

THE HERALD OBSERVER.

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POETRY AND MISCELLANY.

THE RESPECTABLE MAN.

BY THE BROTHER MARY.

A highly respectable man
In lacarol Ingota, Equire,
His "Post Office" on half the "Blue Book,"
And a mortgage or two in each Shire;
And having more cash than he needs,
Why he lends to the poor all he can,
And only takes sixty per cent,
Like a highly respectable man.

He's his house like a nobleman furnished,
His side-board blazing with plate;
And half silver, half gold, you'd declare
It belonged to some peer of the State;
So it did—till he seized it in payment
Of his sixty per centum per annum.
And now he gives dinners of show it,
Like a highly respectable man.

His father is a lawyer,
And his brother-in-law's a Bum-ba-did,
And his son in the Auctioneer's line;
So you've "what-wine" for your bills,
Then send, assted, sold by the clan!
For he loves to assist his relations,
Like a highly respectable man.

For the Assurance of Lives he's an office,
To make his small profits the more;
If you ask him to discount, he tells you
"For security you must insure."
Adding, "All honest men ought to do so—
Besides, it's so easy a plan,
And with something to leave on your death-bed,
You die such a respectable man.

It is said he's a tyrant at home,
That the jewels his wife has for show,
Were all of them stolen for some wretch—
That each diamond he'd say is show;
That his children, on hearing his knock,
To the top of the house always run—
But with ten thousand pounds at his banker's
He's of course a respectable man.

Yet he's kindness itself to young "bloody,"
And when Lordings about his aid,
When he talks like a father, and asks
How is sixty per cent to be paid?
Such extravagance really would ruin
The richest in all the county;
But to serve them he'll do a "Post Office,"
Like a highly respectable man.

His daughter has married for love,
Though she'd offer for persons of rank,
And "my lady" at least might have been
With the money he had in his bank;
But since she thought fit to disgrace him,
She may live in the best way she can;
So he leaves his own daughter to starve,
Like a highly respectable man.

Then he makes a fresh will every quarter—
Or when he's a fit of the "stiffness"—
His wife has often led him away,
Or his son does not follow his views;
And he threatens to leave them all legacies,
Whenever they come under his hand,
Like a highly respectable man.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

A Story for the Holidays.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

"Didn't he make you a present of anything, Lizzy?" asked Margaret of her cousin Lizzy Green.

"No, not even of a strawberry cushion," spoke up Lizzy's sister Jane, "that he might have bought for at sixpence. I think he's a right down mean, selfish, stingy fellow, so I do, and if he don't keep Lizzy in bread and water when he gets her, my name's not Jane Green."

"I wouldn't have him," said Margaret, jesting, yet half in earnest. "Let Christmas go by and not make his sweetheart or sister a present of the most trifling value! He must have a penny soul. Why, Harry Lee sent me the 'Lectures of memory' and a pair of the sweetest flower-vases you ever saw, and he only comes to see me as a friend. And Cousin William made me a present of a splendid copy of 'Mrs. Hall's Sketches,' the most interesting book I ever read. Besides, I received lots of things. Why, my table is full of presents."

"You have been quite fortunate," said Lizzy, in a quiet voice; "much more so than Jane and I, if I receive a great many Christmas presents to be considered fortunate."

"But don't you think Edward might have sent you some token of good-will and affection in this holiday season, when every one is giving or receiving presents?" asked Margaret.

"Nothing of the kind was needed, Cousin Maggie, as an expression of his feelings towards me," replied Lizzy. "He knew that I understood their true quality, and felt that any present would have been a useless formality."

"You can't say the same in regard to Jane. He might have passed her the usual compliment of the season."

"Certainly he might," said Jane. "Lizzy needn't try to excuse him after this lame fashion. Of course, there is no excuse for the omission but meanness—that's my opinion, and I speak it out boldly."

"It isn't right to say that sister," remarked Lizzy. "Edward has other reasons for omitting the prevalent custom at this season—and good reasons, I am well assured. As to the charge of meanness, I don't think the fact you allege sufficient ground for making it."

"Well, I do then," said Cousin Margaret. "Why, if I were a young man and engaged in marriage to a lady, I'd sell my shoes but what I'd give her something as a Christmas present."

"Yes—or borrow or beg the money," chimed in Jane. "Every one must do as he or she thinks best," replied Lizzy. "As for me, I am content to receive no holiday gift, being well satisfied that meanness on the part of Edward has nothing to do with it."

But notwithstanding Lizzy said this, she could not help feeling a little disappointed—more, perhaps, on account of the appearance of the thing than from any suspicion that meanness, as alleged by Jane, had anything to do with the omission.

"I wish Edward had made Lizzy some kind of a present," said Mrs. Green to her husband a day or two after the holidays had passed; "if it had been only for the looks of the thing. Jane has been teasing her about it ever since, and said it nothing but meanness in Edward—And I'm afraid he is a little close."

