

Roman coin, some piece of unique or curious workmanship from Indian isles or Hindoo bazars, etc.—all such things are very suitable for presents to gentlemen and will be far more valued than pins, studs, etc., which only represent a certain number of dollars and cents.

Generally speaking, a gift needs only to be wisely chosen to be as acceptable now as it was in the days of Solomon. Children may teach us a lesson on this subject worth noting. They class their presents under two great heads—those valuable enough to be stored away in their little repositories for precious things, and those tacitly condemned to be destroyed—the pleasure in the latter case consisting in the fun of destroying them.

Now all adult presents are either useful and valuable, or else they are intended to perish in the using. The latter class are by no means poor presents. Among them must be named flowers, always a suitable gift, because they are "an assertion that beauty outlives all the utilities in the world." Another expression of this class of presents is something good to eat. There is no greater mistake than to suppose such presents are not welcome. None bring the giver more pleasantly to mind, and if the satisfaction is short, it is at least genuine and unalloyed. Why should there not, also, be a touch of as graceful sentiment in sending a friend a case of wine of exceptionally rare bouquet as in sending him a case of silver spoons?

Perhaps those gifts are best which are acceptable from their fitness, which are little helps and facilities, and fit into a need. It is easy to believe in the kindness of a Christmas wish that is father not only to the thought, but to a pretty dress or cloak, or to some little luxury which the receiver has longed to possess, though perhaps is not justified in purchasing for herself. Such presents as these show a thoughtful and pains-taking affection; they have cost time and consideration as well as money, and have a peculiar flavor of sympathy and good nature about them.

The expression of pleasant emotions naturally falls into pleasant and graceful forms, but if a sentiment of respect is also to be conveyed, then the gift should not only be beautiful, but also as valuable as the donor can afford.

Never undervalue your own gift; if it is poor, you should not have offered it at all. Avoid also such pretences as, "I could get no better." "It was all I had," etc.; and never ask, "How did you like it?" or, "Does it fit?"

If you give a book, do not write any names or elaborate inscription in it, unless you are certain, first, that the book will be well received; second, that the gift will be rendered more valuable by such autographic display of affection.

Truly we ought not to look a gift-horse in the mouth, but we have no right to give things away because we have no use for them ourselves. When a thing is not good enough for its present possessor, ten to one it will be of no service to a friend. It may, indeed, be given to the poor; but charity is not friendship. It is a real hardship to have to say, "Thank you" for what we do not want, and for what we know has cost the giver neither money nor sacrifice of any kind.

Do not give a person who is socially your equal a richer present than she is able to give you. She will be more mortified than pleased. Between equals it is often as elegant to disregard cost and depend on rarity, because gold can not always purchase it. Still, between very rich people, presents should also be very rich, or else their riches are set above their friendship and generosity.

Never refuse a present except under very peculiar circumstances. However humble or valueless the gift, accept the good will that dictated it. Acknowledge the receipt of a present without the least delay, but do not follow it by an immediate return; it would impart to the gift an appearance of investment or exchange.

No person ought to give a present who is apt to retain a lively memory of her own munificence. Whatever the receiver feels, the donor must not remember it is an obligation. It takes as liberal a nature to receive as to give—not to show hesitation, not to be churlish, and think immediately of having to give one in return, not to be sensitively annoyed at the obligation, but to accept it with frank pleasure, to look upon it as so much gain—not in goods, but in good-will—and to be glad of the privilege it accords to express our own feelings in a similar way.

But they who would know the full measure of delight in giving, and see the perfection of grace in receiving, presents, must give gifts to little children. In their reception there will be no doubt, no affectations, and no suspicious considerations. Now all children expect presents at Christmas, and their desire is mainly for toys. It is a wise desire, and ought to be gratified, for toys are the alphabet of life, and through them they learn what poetry and property mean. Other things will be played with, broken, and thrown away in after-years, but they make their first experiments in the art of living with toys.

