

But Ella's unselfish kindness only increased Dessie's distress, and Cecil was obliged to take her from the room. "I cannot have you there unless you can control yourself," he said, in a voice which sounded stern. "For Ella's sake."

Dessie had no wish to return. The scene had been so intensely painful to her that she only longed to get away. She had yet to learn that we cannot escape sorrow merely by fleeing from the sight of it. Cecil's tone softened as he added, "I began to think you did not care for our trouble, Dessie. I am glad to see it is not so. But if you are with Ella you must not give way like this."

"I can't—can't—" sobbed Dessie. "Oh, poor Ella, poor Ella!"

"I must not stay away from her," said Cecil gently.

"O no—no—good-bye!" gasped Dessie.

"I suppose it is good-bye," said Cecil, stooping down to kiss her. "I hope you will have a happy time abroad, dear."

He was turning away when she grasped his arm.

"Cecil—do tell me—Cecil, please—he isn't—he isn't—"

"He is worse, but it may not be quite so bad as we fear. The convulsions were frightful for a time."

"O Cecil—he can't—he must get well," said Dessie, almost choked.

"If God wills."

"No, no, no—he must—he must," cried Dessie passionately. "Why doesn't Mr. Crewe do something to make him well? Cecil, don't, don't let him die."

"You are talking madly, Dessie. Hush! I can have no more of this; I must go back to Ella. I think I hear Mr. Crewe on the stairs. If you like to wait here, I will tell you presently what he says."

Dessie longed to be out of the house, but longed yet more to hear the doctor's opinion, and she waited on restlessly, through what seemed to her an interminable time. Her one effort was to drive away the recollection of what she had seen, her one aim to abstain from thinking. Neither proved easy of attainment, but when at length Cecil came back, he found her composed.

"I thought you would not be gone," he said. "Mr. Crewe does not consider the case hopeless even now, Dessie. The convulsions have not returned, and if they do not—"

"And if they do—?"

He shook his head.

"Would you like to come in once more?"

"O no—I can't," said Dessie, with a shudder.

"Perhaps you had better not," said her brother kindly. "You will hardly be fit for your long journey to-morrow. Some of us will write very soon, and tell you how the dear baby is—" and he sighed deeply.

"Cecil—please—please tell Ella—I am sorry," said Dessie, with difficulty.

"I will not forget. She will quite understand."

"O no, she won't," Dessie thought

and almost said. But her only audible utterance was—"Good-bye, Cecil."

"Good-bye, dear." He paused to lay his hand on her shoulder, and to say unsteadily—"Dessie, do you ever pray? If you do, remember us. There is need! Pray for our darling—and for Ella and me."

"O Cecil, I wish I could—I wish I could," cried Dessie bitterly, and she turned and ran away without another word.

Did she ever pray? Had she ever prayed? She had "said prayers," of course, many and many a time. But that is a different matter. There are hundreds of girls who "say their prayers" daily or weekly, as regularly as they go to bed and dress and eat, yet who know little or nothing about the real meaning of the word "prayer." Had Dessie ever really prayed—ever distinctly asked God for something which she wanted, and looked out for an answer to her request?

If never yet—why not begin?

Ah, why? That was the question. Why not begin at once, without further delay?

What—begin to pray with this unconfessed wrong lying heavily on her heart? Dessie felt the weight of it that hour! Begin to pray, and make no effort to be released from her promise, so that she might confess.

Yes, she might have begun even then, if the beginning had been with prayer for strength to take that needful step. But Dessie did not wish to take it—did not wish to be able to take it. To tell Ella all then seemed to her an utter impossibility; and to pray without telling seemed to her an equal impossibility. She was like a water-logged vessel, rolling heavily in the swell, powerless to speed before the breeze.

"I wish I could," she murmured—"I wish I could. But to explain to Ella now—oh, no, no—never, never!"

Had it not been for a certain amount of packing which remained yet to be accomplished she would hardly have known how to get through the evening. In her anxiety for further tidings of little Hubert, she almost wished she had remained at Cecil's. Her patience was nearly exhausted when, between eight and nine o'clock, Mr. Fitzroy came back from the other house.

"He is no worse," her father said, as Decima rushed out into the passage, and stood there, mutely asking the question she could not resolve to put into words. "There is even a shade of improvement, though so slight that we dare not at present build upon it."

"Oh!" Dessie cried, in an ecstasy of relief. "You really mean it, papa! Better! Then he will get well! Does Mr. Crewe say so?"

"I wish he did. No; it is the merest shade of a change. If the convulsions return, as may be the case at any moment, he must sink. I don't think poor Ella dares indulge a hope."

Dessie sighed, for the tone was not encouraging.

"Are you going back, papa?"

"Not to-night. Your mother will

come home after supper, and Edith will spend the night there."

"How is Ella?"

"Worn out, poor girl, but she will not leave the child for a moment. She will break down if this goes on much longer." And Mr. Fitzroy echoed Dessie's sigh.

