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# The Primary Quarterly

R. Douglas Fraser, J. M. Duncan, Editors ; John Mutch, Associate Editor

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## Getting Ready for Christmas

By Mrs. C. M. Hincks, B.A.

If we were to ask a group of small children what day of all the year they loved the best, they would probably one and all answer without hesitation : "Christmas !" If, however, we were to ask them why they love Christmas so much, there might be some variation in the replies. Probably the majority would give some such answer as : "Because Santa Claus comes and brings me what I want," or, "Because we have a Christmas tree and a party."

Surely this attitude towards Christmas is natural in little children and not to be blamed; and yet, we want them to love the day for much more than this. If our children's interest in Christmas stops there, it is our fault. We become so busy before that day "getting ready," purchasing and making gifts, baking cakes and puddings, that we ourselves are prone to forget very often the real meaning of this day when the greatest of all gifts was given to us. Let us first take time to see that we have the right Christmas spirit, and then help our children to acquire it also.

Tell them the story of the first Christmas day until they know it by heart. How they love it ! How they delight to look at the pictures of that dear baby in the manger or in his mother's arms ! One little child said to her mother once as she was shown such a picture : "Mother, may I stroke the baby ?" And when the mother nodded, oh ! how gently and tenderly she stroked it ! If we haven't such pictures hanging where our children can see them all year round, let us at least pin one up as Christmas time draws near that they may learn to love it and the

babe whom it represents, and let us pin it low where they can touch it and study all its details.

Let us also teach them little songs about the birth of Jesus. There is a host to choose from, one of the most simple and most beautiful being Luther's Cradle Hymn :

"Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,

The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,

The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay."

Many of the Christmas hymns in our church hymnals are beyond our children in word and thought and have difficult airs, but even then there are a few quite within their grasp, as, for instance : "Once in royal David's City," and "While shepherds watched their flocks by night." In such hymns the Christmas story itself is given and being in verse and set to music is much more easy for them to remember.

Again, let the children remember the baby Jesus in their prayers. When they are thanking the heavenly Father for his love and care, for his gifts of father and mother, of home and food, let them add a thank you for the greatest gift of all,—the Father's only Son.

Having thus aroused our children's love of the baby Jesus, and love for Christmas as his birthday, by story, picture, song and prayer, let us teach them how they can show this love in tangible form. The child understands that, if he wants really to show his love for mother or father, he will obey them and help them ; just so, he can learn that, if he is to show Jesus that he truly loves him, he will try to obey him and help him. Jesus himself has told us how this can be done, "Inasmuch