No toys are so good for bright, inquisitive children as magnetic and mechanical ones. A toy that has nothing moveable about it soon wearies a child; after the eye is satisfied, if it can not pull it about, and pull it to pieces, it is a delusion. Then toys which excite wonder and speculation, for through wonder children attain unto knowledge. Make up your mind that

toys are bought to be deliberately destroyed. A child is haunted by an undying eagerness to know the causes of things; hence the doll is mercilessly gouged, and the lamb torn to pieces. Don't scold if this is done—as it nearly always is—in secret. "The youngest child has an inherited idea that all attempts to see below the surface of things will be frowned upon by the party of order."

Though these are such earnest and intellectual days, it is a mistake to give children nothing but books. But if books are chosen, then buy those that appeal to the imagination. Reason will soon enough turn them out of that world of splendid impossibilities, but they will be much the better for every visit to it. For the imaginative faculty is the precursor of the understanding faculty; the mind must be formed before it can be filled, and imagination is the creative power. "Wouldst thou plant for eternity," says Carlyle, "plant into the deep faculties of man, his fantasy and his heart. Wouldst thou plant for a year and a day, then plant in his shallow faculties his self-love and his arithmetical understanding."

Still it would be a dull Christmas if all the children sat reading Christmas books; therefore buy them plenty of playthings: as before said, they are the alphabets of life. Much of the existence of three-year-olds consists in raids and recoveries of toys. A child who can not take care of his toys in babyhood is likely enough to fail in more important things in after life, while the little ones who can keep their own, and have no objections to those of others, who can play with them cheerfully, and are not too curious about what is below the surface, have already in them the elements of successful men and women.

THE DOCTOR'S CHRISTMAS.

A TALE OF MONTREAL.

BY W. S. HUMPHREYS.

I.

COLD AND WARMTH.

It was Christmas Eve! And such a Christmas Eve! The thermometer ranged somewhere below zero; the wind seemed to search all through your thick coverings, and find its way to the very marrow of your bones; the frozen particles of snow that were blowing about dashed in your face like a shower of needles and pins, making locomotion altogether unpleasant,—making one long to be snugly at home in a nice cozy room, with slippers and dressing gown on, and no further to go than to the bedroom, where, safe in the arms of Morpheus, one forgets that there are such things as cold, snow, ice or wind.

Such were my thoughts as I wandered my way along Notre Dame street, fast as the elements would permit me, when I was suddenly arrested by feeling a gentle touch on my arm, and hearing a childish voice utter in plaintive tones:

"Help, sir, help!"

I paused in my walk, and glancing down saw a little mite shivering before me, and thought to myself what a night for a little one like this to be abroad!

By the light of a shop window I saw that the child was very thin clad. Her little bare hands were blue with cold, and she was vainly trying to cover them over with a thin muffler around her neck. On her head she wore a thin cloud, wrapped around her face, her little nose and ears peeping out, exposed to the wintry blast. She had no cloak, and her little feet were encased in a pair of thin prunella boots, with no stockings. Altogether a pitiable looking object, but withal she was scrupulously clean, in strong contrast with the generality of beggars one meets on the streets.

"Help, sir, help!"

Again the childish voice falls on my ear. It was not a coarse, rough voice—a voice used to asking alms—but a gentle, timid little voice as of a child who was asking something she had never asked for before—as though she was half ashamed of what she was doing, almost telling one that nothing but dire necessity had driven the little one to say:

"Help, sir, help!"

I instinctively put my hand in my pocket to draw out a coin, and handed it to the child, who half hesitated on receiving it, leading me to remark:

"What can bring a little one like you out on such a night as this?"

"Oh, sir," she answered, in truthful tones, "mother is lying sick at home, with nothing to eat,—no fire in the stove,—and it is so cold."

"Poor little thing; where does your mother live?"

"On St. Mary street, a long way down. Oh, sir, will you come and see mother? Will you not get a doctor to see if he cannot do something for her. She is so ill, and I have no money and do not know what to do for her. Do come, sir; do come!"

What could I do. The accents of the little one were so pleading that, had I been made of stone, I could hardly have resisted, so I took the child by the hand, and said:

"I will come with you, little one; I am a doctor myself, and perhaps I may be able to do something for your mother, who must be ill indeed to allow her child to be out on such a night as this, so thinly clad, too. How cold your little hand is—like a lump of ice," I continued, for I felt the cold even through my thick woolen

glove, which I took off, giving it to the child and telling her to make a muff of it for her hands.

