

mas comes, Miss Matheson," said Ernest.

"I ought to be, but I fear I am not this year," she replied sadly.

"Why not?" asked Constance.

"It will be a very lonely time to me, dear."

"Will it?—won't you go home?"

"This is my home, Constance, I have no other."

"But you have a brother, won't he come and spend it with you?"

Miss Matheson's eyes filled with tears as she shook her head in answer.

"No, dear Constance, I heard from him this morning, and he says he cannot come."

"Won't his employers let him?" said Constance sympathizingly, for she knew that he was clerk in the bank of a large town in the north.

Miss Matheson coloured, and hesitated for a moment, but then said firmly, "It is