

BOYS AND GIRLS

The Fairy Godmother.

(Sunday at Home.)

I.

'And it is Christmas Eve,' sighed little Judith Manners. She was sitting in the window with Roland and Eleanor on either side of her, and she looked out into the dull street with large mournful eyes, from which the tears were not far distant. The younger ones knew of what she was thinking; they also remembered, though not so distinctly, the beautiful home in which they had all been born, the father whose delight it had been to indulge even their fancied wants, the merry Christmastides with parties and presents, and every kind of festivity. It had all come to an end three years ago, when Judith was eight years old, and little Eleanor only four. Their father died suddenly, and after his death there was so little money left that the children and their mother had to go to live in a tiny house in a narrow street, and could only keep one quite young servant. Mrs. Manners went out every day to give music and drawing lessons; but though she worked hard, the payment was so scanty that the children's clothes were worn and mended, they sometimes dined on pudding only, and Judith often ate her bread dry, because she saw how little butter there was.

It was not even proper Christmas weather; cold it most certainly was but it was a damp raw cold, that had nothing cheerful about it, and the rain fell in a persistent drizzle. Their mother had gone out to do a little shopping, but the rain kept the children indoors.

'Tell us about Christmas Eve at home, Judith,' asked Eleanor; but Judith who by her constant tales had kept the memory of old times alive in the younger ones' minds was in no story-telling humor to-day. She continued to gaze silently into the wet, deserted street and took no part in a lively discussion between Roland and Eleanor as to what had become of Santa Claus.

'He must have lost our address,' decided Eleanor 'we have never had him since we came away from home, or perhaps—Judith, Judy,' and she gently shook her sister, 'don't people ever have any Christmas after their fathers die?'

'Yes, of course, they do,' cried Roland, with the scornful superiority of his ten years, 'there is the Robinsons—oh, be quiet, Judy, a fellow can't be always minding grammar—there is the Robinsons, I say, and their father is dead, but they have the jolliest times.'

Eleanor sighed. 'I wish we did,' she said, 'we haven't any Christmas. I wish—oh, Judith, let up play at three wishes—you first.'

Judith turned round from the window, and entered into the play. 'I know what I am going to wish,' she said, 'and I will have my turn last. You begin, Nelly.' Eleanor shut her eyes very tightly and considered for a minute.

'I wish,' she began slowly, 'I wish I had five shillings, and then you should all have beautiful presents.'

'Why didn't you wish for more while you were about it,' asked Judith. 'Five shillings won't buy much. Now, Roland.'

'Are we to have three wishes each, or three between us?' enquired Roland.

'Three between us; one each. Make haste.'

'There isn't any hurry,' said Roland, kicking his feet against the bars of his chair. 'Percy Robinson told me they are going to have a jolly big party on Tuesday, with a conjurer and all kinds of games. I wish I could go to that.'

'Well, of all silly wishes, that is the silliest,' declared Judith, as seriously as though the play were a reality. 'The idea of wasting a wish on one evening's pleasure. You are just like the man in the fairy tale, who wished for a sausage and had it stuck on to his nose.'

'It was his wife who wished it to be stuck to the end of his nose,' retorted Roland, 'so she was the most silly, because they had to waste the last wish getting it off again. Now, Judy, it is your turn. Let us see how good your wish will be.'

'Better than either of yours,' said Judith, 'I wish that we could find mother's fairy-god-mother.'

Roland and Nelly clapped their hands and

men-servants. She and mother would fall into each other's arms, then mother would introduce us. She would love you best, Nelly, because you are named after her.'

'No, you, because you are the eldest,' said Eleanor.

'And she would be very fond of Roland, because he is a boy,' continued Judith; 'old ladies always like boys. She would be a widow, and all her children should be dead, so she would adopt all of us.'

'Oh!' interrupted Eleanor dolefully. 'I don't want to be adopted. I would much rather be mother's little girl.'

'She would adopt mother, too,' explained Judith, 'we should be just like her grandchildren, and —'



SANTA CLAUS HAS LOST THE ADDRESS.

declared that was the best wish that could be thought of, for of all the tales that had delighted them from infancy, none equalled their mother's description of her fairy-god-mother, Lady Eleanor Ashley, who had been so good to her in childhood, but of whom she had heard nothing for many years. They always spoke of her as the 'fairy-godmother,' and were fond of supposing what she would do if she came to see them.

'If she could only come in some day,' went on Judith, 'it would be just like a book. She would be quite old, you know, a beautiful old lady thin and upright, with lovely silver hair, bright eyes, and a pretty pink color in her cheeks. She would be most elegantly dressed, and would walk in, leaning on an ebony cane with a gold top.'

'And a carriage,' put in Roland.

'Oh, a beautiful carriage and pair, with two

'Why, children!' And at that moment a sweet voice made them turn quickly, to see their mother in her waterproof and worn bonnet, standing in the doorway. They all ran to her at once. Roland took her basket, Judith knelt to unfasten her cloak, and Nelly began to pull off her gloves.

'Was it very wet and horrid, mother, dear?' asked, Judith. 'Oh, what a heavy basket! Why didn't you let them send the things?'

Mrs. Manners laughed, such a bright, pleasant laugh, and bent to kiss her little daughter's troubled face. 'Wet, but not horrid,' she said. 'Don't make troubles, Judith. And I am thankful to have a basket to carry. I would not have the things sent because I am so sorry for the little errand boys on a wet Christmas Eve.'

'I wish I was an errand boy,' declared Ro-