"Oh, no, sir, I am not cold now you are coming to see my mother. I am so glad. I know you will make her well," and the little one ran along by my side quickly, as though anxious to get to her mother's side as soon as possible.

"You say your mother has nothing to eat. Had we not better get something as we go along? What can we get?"

"Bread, sir, we have had nothing but bread for the last two weeks, and nothing at all since last night."

Imagine, you who live in luxury, here is a woman and a child who have not had even a crust of bread for twenty-four hours! I thought to myself, and wondered how many more there were in the city who were likewise starving. My profession leads me into many scenes of poverty, but I had never come across such a one as this, and my heart went out to the little one, and I mentally resolved that she should not want bread as long as I had a crust myself.

Entering a grocer's we purchased bread, butter, some bacon, tea, sugar and a few other articles, and then proceeded rapidly onward, the little one at my side apparently becoming happier as we neared her home.

"How shall we cook the bacon, sir?" she said. "We haven't a stick of wood left."

The question rather puzzled me, for I did not know where to purchase firing, but after a little thought I concluded to get a few bundles of kindling wood in the meantime, after which we hurried forward once more, and did not pause again till we reached a dilapidated old wooden house, three stories high, at which we stopped, the little one saying:

"This is the house, sir, I will go in first, get a light, see how mother is, and tell her I have got some one to see her. Oh, sir, I am so glad you came," and the child caught hold of my hand, kissed it and ran upstairs.

I entered the porch and waited for the little one's return, wondering what would be the end of my adventure.

I had not long to wait.

"Come up, sir, please," said my guide.

I groped my way in the darkness and managed to ascend the first flight of stairs, at the top of which the little one took my hand and guided me to the next, which we ascended; then a third, the stairs creaking with our weight at every step, and the place seeming to smell mustier and damper the higher we got. At the head of the last flight was a long dark passage, which we traversed, the little one still holding my hand, until presently there is a faint glimmer of light escaping from a half open door, at which I pause for a moment. The child entering first and bidding me follow, I enter the apartment, my eye involuntarily gazing on such misery as I had never looked on before and such as I hope never to see again.

The room—if it can be dignified by such a name, for it was nothing better than a barn—was not much more than three yards in length and a little less in breadth. The walls were paperless, the ceiling was plasterless, the naked rafters looming overhead, covered with frost, and in many places the sky could be seen through great cracks, letting in the cold night air, and making one shiver the moment of entry.

In one corner, on a dilapidated bedstead, with scarcely anything covering her emaciated form, lay the wreck of a woman. Her features, though drawn and contracted by disease and hunger, must at one time have been very beautiful. Even now the fire had not all left her eye, nor the beauty her cheek, and notwithstanding her surroundings, any one looking at her as I was doing, would instinctively come to the conclusion that she had seen better days.

The only furniture in the room, besides the bed, was a rickety chair and a table, upon which was a tallow candle stuck in a bottle, which shed a sort of ghastly light around the room. An open grate was on one side, but the fire had all burnt out, leaving nothing but ashes, which made the place look even more wretched than it otherwise would have done. A hasty glance sufficed to show me all this.

"Oh, mamma," said the child, "this is the kind gentleman who has come to see you, and he has brought such a lot of things; and he is going to make you well, I know. May I light a fire, sir?" she said, turning to me.

I immediately assented and while the little one was thus engaged I drew near to the sick woman, who seemed to cover a approached and endeavored to cover up her face with the scanty bed covering, but finding it impossible she held out her hand to me. Took the hand and while I professionally felt the pulse, a thrill seemed to pass through my frame, and I examined the face on the wretched pillow more closely than I had hitherto done, and gazing I seemed to recollect the features; something seemed to tell me that I had known them in the far-away past, and I was puzzling my brain to think where I had seen the face before, when

"John, do you not know me?"

The voice I knew! The features may have been altered almost past recognition, but that voice could never alter, and though it was twenty-five years since I had heard the silvery tones, and the place three thousand miles away, and the surroundings far different, still the voice was the same and I knew it. I could not forget it. It will go with me to my grave.

"Emily! Great heavens! In such a place! What has brought you to this!" I exclaimed, sinking on my knees beside the bed.

