



His First Holiday

must have been while his strength was being shorn, even though the parable says he slept.

A trifle dazed by exaltation, he followed her into the library. The children who had greeted him vociferously as Santa Claus were now strangely silent and tongue-tied in the presence of a mere human, — but only for a moment.

"Oh, it's Mr. Pycke!" screamed the pinkest one of them all. "I know him!"

Whereupon she announced that he had come down from New York to see her sister Mary and was going to stay for dinner and play bear.

"Do you mind being left alone with them for a few minutes?" asked Mary. "I must go up to father's room. He is quite helpless, you know."

"I'd forgotten to ask how he's feeling to-day," he murmured contritely.

The tears suddenly rushed to her eyes. A very pathetic smile and a shake of her head was the only answer he received. She left him standing there, surrounded by glad, expectant revelers, prey to a new and unusual depression — as swift as it was surprising. His heart, overflowing with a new sensation of tenderness and pity, followed the slender figure up the stairs; there was but little of it left below to encourage the gleeful spirits of the care-free lads and lassies.

For some unexplained reason, which he afterward sought to attribute to hysteria, he hugged the pink little Pembroke girl with unnecessary ardor, and would have kissed her older sister if he could have caught her.

When Miss Pembroke came downstairs half an hour