

talked when Maxwell was out, and she told me such lovely stories, and I saw a beautiful picture of the probable son in the best parlor, and Mrs. Maxwell took it down and let me have a good look at it. I am going to save up money and buy one just like it for my nursery, and do you know uncle—

She stopped short, but not for want of breath. Putting her curly head on one side, she surveyed her uncle for a minute meditatively, then asked a little doubtfully: 'Can you keep a secret, Uncle Edward? Because I would like to tell you, only, you see, Mrs. Maxwell doesn't talk about it, and I told her I wouldn't—at least not to the servants, you know.'

'I think you can trust me,' Sir Edward said gravely.

'This is it, then, and I think it's so wonderful. They have got a real live probable son.'

Sir Edward raised his eyebrows. His little niece continued:

'Yes, they really have. It was when I was talking about the picture Mrs. Maxwell took the corner of her apron and wiped her eyes, and said she had a dear son who had run away from home, and she hadn't seen him for nine years. Just fancy! Where was I nine years ago?'

'Not born.'

'But I must have been somewhere,' and Milly's active little brain now started another train of thought, until she got fairly bewildered.

'I expect I was fast asleep in God's arms,' she said at length, with knitted brows, 'only of course I don't remember,' and having settled that point to her satisfaction she continued her story:

'Mrs. Maxwell's probable son is called Tommy. He ran away when he was seventeen because he didn't like the blacksmith's shop—Mrs. Maxwell and I cried about him—he had such curly hair and stood six feet in his stockings, and he was a beautiful baby when he was little and had croup and—and confusions, and didn't come to for four hours, but he would run away, though he laid the fire and put sticks on it and drew the water for Mrs. Maxwell before he went. And Mrs. Maxwell says he may be a soldier or a sailor now for all she knows, and he may be drowned dead, or run over, or have both his legs shot to pieces, or he may be in India with the blacks; but I told her he was very likely taking care of some pigs somewhere, and she got happy a little bit then, and we dried our tears, and she gave me some peppermint to suck. Isn't it a wonderful story, uncle?'

'Very wonderful,' was the response.

'Well, we were in the middle of talking when Maxwell came in, so we hushed, because Mrs. Maxwell said, "It makes my man so sad;" but do you know, when Maxwell was bringing me home through the wood he asked me what we had been talking about, and he said he knew it was about the boy, because he could see it in Mrs. Maxwell's eye. And then I asked him if he would run and kiss Tommy when he came back, and if he would make a feast; and he said he would do anything to get him home again.'

Milly paused, then said wistfully:

'I wish I had a father, Uncle Edward. You see, nurse does for a mother, but fathers are so fond of their children, aren't they?'

'It does not always follow that they are,' Sir Edward replied.

'The probable son's father loved him, and Maxwell loves Tommy, and then there was David, you know, who really had a wicked son, with long hair—I forget his name—and he cried dreadful when he was dead. I sometimes tell God about it when I'm in bed, and then He—He just seems to put His arms round me and send me off to sleep; at least, I think He does. Nurse says God likes me to call Him my Father, but of course that isn't quite the same as having a father I can see. Maxwell is a very nice father I think. I told him I would pray for Tommy every night when I go to bed, and then I told him that God had lots of probable sons, too—the clergyman said so on Sunday, didn't he?—people who have run away from Him. I've been asking God to make them come back. I hope He will let me know when they do. Do you know any one who has run away from God, uncle?'

'You are chattering too much, child,' said Sir Edward irritably, 'sit still and be quiet.'

Milly instantly obeyed, and after some moments of silence her uncle said:

'I don't mind your going to Maxwell's cottage, but you must never take Fritz with

you. He is not allowed in that wood at all. Do you quite understand?'

'Yes, but I'm very sorry, for Fritz doesn't like being left behind; the tears were in his eyes when nurse told him he wasn't to go with me. You see, no one talks to him like I do. He likes me to tell him stories, and I told him when I came back about my visit, so he wants to go. But I won't take him with me if you say no.'

When she was leaving him that night for bed she paused a moment as she wished him good-night.

'Uncle Edward, when you say your prayers to-night, will you ask God to make Tommy come back home? His mother does want him so badly.'

'I will leave you to do that,' was the curt reply.

'Well, if you don't want to pray for Tommy, pray for God's probable sons, won't you? Do, Uncle Edward. Mrs. Maxwell said the only thing that comforted her is asking God to bring Tommy back.'

Sir Edward made no reply, only dismissed her more peremptorily than usual, and when she had left the room he leaned his arms on the chimney-piece, and resting his head on them, gazed silently into the fire with a knitted brow. His thoughts did not soothe him, for he presently raised his head with a short laugh, saying to himself:

'Where is my cigar-case? I will go and have a smoke to get rid of this fit of the blues. I shall have to curb that child's tongue a little; she is getting too troublesome.'

And whilst he was pacing moodily up and down the terrace outside, a little white-robed figure, with bent head and closed eyes, was saying softly and reverently as she knelt at her nurse's knee:

'And, O God, bring Tommy back, and don't let him be a probable son any more; bring him home very soon, please, and will you bring back all your probable sons who are running away from you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

(To be Continued.)

STRAIGHT GIVING.

Some time ago a member of a Christian Endeavor Society in Montreal was speaking with the president of a successful Ladies' Missionary Society. She asked: 'What methods do you use to raise money in your society?' 'Straight giving,' was the reply.

It set her thinking, and it set some others in that Christian Endeavor Society to thinking, too. And from thinking they went to talking. For ten or eleven years they had existed as a society, but as a society had done nothing for foreign mission work. 'Could not afford it,' they said; they were each doing all they could already. But they talked more, and prayed and asked God to show them what they could do, and asked him to make them want, more than anything else, to know and to do just what he would have them do. After the talking they went about doing. Some of them promised to give five cents a month and some ten for a year. Some got up an entertainment. Some promised to try the talent plan, beginning with ten cents, and then give the proceeds. At the end of the year how much do you suppose they had raised? Thirty-five dollars. Not so bad for the first, was it?

But the vigorous hint of 'straight giving' stuck to some of them. At the first missionary meeting of their society this year they brought the matter up again. They talked of the sore needs in two of the fields in which their denomination is interested. They read the latest letters from their missionaries there, and prayed again and asked God to make known to each of them just what they could do, and make them want to do His will more than they wanted anything else in the whole world. And then the wide awake treasurer of the missionary committee asked for promises again for this year. Slips of paper were passed around, and each one wrote how much he or she

wished to give a month for the coming year. Some members were absent, but they were interviewed by themselves. Some promised five cents a month, some ten, some twenty, some thirty, and one even promised forty. And at the next business meeting the chairman of the missionary committee, with a beaming face, announced that she had pledged for over \$5 a month, or more than \$60 for the year. So much for 'straight giving.' And I do not think that a single one of those young people expect to feel one cent the poorer this year. On the contrary, looking into their faces a stranger would gather that they expected to be double that amount the richer. And they strongly recommend the plan to other societies.

Northern Messenger.

We are glad to hear that our readers are so pleased with the change which has been made in the 'Northern Messenger.'

Among the new features in this week's issue the two headings of 'Boys and Girls' and 'Little Folks' will be noticed.

The five pages devoted to boys and girls gives ample room for a number of interesting stories each week, among which in this number will be noticed one written especially for the 'Messenger' by the Rev. Mr. Hopkin, of Montreal.

The two pages devoted to 'Little Folks' are set in very large type, so as to make them more easily read and more attractive to the little ones.

Is the 'Northern Messenger' distributed in your Sunday-school? If not, please find out why it is not and try to get it done.

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