

## FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

## "NO ROOM."

"There was no room."—Luke ii. 7.

No room in yonder mansion

So stately and so fair:

Though other guests are welcome,

No room for Jesus there?

So full of earthly treasures—

Of jewels choice and rare,

And yet no room for Jesus,

The King of Glory, there?

Ofttimes He waits and lingers,

Outside those portals fair,

And though He seeks admittance

Still finds no entrance there.

There are other homes less stately

With room enough to spare;

Yet none is found for Jesus,

That Friend beyond compare.

And thus how oft are human hearts

With pleasure filled, or care,

That they, alas! for Jesus have,

No time, no room to spare.

Oh! gracious, loving, heavenly Guest,

Our hearts and homes prepare,

That we may gladly welcome Thee,

Our King, our Saviour there!

CONSTANCE BRADL.

## HUGH'S CROSS.

A TALE FOR THE FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

[Continued.]

Very like the roll of distant thunder it was, when as the clock struck four, the doctor's voice sounded ominously through the lofty room.

"Boys," he said, "something has come to my knowledge to-day, which has pained me more than anything I have ever heard during the ten years I have been at Warrington. Boyish escapades, boyish follies, aye, I may almost say, boyish sins, have come under my notice, but never before have I had to accuse any of you; of theft. Seymour has been with me to-day, he tells me that his purse containing a ten pound note has been taken out of his box, and no trace of it can be found: the servants have all been questioned and their boxes searched, no trace of the money is to be found.

Seymour has known of his loss for more than a fortnight but has scrupled to tell me of it until he could no longer keep silence; for some debts in the village are pressing heavily upon him, and this money was sent to him by his father for the express purpose of paying them off. And now boys, I give you all one more chance; similar difficulties may have pressed upon some of you, you, like Seymour, may have disobeyed orders, and contracted debts in Warrington, I have given him his punishment; I mean to set on foot an enquiry this very day and find out who the other offenders are; but if there is one amongst you who has lacked moral courage to write home and ask for money to get himself out of a scrape, who was tempted by the sight of what he could not obtain, let him stand out and confess, boldly now before his God and before all of us, and I do not say that the sin, great as it is, may not be forgiven by me, and as God's priest I tell you that if it is repented of and atoned for, it will most surely be forgiven by Him who on the cross promised the dying thief that he should be with Him in Paradise."

A silence broken only by the quick almost suppressed breathing of fifty boys, a nameless fear on many a young face, followed the doc-

tor's words. He was a man well skilled in reading the workings of the human countenance, it seemed to each one of the boys as though those piercing, scrutinizing eyes were fixed upon himself, and they all stood it bravely—all save one, and that one sat on the junior form, his face livid, the perspiration standing out on his delicate brow, his slender frame quivering with some strange emotion,—and that one was Hugh Neville.

There was only one of the boys who noticed him, and who wondered at the cause of his apparent fear, one who knew that trouble and sorrow was in store for poor little Hugh, but who could not understand the reason of his agitation. That boy was Reginald Hollingworth.

The doctor's patience was exhausted, no word broke from that almost breathless throng. "Then, boys, there is but one alternative," and this time there was deep sorrow in the manly voice, "your boxes must be searched, give up your keys."

One by one they laid their keys on his desk, one by one they looked into his face as though they would ask him to believe that they were true and honest. But his eyes were fixed upon the opposite wall, he did not bestow a single glance on one of them.

"There will be no going into the play ground this afternoon," he said, "the elder boys may go into their studies, the younger ones may keep in the schoolroom."

Half an hour later there was a timid tap at the door of Reginald Hollingworth's room, and Hugh's face ghastly in its whiteness appeared there. "Reginald" he said, "I want to speak to you."

"You've no business out of the school-room, sir; didn't you hear the doctor's orders?"

"Yes, but I couldn't rest until I had spoken to you. I don't want to get you into a scrape, I don't want to preach, Reginald, I only want you to go and confess to the doctor that you took the money, for I saw you go to Seymour's box and unlock it and take out his purse; I had been put into his room that night, because they thought Howes was sickening for scarlet fever, and we were all moved. I was the only one there when you came in. Oh Reginald, dear Reginald, do go to the doctor and tell him all."

