

where there are children the gifts are generally entrusted to the care of old Santa Claus, who carefully stows them into the expectant stockings that so faithfully keep vigil by the chimney side, so that Santa may have no difficulty in finding them.

To be sure, Christmas is a children's festival, and Charles Dickens, the eminent novelist says: "It is good for grown-up people to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas." Those who have read Dickens' works cannot have failed to notice his tenderness for children. His Christmas Tales are just the thing to amuse and instruct children on long winter evenings when lessons are over and they sit around the fire. Although the old-fashioned fireplaces he describes in those charming stories are a thing of the past, the kettle still hums, and the village bells ring out as of old their notes of cheer, and, perhaps, if we listen closely we, too, may find in them a language, even as Toby did. We may hear the words: "On this day was born, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Let each one think of Christmas as Scrooge's nephew did, "as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts, and to think of people below them as if they were really fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys."

Christmas is a *home* festival. Everyone knows the old familiar song, "Home, Sweet Home," yet every one may not know that it was written at this season by a homeless man in a foreign land. The author, John Howard Payne, was a lonely man in a strange city and in his sorrow and loneliness he wrote that beautiful song which everybody loves. How few families *all* meet, even once a year, when once separated. How many families sit at the family feast and miss the merry laugh or the absent voice of the loved one, who, but one short year ago, filled what is now the vacant chair.