

CHILDREN AND FORBID THEM NOT TO COME

PEACE ON EARTH

GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

SUPPER · LITTLE

UNTO · ME ·

CANADA

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Edmund's Christmas Prayer.

BY FRANCIS FORRESTER, ESQ.

"To-morrow is Christmas. Wont it be jolly! I shall have heaps of presents. Hurrah! I wish Christmas came every quarter, instead of every year. Wouldn't it be jolly to have four Christmas days instead of one!"

After this fashion young EDMUND CRAWFORD talked to himself one afternoon as he sat on an ottoman in his father's parlor, with his slate, his marbles, tops, balls, and numerous other playthings scattered on the carpet around him. He was certainly a very well pleased boy, though, as you can see, his pleasure was of a very selfish sort. It all arose out of his expectation of receiving "heaps of presents."

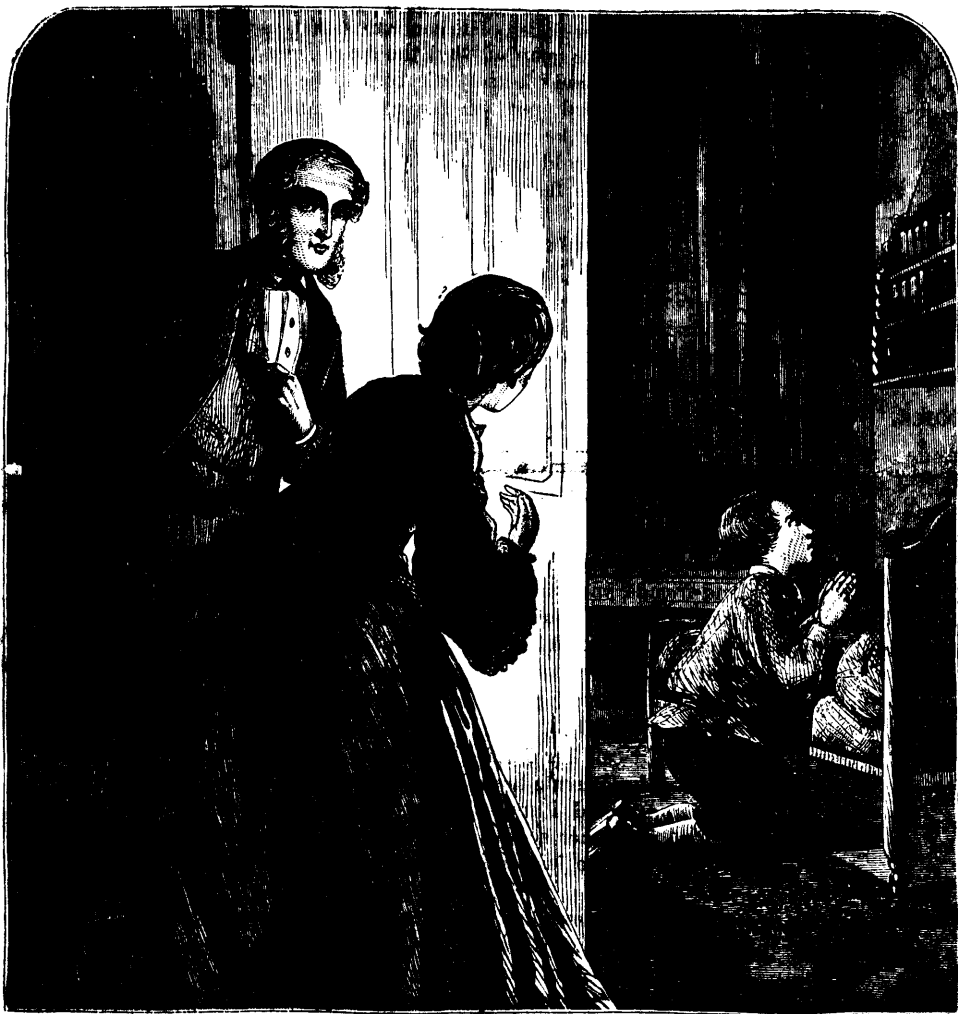
Just then he heard a foot-fall on the piazza. Next a shadow fell on the floor. He looked up and saw at the long window the figure of a beggar woman. Her face was pale, pinched, and forlorn. Her eyes were dull, and her lips almost colorless. A more pitiable face young Edmund had never seen.

The woman held out her hand as if asking for alms. She had rung the bell, and when the servant opened the door the beggar left the window, and in a low, soft voice said:

"Please give me some bread to keep my little boy from starving?"

"We don't give anything to street beggars," said Edmund's mother, speaking from the head of the stairs. The servant shut the door in the beggar's face, and the poor creature glided off the piazza, and walked slowly to the next house.

Edmund's mother was no doubt right with regard to street beggars generally. Nine out of every ten of them are impostors, and need not beg if they were not too lazy to work. But it is well to observe beggars closely, because now and then a really deserving person is forced to beg from door to door or die. Any one having such an appearance should be visited by father, mother, or pastor, and



if found to be a proper subject for charity relieved.

Edmund had been struck with that pale, sad face. It seemed glued to the window pane after the beggar was gone. Her words too rung in his ears, "Give me bread to keep my little boy from starving." He drew pictures of that starving boy in his fancy until his heart ached.

His pleasure was all gone now, and his soul was full of pity. He wished he was rich, that he might save that woman's boy from dying a cruel death. Finally, he thought he saw a way to help him. He would ask his father to give him money instead of Christmas presents, and then he would try to find out the boy and save his life.

This was a noble purpose, and it brought a purer joy into Edmund's heart than he had ever tasted before. Still he was afraid his father would not grant his request, and, acting under the impulse of a good thought, he gathered up his playthings, and went up to his little bedchamber.

Presently his father came home from his office.

On going to his room, which was next to Edmund's, he heard a murmur as if some one was praying aloud in his boy's chamber. Beckoning to his wife, he stepped with her very softly to the door. Peeping in quietly, they heard Edmund praying very earnestly, using these words over and over:

"Please, God, make papa give me money for my Christmas present, that I may keep the poor beggar woman's boy from starving?"

Stepping back into the room with her husband, Edmund's mother told him of the beggar woman she had sent from the door, and said, with tears in her eyes:

"Maybe I was wrong in not asking who she was. Perhaps she is deserving of help. We had better search her out if we can."

Mr. Crawford said nothing, but wiped his eyes, and waited to see what course his little boy would take. He did not wait long, for Edmund soon came to him with his story of the pale face, and petition

for bread to save the little boy from starvation. He closed his story by saying:

"Please, pa, give me money for my Christmas instead of playthings, and I will try and find out the boy and help him."

Mr. Crawford kissed his son's cheek, and promised to do as he desired. Never was Edmund so happy as the next morning, when, with his Christmas present of three dollars in his pocket, he trudged along the street, holding his father's hand, in search of the poor beggar woman. You will be glad to learn that they met her, found her home, learned that she was a worthy widow in deep distress, and that she had a son of Edmund's age. The three dollars were soon changed into bread and meat and coal. Mr. Crawford added his gift to his son's. The widow and her little boy had a merry Christmas you may be sure, and Edmund declared, in his boyish way, "that it was the jolliest Christmas he had ever enjoyed." Mr. and Mrs. Crawford were happy too. Ever after they were true friends of the honest poor, and many widows and