

for when you are dressed I have something to tell you."

"Is it——" began Ted, but Mike clapped his hand over his brother's mouth, and the little boys began to wash and put on their clothes in a great hurry.

CHAPTER III.—THE BIRTHDAY TREAT

When they were dressed quite neatly, and had put on their brown holland overalls, and had their hair brushed, and said their prayers, they each took hold of their mother's hands, and prepared to descend to the breakfast parlor. Suddenly Ted ran back, and raised his eyes to the illuminated text over the mantelpiece.

"I did want to 'member my verse," said the little fellow.

At which Mike laughed.

"Why, I know every word of it, Ted. 'Tis only five words. See! one for each finger—' Little—children—love—one—another.' I'd know that little easy verse if I wasn't to see it, not for sixty years."

But Ted, looking up into his mother's face, received an answering glance, which showed she understood him.

She knew Mike meant only the knowledge of the head, while Ted included that of the heart. They went down into the breakfast parlor, round which Mike's restless eyes eagerly travelled. His father was seated with the large family Bible open before him waiting to begin family prayers. He looked just as usual.

"Why, father, how soon you is back," said Mike.

"Yes, my boy; I came home before you were up this morning."

He spoke just as usual. How strange!

The room, too, looked as usual; There was no sign of a red shawl or a little child.

But suddenly Mike's face lit up with satisfaction. Yes, there was a difference. Biddie was the only servant at prayers; Nurse Nora's chair was empty.

I greatly fear that the little boy did not listen much to his father's prayer, which was very short, and quite easy of comprehension; he did nothing but gaze at Nora's empty chair.

When they rose from their knees, he rushed to his mother, and clasped his arms round her neck.

"Mother we just can't wait no more. Tell it, mother."

His mother kissed him.

"What day will next Wednesday be?"

"Course, mother, I know that; 'twill be our birthday."

"We shall be six years old," said Ted; "we sha'n't be so very young no more."

"Tell us about it, mother," said impatient Mike.

"Somebody is coming on your birthday."

Mike looked at Ted, and Ted looked at Mike. The somebody about whom their hearts were full had surely come, was now in the house.

"I guess," said Ted; but Mike stopp'd him with a frown.

"Read their uncle's letter to

them, my dear," said Mr. O'Donnell; "don't keep the little fellows in suspense."

"'Tis their own letter," said their mother. "I don't know what is in it. Here, Mike, you are the eldest, you may open it."

The letter was done up in a blue envelope, and had a great read seal. It looked very imposing.

"Oh, I wish I could read writing," said Ted.

But it was not Mike's way to show his ignorance. He broke the seal deliberately, spread out the sheet before him, and then handed it to his mother, saying, carelessly, that if she liked she might read it aloud.

The letter was from their Uncle Edward, after whom Ted was named, and its contents were as follows:—

"MY DEAR BOYS.—Your mother will tell you that I mean to spend your birthday with you. I shall arrive on the morning of the day, and go away again in the evening.

"Now I am sure you will begin to wonder at once what present I am going to give you, for you know that Uncle Edward does not appear on people's birthdays, particularly on little people's birthdays, with empty pockets.

"You remember the kite last year, and the rabbits the year before.

"Now, boys, I am going to surprise you. You may put your hands as often as you please into my pockets this year, but you won't pull out as much as would cover a six-penny bit in the shape of a gift for either of you.

"I will not bring you any birthday present, but I have a plan in my head which will please you just as well, and better.

"Your mother writes me word that you have been very good boys for the last half year, that you have obeyed her and your father, been kind and loving to one another, and even made some progress in your lessons.

"So, boys, if between this day and your birthday you neither of you get a bad conduct mark, I shall take you both in the evening of that day away with me. You have never been out of your native country; well, I shall take you to Cork; we can visit Glengarriff and Gougane Barra, and fish in the lakes! What do you say to that, boys? But remember the condition—good conduct between this and the birthday.

Your affectionate uncle,

EDWARD."

Their mother paused. She expected to be assailed with a thousand questions and many noisy expressions of delight, instead of which there was dead silence.

Mike looked at Ted, and Ted looked at Mike; the same thought was in the minds of both. If Mike confessed his fault of that morning he would lose a good conduct mark. Neither spoke, unless their glowing cheeks and downcast eyes were language.

