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"3 Have Always Thought

of Christmas time as a good time; a kind, forgiving, generous, pleasant time; a time when men and women and little children seem by one consent to open their hearts freely; and so I say, 'God Bless Christmas.'—Charles Dickens.

Christmas Gifts

*Christmas gifts for thee,
Fair and free!*

*Precious things from the heavenly store,
Filling thy casket more and more;
Golden love in divinest chain,
That never can be untwined again.
Silvery carols of joy that swell
Sweetest of all in the heart's lone cell,
Pearls of peace that we sought for thee
In the terrible depths of a fiery sea,
Diamond promises sparkling bright,
Flashing in farthest-reaching light.*

*Christmas gifts for thee,
Grand and free!*

*Christmas gifts from the King of love,
Brought to thee from His home above;
Brought to thee in the far-off land,
Brought to thee by His own dear hand.
Promises held by Christ for thee,—
Peace as a river flowing free,
Joy that in His own joy must live,
And love that Infinite Love can give.
Surely thy heart of hearts uplifts
Carols of praise for such Christmas gifts.*

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

December! from decem the tenth month of the Roman year; the Saxons called it "winter-month" from the intensity of the cold, or "holy month" on account of the nativity of Christ.—Loaring.



Perhaps because I am English born and the first recollections of Christmas that recur to me are tinged with customs that prevailed in the Old Land a generation ago, I love to read Dickens at all times, and especially when the festive season approaches. The jollity that he depicts in his immortal Christmas stories, holding all the household in happy merriment and care-free unity for at least one glad day, occupies an imperishable place in the memories of my early childhood, and even now I feel the joyous thrill of the little child on whose awakening sense some of the lessons of the Christmas story are being borne by the wholesome fellowships attendant to the home-coming of all the family for the reunion of the happy day.

My parents before me, and their parents before them, for I don't know how many generations of Englishmen, brought to the Christmas festivities a spirit of good-fellowship that exemplified in some degree the words of Dickens, whose writings not only helped to make a better Christmas, but breathed the spirit of the season as it existed in many home-circles in the England of his day. And though the manner of celebrating the holiday may have somewhat changed since Dickens lived and wrote, its essential spirit is the same whether in England or in Canada, and what he thought of Christmas we should all still try to actually make it. And so the thinking shall find expression in outward actions that prove the inner kindness of our hearts and the open generosity of our hands.

If there is one danger that threatens the Christmas of to-day it is that young people shall think of it as a time for getting rather than for giving. Of course one implies the other, for there can be no giving on my part without getting on the part of somebody else; but the idea of getting should never afford so much pleasure as that of the giving. For once in the year, at least, we should all find expression in the old-time maxim, "It is better to give than to receive."

True giving does not necessarily imply the passing of money or even of such commodities as money can buy. There are gifts that are more precious than

gold, and in the exchange of these none need be denied both place and privilege. They are not confined to the few nor limited as to sphere of influence, but relate alike to the public as well as the private intercourse of man with man, and come within the scope of every relationship of life. The near approach of the Christmas-time instinctively prompts us to look within and make inventory of the motives that prompt us in our dealings with one another. And such introspection is wholesome for us all, for in the rush and hurry of the months we are all apt to become selfish and to grow out of real kindly sympathy with those about us.

Especially true is this of the limited circle of home. Here most of all, the kindly disposition should ever be in evidence; but in actual fact, in too many cases, it is least regularly shown. The old English idea of making Christmas emphatically a home day is one that ought never to be relinquished or superseded. In the family circle, therefore, let men and women and little children with one consent open their hearts freely toward one another and fill the day made sacred by Heaven's Best Gift to earth, with the same Divine spirit that prompted the Heavenly Father to bestow it on His undeserving children. So, with Dickens, let us say, "God bless Christmas!" in our homes. And we shall enjoy it all the better there, if we remember the homes of the poor where all too little of earthly comforts are found. In every community there are such. Thank God that in Canada the numbers are not as relatively numerous as in many another land, and yet even among us there are those who without the friendly and generous gifts of their more favored neighbors, will know but little of real good cheer on Christmas Day. Seek these out, minister to their need, increase your own happiness by dividing it with them, and prove the joy that comes when you spell it thus: J: Jesus first, O: Others next, Y: Yourself last of all. I know no better way to have a right Merry Christmas than this suggests. Such I hope to have myself and wish it with all my heart for my readers, every one. So say we all again with good old Charles Dickens, "God Bless Christmas."