

"Nonsense!" said Ernest, while Constance opened her eyes wide with astonishment.

"I do indeed."

"What is it?" said Ernest.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you for nothing, this precious, golden secret of mine."

"Oh, do tell us, Reggie!" and Ernest looked quite brightened up.

"No, no!" said Reginald, shaking his head; "if I tell you, you shall pay me."

"I want all my money for Christmas boxes," said Ernest.

"Well, I won't ask for money, but if you'll do for me the work, that I should do if I was about, I'll tell you the secret the first thing on Christmas morning, and I think that you'll have 'a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.'"

"All right, shake hands on it," said Ernest, "it's a done bargain."

"When shall we begin?" said Constance.