

Young People's Department.

PREPARING FOR WINTER.

IN the opposite page is a picture of a well regulated barn yard prepared for the winter. Everything about it looks trim and neat. The stacks of straw are ready for the cattle to draw from through the cold months and the cattle themselves are collected together awaiting the approach of old Boreas who is ready to come and announce the winter. Every good farmer prepares in this way for winter and all should be ready for it. Some people put off their preparations for winter to the last moment and sometimes leave it too late and the winter overtakes them unprepared.

Have you not noticed how Providence has taught the dumb animals to prepare for winter? The birds on the approach of winter, fly to the sunny south and there remain till it is over and then, in the spring, they suddenly appear in our midst and sing to us as happily as ever. Many of the creatures of the woods, such as the squirrels, lay by in store a plentiful supply of provisions for the winter, and yet there are men and women everywhere who enjoy themselves through the summer and then have to beg from others and suffer greatly through the winter. Could anything be more foolish? Why, the little squirrel knows better than that.

And young people might learn a lesson from this for the guidance of their life. They are in the spring time of life; but the spring will soon wear into summer and the summer into the autumn and the autumn into the winter,—for old age is like the winter,—and sometimes people let old age come upon them without having made preparation for it and then they must be dependent on others or suffer till they die. Young people should always bear in mind that if they live, they will surely grow old and for this they should prepare.

And then there is the great future that lies before us all, the winter that may suddenly overtake even the young. Through the Saviour of the world all may be prepared for this great change, the change which must come to all by the visitation of death. If this should come to us suddenly how happy if it should find us ready to meet the Lord. The Advent season tells us of His coming and tells us to be ready for it. And there will be a gladsome time, no dreary winter, but a happy spring and summer time of everlasting joy and peace.

MR. GRIPPS HOT WATER KETTLE.

A CHRISTMAS STORY. BY EROL GERVAISE.

IT was very unpleasant, he disliked it exceedingly; it made him uncomfortable, so uncomfortable that he resolved to put up with it no longer. He seized the offending object, jerked it over to the other side of the table, at the imminent risk of scalding himself, and turning his back on it, prepared to enjoy his cup of tea in

peace and quietness. He took a sip, another and another but it was no use. The object followed him. He shut his eyes and saw it as distinctly as ever, he opened them, blinked angrily, there it was. He would not be made a fool of, he said to himself, he was neither imaginative nor superstitious, and what was this but imagination or superstition. He seized it again and set it down just where it had stood before, nearly in front of him and where the gas light shone full on it, making the reflection distinctly visible. What was it?

An old fashioned brass kettle, the polished surface of which shone like burnished gold, and which just now was, and had been, making him very uncomfortable by combining in one the properties of kettle and mirror. What did he see in it now, what had he seen in it twenty minutes since, when Mrs. Chubbs, his housekeeper, having poured out his post-prandial cup of tea, had left the room as was her custom, leaving him, as she supposed, in solitary possession.

Well, first of all his own face comically foreshortened in the burnished convex. It was rather amusing at first; it looked as if the features had been lengthened out *crosswise*. And when he smiled at the grotesque apparition, the smile in the kettle became a grin, and when he laughed aloud at the grin, he seemed to hear the kettle laugh too, and in such an exaggerated manner that it was positively too ridiculous.

But while he looked, other objects began to show themselves. It might be the group in Crown Derby on the mantelpiece. It might be the marble Daphne with her laurel spray on the bracket yonder, or the projecting knobs and ornaments of the silver tea-pot, the cream jug or the sugar bowl. Whatever or whichever it was it did not matter, but the effect did very much. From being at first comical it became confusing, then irritating and at the last exasperating. There they were, any number of them. Imps and hobgoblins and all sorts of ludicrous and frightful creatures with grinning faces and cunning little eyes and disproportionately large ears and noses and little round bodies with no legs to speak of.

And actually over there just under the spout of the kettle, an unmentionable creature with hoofs and horns, whom Mr. Gripps, being, as he would have told you, one of the oldest pew holders in the Cathedral, and of course a good Christian was not supposed to know by sight or otherwise, but whom strange to say he at once recognized as the —, well, we will say, the old gentleman.

A most disagreeable old gentleman Mr. Gripps found him. His horrible eyes seemed to scintillate light in every direction, but it was a light suggestive of brimstone, rather than cheerful gas or kerosene, of fiendish malignity rather than good natured intelligence; and, would you believe it, even in the shining yellow of the kettle, he looked black. The little imps and hobgoblins seemed to form his court. They stood round him in various attitudes, and two of the ugliest perched themselves one