such an exact imitation of his French master in speech and gesture, that Ernest could not help laughing.

"You ought to be ashamed Murray, to have that said to you so often that you are able to deliver it yourself." Ernest saw fit to administer a reproof, but in his heart he was very proud of his brother. He felt as if a sudden flash of sunshine had come into the dingy room as he watched the bright little figure haranguing him from the platform. Not that he was so much younger than Ernest, but he was small for his age, and had a fair delicate face, which made him look childish, and had gained for him many a girl nickname from his schoolfellows, to his great disgust. He had merry blue eyes and light hair which would persist in forming itself into curls whenever it got the chance. Of this Murray was intensely ashamed: could he have had his own way he would have had it cut every two or three weeks. "Looks as if I put it in papers," he said scornfully when his mother had put a limit on his visits to the barber. Now, as he stood there, flushed with exercise, he looked very handsome, and Ernest thought, "No wonder Mamma wants to see him!"

All of a sudden Murray recollected his business and came down from his elevation.

"But the letter Ernest," he asked. "You said you had one. Why did you not give it to me before? Did the money come? Is it all settled when we are to go? What a jolly time we will have! How many more days? Let me see I have lost count lately. Mamma will be glad to see us—but, I say old fellow, you don't look very much overjoyed over it—Is anything wrong?"

"If you could hold your tongue, Murray, long enough to let me speak, I might get a chance to explain."

"Go ahead then: Where's the letter?"

Ernest flushed a little as he felt first in one pocket and then another, well knowing it was not there.

"Never mind," he said, "I can tell you. The money did come, but only enough for you."

"Only enough for me?" Murray echoed. "Does Mamma think you have enough of your own? You know we haven't Ernie; both put together."

"It's not that Murray," with an impatient gesture. "Mamma has not the money to send. She says she cannot possibly spare it. I will have to stay here during the holidays," he added quickly to get the worst over.

"Stay here! You don't mean at Longly's?" Ernest nodded.

"But Ernie, you never can; just fancy not to go home! Why there won't be a soul stay here. It will be dreadful."

"Nonsense." It was about all Ernest was able to say. Murray was not making it any easier for him, he thought, but he was on his guard lest he should betray how he longed to go.

"But surely mamma did not mean you were to stay here! Couldn't we raise the money somehow? Let's sell something! There's my little watch uncle Bob gave me."

"Do not think of such a thing Murray. Do

you hear me? You are not to do it. It would be very wrong. We have no right to part with our things. Ernest spoke sharply, but he was more touched than he cared to own, for Murray's watch was his great treasure.

"If it is to save expense why are we not both able to stay?"

"There are the trunks to bring back. Some one must look after them. Do you think you can manage them?"

"Of course I can, but half the fun will be spoiled if you are not home for Christmas." It's so long since we were there too."

There was silence for a moment. They were both thinking that their father would be missing too. At length Murray said slowly. "Why don't you go and leave me here?"

"Ernest could almost have laughed, had he been in better spirits himself, at the troubled expression on Murray's unusually sunny face.

"You must do as you are told, Murray, and not make so many objections."

"Don't you care to go, Ernie?" Murray asked dropping into a seat near his brother, and speaking in a winning, affectionate way, peculiar to himself, which made him a favorite with so many.

"I'd like to go, of course, but you must think I'm a great baby if I cannot stay without making a fuss."

Ernest spoke with apparent indifference, nevertheless he found it convenient to raise the lid of his desk and arrange some papers under the shelter of it.

"Well," Murray said with a sigh of immense relief, "I'm glad you don't mind. Now if it had been my fate to stay, I never should have lived through it, I know, and it's almost as bad to have you here."

"It's all right. You know I'll have a famous chance to study up, when I'm all alone here."

Murray, knowing his brother's habits, actually thought, in his innocence, that Ernest was pleased to have the opportunity of being by himself.

"Now," Ernest said, "let's get out of doors, or it will be too late soon. It's getting dark already."

"Will you come for a walk; there's lots of time."

"If you like, but I thought you were playing ball."

"So I was, but that can go now, I don't care to play now," Murray said as he followed his brother from the room.

A week later, when Ernest Kingdon returned from the station and found himself alone in the deserted rooms, after seeing Murray and a number of other boys off, he thought it was more than he could bear.

He tried to cheer himself up by going for a long ramble, exploring places where he had never been before, and came back somewhat brighter, but later in the evening the old feeling of loneliness came back. He was wandering up and down one of the corridors, thinking he would have to get his books for company, when suddenly one of the doors near him opened and a young man came out. It was Mr. Randall, one of the masters, and he seemed surprised to see Ernest.

"Why, is it you Kingdon? I thought all the boys had gone home."

"So they have sir, but I have to stay here."

Perhaps Ernest's voice was not quite steady, for when Mr. Randall answered he spoke very gently.

"I have to stay here too, my boy, so if we are the only ones we must keep each other company. But I thought I saw you go with your brother to the station."

Ernest explained that he only went to see the others off.

"Well, we must keep up our spirits though it is rather dull here. Will you come to my rooms and spend the evening with me?" Ernest flushed with pleasure as he accepted the invitation, for Mr. Randall was a great favorite