

shut the door at last, and ran away to her tram.

And when Christmas morning came Edith gave round her presents with a full heart, glad, glad, that though they were a little cheaper than the others gave, somebody else in the big city was waking up to a happy Christmas too.

'It's a splendid knife,' whispered Ned as he slipped a silver thimble and a penny pencil into her pocket. 'You always spend too much on me.'—'Our Darlings.'

Christlike Christmas Presents

(H. R. Estey in 'The Independent'.)

'Well, that settles the question of Christmas presents for this year!' said Edith Marvin, in a tone which she tried to make quite cheerful—an attempt in which she failed miserably. For what girl of sixteen, even though she have sweet Madonna eyes and forehead, as did this daughter of a country minister, can contemplate a Christmas without presents and the usual festivities with stoic composure?

The mother, reclining in an invalid's chair near the old-fashioned fireplace, perceived the heroic effort and the signal failure; for the atmosphere of this plain, Christian home was one of love, and such an atmosphere is an excellent medium for the transmission of heart vibrations.

It was an evening in December, and a blizzard, such as Kansas knows, was making the wind fairly screech and howl about the light frame house. With every strong blast the whole building was visibly shaken; but the mother and daughter seemed not to notice this. Kansas winds and cheaply built houses make this such an ordinary occurrence that it ceases to be a matter of nervous discomfort to denizens of the prairie. The hard, dry snow had been whipped in by the wind between the window-sashes and under the door, where it lay white and chilly, untouched by the heat from the blazing fire in the old brick fireplace. Now and again the rag carpet was raised with a swelling, wave-like motion as the wind swept under it.

The evening devotions had been concluded, and the minister had gone out to the barn to see that the stock was all right for the night; for in this Western village almost every family kept a horse, a cow, a few pigs and a flock of chickens. It was this opportunity which Mrs. Marvin had improved to break to Edith the news about the distressing condition of the family finances; for she knew how difficult it would be for the tender-hearted father to do so. She wished to spare him the keen pain of seeing the shadow of disappointment settle on their child's face. She strengthened herself to endure this, by thinking of the look of relief which would come over the father's face when she should tell him that the explanations were all over, and that Edith seemed quite reconciled and cheerful in her acceptance of the unpleasant condition of things; for she felt sure she would be able to say this truthfully, since Edith was such a brave patient child.

A home missionary's life on the Kansas prairie knows some things not dreamed of in the philosophy of many an Eastern pastor. Mr. Marvin had three charges, from each of which he received a hundred and twenty-five dollars annually, by way of remuneration for his ministerial services; in addition to this, he received two hundred dollars from the Home Mission Board. One who knows even a little about the cost of books, periodicals, clothing, groceries and rent, can easily perceive that the amount annually saved from this income could not be very large, even with the careful economy

which a missionary's family knows how to exercise. Thus, it is easily conceivable that when the married son, John, who was a telegraph operator, was thrown out of employment and brought his wife and child 'home' to stay until he found a new position, and Mrs. Marvin's mother was stricken with paralysis and lay helpless as a child for a year before she went to be with God—it is easily conceivable, I say, that under these circumstances, the little store of savings melted away. After the funeral expenses were paid and money provided to send John's wife and child to him, it became plain that there would be very little money to spend for Christmas festivities. But it was the information imparted to Mr. Marvin that day by one of the deacons that came as the crowning trial and called forth from Edith the exclamation which she tried to make a cheerful one, and only succeeded in making a pitifully miserable one. The deacon had said that it would be impossible to pay him the salary due from this charge for several months. That meant that the Marvins would have all they could do to pay for food and necessary clothing. There could not possibly be a single penny spared for anything not absolutely necessary.

Edith's generous heart had always taken delight in previous years in making dainty little Christmas presents for her many friends and for the poor and neglected ones of her father's parish who were not likely to be thus remembered by anyone else. It was the thought that all this must be given up this Christmas that made the keenest disappointment to her, and not the fact that her parents would not be able to give her any presents.

'I am not quite sure that it will be impossible for you to make any presents, Edith,' Mrs. Marvin said.

Edith looked up with a quick flash of hope from the blazing fire, which she had been eyeing in silence for several moments.

