

A LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS.

Dear Santa Claus, please don't forget to call at our house.
Our little kids will watch for you, each "quiet as a mouse."
Unless the sand man comes too soon and shuts some blinking eyes
That wait the coming reindeer sleigh from out the wintry skies

There's Tom, and Ben, and Sue, and Kate, and little blue-eyed brother,
And me, but I'm the oldest one, so 'bout me don't you bother;
If Tom could have a painted sled, and Ben could have a top,
When one gets tired of using his, why, they could make a swap.

If Sue could have a pretty doll, and Kate could have some dishes,
Our toddling brother have a book with painted birds and fishes;
And if it ain't again your rule, to sometimes think of others,
I want to tell you that we have the very best of mothers

One year ago our father died, and left us in the keep
Of God in heaven; and every night, before we go to sleep,
We kneel at mother's knee and say, "Father who art in heaven,"
And mother whispers tenderly: "Let us all be forgiven."

So Santa Claus, if you will be to us so kind and good,
Please fill the smallest stockings first, and then if you but would
Skip mine and leave some little gift for loving mother dear,
We'll have a welcome Christmas day, though father is not here.

A merry Christmas day for Tom, and Ben, and Sue, and Kate,
Tho' a green and fresh-made wreath will hang above the open grate,
And little brother, when a man, will thank you with the rest,
That you did not forget to come, a welcome Christmas guest.

"Tired nature's sweet restorer *** sleep," came down upon the fold,
The little lambs securely slept—a story oft-times told.
A gentle, tender shepherdess went on her lonely way,
And eyes were bright, and hearts were light, when broke the Christmas day.
Good Housekeeping.

THE SONG OF OLD.

By A. E. B.

One winter midnight a feathery snowflake drifted uncertainly down from the gray sky. No one saw it, although a host of beholders might have examined the starry crystals with delight. For a moment only it lay, and then, slowly melted away into the brown earth. It was followed by another and another, until soft heaps of them covered the streets, rested upon the garden walls, clung to the trunks and limbs of the trees. Not one star ventured to show itself from behind the clouds, which dulled the sky. There was no sound to break the stillness, till suddenly came upon the air the joyous jangle of bells swinging back and forth in high places—chiming notes floating down from lofty steeple; swift, clamorous echoes having birth in belfry or tower—until all the air vibrated with the insistent

clangor—softened, however, by the falling snowflakes.

"And this is Christmas?" said one, whose interpretation of "Glory to God!" came through the glorification of man as represented by himself. "Peace on earth! and all the world ready to take up the sword. 'Good-will to men!' and the snow covering the huts of the poor. What mockery!" And the man, whose "Glory to God in the highest!" was drowned in his own song of "Praise to man, unending praise!" turned from his window and went to his sleep, while the snow flakes still fell softly.

But while the man slept he dreamed, and he thought that he had the power of discerning each snow-crystal separately; so that he marvelled at the perfection of these myriads of them, while he could not understand that such beauty should be made to exist merely to be wasted and trodden under foot, till he saw further, and, after watching them gradually melt away, he had the perception to follow their course through the clods of earth, and beheld the drops trickle down through the soil to the roots of the trees, to the young grain, green under its cover of snow. And the man was filled with wonder at all he saw down under the surface of the earth; at the quiescent life; at the gathering together of streams which by degrees swelled the rivers and watered the land, or by a mysterious process were taken up higher into the very heavens. Then—since one can dream a great deal in a few moments—the echo of the bells went ringing through his dream: "Good-will! Good-will!"

Again he dreamed, and this time he was in the midst of a land threatened by war. Discord and persecution surrounded him; but—in the queer manner of dreams—he was conscious of penetrating to the purpose of it all, and he knew that great evils are often cured by the outbreaking of lesser evils, and that the overthrow of tyranny could not be accomplished save by such extremes as would rouse nations to action—just as the bells must swing far to either side before they could send their voices through the land. But the man turned and muttered in his sleep something about "glory."

