

anything but regret for what might have been. All unconscious of Frances' presence, Margaret gazed out the window at the ice-covered street and falling snowflakes; and she involuntarily shivered at the consciousness that all her hopes were chilled and dead like the flowers on her mother's grave.

"Are you crying, Margaret?" said the little one, as her own bright face darkened in sympathy.

"No, Frances, dear, it is the tears in your own eyes that make you think so."

With an effort Margaret kept back further memories by interesting herself in the letter. Frances held up the page, so awkwardly written with pencil and so often marred by the marks of the eraser that neither she nor Margaret could make out the words. But the letter must be written. Who could help her to do it but her teacher and best friend? It is by dint of such mutual aid and confidence that most people in the world get along. The letter ran thus:

Dear Fred,—I write for you to come home at Christmas. Papa and mamma want you here, and so do I. I am praying night and morning to the Child Jesus for this, and I will hang up two long stockings besides my own, one for you and one for Margaret. From your sister, Frances.

The tears were now flowing from Margaret's eyes in earnest, and to conceal her bursting heart from the child she bent down and pressed her pale cheek against the warm and rosy one of her little friend, telling her what a dear child she was and that she hoped Fred would come indeed in answer to her letter and her prayer to the Child Jesus.

"Come now and ask mamma to let you go with me to see the nice Christmas tree that we are putting up for you at school. And on the way we will stop at the church to say one more prayer to obtain your wish."

By this time Margaret had regained her self-possession. Fred Moran's absence was another of her sorrows. It was fully a year now that he had been away. People told her she had no business liking him, since his folks were comparatively poor and Fred's earnings were but small. Never had he given hope of soon coming back. Hence with her expiring teaching certificate and her wages spent in covering the debts incident to her mother's last illness, her prospects for the coming year were dark indeed.

But Frances' letter sped on its way. In due time Fred read over the childish lines. They did not, however, change his mind.