Morning came, and before breakfast Mr. Fitzroy, though usually by no means an early riser, was at his son's house. Dessie, taking an early meal that she might be in time for her train, waited impatiently for his promised return. Her fly was at the door before he appeared, but his first words sent a thrill of joy through her.

"No worse! On the whole, there is improvement. Mr. Crewe begins to hope that, after all, he may pull through."

"No return of the convulsions?" asked Mrs. Fitzroy, as Dessie clasped her hands, with a rapturous spring into the air.

"None, and we hope there may not be. The pulse is stronger this morning. He is fearfully weak still, of course, and knows no one—not even Ella. Still, there is a change, on the whole, for the better. I think we may allow ourselves a grain of hope."

Dessie took the words for more than their worth, made up her mind that all danger was over, and forthwith rushed into a fit of wild spirits. She flew up and down stairs, rattled unceasingly during the few minutes that remained, was suddenly filled with delight at the prospect of her journey, and drove away with her father by her side, in a general state of overpowering excitement.

(To be continued.)

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND KEEP CHRISTMAS.

By RUTH LAMB.



It is the right thing, and no doubt about it! You, dear girls, ought to have a Christmas number of your very own paper.

I do not believe your friend, "Dear Mr. Editor," could eat his Christmas dinner with a quiet conscience and a reasonable prospect of its subsequent satisfactory digestion, if he did not provide one for you.

He has given you any amount of valuable instruction in all sorts of accomplishments, and in plain and fancy work, during the past year. You have shown that you valued and used the information given by doing piles of work.

In crochet and tatting, in crewels and matting,  
In garments for folks of all sorts and all  
sizes;  
You've worked till you furnished a girl's  
exhibition,  
And gained commendations and, some of  
you, prizes!

Well, after all this, you ought to have a  
thorough holiday, and I want to urge upon  
you the wisdom of taking one when you have  
the chance.

I sincerely trust that you have none of those  
misnamed things called "holiday lessons" to  
do. I know there are some good, conscien-  
tious teachers who think their duty is not  
properly performed unless they give you *just a  
little work to do some time during the  
vacation*. As a rule, this *task*—the only  
fitting name for it—is put off till the last day,  
and then "scamped," as it deserves to be—  
that is, scamped over in a fashion with which  
one's heart and conscience have nothing to  
do. And yet is none the less a load on the  
mind the whole time, and helps to spoil the  
sense of freedom from school-work.

If I were a schoolgirl now—though I am  
glad I am not, for *holiday lessons* were un-  
known in my quite young days—I should get  
up a "round robin," and petition against  
such an infliction. I should plead that, being  
expected to work whilst we are at work, we  
should be allowed to have a real holiday and  
play heartily whilst we play, especially at  
Christmas-time.

I was once much amused at reading the  
following motto, which a youngster of mine  
had printed very neatly on the outside leaf of  
a school composition:—

"All work and no play will make Jack a dull  
boy,

but

All play and no work will make Jack a  
dunce."

Here we have the very text for my introduction  
to Christmas. We say to Jack, "Work  
heartily and play heartily," and the advice is  
equally good when applied to the youth's  
sisters. A representative "Jack" said to me  
one day, "Isn't it a shame to give a fellow  
lessons to *stew* over in the holidays? As if  
one hadn't plenty of cramming and swatting"  
—whatever that may be—"in schooltimes!  
I think the masters forget that they were once  
boys, if," he added, with a growl, "they  
ever were young."

I wish I could give a reflection of that dis-  
gusted face, and convey that sound to the ears  
of every girl. But it does not matter. You  
have seen and heard the feminine varieties of  
the same things, and perhaps contributed to  
the production thereof.

Still, I do not say, "Never look at a school  
book in the holidays." But let all your reading  
be matter of enjoyment, not "cram." Then  
you will go back to school and work, refreshed  
and strengthened, and do what you have to do  
the better for your bright interval of rest and  
enjoyment.

About shopping for Christmas. Never  
drive it late. Shops are always crammed, and  
helpers overworked. Purchasers can hardly  
obtain attention, and gifts chosen in a hurry  
are often unsuitable. People who drive their  
shopping, decorating, and other Christmas  
preparations to the last minute are generally  
too weary to enjoy the day when it comes.

And if you want your own Christmas to be  
a happy one, let the echo of the angels' song,  
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth,  
peace, good will towards men," come from  
your hearts. Merry hearts, cheerful counte-  
nances, loving words, finding expression in  
loving deeds, a spirit of peace, forbearance,  
forgiveness. All these are in harmony with  
the season's teaching. One of the sweetest  
thoughts in connection with Christmas Day is

this—That as He, the Master of the feast,  
came on earth to insure the eternal happiness  
of all His believing ones by the gift of Him-  
self, we, for His sake, should make a point of  
sacrificing something, in order to render a  
poor home, a single individual, or even one  
little child, the happier on Christmas Day.  
Join together, dear girls, if your means are  
small, and spread some cottage table with  
plenty! Buy a homely garment for some old  
body who shrinks and shivers for want of a  
shawl. Buy a toy or two for a child who  
never knows the luxury of purchasing one for  
itself. Send out a pile of those Christmas  
cards which have been showered upon you in  
such abundance during past seasons, and  
which you are really at a loss to turn to account.  
Address them to some of your poor acquaint-  
ances, young and old. Those little folks whose  
only acquaintance with Christmas cards is  
made by flattening their noses against the  
stationer's windows will not be particular  
whether those you send are new this season or  
not.

