

"But if you do it, it means a giving up, a real giving up of something of your own that you will feel, for you cannot have as much yourselves, though I am sure you will have more satisfaction."

"How shall we do it?"

"Of course I want to help you all I can, but I want you to think it out and plan it somewhat for yourselves. Make believe that you are the little wood-children, and think what you would like to have sent to you."

"What a funny plan. We'll try it."

So the children went to work in earnest. A good sized box called the Christmas Box, was placed in the corner of the nursery, and in it were put the things as fast as they were ready. In one corner of it they placed a candy box with a hole in the top where they slipped in all the money that came to them for Christmas, and when the time came to spend it they went with mamma as usual to visit the Christmas stores. Instead of spending it for expensive toys and attractive trifles, they bought needed things: caps, mittens, dresses, aprons, groceries, and for the festivities: oranges, nuts, figs, and some canned fruits.

Another day was spent in Santa Claus's workshop. All the old toys and torn books were brought out, and with glue, tacks, scissors, and paste, were made over as good as new. The scrap books were really very pretty, made of manilla paper or silesia, with pictures cut, trimmed and fitted from old books.

The greatest fun of all was packing the box; the children did all they could about it, wrapping up the things and arranging all manner of surprises. They were surprised themselves to find the box was not big enough, so a barrel was brought up and lined with picture papers. Papa contributed a pile of clothes, and grandma put in a big roll of flannels, so the barrel was filled up "plump" full.

What do you suppose was right in the middle of it? A present from Mrs. Hobson, a loyal English woman, to the teacher, nothing less than a real English plum pudding! Wasn't that a pretty good heart for a barrel?

When it was all packed and headed and marked, Peter took it to the station, and away it went on its blessed mission. But it found no happier children than those it left.

When Christmas came, though it did not bring as many toys or as fine gifts as usual, it brought a deeper pleasure to the little givers. And when they read the letter from the wood country telling of the beautiful happiness that had come to forty children by this real giving, this giving up, they knew as they had never known before, the best meaning of Christmas giving.

"Well," said Howard, "this is the bettermost Christmas I ever had, and I am going to make another one next year."

Soap Bubble Elves.

"Well! children, what a mess and what a noise!" said grandma, as she opened the door, "what are you playing with? Ah, soap suds and pipes; I suppose you all know all about soap bubble elves."

"Elves!" they shouted, "no, we never heard of them," and they all surrounded grandma, and begged her to tell them all she knew at once.

Grandma was very surprised to learn

that they did not already know the story, and agreed to tell it if they were very quiet.

"One winter," she began, when they were all settled around her, "It was dreadfully cold, so cold, indeed, that the snow was inches deep on all the fields, and all the water was frozen, and most of the trees, which, as you know of course, are the winter homes of the elves, were blown down and covered with snow. The poor elves were having a very uncomfortable time, so uncomfortable that at last they decided to go to the owner of a large, old house, who was known to be a very kind man, and to ask permission to spend the winter there. They sent a few elves of the highest rank to ask this favor.

"After some little consideration the master consented, as they were such tiny people that nobody would ever see them. But, he said, although they might dance and frolic as much as they liked, in all the rooms, nothing was to be displaced or injured in the very least. The deputation of elves agreed to this, in the name of all their fellows, and thanking him most heartily for his kindness, they left to carry the good news to the others. When it had been told, and received with great joy, the king warned them that, if any broke the compact which had been made in their behalf, he should inflict severe punishment.

"For some days all went well; nothing was disturbed, and the elves were happy in their warm new quarters.

"But one night, when some of the younger and more thoughtless of them were roaming over the house, they came to one of the bed rooms, and stopped there to explore it. It was a very pretty room, and they spent all the night there. Just as the dawn was breaking, one of them called his companions to see a beautiful ball he had found. They all gathered round and saw a dark, clear ball, resting on a china dish. It looked a very fascinating plaything, but the sun was just rising, so they agreed to return next evening, and see if it was still there.

"When evening came and they went to the same room, there it was, still looking very tempting, and they decided that it could not matter just rolling it along the floor, if they put it back before morning.

"For some evenings they played with it and successfully replaced it before they had to disappear, but then they noticed that it was getting smaller and smaller. They discussed the cause of this, and at last one of them suggested that it was made of sweet-stuff, and that the mortal that lived in that room ate some every day. They agreed to taste it and see if it tasted as nice as it looked.

"One by one they each took a small piece, too small for mortal eyes to see, but quite big enough to make those wee creatures very ill. They began to feel rather frightened, but hoped to be well enough before morning to put the unlucky ball in its place again.

"When day broke, and the King assembled his people, they were missing.

"A search party was sent to find them, and when they appeared, looking very unhappy, the King inquired the cause of their illness. Feeling too ill to disguise their disobedience, they confessed all.

"Then the King said that they deserved most severe punishment, and as a ball of glycerine soap had been the cause of their disobedience, as a

continual reminder of their fault, the only place the guilty elves might have as a home henceforth should be the inside of a soap-bubble. The minute the bubble burst, their wings would shrivel up, all their beauty would fade, and the miserable elves would be glad to hide in any dark corner till another bubble was blown. Then their wings spread again, and during the life-time of the bubble they could once more be happy and gay, as in the days before their disobedience."

During the tale all the children had listened eagerly, and when grandma finished, scarcely stopping to thank her, they all trooped off with greater enjoyment than ever, to make homes for the poor elves.

Grandmamma's Birthday.

It was the day before Christmas Day, snow lay thick on the ground, the roads were hard and dry, and everything looked cold and dreary out of doors. But inside one might almost think it summer! All the children had been very busy preparing presents for grandmamma, and as soon as they heard she was down stairs, they ran into the breakfast-room to greet her.

They found her in the arm-chair in front of the fire, with her feet on the soft rug, delighted to see her grandchildren.

"Good morning, grandmamma!" cried Ellie and Frank, each holding out a small bouquet of choice hot-house flowers. "A happy birthday to you, dear grandmamma, and many returns!"

"Thank you, dear ones, thank you all. You seem to have brought June with you instead of December. Why, what a gay basketful Rowland has got."

"Yes," said Ellie, unable to keep the secret; "yes, and underneath is something for you."

"Oh, Ellie, you ought not to tell!" said both her brothers at once.

"I didn't say what it was; do give it to grandmamma."

The basket was laid at her feet, and the dear old lady peeped through the leaves, and then kissed all the young folks before she looked further. "I wonder what she found there!"

"Dear friends, dear brethren, it is not simply that you shall warm one another by the contact of your lives; it is not merely that you shall do the things which some conception of duty on your part obliges you to do; but it is that you shall have the mind of Jesus Christ, shall have in yourselves the life, and then the power of the life will show itself.—Phillips Brooks.

—Cultivate a cheerful disposition; endeavor as much as lieth in you, always to bear a smile about with you; recollect that "Rejoice evermore" is as much a command of God as that verse which says: "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart."

—The Russian Bible Society recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, although it had been at work five years before. During the thirty years it has distributed 1,588,418 copies. It has been very cordial in its relations with the American Bible Society, having received much assistance in colporteur work, 400,000 copies of its distribution being at the expense of the American society.

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