

kissed Herbie's pale cheek, then she led them into the dining-room where the whole family were assembled at tea. Every one spoke kindly to the stranger boys, and Herbie was installed in a large arm-chair by the fire; but their arrival was evidently a great puzzle to Ernest and Constance, till a whisper from their father seemed to satisfy them.

When tea was over, Ernest took Arthur and Herbie up to Reginald's room, and on the way he said to them, "There is some secret about your coming here, but we are to know it to-morrow. We've had such fun to-day, we've been to Willingham with Mr. Barnett, and he's got such lots of things, and we've been round the village giving Christmas wishes and pretty substantial ones too, and we've been putting up the holly in the church, and this evening we are going to decorate our own rooms, and you must help."

*It was a merry Christmas Eve. Herbie*