Their mother thought they were really stunned with delight, and giving the letter back to Mike, she put her hands lovingly on their shoulders.

"My darlings have been dear good boys lately, and I hope will have a happy time. Your uncle says he means to keep you for a week. Fancy, Mike, driving on the mail car, and sleeping at the hotel, and then getting into a real boat and fishing up little trout for yourselves!"

"But they have to earn it yet, mother," said their father; "they must have good conduct marks all this week."

"Yes," said their mother; "and I fear it will be a hard week for them, poor little men!"

"Why, mother?" asked Mike, speaking low and in a subdued manner.

"Because your nice, kind nurse, Nora, will be away from you. Bid-

die will dress and undress you, and Miss Ross must stay with you most of the day, as I expect also to be busy. I am going to trust you to sleep by yourselves."

"Why will Nora be away, mother?" asked Mike, now recovering his spirits and looking up eagerly.

"Ah! that is mother's secret, which her boys must not even try to find out. Some day I shall tell you."

"When, mother? On our birthday?"

"Perhaps on your birthday. Now come and take your porridge and milk."

Not a word about the baby in the red shawl; but for the present the boys had enough to think about,—Mike's tongue once loosened, he had more questions to ask than could well be answered, and Ted's curiosity was nearly as great.

When breakfast was over, as they were leaving the room, Mrs. O'Donnell called them back.

"Mike, dear, when I went into your nursery this morning I saw your little Dan's cage down on the window sill, and Nora assures me she hung it up on the perch last night. Do you know anything about it?"

"No, mother," said Mike instantly, and boldly.

"Do you, Ted?"

Ted had gazed at his brother in speechless astonishment. Now his delicate little face grew crimson, and when his mother asked:

"Do you, Ted?" he answered:

"Yes," beneath his breath.

Mrs. O'Donnell was about to ask something further, when there was an interruption. Nurse Nora put her head in at the door. How funny she looked! She had on an old brown dress belonging to their mother, and a little tight-fitting cap on her head.

"Sure then, ma'am, dear, the heart's just broke in me. Can ye come?"

Then seeing the boys, she put her hand up to her mouth, with a gesture of dismay and disappeared.

Mrs. O'Donnell rose at once, leaving Mike and Ted staring at one another.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DON'TS FOR CHURCH PEOPLE.

Don't call the *offertory* the "collection."

Don't go to the Holy Table with gloves on.

Don't come to church late.

Don't kneel or "lean forward" at the Ascription after the sermon; stand.

Don't wait to kneel till the clergyman enters the church. "The Lord is in his holy temple."

Don't leave the church while the clergyman is in the chancel.

Don't kneel till the minister says, "Let us pray," after "The Lord be with you."

Don't lean forward instead of kneeling.

Don't call Maundy Thursday Holy Thursday.

CHILDREN IN CHURCH.

If you want to see your children trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, do not try to shift your parental responsibility upon ministerial shoulders. The work that is done in the church and Sunday-school depends for its success upon the precept and example of the home. If the father is careless and the mother lukewarm, they will quickly communicate these qualities to their offspring. Every fireside is an altar, and every head of a family is a priest appointed of God to keep the sacred fire continually burning. These are considerations which make home the first of all temples. It is the original of the idea of a church. As the hills of the mountain steal out of every grassy nook, from every little dell and ravine in the side of it and at last appear as a river in the valley, so the greatest nations and the purest churches are the sum total of all the home life of the people. The place for the education of the conscience, for instruction in righteousness, for growth in grace, for the building and sweetening of character, is under the benign influence of domestic atmosphere. The spirituality of a parish is not the result of eloquent preaching and pastoral fidelity alone. If the teaching of the pulpit is followed by religion in the household, there will be no stagnation or dullness in churches.

The reluctance exhibited by children in attending public worship is often traceable to the lame and hurtful excuses their parents offer for absentsent themselves from the Lord's house. How can a man conscientiously reprove his son for neglect of the Lord's day if its weekly recurrence awakens in his soul no sacred desire to honour God's appointments? How can a mother blame her daughter for inattention to the great verities of the Christian faith if she seek with slightest provocation to subordinate her own duties to Christ to the demands of society and the interest of this life? These are questions that are important enough to be seriously considered.—*Ballston Register*.

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