



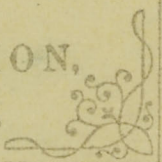
THE

NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.



SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

200 MULBERRY-STREET, N. Y.



1917

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

300 MULTIPLE STREET, NEW YORK

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THE NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.

“FIVE dollars, ma! five dollars more!” said little Clara May on a bright New-year’s morn. “What shall I do with it? I wish it had come last night, and then you could have bought something with it to put into my stocking.”

“But your stocking was full as it

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was, my child," said Mrs. May with a kiss; "I should not have known where to put anything more, I am sure."

"O yes you would, ma! you would have put it in some way, I know," said Clara with an extra skip, as she went up and down the room.

"But what should I have got, my child? I think if you cannot tell what you want it would not be easy for me to do so."

"Well, now, let's see; what do I

want most?" and Clara sat down in her little chair as demure as if she was to plan out a whole life. "Don't you think Uncle Harry cares what I do with it? Did he not tell you what to get, not a word?"

"Not a word, my child. He said he did not know what you might have, and so he would not choose. I think he would want you to have just what you like. It may be Aunt Susan will help you make a choice."

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“I'll run and see!” said Clara, and she ran up stairs and went into Aunt Susan's room with a skip and a hop.

“O, Aunt Susan! Uncle Harry has sent ma five dollars to get me a New-year's gift, and ma says I may choose what it shall be, but I can't think, and so I've come to get your help,” and the child knelt by her side and laid her head in her aunt's lap.

Aunt Susan was a dear, good little lady, a sister to Mrs. May, and

one whom Clara loved very much. Her health had been poor for a long, long time, but there was a sweet look on her thin, pale face, and a mild love-light in her dark eye that would have won your heart at once. She folded her thin hands around the little form beside her, and bent her head down till it met that of her niece, and after a little pause she said:

“Well, now, my Clara must tell me what she'd like, and then we

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may be able to decide what it is best to get."

"Ah, that's just the point, Aunt Susan. I'm sure I can't tell. It seems to me I've got almost everything I can think of: there are two wax dolls and plenty of baby clothes, and chairs, tables, cribs, and bureaus, and three china tea-sets. And then I have all the jewels I want: a gold chain and charms, and breast-pin and pencil. O I do wish I knew what to get! Why, what makes

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you smile at me so, Aunt Susan?" said the child all at once as she looked up and saw a sweet, bright smile on the lady's lips.

"I was thinking, my dear child, how very few little girls there are in the whole world that are so happy as to be able to say those words: "I don't know what to get."

"Are there, aunty? I did not think of that."

"And did you not think that the five dollars might do some other

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child a great deal more good than it will my little petted, half-spoiled niece, Clara May?"

Clara looked up once more into those dark tender eyes, but she read only love there, and then she looked into the fire just for a moment.

"You think, aunty," said she slowly at last, "that I ought to spend this money for some other child who needs New-year's gifts more than I do, don't you?"

"Well, what do you think about it,

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Clara? You have had many gifts, would you not like to make some?"

"But I have just now thought of one thing that I do want—a little pearl writing-desk that I saw in a store the other day. It was the dearest little thing, lined with pink velvet, and it had places for pens, and wax, and paper. O it was such a love of a desk, and all for five dollars. I must have that box this very day. Nothing would make me half so happy!"

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“I doubt it, Clara,” said her aunt with a gentle shake of the head.

“Why, what else could I get?”

“I’m afraid you won’t try and see if I tell you.”

“But I think about it, aunty, I will, now. O please do tell me!” and she put her arms about her aunt in her most coaxing way.

“Well, I’ll tell you; but you must think about it well before you make up your mind. I think it will do you more good to give those five dollars

to some poor girl that needs it, than it will to buy this pearl desk."