A third time he dreamed. He saw an old man whom many followed, stepping along bravely, all looking toward their leader, who, however, fixed his eyes upon a star in the sky. And the dreamer asked: "What great general is this?" "No great general," they told him—"only a poor, humble man." "But what glory do they gain?" "The greatest glory—God's."

Then came a far-off sound, music borne from some unseen spot, and it carried the dreamer back to his long ago, when that same song was like a battle-cry. "I, too, am a leader," he said. "Behold my followers!" But no one answered, and, looking back, he saw that no one followed him; he was alone.

Then, suddenly, he awoke to see a white world reflecting back the dazzling sun, and walked forth.

An old, rickety house at the corner of the street was well chinked by the soft white snow; not a breath of icy wind could creep in through cranny or crevice. Men called cheerily to men. There was a holiday air in the look of things. There were Christmas treats in every poor dwelling; the man could tell by the savory odors which issued forth. He saw a ruddy-faced woman bearing a covered dish run across to a neighbour's house. He heard children laughing with delight as a door swung suddenly open, disclosing a gay, glittering tree. He sighed, for, as in his dream, he was alone.

Farther on he heard the deep notes of an organ. For a moment he paused, and then he stepped aside into the church. A clear voice sang out, "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth, good-will toward men!" Then

all dropped upon their knees, one common petition upon their lips. The man hesitated, then he, too, bowed his head. A shining sunbeam, coming through a stained-glass window, fell across his face, irradiating it.

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!" repeated the priest. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end!" responded the people. And the man, with the others, said "Amen!" He was no longer alone.

CHRISTMAS GREENS.

It was the day before Christmas. Dear little Polly had been busy for weeks doing all she could to make a present for everybody. Grandma had been her great helper, and together they had worked wonders. Everything was almost ready now, and this afternoon a great treat was in store. Phil, Polly's big brother, was going to take a whole load of children in his big sleigh to gather Christmas greens.

"Here he comes!" cried Polly, who was watching at the window. "Good-bye, Grandma, I'll bring you some greens on my way home," and away she flew like the happy bird that she was. "All aboard!"

What a jolly load they were, all sitting tailor-fashion, tucked into the big fur rugs, two rows of hoods and caps crowning faces fairly shining with happiness. Away they rode through the clear, crisp air, the horses prancing in time to the jingling, jangling, ringing, singing bells; the snow sparkled like diamonds, and all the world was glorious.

The woods seemed so strange in their winter clothes, the trees stretched out their long arms to welcome the children, while the evergreen trees looked so comfortable and snug in their thick, heavy, green cloaks. They appeared glad to see the children, too, and very proud to give them great branches to take home. The holly berries were as thick as "spatters," and looked so pretty in their green and white surroundings. Little rabbits hopped, skipped, and jumped about; and squirrels ran nimbly out on the high boughs, waving their plumed tails in triumph as they looked down with their bright eyes.

Birds, here and there, started out suddenly with a "whi-r-r" and a sharp call; a few stray robins hopped comfortably about, as though they well understood the whole matter, and were very sure of the "good will" due everyone at this season. One of these cozy, confidential little creatures greeted little brown-eyed Polly Porter with a cheery chirp, and winked to her to follow him into a little clump of trees.

"Come in," he said, "you are one of us, you understand a great deal, and we have a message and a mission for you. We know you are a Christmas worker."

Polly followed the robin and found herself in a large round space, with a wall of evergreen which arched to a roof above, and shaded the snowy carpet beneath. Flecks of sunshine danced with the shadows, and as Polly's eyes became accustomed to the witching place she saw heaps and heaps of letters lying all about. Funny little birds with spectacles over their eyes and tiny pencils over where their ears ought to be, moved about among the letters making notes of what they read. They looked so wise and important that Polly couldn't help smiling at them as she watched them, but her guide said:

"This is no light matter, Miss Polly; you see we birds have the contract this year from Santa Claus to gather all his letters from all the chimneys, and to read them, and then to take him to the right houses and tell him the right things to leave for the good children. It is a lovely mission, we know so many children so very well, having nested about the homes so much, and we love these children, too. But oh, Polly, Polly, you have no idea what a