

NO CARDS.

BY SYDNEY DAYRE.

"Mother, let's have a Christmas of our own this year. Most all the girls has 'em at their houses—some has Christmas trees, and some has hangin' up stockin's and they make presents and they gets presents, and there's candy, and it's nice. Do let's, mother."

Tildy Crofts spoke very earnestly as her mother sat darning discouraging holes in a large pile of small stockings.

"I wouldn't be no sort o' use to try. You can't spread a pound of butter over a whole acre of bread, and no more you can't make a little bit o' money go more'n just so far. There's too many here to do for, Tildy!"

"But that's just why I'd like to do it, mother. They'd like it so."

"Yes, I know they would, and so would you, and so would I. But it ain't no sort o' use to try—none!"

And Tildy could not stir her up on the subject. There was a large family, and a husband who never "got along," and the struggle which always comes in company with these conditions had long ago taken away whatever of energy or spirit the poor woman might have possessed. Tildy, now thirteen, going occasionally to school, and to Sunday-school, was beginning to take in influences which came from happier homes, and her childish heart was sometimes sorely perplexed between her desire of having things more "like folks," and her discouragement over the hopelessness of the ground she had to work.

But her anxiety to have a Christmas tree of their own was becoming too strong to be destroyed by the lack of sympathy shown by her mother. She went out and sat down in the back yard, resting her hands on her knees and her head on her hands, looking at the three or four chickens feeding there.

"Turkeys are the thing to have, but them that don't have turkeys has chicken-pie Mis' Bartlett says so. I'd hate to have my poor chickens killed, but I'm bound to have a Christmas. Might have a dried apple pie to come after, with orange peel in, and clean plates to hand it 'round on! I'm goin' to hem a handkerchief for father. I'd like to make a pincushion for mother; then she'd stick her pins in it, and not in her dress and scratch the baby. I'd like to have a tree—trees are splendid; Jim could get a tree in the woods. But then there has to be lots o' things onto a tree to make it look any-ways stylish and proper."

But there was in Tildy stuff which surely had not come of either father or mother, for the more it appeared as if she couldn't possibly have a Christmas tree, the more she determined she would.

"Fifty cents apiece, mamma, please, for the Christmas cards," cried three happy children dressed for a morning shopping.

"Dear me! it really seems too much, children, when you get so much besides. A dollar and a half for what could so easily be done without, and times so hard!"

"Why! ain't we to have our cards, mamma?" The three faces looked surprised and grieved.

"Oh, yes, dear, I suppose so, but I sometimes think you little ones are learning to care too much for your own selves, and not enough for others about you who has a so little. I wish you could have heard Aunt Laura tell me the other day about one of her Sunday-school class who was thankful for such very small helps and showings—how in the way of Christmas doings. This season, when our Lord came a little child among us, ought to be a time for children to try to do good to each other."

"I would like to, mamma," said Bessie.

"Real helping means a little doing with-out ourselves, you know, dear. But we'll talk of it again. Run along now, little ones; don't stay too long."

Bessie kept on thinking she would like to help Aunt Laura help the poor little girl, till they came to the cards and then she forgot her. They were beautiful in their endless showing of flowers, birds, angels, and pretty child-faces. The great difficulty was to choose among so many. She was soon in deep discussion with Susie and Emily as to the desirability of buying a cheap lot which would enable them to send one to half the girls they knew, besides some for the home circle, or a few more choice for a few more favored ones, when she heard a voice close at her elbow.

"Oh-h-h—ha'n't them lovely, now!"

The words came from a girl she had seen

at school, but had little to do with, with a stubby figure, homely face, and keen, good-natured-looking black eyes. Very poor she looked—not at all like a customer for fancy goods, as the clerk seemed to think, for he paid little attention to her except to interpose slightly as a younger child who was with her seemed anxious to handle the easily soiled wares, clamoring rather noisily.

"Let me see—let me see!"

"Sh, now, Patty, them ain't meant for you nor me."

But the speaker leaned rapturously over a card which Bessie would not have supposed would attract her, one not gaudily colored, but exquisite in soft delicate tinting and dreamy allegorical figures. But she turned from it with a sigh to ask the price of some ladies' polka-dotted lawn ties.

"Twenty-five cents." She hesitated, and then in a lower voice asked.

"You couldn't sell two for forty cents, could you?"

"No." A wistful look followed the red dots as they went back into the showcase. The blue one she bought could not be intended to go near her own coal-black hair and eyes.

"Don't you tell mother about this," she cautioned Patty, turning just in time to rescue from her not overclean hands a card with a bright colored bird. Patty gave it up with a pitiful look which went to Bessie's heart as she watched the two.

"I want it—I want it awful bad," she whimpered.

"Look here," the older girl led her to a loaded Christmas tree, on which both gazed with wonder and admiration. Then the latter slipped back and bought the card, a cheap one, without letting the child see, and they went out.