Clara stood there with one arm still around her aunt's neck, and her head on her shoulder, and there came to her mind the thoughts of a little pale face that she had last seen on a sick bed in a large room almost at the top of a tall house not far off. It was the face of little Mary Dean, who a year before had a fall that broke her hip and made her lame for life. Mrs. Dean took in sewing for a living,

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and by the aid of kind friends she got enough to provide comforts for herself and her child, but she had little to spare for a New-year's gift.

“Why have I not thought of Mary before?” said Clara to herself. “The poor child must lie in bed all the while, and has very little to amuse her.”

And then Clara thought a long time what she could get for the poor child, and at last she hit upon a bird,

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a canary bird. It would be so nice to have a bright bird in her room to flit about the bars of its cage and sing to her of the green woods. And then she would never tire of seeing it peck the seeds from its little china trough, and shake the drops of water from its wings. O yes, she would get a bird for Mary. But just then the thought of that pearl desk came up to her mind, and almost shut out the pale face of poor Mary Dean.

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It was a long hour after her talk with Aunt Susan, that, with a new glow on her cheeks, Clara sought out her mamma. "I have made up my mind now, ma," said she quickly. "If you please, I will buy a bird in a nice little cage for Mary Dean with this five dollars, and it shall be my New-year's gift to her; and please, ma, let us go and get it at once, for I want to take it to her this very day."

"You have done well, my child,"

said Mrs. May with a fond kiss, "and I will go with you after lunch."

That day Mary Dean was quite poorly; nothing seemed to please her. She could not touch even the nice jelly in the white china mug that a friend had sent to her, nor the nice cake with the thick white frosting. She looked at them when her mother brought them, but turned away weary and said: "No, mamma, I am tired of them, I can't eat

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now. Have you nothing else for me?"

"I don't know, my child. You are tired of the new doll, though you have not had it a day, and you wished me to put away the other toys."

"Well, I want something else!" Mary was just a little cross; she had been sick so long that she was not easily pleased. I suppose we should feel so too if we were as sick as she was. Mrs. Dean turned away sad-

ly. She thought of the time when Mr. Dean was living, and said to herself: "If he were alive now our poor child could have all she might want," and the tear came in her eye. Mary did not see it or her little heart would have melted, and her little hand would have wiped it away. But another little hand was waiting to do the kind deed. Before that tear was dry there came a knock at the door, and Mrs. Dean went to open it, and there stood Mrs. May and

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Clara, and the little girl had something in her hand with a silk spread thrown over it.

As soon as the door was open she sprang to the bedside of the sick child and cried: "It is yours, Mary, all yours! I have brought it for your New-year's gift," and she took off the cover to show a dear little yellow canary bird in a nice little brown cage.

O if you could only have heard the cry of joy from Mary, or seen

the light that came to her pale face as she sprang up in bed, it would have done your heart good. The tired look was gone from her face, and the tear was gone from Mrs. Dean's eye. The two ladies sat down to talk with each other, while the little girls looked at the bird.

“Has it not a pretty trough for seed and a cup for water? Will it sing?”

“O yes, it will sing almost all the

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time when it has been here a while. It feels a little strange now."

"Only see it bite the seed!"

"Yes, it is taking the hull off; and see! now it takes a sip of water. Only see it turn its little bill up!"

"My child, you will not get tired of the bird, will you?" said Mrs. Dean.

"O never! never! I shall forget the pain in my hip when I hear it sing, and I can watch it all day and see it fly about the cage. I did not

know what I wanted, but here it has come," and she threw her arm about Clara's neck and gave her a sweet kiss.

"Well, dear, was I right?" said Aunt Susan when she had heard all about the bird and the cage, and the joy of Mary Dean.

"O yes, aunty, indeed you were. I'm so glad that I spent that five dollars for Mary Dean. It has done me more good than ten pearl desks would, I am sure! I shall not soon

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forget the lesson that you have taught me this day."

And Aunt Susan laid her thin hand on the soft brown curls and said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

THE END.

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