"Better that he should be so than too free," replied Mr. Green; "though I must confess that a dollar or two, or even ten dollars, spent at Christmas in a present for his intended bride, could hardly have been sent down to the more of prodigality. It does look mean, certainly."

"He is doing very well."

"He gets a salary of eight hundred dollars, and I suppose it doesn't cost him over four or five hundred dollars to live—at least it ought not to do so."

"He has bought himself a snug little house, I am told."

"He's done that, he's done very well," said Mr. Green; "and I can forgive him for not spending his money in Christmas presents, that are never of much use, say the best you will of them. I'd rather Edward would have a comfortable house to put his wife in than see him leading her down, before marriage, with presents of one foolish thing or another."

"True. But it wouldn't have hurt him to have given

the girl something, if it had only been a book, a purse, or some such trifle."

"For which trifles he would have been as strongly charged with meanness as he is now. Better let it go as it is. No doubt he has good reasons for his conduct."

Thus Mr. Green and Lizzy defended Edward, while the mother and Jane scolded about his meanness to their heart's content.

Edward Mayfield, the lover of Lizzy Green, was a young man of good principles, prudent habits, and really generous feelings; but his generosity did not consist in wasting his earnings in order that he might be thought liberal and open-hearted, but in doing real acts of kindness where he saw that kindness was needed. He had saved from his salary, in the course of four or five years, enough to buy himself a very snug house, and had a few hundred dollars in the Savings' Bank with which to furnish it when the time came for him to get married. This time was not very far off when the Christmas, to which allusion has been made, came round. At this holiday season, Edward had intended to make both Lizzy and her sister a handsome present, and he had been thinking for some weeks as to what it should be. Many articles, both useful and merely ornamental, were thought of, but none of them exactly pleased his fancy.

A day or two before Christmas, he sat thinking about the matter, when something or other gave a new turn to his reflections.

"They don't really need anything," he said to himself, "and yet I propose to myself to spend twenty dollars in presents merely for appearance's sake. Is it right?"

"Right if you choose to do it," he replied to himself. "I am not so sure of that," he added, after a pause. And then he sat in quite a musing mood for some minutes.

"That's better," he at length said, rising up and walking about the floor. "That would be money and good feelings spent to a better purpose."

"But they'll expect something," he argued with himself. "The family will think so strange of it. Perhaps I'd better spend half the amount in elegant books for Lizzy and Jane, and let the other go in the way I propose."

This suggestion, however, did not satisfy him.

"Better let it all go in the other direction," he said, after thinking awhile longer; "it will do a real good. The time will come when I can explain the whole matter if necessary, and do away with any little false impression that may have been formed."

To the conclusion at which Edward arrived, he remained firm. No present of any kind was made to his betrothed or her sister, and the reader has seen in what light the omission was viewed.

Christmas eve proved to be one of unusual inclemency. The snow had been falling all day, driven into every nook and corner, cleft and cranny, by a piercing northeast; and now, although the wind had ceased to roar among the chimneys and to whirl the snow with blinding violence into the face of any one who ventured abroad, the broad flakes were falling slowly but more heavily than since morning, though the ground was covered already to the depth of many inches. It was a night to make the poor feel sober as they gathered more closely around their small fires, and thought of the few sticks of wood or pecks of coal that yet remained of their limited store.

On this dreary night, a small boy, who had been at work in a printing-office all day, stood near the desk of his employer, waiting to receive his week's wages and go home to his mother, a poor widow, whose slender income scarcely sufficed to give food to her little household.

"You needn't come to-morrow, John," said the printer, as he handed the lad two dollars that were due him for the week's work; "to-morrow is Christmas."

The boy took the money, and after lingering a moment, turned away and walked towards the door. He evidently expected something, and seemed disappointed. The printer noticed this, and at once comprehended its meaning.

"John," he said kindly.

The boy stopped and turned around: as he did so, the printer took up a half dollar from the desk, and holding it between his fingers, said—

"You've been a very good boy, John, and I think you deserve a Christmas gift. Here's half a dollar for you."

John's countenance was lit up in an instant. As he came back to get the money, the printer's eyes rested upon his feet, which were not covered with a very comfortable pair of shoes, and he said—

"Which would you rather have, John, this half dollar or a pair of new shoes?"

"I'd rather have the new shoes," replied John, without hesitation.

"Very well; I'll write you an order on a shoemaker, and you can go and fit yourself," and the printer turned to his desk and wrote the order.

As he handed to John the piece of paper on which the order was written, the lad looked earnestly into his face, and then said with strongly-marked hesitation—

"I think, sir, that my shoes will do very well if mended; they only want mending. Won't you please write shoes for my mother instead of me?"

The boy's voice trembled, and his face was suffused. He felt that he had ventured too much. The printer looked at him for a moment or two, and then said—

"And are your wages all she has to live upon?"

"Yes, sir."

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