

and so were his boots, and he had a great flapping hat, which was all over snow too. He had an immense hamper under his arm, like those which you see railway porters carrying about at Christmas-time, and he let it tumble down on the carpet, and then he sat down by it. Was he not a curious person to come into a room where every one else was nicely dressed? He told us, in a very gruff, grumpy voice, that we might go and open the hamper, if we liked, but we none of us liked to go, for we were rather afraid of him; he looked such a funny man. We wondered if he was tipsy.

At last Georgie Aidel said, if I would go with him, he would go. So we went and lifted up the lid of the hamper. We were rather afraid the old man would reach out and catch hold of us, but he did not, and what do you think we found?

The hamper was lined with green leaves, and filled with crystallised fruits, lemons, oranges, green-gages, apricots, pears, cherries, cut in halves and quarters and covered with sugar, which looked just like frost and snow upon them. Others were cut into stars and diamonds and rings and flowers. The old man took one of the rings and threw it to aunt