"Hugh, I think you have lost your senses, or were dreaming and imagined you saw me, get away, sir, and don't bring any of your improbable stories to me; wait and see whether the real culprit may not be found out."

Reginald spoke somewhat more gently than was his wont, and Hugh bewildered and startled, went as he was 'old to the school-room. How long he sat there he never knew; he did no lesson, heard nothing that went on around him for a very long time.

At last there came a vague rumour that the thief was discovered.

Then, the elder boys began to troop in, and the doctor took his usual seat, with a sterner, more sorrowful expression on his face than any one ever remembered to have seen there. On the table before him lay Seymour's purse. He tried their patience to the utmost, he was silent for full five minutes, then it seemed as though his mournful glance rested on the junior form.

"Hugh Neville," he said, "stand forward, and tell me how this purse came into your box." No answer. "Speak, I command you, sir," thundered the voice which never spoke but to be obeyed.

There was no timidity in Hugh's glance now, no faltering in his speech as he said firmly, "I did not put it there, sir; I never saw the purse before but one day in Seymour's hand."

The words, the tone, and manner carried conviction within them, half the school, in their own minds, notwithstanding the strong circumstantial evidence against him, pronounced Hugh to be innocent. The other half, Holling-

worth's set, put the boy down as a sneak and a liar.

"I cannot enquire further into this now, boys; understand you are all fully acquitted, all but Neville: go to your room," continued the doctor, addressing Hugh, "and don't come out of it again until I give you leave."

And the boy with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, so different to his usual demeanour, passed out from amongst that little world of school life, with the brand of disgrace upon him. He did not leave his room for many days, all that fearful excitement had been too much for him, and ere the next morning dawned, he was tossing about his bed in all the delirium of fever. Somehow the boys found out then that they had not been as kind as they might have been to the little fellow who was always so meek and gentle, so ready to oblige, so slow to wrath; and boylike they made up for it, and tried all they could to do him some service now. How much of their pocket money was spent in little delicacies which poor Hugh could not eat, how anxiously they asked at his door when he would be about again; even if he had stolen the money, how he had suffered for it already, poor little chap," they said, "and perhaps after all he was innocent."

Seymour sat by the little boy's bed-side whenever he could get a spare moment, and before the first week of his illness had passed, once more the senior boy stood in the doctor's study. "There has been some mistake made, S.R.," he said, "little Neville is not the thief."

"Ha, I thought so," said the doctor, "who is it?" Then Seymour told now in the ravings of delirium, Hugh had let out his secret, and had accused Hollingworth of the crime; "he kept on talking of his cross, sir; I can't make out what he meant, anyhow, he's borne a heavy one, poor little fellow, for somehow I have an idea that he knew all along who the real culprit was."

Once more the boys were assembled in the school-room, once more the doctor stood amongst them, and at his side out of the ranks of boys dogged, sniled, heartily ashamed of himself, stands Reginald Hollingworth.

The truth has come out at last, it has been ascertained beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he changed the note in the village, and paid his own bills with the money; denial is of no use, so tardy confession has been wrung out of him, and as he stands there in his degradation and his shame, the boys cannot but pity him. He wishes them all good bye, for he is going away, and they shake hands with him, and mutter some hope of hearing that he is going on well, and then he passes from among them and goes up to the room where Hugh, looking miserably ill, but quite sensible, is lying.

He has been told all, his own exculpation and Reginald's disgrace, and even now he cannot be happy.

Reginald goes up to him and kneels by the side of his bed, "Hugh, can you ever forgive me?" is all he says, and then his tears flow fast. And Hugh puts his little thin arms round the boys neck, and tells him how good God is, and how he wishes he would seek Him and find Him.

Then the "good-bye" has to be said; and they both knew that it must be a very long one, for Reginald is going to Australia to an uncle of his mother's, to try in the new world to redeem the wretched past.

And Hugh, whither is he journeying? how is the cross to come to him next? Come with me to Bribblecombe, one year after the commencement of my tale, on the Festival of the Holy Innocents. Hugh is dying; no earthly power can save him now, it is a gradual wasting away, a failing of all the powers. His father leans over his bed, and poor old Nurse prays that her darling may be spared, and even the step-mother, who the world says is so cold and hard, is very gentle when she speaks to the little boy; perhaps his kindness to Reginald has won her heart, the mercy he showed to her