

you please tell us how much money we will have to spend for Christmas."

"Papa said that he intended to spend about twenty-five dollars on your Christmas presents, and if you decided to give them up you could have that amount to spend."

"Twenty-five dollars!" exclaimed Ethel. "We can get lots of things with that, can't we, mamma. Let's get some paper and a pencil, Harry, and make out a list of what we have got to get. 'What have they got now, mamma?'"

"Nothing at all, dear, except a few old dishes and a bed I sent them yesterday."

The four heads bent over the paper, Bertie interested because the others were, all talking eagerly.

Mamma smiled quietly to herself as she heard some of the items proposed.

"A cook-stove, put that down, Harry," May exclaimed.

"They want a bed-room set too," said Harry, with the air of having suggested an invaluable item.

"Guess you don't know how much bed-room sets cost," said May. "It would take more than all the money we have got to buy that."

"Would it!" said Harry, in surprise, "well we can leave that out, I suppose."

The children filled up both sides of the paper with a list of things that they considered absolutely indispensable to the poor woman's comfort, and Harry was about to go upstairs for another sheet when mamma suggested that twenty-five dollars wouldn't buy everything that they could think of, and that they would, therefore, have to leave out a great many of the things that they had thought of.

The next two days were very busy ones to the three older children. They made a great many errands to the sick woman's house, laden with little dainties from mamma, that they might see what things were really the most necessary, and I think they were far happier in looking forward to her surprise and pleasure than they would have been in looking forward to a beautiful tree and presents for themselves.

The day before Christmas the children were up almost at day-break so anxious were they to carry out their plans. A neighbor of the poor woman's, whom they had let into their secret, promised to bring both the mother and children over to her house early in the afternoon and keep them till evening, so they would have a chance to prepare their surprise.

The morning seemed very long to the eager children, and they could scarcely restrain their impatience. After they once got fairly at work it was wonderful to see how they changed the appearance of everything.

If they had been fairies the changes they made could hardly have been greater.

Ethel swept the floor neatly, and then Harry put down a large square of warm carpet, faded, it is true, and mended in one or two places, but still very comfortable. Then he put up an old stove which Aunt Jennie had found in her lumber-room and given him.

May had fastened a curtain at the window, and already there was an air of comfort in the room that had seemed so bare and cheerless.

Then how they enjoyed dressing the little Christmas tree. They intended that these poor little ones should, for once, have a real Christmas.

Harry fastened the tree firmly in a barrel of coal which papa had given him, and then they festooned it with strings of pop-corn which they had made themselves.

They hung apples, oranges, and tinsel covered nuts on it, and a sweet-faced doll smiled down from the top of the tree. The children had looked through their stock of toys and found that they could spare a great many of them to beautify the tree, and as they hung the last gift on the heavily-laden boughs, and stepped back to view the result of their labors, they were more than delighted.

"Won't they be pleased, though," said Harry enthusiastically. "I say, girls, I had a great deal rather have this kind of a Christmas than the kind we generally have, wouldn't you?"

"This is a great deal more fun," said May, warmly, while Ethel added:

"And then, the best part of this Christmas is, that we make somebody happy besides ourselves. The children will enjoy this tree just as much as we did fixing it for them. Now let's hurry and finish fixing things, so they can come home soon. I want to see them when they come in and see the tree."

"How differently everything looks, doesn't it?" said May, with a last glance into the cup-

board, where, on the neatly covered shelves, were all kinds of good things.

"I think they will enjoy sleeping in a warm bed after lying on the floor," remarked Harry, looking at the low broad bed with its warm blankets.

"Now, you girls light the candles, while I go and get all the folks," he exclaimed, darting away.

I don't know who was the happier when he returned a few minutes later, the sick woman and her children, who were delighted and surprised beyond measure at the change in their home, or the children who saw their happiness.

One thing I know, that the children did not for an instant regret that they had given up their own pleasure to make others happy.

At bed-time they missed the fun of hanging up their stockings as usual, but the remembrance of the children's delight over the tree more than counterbalanced any feeling of disappointment they might have felt.

They helped Bertie to hang up her stocking, and then went to bed to dream of Christmas trees and Santa Claus.

The patter of Bertie's little bare feet as she ran across the nursery floor to get her stocking awoke them the next morning, and they gathered around her to watch her empty it.

"See what Santa Claus has brought me!" she cried in delight, drawing out its contents. "Candy, and a dolly, and lots of things. You poor chilless, was you so bad Santa Claus wouldn't bring you nothing?"

The children laughed.

"It is because we were so good that we didn't get anything, Bertie," said Harry.

Bertie shook her golden head wisely.

"I know better'n that," she replied.

Don't mamma tell me if I isn't good Santa Claus won't bring me anything? You was all very bad so he didn't bring you anything. You can have a piece of candy," she added, generously, putting a piece in her own rosy mouth as she spoke.

"I have one present for you," said mamma, as they came down to breakfast, and she pointed to a beautiful illuminated motto that hung on the wall.

Oh, thank you, mamma, they exclaimed together.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive," read Ethel, slowly.

"Oh, mamma, I know why you chose that motto for us! It's true, too, isn't it?" she added, turning to May and Harry.

