

Primary Department.

A CHAT WITH THE CHILDREN.

RHODA LEE

CHRISTMAS holidays are over, and to all I think this has been a happy vacation. You have told me all about the Christmas presents. Just the things you wanted most, were they not? Jack-Frost has let you use your new skates and sleighs and I really believe no one has had time for the tiniest grumble. Harold learnt a great many things at his grandfather's in the country and Marjory has been a long way on the train and is going to tell us about what she saw, some day soon.

But since the holidays *began*, something strange has happened, children. One day, I heard a little boy's father say to him, "Peter, do you want to see something queer? and Peter said, "Why, yes, father." So when the little fellow came running over to see what his father had to show him, he said, "If you go into the sitting-room and look under the table you will see a cat with as many heads as the year eighteen-hundred-and-ninety has days to live." Poor little Peter felt somewhat frightened and was puzzled at what his father said. But at last he thought he would just take one little peep in at the door, and what do you think he saw? Just sleepy old Tom stretched out under the table, too lazy to do more than open one eye and then go off to sleep again. Had Tom more than one head? No; then how many more days were there in the year? Just one, of course. Then this must be another year. Yes, I thought everyone could tell me what year it is. Eighteen, ninety-one. And what is the name of this month? January. Cold, wintry January.

Now, we are going to have some little verses about winter. I will read them to you to-day. Each morning we will learn one verse and by Friday everyone will be able to say them perfectly.

The verses are about the snowflakes and whenever you see the snow making everything pure and white and beautiful, these lines will help to bring some good and beautiful thoughts into your minds about it.

THE SNOWFALL.

"The old year's gone forever,
A new one's come instead;
He brings a snowy cloak with him
O'er all the ground to spread."

But the great white cloak with which everything was to be covered, was still in the clouds and had to come down little by little, one tiny star at a time. But all the snowflakes helped and they nestled up, close to each other, until they made a good, warm blanket, to keep the little seeds and roots warm until spring-time.

"Oh, see the merry snowflakes,
They have now begun to fly,
They are coming by the hundreds
From the dark and cloudy sky."

Now they come still more thickly and the path begins to get quite white. But here is a little snowflake that surely must have wandered away from his brothers and sisters, for he has lost his way. The window did not fit very closely at the top and in through the crack he fluttered and fell straight down on a little girl's head. Poor

little snowflake! Outside he was bright and beautiful; but when he went where he ought not to have gone he, of course, got into trouble. I see you can all tell me what he looked like in the warm school-room.

"They are covering up the pathway
With a soft and downy spread,
One has flown into the school-room,
See—it lights on Mary's head."

And the other wee snowflakes were perhaps curious to see where their brother went, or it may be they were anxious to get a peep at the boys and girls who were so *foolish* as to stay indoors on such a beautiful day, for they came flying against the window as though they were in very great haste. Ah, those children inside the windows had something more to do than play all day. But after the work was all well done how they would enjoy the run home and the sleigh-riding.

"Some are pushing on the others
In their play of hide and seek,
Some are lighting on the windows
At the girls and boys to peep."

I wonder what the snowflakes would say to us could they speak. Are they whispering? Listen to what I think they say:

"Hark, the merry snowflakes whisper,
'Children, when your work is done,
Come and make us into snowballs,
Come and try it, every one.'"

N.B.—One verse a day occupies very little time in the morning's work, and by Friday the whole may be repeated either in concert or individually. Class recitations such as this very simple one, form good Friday-afternoon exercises and are full of interest to the children.

PLANS FOR SIGHT-READING.

RHODA LEE.

ONLY a few days ago I received a note inquiring if the Primary Department could furnish any new plans for arousing more interest in what is termed *Sight-Reading*.

Now, to most wide-awake children this work is always more or less full of interest. There is an undercurrent of mystery and excitement centering around the curtain, that is, when drawn to reveal the story; but whenever one finds the interest flagging it is of course, wise to look about for something new—something that will give pleasure and zest to the lifeless work, for monotony is warranted to crush child-growth. First, I would suggest a plan that I have used for some time and, which is a story containing some little order or suggestion for action. When I draw back the curtain the children read:—

"Fred, hold up your slate."

At any signal, such as erasing the sentence, touching the bell, etc., the scholar to whom the story speaks does as he is directed.

Or let the order be one to the class as a whole, such as:

"You may all clap your hands;" or
"Every girl may raise her right hand."

There may be words which you are specially desirous of impressing. These will, of course, form the framework of the sentences.

Another plan is to have the story contain some simple picture that may be easily sketched, such as:

"I see a tent and a boat."

Now, before the story is read, allow five or six scholars to *make the picture* on the board. Or to employ everyone let the sketch be made on the slates. Pass quickly up and down the aisles and see that every child has some resemblance to the objects named, on his slate. Then the story may be read.

You may see some rather crude and disappointing pictures, but you will see intense interest and enthusiasm among your scholars.

COMMENCEMENT.

ARNOLD ALCOTT

'SEE one of the good resolutions I have made.' And as I looked I saw in his hand a little red book, on the outside of which was the word "Diary" in yellow letters. Immediately, I said "Are you going to start a diary with the New Year?" The reply was that he would try, and that he hoped the effort would be carried out more faithfully than on a former occasion, when the first half-dozen pages of the book showed the following:—"Got up."

"Washed myself."

"Went to bed," the rest of the book being a blank. This little conversation suggested to me a line of thought, which led me to contrast and note the connection between the three R's, as I called them, viz.,—Resolves, Results, Rewards. Just think how many good resolutions fail to result in anything. We get tired and lack adaisical perhaps sooner than the diary-keeper. Has it not been so with you? Have you not neglected many of the good intentions, with which you began last year. And yet the fact that we tried at all did us some good. Now, real advancement is made by having some specific aim. I am more and more impressed with the idea that we should try to attain our highest standard of excellence in some particular direction, and this trying hard to be first-class in one branch, is sure to have its reflex influence on all other work.

An earnest, active little teacher with plenty of inspiration for a new year of work said: "I intend to make more use of gymnastics this year than ever before. I am going to dwell on the processes, and I intend to have specific exercises or gymnastics to strengthen weakness in any and everything if possible. Perhaps we could not do better than hear a few of these exercises.

FINDING THE PLACE.

There are always some slow pupils who need to be spurred on, and who need to be shown how to turn the leaves of a book quietly, carefully and quickly. These pupils should not receive a scolding such as would have been given in the "good old days," some fifty years ago. A special exercise in finding the place should be given. It may be as follows:—

Teacher gives the command, "Books—take;" naming the article first, and then pausing between the first or cautionary, and the second or executive word. Of course it would not be as well to say "Take—books," because how are the pupils to know what to take? The corner of the book placed on the desk, the book being held by both hands. Now the teacher says "Page seventy-nine."