



CHRISTMAS MORNING.

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS.

We think of the little children,
The toys for the Christmas tree;
The things that will give them pleasure,
And raise their glad shouts of glee.
Do we think of the Christ of child:en?
The Lord who was once a boy?
Do we seek to prepare for Jesus,
The things that will give him joy?

We think of the poor and needy,
And furnish the Christmas board;
The garments to clothe the naked,
The feasts where no feast is stored.
Do we think of the homeless Saviour,
Who knocks at a thousand doors;
And fails of a heart's glad welcome,
And hungers amid our stores?

We think of the loved and precious,
And purchase the gifts we think
Will give them the satisfaction
And tighten Love's golden link.
Do we think of the Chief of Lovers,
And gifts for his heart prepare;
The best of our Christmas presents,
For our dearest Friend to share?

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

There is a story told of Santa Claus,
and it is that he was persuaded into putting a telephone into his winter palace. And these were the messages continually flying over the wires:

"Hello! Who is it?"

And then would come the answers from

Johnny and Katie and Mollie and Bessie and a thousand others. And they were all just alike:

"Dear Santa Claus, I want you to send me for Christmas a pony, or a donkey, or a big wax doll, or a set of real china dishes, or a sled," and many other things like these.

One day this was the message that reached his ears, in a whining, complaining voice, "Dear Santa Claus—You needn't send me such a mean old present as you did last year. My papa is a very rich man, and I want a big diamond ring. You'll send it, won't you?"

"No, I won't!" said Santa Claus, and he shut the telephone with a snap and said to his wife, "All these children are growing up as selfish as pigs. What do they think Christmas was made for, I wonder?"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling," rang the telephone bell again, and this is what came over the wire this time: "Dear Santa Claus— I am a little lame girl, living in Beggars' Alley; the grocer said I might telephone from his store; my mamma is sick; if you would only bring her a new warm blanket and a cup of hot tea, with milk and sugar in it; you needn't bring anything for me."

When Mrs. Santa Claus heard this message she said to Santa Claus, "I am going to take your sleigh this year, and I will go to Beggars' Alley, to the Orphan Asylum and to the Poorhouse with those presents."

Then Santa Claus seized the wire again. "Hello! I'm Santa Claus. Connect me with the children;" and this is what he said: "Dear children, won't you send me word that you will be willing to go without your Christmas presents this year, so that they may go to the beggars and sick children and poor people all over the world?"

Most of the children sent back word, "Yes, we will," or "Yes, dear Santa Claus," or simply "Yes." And so the lame girl's mamma had her warm blanket, and hot tea with milk and sugar in it, and a little blind girl had a music-box, and a sick child a beautiful doll, and the rag-pickers and street-sweepers even were remembered and made happy.

Thus the children were learning what Christmas is for; not to get all we can ourselves and have our hands full of presents, but to give to those who have not much, as Jesus Christ gave all to us who were poor and needy. Then,

"When the Christmas bells begin to chime,
Oh! the beautiful, blessed Christmas time,"

our hearts will join with them gladly, because we will have the true Christmas spirit.

CHRISTMAS.

Whatever else the breaking of the first Christmas morning over the earth brought to the world, it brought one new day for the children. On Christmas Day children take possession of the world's heart as on no other day beside, and as no other person takes possession of it either on that day or on any other of the days of the whole year round.

But while for children that first Christmas dawn brought the fairest, kindest day to the world which children have yet seen, it brought more than a new day into the world for its children, it brought a new spirit toward them. It gave them, for all days, for all their life, a new place in the thoughts and hearts of men.

"Only a child." That was the language of nations with reference to children. But when God began his new kingdom on the earth with a child, when his angels sang the honours of a child, and foretold all people's great joy in a child, henceforth there was a freer, greener, brighter world for the souls and limbs of children. The spirit of that birthday of Jesus has wandered all over the world, touching and changing and beautifying everything, bringing good-will to everybody, and especially to children. Not in vain did Jesus say, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."