"It's Tildy Crofts," said Susie, looking after them. "Jessie Barnes says they're the slackest, good-for-nothing set in town."

"I don't care," said Bessie, "I'm sorry for her. I wonder what kind of Christmas such folks have?"

"Oh, never mind that—it don't concern us, you know. Come, let's club together and buy this lot. See, they're beauties!"

But Bessie was looking down at the card which Tildy Crofts had admired, half thinking of the angels on it who were showering blessings down with liberal hands, half wondering why beautiful cards and all the other beautiful things which go to make up Christmas-tide in beautiful homes, should belong to one child and not another—to her and not to Tildy Crofts. Wondering too, in a vague sort of way, if it might not be so ordered to give the one a chance to do that good by the other of which her mother had spoken, and slowly making up her mind that it ought to be some concern of hers what kind of Christmas Tildy Crofts had.

"No, I'm not going to buy those," she said, paying for the card she was looking at.

"Twenty cents for that one!" exclaimed Emily. "Why, if you buy such nice ones, you won't be able to get half enough for the girls, or for father and mother."

"I ain't going to get any for the girls, nor for father and mother. I'm going to send this to Tildy Crofts." Her sisters stood with open eyes in astonishment and dismay.

"Such a beauty. I thought you were going to send it to Belle Whitman."

"See, here," Bessie drew a little aside from the crowd of purchasers, a Belle Whitman gets more cards than she knows what to do with, and everything else too. I think it would be ever so nice to give things to some one that don't get things, don't you?"

The others looked doubtful.

"If you mean to send cards to all the Crofts, it will take nine more," said Susie, hesitatingly. "I heard Tildy, one day, telling the teacher there were nine besides her."

"Just think of so many poor little things not having a good Christmas. But I ain't going to buy any more cards. I'm going to buy that necktie for Tildy." When this was done she had just five cents left.

"There must be a baby among so many," she said with a very positive air. "I mean to buy it a rattle—babies always like rattles. Now, I'm going to find Jimmy Crofts. I know he drives a grocery wagon, a little way from here, for I saw Tildy talking to him, and he's got red hair and squints."

Bessie started out full of her new interest and the others followed in a great state of perplexity over this confusion thrown on their plans. Jimmy was found loading his grocery wagon, and Bessie approached him confidentially.

"Will you give this to Tildy?" she said, offering her small parcel.

"Yes'm, sure, secin' you wants me ter."

"But they're for Christmas. Couldn't you manage to put them where she'd find them on Christmas morning, for a surprise, you know?"

Jim's face beamed as he took the parcel.

"Crackey, now! But I guess you didn't know we're agoin' to have a real right up an' down Christmas to our house, did you?"

"No, I didn't," said Bessie.

"Sure's—you—live! An' a tree! Me'n' Tildy's a doin' of it, 'n nobody else don't know 'cept the teacher as has been a showin' of her how to string popcorn onto strings, 'n make popcorn balls with dabs o' red onto 'em, 'n stars o' shiny paper, 'n lots o' doin's!"

"Well, can't you hang these on the tree when Tildy don't see?"

"I'll do it if I have to set up all night for it!" said Jim fervently.

"I'm glad I did it," said Bessie as they turned away.

"I wish I had," said Emily.

"We can yet," said Susie. "Let's go in here. But what shall we get?"

They looked rather helplessly around upon everything necessary to make Christmas for any whose age might fall between one month and a hundred years.

"Tops are nice—let's get tops."

"Nice tops! But we don't know whether they are all boys."

"Dolls, then. See these cunning little ones!"

"But what if they should not all be girls?"

"We ought to get something useful for poor folks," said Susie, looking wise. "Mittens or scarfs or stockings."

"But we couldn't get enough with our money. I say, let's get some pretty things for their tree—something just to make them glad—that they wouldn't get any other way, poor things!"

So it was agreed. Some bright-colored candy was bought, then such love-fruit in the way of tree decoration as would make the most gorgeous show for the least money. Jimmy was again waylaid, and the treasures entrusted to him, under solemn promise that he would never tell where they came from—no, not if he lived a thousand years.

"And we won't tell anybody else."

"No. How they'll wonder why we give 'em as to anybody."

Aunt Laura peeped in on the afternoon of the sunny Christmas day.

"Come, Bessie, Susie, Emily, I'm going to see some of my pets, and I'll take you."

Two or three old people were visited, to each one of whom the day had been made pleasant by her remembrance, and then they stopped at a door which was not thick enough to keep in the sounds of noisy mirth.

"Now you'll see a jolly little bee-hive," said Aunt Laura, as the door opened.

"If it isn't Tildy Crofts!" said Bessie, in an amazed whisper.

