

Archie's Christmas Gift.

BY EMILY BAKER SMALLE.

TWENTY-ONE, two, three, four and five!
Just a quarter sure's I'm alive!
And that will buy the funniest doll,
Rubber and worsted, for Baby Moll.

That takes all of my ready cash,
And breaks my bank all into smash;
You little tin bank, you're never full;
I can't work much nights after school.

These days are so short the light don't last,
And Christmas is coming so fast,
I won't ask father to give me a cent;
He works too hard for bread and rent.

But mother must have a Christmas gift;
O dear! who'll give a fellow a lift?
Dear mamma! her hair is pretty and brown,
And her smile so sweet, with never a frown.

I'll get her something, I will! I will!
But how'll I get it's the question still.
I know!—I've got such a splendid plan;
'Tis good enough for a grown-up man.

I think my present will be just grand;
'Tis this: I'll write, in my nicest hand,
A pledge that liquor I'll never drink;
That I'll never swear—and then, I think,

I'll write that tobacco I'll never use,
In tobacco pipes or tobacco chews,
I'll get an envelope clean and white,
And on it mamma's name I'll write.

And I'll copy it out so nice and fair,
And sign my name at the bottom there;
"Archibald Spinner!" Oh, what a name!
But grandpa wears it, and 'tis no shame.

"Archibald!" Mamma will like it so,
"Archie!" she says when I'm good, I know,
But I think 'twill please her—I know it will!
Her dear brown eyes with tears will fill.

But behind the tears there will be for me,
The happy twinkle I love to see.
So, "Archibald Spinner," the road is long,
You must make your mind up good and strong,

Before you put down in black and white,
The pledge that the angels in heaven will write.

Yes, I'm going to do it! I've counted the cost:
There is all to gain, and nothing lost.

Now Christmas may come—come slow, or come fast—
I'm ready to meet it, ready at last;
Who in this town has a finer show
Than "Archibald II." I'd like to know!

MAY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

BY JAY.

It was Christmas week, and as I looked at the sewing on the table, and thought of all the other work that must be accomplished in the next two days, my fingers fairly flew over the garment I was finishing, while I was mentally engaged in planning how to make a very small sum go a great way in my house-keeping expenses. As I thought it all over the problem became more difficult, and I had concluded to do without some needed articles myself, when my little six-year-old girl came in where I sat so busily sewing and thinking.

"Mother,"
"What is it, darling?" I asked.
"Mother," she spoke so seriously and so unlike my laughing May that I stopped and looked at her. Encouraged by having gained my attention, she went on. "You know that this is Christmas, and I want to give a Christmas present; I want to give a doll to poor Nanny McDermott."

"Who is Nanny McDermott, May? I never heard you speak of her before. Is she in your class at school?"

"O! no, mother; Nanny's a poor Irish girl, and her mother's dead, and she has no one to teach her at home, so she had to go into a lower grade; but I see her in the playground at recess, and she looks so sad and lonely, I want to give her a doll to play with, for her mother's dead;" and the big blue eyes filled, as she spoke of the desolate child who had no mother.

For the fiftieth time that day I sighed, "Oh! if I had only five dollars that were not imperatively needed!" But I had not fifty cents to spare; so I said, as gently as I could, "I should love to get the doll for Nanny; but, my darling, I haven't the money."

Her face brightened, and she said eagerly, "You know, mother, I have some money Cousin Tom gave me last summer; and, besides, old Auntie Heywood paid me for

carrying in her light wood. I don't want to give your money. I have it in the little blue box upstairs, and I'll run and get it."

She came back in a moment, and poured the contents of the blue box into my lap. She had just one dollar and two cents. Her face beamed with delight as she said, "That's enough to buy the doll, and Nanny will be so glad! Will you come up town now, mother, and help me to buy it? I saw some beautiful ones in Smith's store window yesterday, and you know they might be sold if we waited till to-morrow; and please carry the money, mother; I might lose it."

How could I go, when I had so much to do, and the daylight waning fast? But I could not cloud that happy face by refusing, and I had so little to give her that I felt my boundless love and sympathy must never fail her; so, if I had to sit up half the night to make up for it, I would give an hour of my precious time; so I answered cheerfully, "Yes, darling; get your wraps, while I put on my bonnet and shawl."

She was soon ready, and as we walked up the village street together I held the little hand, in its coarse mitten, close to mine, and often tenderly pressed it, that she might be quite sure she was very dear to me. She did not laugh nor skip, as is her custom, but walked quietly, I had almost said solemnly, by my side, for her childish heart sympathy with the want she tried to cheer. As I looked down at the fair curls and big blue eyes of my darling I thought how happy I should be could I surround her with Christmas gifts, or even get her warmer clothing. Loving mothers, who are poor, know my feelings that afternoon.

