

the families met, not to give but to receive presents. They could give them too if they liked, but Rudd's grandfather's wish was that they should primarily receive.

These presents were piled round a Christmas tree, and were real presents: something to keep with care and use with ceremony.

One by one the mysterious parcels were distributed among the cousins.

Henry came first, with a tool-box as big as a port-manteau. Every conceivable tool was there, from an axe downwards; Henry would be able to sever each finger and each toe with a different weapon, and still have enough left for scores of minor injuries. The other children looked on in envy and not a little perplexity as to their own future, for what present could be as good as that?

Then came Anne, next in age, the eldest of the second family of grandchildren, and her gift was a workbox, complete in every particular, lined with flounced satin, with a lock and key, and a thimble of solid gold, silks of myriad hues, and an armoury of shining scissors, bodkins and needles.

Rudd's envy had a rest, although not a complete one, for he knew of a thousand things to do with a box divided into compartments like that, apart altogether from such rubbish as needlework. Henry and Anne equally were in raptures.

Next came Ernest to join them in ecstasy over a tool-chest like Henry's.