"Yes, indeed," said Harry, warmly, while May said, quietly:

"Mamma, I would rather have every Christmas like this than have all the presents in the world for myself."

EDMUND AND HIS DOG.

HERE once was a little boy named Edmund. He was generally mindful and good-natured; but he had one fault, of which his parents found it difficult to cure him—he was too fond of delay. If he was sent upon a short errand, he would often stop by the road, and pass an hour in seeing the men mow down the grass. Or he would lean over the railing of the bridge that crossed the river, and gaze upon the water as it flowed swiftly underneath. Sometimes he would crook a pin, and, tying it to a piece of twine, throw it into the stream, to try his luck at angling. I suspect that he was never a very successful fisherman; although, occasionally, he used to boast of having had a "glorious nibble."

Edmund was also very apt to be tardy at school. He would come running in, after all the other boys were seated, and would wonder that it was so late. It was in vain that his master reprimanded him, and that his parents advised him; his habit of delay still clung to him.

Among his other indulgences, Edmund had a dog, which was called, after one of its ancestors, Ponto. This dog was a good deal like its owner, of whom he was very fond. He would follow Edmund in his saunter to school, and lay upon the doorsteps until the boys were dismissed. Ponto would then wag his tail, and leap upon his young master, as if to let him know how glad he was to see him again. But Ponto, I am sorry to say, was a very mischievous dog. He would hunt among the bushes, and when he found a little bird's nest with some pretty eggs in it, he would seize it in his mouth, and bound away, to lay it at the feet of Edmund. Ponto would also take a wicked pleasure in frightening the cat, and in exciting the anger of the old hen, with her brood of chickens.

One Saturday afternoon, Edmund asked leave

to go and visit his cousin, who lived about a mile distant. His mother told him that he might go, if he would come back before five o'clock. Edmund promised that he would not stay beyond that time, and whistling for Ponto, he left the house. He had not walked far before he saw some large boys playing at foot-ball. Climbing a fence, he sat down to observe the game. Ponto stretched himself upon the ground, and sought amusement in catching the flies which buzzed around his head. Suddenly, a great noise was heard in the road; and, turning around, Edmund saw a horse running away with a chaise, in which a little girl sat, pale with terror. Several men were running after the horse; and the boys immediately left their play, and joined in the chase. Ponto rose up, barked and leaped forward, as if to encourage Edmund to follow him. Edmund did not hesitate long, but jumped from the fence, and followed the other boys.

The horse ran nearly two miles before he was caught. The little girl was saved, although she was much frightened. Edmund felt very tired when he came up to the spot where the chaise was stopped. The little girl was carried home to her father and mother; the horse was led back to the stable; the men went to their work, and the little boys returned to their play. Edmund and Ponto remained alone.

It was now late in the afternoon. The sun was becoming less and less bright. Edmund sat down by the side of a brook to rest himself. He felt quite tired; but thought that he should be able to get home in good season. He concluded not to go to his cousin's house that afternoon. Seeing a piece of wood by his side, he threw it into the brook. Ponto jumped into the water, took the stick in his mouth, and brought it to Edmund. They played in this way till sunset, and then Edmund started up, and took the path towards home.

The night was approaching fast. The crickets were chirping loudly from all sides, and everything seemed to be settling into repose. Edmund tried to whistle, and Ponto barked. The trees grew thicker as they advanced, and at last Edmund could not see a single light streaming through the leaves. He was not a timid child, and he hastened forward with a light heart. But soon he perceived that he had missed his way. He was very, very tired, and sat down on a large rock to repose himself. He thought of his situation, and sighed. Ponto leaped up, placed his forefoot on Edmund's shoulders, and wagged his tail. Edmund sighed again. Ponto barked and ran away.

Edmund stood up on the rock, and tried to call back the dog. But Ponto had forsaken him in his trouble, and he was now all alone. He could no longer keep from crying. His eyes were blinded with tears. The night grew darker and darker, and the grass was wet with dew.

After he had sat nearly an hour upon the rock, Edmund heard a loud rustling in the bushes. He was startled at the sound, but his fears were quieted when he heard the well known bark of Ponto. The next moment the faithful creature was at his feet. There was then a sound of voices, and Edmund heard his name shouted by some one at a distance. Ponto again left him, but soon returned. Two men rushed through the bushes. One of them was Edmund's father, and the other, John, the servant man.

Edmund returned safely to his home. His mother had suffered the greatest anxiety on his account, and the family had been long in search of him. He learned a useful lesson from his adventure. From that moment, he overcame his idle and dilatory habits.

My young readers! begin early to shun delay, for it is dangerous. Go straight forward in everything that you undertake, and never "linger by the road."

NEVER INSULT THE HUMBLE.

A HUMMING-BIRD met a butterfly, and being pleased with the beauty of its person and the glory of its wings, made an offer of perpetual friendship. "I cannot think of it," was the reply, "as you once spurned me and called me a drawing bolt." "Impossible!" exclaimed the humming-bird. "I have always entertained the highest respect for all such beautiful creatures as you are." "Perhaps you do now," said the other, "but when you insulted me I was a caterpillar. So let me give you a bit of advice: never insult the humble, as they may perhaps some day become your superiors."