When we reached the toy-shop we were both disappointed, for the "beautiful dolls" cost more than she could pay. At last we found some that looked very well, indeed, for the money, and she bought one for ninety cents. It had curly hair, dark eyes, and phenomenally red cheeks, and was dressed in a neat wrapper. May carried it home as proudly as if it were worth a hundred dollars, and put it away in the box with her Sunday clothes, there to wait for Christmas.

On Christmas Eve she pinned up her small stocking behind the stove in the sitting-room. Several times that day mysterious little parcels had arrived at our house, all from kind friends who, in their own fortunate homes, had not forgotten ours. There was a pretty red purse, with ten cents in it, and a tiny china tea-service, from old Auntie Heytiny china tea-service, from old Auntie Heytiny wood; a bound volume of *Saint Nicholas*, from Cousin Tom; a tiny candelabra with a box of wax tapers, from the Sabbath-school teacher, and bunches of raisins, and some oranges from a neighbour almost as poorly off as ourselves. Of course, all these things could not be squeezed into such a small stocking, so I put her high chair underneath to catch the overflow. There never was a happier child than my May when I carried her down, before daylight next morning, and she saw all her treasures. The lighted wax tapers and the bright oranges were particularly effective, and she thought the tea-dishes almost too pretty to play with.

After breakfast she said she would take the doll to Nanny, so she wrapped it up carefully and set out on her loving errand. When she returned I asked her if Nanny had pleased with her Christmas present.

"O! yes, mother; but she was so surprised we didn't say anything when I put the dolls into her cold hands. Only she said, 'Is this really for me?' and I said, 'Yes; I give it to you for your own, to keep for it's Christmas;' and then I went away, and then she called after me, 'Thank you, May, ever so much; and that's all. But I saw her home, and she's awfully poor, and I'm so glad I gave her that doll.'"

May did not mention the matter again, and the incident was quite forgotten, till one cold, blustering March evening we were startled by hearing the cry of "Fire!" and heard the fire-engine going swiftly to the opposite side of the village. Shortly after, a neighbour called to say that McDermott's cabin had caught fire, and little Nannie was so badly burned that she could live but a few hours. It was indeed true, for before midnight poor lonely Nannie was lonely and desolate no longer,—she had joined her mother.

When May came home from school next day she told me that her teacher had been with Nannie from the time of the accident till her death.

Teacher said that Nanny's sister had left her playing with her doll, and had gone to call her father to supper. Coming back she saw the blaze and shouted "Fire!" They soon put it out, but somehow Nanny was badly burned. Teacher said she knew them all, and didn't seem to suffer much. She asked them to put the doll May Bentley had given her at Christmas on the pillow, and died with it beside her. I wish teacher

hadn't said my name before them all, for all the girls looked so surprised they hadn't heard about me. A good many of them are going to the funeral to-morrow, but I couldn't bear to see her dead."

"Why, May," I said, "Nanny is far happier now than she has ever been. She has her mother now, and will never cry for her again; and she's away from all cold and hunger. Happy child! no more suffering for her."

May looked out of the window, far away. "I know that," she said softly, "but I'm glad I gave her the doll, mother."
"So am I, darling."—*Christian Work.*

TO BOYS WHO SMOKE.

If boys who smoke would only be sensible and see the folly of it, how much better it would be for them and others! Can you not see, do you not know, that you are going through a great deal of misery to do something you do not really like? You are enduring with a patience worthy of a better cause the suffering of a martyr, in order to acquire a useless, bad habit; and trying to cultivate a taste that makes you sick. Why should you treat yourself so meanly? You know perfectly well that you do not smoke because you enjoy it. It is only when you think some one (but assuredly not your parents) is looking at you. You always do this with an air of intense self-consciousness. Everybody, including yourself, knows that you are on exhibition. And it is such a pitiable, cheap show, too. You think people are admiring you, which they are not. Why, so far from exciting admiration in the minds of the beholders, if you boys could hear the remarks which people make when they see you smoking, you would never again try a cigarette where human eyes could perceive you.

Moreover, it makes you disagreeable company. When you bring into society the horrid taint of stale tobacco in your hair and clothes, your absence is always more gratefully welcome than your presence. So don't smoke, boys. It makes you stupid, so it does not help you in your studies; it is injurious to the heart, so it does not aid you in athletic sports. It does not do you one particle of good; it makes you appear silly and ridiculous; it is as disagreeable and offensive to yourselves as it is to anybody else; you do not get a bit of comfort and real pleasure out of it, and you all know it—so pray do not smoke!