Neither will the older people amongst your  
poor acquaintances. I should be sorry to  
imagine any of you Christian girls without  
poor acquaintances, who are rendered some-  
what happier by the sight of your bright  
young faces, and cheered by your words of  
love and sympathy from time to time. De-  
pend on it, if you send some of your hand-  
some last year's cards into cottage homes, you  
will see them again, hanging over the chimney  
piece as valued ornaments, framed by the  
ingenuity of the house-father or some of the  
young folk.

Or, if you have not acquaintances in poor  
homes, let me advise you to make some.  
You lose much if you do not know what it is  
to see a sorrowful face grow brighter at your  
coming; a mind seem somewhat lightened of  
its load by the telling of a present trouble,  
and by your hearty sympathy and whispered  
words of hope and cheer. Never mind if  
the chubby little one strols down your dress  
with hands not quite spotless, because it is a  
treat to touch anything so nice; or if the up-  
turned face, though beaming with admiration  
of you and your belongings, is not quite fresh  
from contact with soap and water.

You may find your way to many a mother's  
heart by means of a kiss on the smooth, fair  
forehead of her child which is pretty sure to  
be clean and kissable, though the rosy lips may  
shine with butter, or be sticky with treacle.

Be sure you cultivate some poor acquaint-  
ances, dear girls, and resolve that they shall  
be the happier, especially at Christmas time,  
for knowing you.

If you have lots of Christmas cards, that you  
do not know what to do with, send them to  
the ragged schools, or the children's hospitals,  
with a little written message, as from a friend.  
You will give a great deal of pleasure at almost  
no cost of money to yourselves.

If you have had a quarrel with a school  
fellow, or, worse still, with any relative, try to  
make it up, so that you may end the old year  
and begin the new in the spirit of peace and  
good will which befits all times, but should  
be the special characteristic of the Christmas  
festival of love towards all mankind.

In order to help you to make up your quar-  
rels, let me advise you to look as little as pos-  
sible at your own grievances, and consider the  
other side of the question and how you would  
have felt under the circumstances had *that* side  
been your own.

If, after all, you feel that you are the person  
aggrieved, then look into the good old Book  
and see what the Master of the feast says on  
the subject, "Forgive, and ye shall be for-  
given."

I know a gentleman who is of a very im-  
petuous temper, and a little apt "to get into  
hot water" on account of the pertinacity with

which he endeavours to advance his rather  
peculiar opinions. But, if he has a warm  
temper he has also a warm heart, and a great  
deal of right feeling. So, when Christmas  
time is approaching, he makes it his regular  
custom to take himself to task, in order to ascer-  
tain whether he has, carelessly or unwittingly,  
offended any during the year that is drawing  
to a close; or if any friend has seemed less  
cordial with him than of old.

If he has been to blame, he goes with out-  
stretched hand and honest face; owns that  
his friend has had cause to be aggrieved, and  
asks forgiveness and a renewal of the old re-  
lations. If there is a coolness which he cannot  
understand, he asks for an explanation, and  
says, if he has offended by word or deed, he  
would like to make amends.

How can enmity or ill-feeling continue to  
exist when met and battled with in such a  
spirit? The result, in the case alluded to, has,  
I believe, always proved satisfactory. Thus,  
what might have grown into a life-long grudge  
or quarrel, if treated in a stiff-necked, self-  
righteous spirit, proves the beginning of a  
better understanding, and a more real and en-  
during friendship.

Let me recommend this example for your  
imitation, dear girls. If you begin to show a  
spirit of forgiveness when young, depend on it  
you will not grow into cold, hard, unforgiving,  
supercilious women in your riper years.

When I sat down this morning, pen in  
hand, it was with the intention of writing a  
chapter on Christmas games, in compliance  
with the request of your Mr. Editor. He told  
me there was to be a Christmas number of  
THE GIRL'S OWN, and as I am one of your  
very oldest acquaintances in its pages, I own  
I should be dreadfully "put out" if I were to  
have no flower in the cluster of roses which has  
been prepared for you. But here have I gone  
off at a pen-canter into a sort of pre-Christmas  
preachment, which I hope you will take in  
the loving spirit in which it is written.

The very name of Christmas suggests de-  
lightful pictures to the minds of those who  
can recall many such seasons spent in bright  
homes where the happy festival meets with  
fitting observance. Where friends young and  
old have been wont to gather, and where,  
amid innocent fun and mirth, there is yet  
nothing inconsistent with the sacred origin  
of the glad season—nothing in our festival  
which could prevent our rejoicing in the  
thought of the presence of its Glorious  
Founder.

May this be the character of your Christmas  
when it comes, dear girls; and as for that  
chapter on games that I sat down to write,  
you must just look for it in your bunch of  
"Christmas Roses."