'Why, mamma, how can I possibly make any presents when there will not be a single penny to spend?'

'Come over here to this footstool, dear, and you and your old mamma will have a talk about it.'

Nervous prostration, caused by the strain of caring for her helpless mother day and night for a year, had made Mrs. Marvin an invalid, but such a sweet, patient one that the very sight of her face was better than a sermon.

Edith took the low seat, and rested her arm on her mother's knee while she waited impatiently for her to explain her words; for she knew from her expression that it was 'one of mamma's original ideas,' and not a mere matter of ordinary 'Christmas presents.'

'Did Christ give any gifts to men, Edith?'

'Why, yes, mamma.'

'Do you read that he had any money or ever spent money in order to make a gift?'

'No, mamma.' She was beginning to catch her mother's thought.

'His gifts had nothing of the money element about them. We celebrate his birthday by making presents, but we do it clumsily, crudely, by making material presents. I have often wondered if our modern Christmas customs are not degrading the day, rather than honoring it, whether they do not tend to fix our minds on the material things of life, instead of leading them to contemplate and practice the great spiritual teachings of Christ. Do you suppose it would be possible to make Christmas presents which would not be material, which would give joy and pleasure and at the same time be Christlike presents—gifts to the spiritual life? Can't you try it this Christmas?'

'That is a grand idea, mamma!' exclaim-

ed Edith, enthusiastically. 'I wonder why people haven't thought of it long before this. I intend to try the plan—'

Mr. Marvin's entrance interrupted the sentence. As he opened the door a great gust of wind and snow came in with him, and it required the exercise of all his strength to push the door shut and slip the bolt in its place.

Edith bade her parents good-night and retired to her little room at the head of the stairs. Long after the house was quiet she lay awake listening to the sound of the wind, a sound she loved as many a one born on the coast loves the sound of the waves, and thinking of Christmas presents without money—Christlike presents.

At first she was quite at a loss to think of a single thing that would serve her purpose. Her mind had always been so accustomed to associating material gifts with the thought of Christmas presents, that for a time all seemed very dark along the line of this new experiment.

'What gifts did Christ give to men,' she thought. 'He gave sight to the blind; but of course I can't do—why, I can, too, in a way! Old Mrs. Wales, poor blind woman as she is, delights to have someone read to her, but her only daughter must sew so steadily that she has little time for reading. I'll go Christmas morning and read to her all the Christmas passages from the Bible, and some Christmas stories which I'll hunt up. I'll lend her my eyesight for a time!'

That was the beginning, and after that her quick thought fairly leaped its way from plan to plan till she was in a perfect fever of delight and excitement. It seemed to her that she should never have the patience to wait two weeks for Christmas, which she already began to feel would be the happiest Christmas of her life.

'There! that'll be my Christmas present to mamma and papa—I mean just my being happy and contented on that day. If I bought a present for them, it would be with the hope and expectation of giving them pleasure. But what could give them so much pleasure as just simply feeling that I am not disappointed or "blue," but really happy on that holiday?'

The days that intervened before Christmas, instead of finding Edith sad and quiet, as her father feared she might be, found her bright and happy as any parent could wish. Now and then in the afternoon, after the housework was all done, she put on her wraps and slipped away for a little while, with the same air of happy mystery that is the usual accompaniment of young people's movements during the days preceding Christmas. In answer to questions from her father or mother she always replied, with a smile, 'Christmas presents.'

Mr. Marvin, who had been quite despondent over the adverse set of circumstances which made them so poor just at Christmas time, was so cheered by Edith's joyous planning for 'Christlike Christmas presents,' that his heart was stirred to write such a Christmas sermon as he had never before in his life written.

On the day before Christmas Edith was as busy and happy as any girl could possibly be on that particularly interesting day. First the whole house was swept and dusted from top to bottom. After that she set to work cracking pecans, walnuts and hickory nuts.

'Do you think we shall eat so many nuts, my dear?' Mrs. Marvin asked, with a smile, as she noticed several dishes already heaped full, and the process of cracking still continuing.

'Well, mamma, I suppose that it is time to confess that I am planning to have a little party to-morrow evening; but I did not