"It is too long a story to tell you now, and I

have not the strength to tell it. But do you not shrink from me? Remembering how I left you years ago, surely you will do nothing for me now. Leave me and let me die, but, oh! do not reproach me."

"Reproach you? no. Although my heart was nearly broken at the time, I cannot reproach you, neither can I shrink from you. But we must have you out of this wretched place, and get some warmth in your half frozen body. Your hands are like stones."

"I am not so cold now. All I ask is your forgiveness, then to be left alone to die."

"For all the injury you did me I have forgiven you long ago; but you must not talk of dying. What will become of your little child if you should be taken away?"

"Ah! that is what troubles me. Who will take my little one when I am gone?"

"Mamma, mamma, look at the nice fire," broke in the child, who had been so much engaged that she had not noticed what had transpired, but turning round and seeing me on my knees with her mother's head supported in my arms, she ran toward us, exclaiming:

"I knew the gentleman would make you well; you look better already."

"Yes, dear; he is noble, generous and good, and I will try to get well for your sake," she answered, pressing her finger on her lips,—a sign that I understood.

"In the first place, then," said I, "you must have some food, after which the sooner you are away from this wretched building the better it will be for both of you."

"But where am I to go?" wailed the poor woman.

"Leave that to me," I answered, as I then went to work to help the child in her humble preparations to prepare a meal. After everything was ready I said:

"While you are making what sort of a meal you can, I will go and arrange for your removal to more comfortable quarters. I hope to see you more cheerful on my return. Don't you want to leave this cold place for a nice warm room, little one?" I added, turning to the child, who was in the act of pouring out a cup of tea for her mother.

"Oh, yes, sir, if mamma comes with us."

"Mamma shall come with us, and we will try to put a little color in her pale cheeks. But take care of her while I am away."

And I hastened out, with "Heaven will bless you" ringing in my ears from the lips of the sick woman.

Once more in the street I hailed the first passing sleigh, and telling the driver to make as much haste as possible to my residence in St. Catherine street west, I was whisked quickly over the snow, the sharp air seeming to have infected the horse, who dashed along at full speed, soon landing me safely at my door, when telling the carter to wait for me I hastened in, and soon explained matters satisfactorily to my landlady, and in less than half an hour she was ready to accompany me with a good supply of wraps, and we were again whisked back to St. Mary street.

I entered the room first, and telling Emily what I had done, introduced Mrs. Jones to her, and left them together to make necessary preparations for departure.

The snow had now stopped falling, the wind had abated and the moon was endeavoring to show herself between the clouds, and as I stood waiting for my charge my thoughts began to wander back to such a night in the far-off past, in a far-off country, amid different scenes. I was young then, the accepted lover of one of the most beautiful women it has ever been my lot to meet. We were happy. I thought my happiness was too great to last—and was not mistaken, for in twenty-four hours all was changed and I was one of the most wretched men in the universe.

But—

"Dr. Dolmar," interrupted the voice of my landlady, "we are all ready. Please come and help the lady downstairs."

I hastened up the three flights of steps, and gathering Emily safely in my arms, soon had her in my sleigh, and assisting in little Nellie (as I was informed was the name of the child) and Mrs. Jones, the horses were started, the sleigh-bells tinkled merrily and we were hurried rapidly on our homeward journey.

I turned to speak to Emily but found she had fainted, so gathering the wraps around her closely we made the distance from St. Mary street to St. Catherine street silently, with the exception of the childish prattle of Nellie to Mrs. Jones, with whom she was already a favorite.

Arrived once more at my home I carefully conveyed Emily into the parlor, and placed her gently on a lounge, just as she was returning to consciousness, and after dismissing the carter, assisted my landlady in fully restoring her.

"Oh, John," were the first words she uttered, "how can I ever repay you for what you have done? When you have heard my story you will spare me from your door. I ought not to have allowed you to bring me here. It will only add to my sorrow in the end."

"Well, Emily, my dear, don't think of the end. Only think of the present, let the past take care of itself. If I am to hear your story let it be when you are sufficiently recovered to tell it me. Now I want you to go with Mrs. Jones, who will do all she can to make you comfortable, and we will talk about other matters in the morning, or whenever you are well enough to do so."

I hastened to her side, helped her to arise, wished her a hearty good-night, and was turn-