"Come in," cried Tildy, with a face which would have brightened at sight of her teacher if it had not already been so radiant as to make that impossible. "Yes'm," she went on in a flutter of joy and excitement—

"there is—a tree! A Christmas tree—at our house! Jes' for all the world like other folks' Christmas trees, ha'n't it?"

Mrs. Crofts came forward with more of an appearance of life in the face, over the blue dotted tie she wore, than had been seen there for many a day. The red dots graced Tildy's neck, both being tied in as large a bow as their size would admit. The children gathered around with faces full of Christmas sunshine.

"I guess you knowed somet'ing about this," said Tildy, with an affectionate smile at her teacher, as she displayed a neatly fitted up little work-basket. "I'm agoin' to keep everybody's clothes mended now, so mother 'll git more time for keepin' things slicked up. And look a-her, Jim made this feather-brush out o' the tail feathers of the chicken that made the pie. Jes' see how it works—wait till I find some dust, we're dusted high about all there was a'ready."

Aunt Laura inwardly hoped the duster might lead to improvements in the Crofts housekeeping.

"But do you see the bought things?"

Tildy returned to the tree in a fresh burst of delight. "I thought we was jest agoin' to have home doin's onto it. Jimmy—he's gone out 'cause he had to do a little work to the store—well, Jimmy he knows some-thin' o' how these be-you-chiful bought things come," she shook her head mysteriously; "but says he can't never tell, not on

no account whatever, no more'n if he was dumb. Says 'twas angels done it. (I guess 'twas too.) Says—look a-her—" she reverently drew from its envelope the card Bessie had bought, and went on impressively, "Jimmy says the angels looked precisely like them in this pictur!"

Aunt Laura caught the quick look which Bessie cast at Susie; a look in which a tear arose above the amused smile, as the feeling grew warm in her heart that this helping to make Christmas bright for the Crofts family was the sweetest work she had ever done.

"Ah!" Aunt Laura said, as they got outside the door, "I wonder if this is why there were no cards at home!"—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

THE TEACHER IN HIS CLASS.

In every lesson, as far as possible, stick to one point. Do not attempt to cram the mind of your pupil with too much. Say to yourself, "Such and such is the point in my lesson, let all the rest of my teaching revolve around that." One point fixed on the mind is better than twenty "in at one ear and out at the other."

Be simple. Do not shoot over the head of your scholar. Little Johnnie was very anxious to go to Aunt Susan's. When his mother inquired why he was so very anxious to go there, he replied, "Because aunt Susan always puts the ginger-snaps on the lowest shelf." If the teacher in a Sunday-school class talks of "protoplasm," "antipodes," "the sun culminating at noon," and like things, there will be little or no interest, but if he puts "the ginger-snaps on the lowest shelf," he will not fail to hold the attention of the little ones.

Do not preach. Here is a temptation, especially if the love of God is in your heart. But there is a time for everything, and in teaching children, bear in mind that they will remember long what they tell you but will soon forget what you tell them. This is the difference between a good teacher and a poor one. A good teacher will draw out the observations and reflections of the scholar, and so make him remember; a poor teacher gives him a lot of information, which is no sooner heard than forgotten, because the child has not been worked, and takes no part in the lesson.

Don't neglect the dull children. There is such a temptation to push forward the clever ones and neglect the rest, but it is the second half of a class which is the test of a good teacher. It is easy enough to teach a child who is anxious to learn, but the dull and stupid ones surely want most care.

For their benefit be graphic. You are teaching the parable of "the sower." Picture out the crowds, the lake, the hills around, the boat, throw life and reality into the scene. An able writer, describing this, makes little boys trying to spell Peter's name backwards on the stern of the boat. Or your lesson is on Simeon detained by Joseph as a prisoner. Picture the feelings of the wives watching the return of their husbands from a distance, and seeing one short—their agony of suspense to know which it was. A young teacher once described Peter praying on the house top—the flat roof, the sea-beach below him, the sun shining on the waves, etc.—to a class of big manufacturing "Brunnengen" boys, and the next Sunday the lesson had hardly begun, before one began, and the whole number chimed in: "O teacher, please tell us again about Peter, and the waves, and the roof—it was so nice!"—*Selected.*

THE FIRES which have occurred of late have given very satisfactory proof of the use of the jumping sheet. This article consists of a piece of the strongest sail-cloth, about 10 ft. by 8 ft. Its edges are bound over a stout rope, and at short intervals round it there is a rope handle, or "hooket," as it is technically called. It would be well if the occupiers of large premises, would consider the propriety of adding this simple and inexpensive article to the fire appliances, which are commonly to be found in such places. Every fire-escape carries one, and we believe every fire engine also; but if every factory and other large places of business had easily accessible a jumping-sheet of sail cloth with properly constructed rope-handles round the edges of it, recent experience shows that it might often prove of service before the brigade could be on the spot; and a little occasional practice of those who might have occasion to use it would tend greatly to diminish the risk of it.—*The Presbyterian.*