PATting THE IRON HORSE.

The overland train had arrived at Oakland, Cal., and the great iron engine was throbbing and puffing after the long trip over mountain sides and rocky defiles, lofty trestles and marshy stretches.

The din in the depot was deafening, but out of the chaos of sounds a sweet, girlish voice was heard welcoming home her parents, who had arrived on the train. She was a little golden-haired beauty, scarcely seven years of age, with a loving nature, to which she gave full vent in the impulsive way she welcomed her parents back. At last they took her by the hand and proceeded toward the waiting ferry-boat.

As they passed by the engine attached to the train, the little one broke away and ran up to the big, black machine and patted the driving wheels affectionately with her small, white hands. Then, looking up at the smokestack, she said: "You ing up at the smokestack, you have good, big, old, iron horse, you have brought back papa and mamma safe over the great mountains to their little girl, and I want to thank you, even if you don't care for me because I am so little. And wistfully toward the grimy engineer and fireman, who were looking down at her. "I love you all." Then she kissed her hand to them and was gone.

"Bill," said the engineer to his fireman, "what was that?"
"Peared like an angel," said the fireman, echoing the other's thought.

Just then a fleeting sunbeam came stealing through a chink in the depot and stole by the engineer into his cab. There was a strange look on his face for an instant, and when he turned his head there were two light streaks on his dust-begrimed cheeks.—*Sunday-school Visitor.*

"STRAIGHTENING OUT THE FURROWS."

"Boys," he said, "I've been trying every day of my life for the last two years to straighten out furrows, and I can't do it!"

One boy turned his head in surprise toward the captain's neatly-kept place.

"Oh, I don't mean that kind, lad. I don't mean land furrows," continued the captain, so soberly that the attention of the boys became breathless as he went on:

"When I was a lad about the age of you boys, I was what they called a 'hard case'; not exactly bad or vicious, but wayward and wild. Well, my dear old mother used to coax, pray and punish—my father was dead, making it all the harder for her—but she never got impatient. How in the world she bore with all my stubborn, vexing ways so patiently will always be to me one of the mysteries of life. I knew it was troubling her, knew it was changing her pretty face, making it look anxious and old. After awhile, tiring of all restraint, I ran away, went off to sea—and a rough time I had of it at first. Still I liked the water, and I liked journeying around from place to place. Then I settled down to business in a foreign land, and soon became prosperous, and now began sending her something besides empty letters. And such beautiful letters as she always wrote me during those years of absence. At length I noticed how long they grew—longing for the presence of the son who used to try her so, and it awoke a corresponding longing in my own heart to go back to the dear, waiting soul.

"So when I could stand it no longer, I came back, and such a welcome, and such a surprise! My mother is not a very old lady, boys, but the first thing I noticed was the whiteness of her hair and the deep furrows on her brow, and I knew I had helped to blanch that hair to its snowy whiteness, and had drawn those lines in that smooth forehead. And those are the furrows I've been trying to straighten out.

"But last night, while mother was sleeping in her chair, I sat thinking it all over, and looked to see what progress I had made.

"Her face was very peaceful and the expression contented as possible, but the furrows were still there! I hadn't succeeded in straightening them out—and—I—never—shall—never!

"When they lay my mother—my fair old sweetheart—in her casket, there will be furrows in her brow; and I think it a wholesome lesson to teach you, that the neglect you offer your parents' counsel now, and the trouble you cause them, will abide, my lads, it will abide!"

"But," broke in Freddie Hollis, with great troubled eyes, "I should think if you're so kind and good now, it needn't matter so much!"

"Ah, Freddie, my boy," said the quavery voice of the strong man, "you cannot undo the past. You may do much to atone for it, do much to make the rough path smooth, but you can't straighten out the old furrows, my laddies, remember that!"

"Guess I'll go and chop some wood mother spoke of; I'd almost forgotten," said lively Jimmy Hollis, in a strangely quiet tone for him.

"Yes, and I've got some errands to do!" suddenly remembered Billy Bowles.

"Touched and taken," said the kindly captain to himself as the boys tramped off, keeping step in a thoughtful, soldier-like way.

And Mrs. Bowles declared a fortnight afterward that Billy was "really getting to be a comfort!"

Then Mrs. Hollis, meeting the captain about that time, remarked that Jimmy always meant to be a good boy, but he was actually being one.

"Guess your stories they like so much have morals to them now and then," added the gratified mother, with a smile. As Mrs. Hollis passed, Captain Sam, with folded arms and head bent down, said softly to himself:

"Well, I shall be thankful enough if a word of mine will help the dear boys to keep the furrows away from their mothers' brows; for once there, it is a difficult task straightening out the furrows."