

THE CHRISTMAS FRETENDER.

BY MRS GEORGE ARCHIBALD

WHEN Christmas time is almost here
And folks begin to wink,
And hush their talk if I come near,
Then I begin to think
I'll write to Santa Claus, about
The things I want, to fill
My stockings,—he won't get the note,
But I pretend he will!

I slip it in the envelope,
And put it with the mail,
And beg mamma to send it
By the postman—without fail.
And thank her when I find it gone,
For doing what I bid,
I know she never sent it off,
But I pretend she did!

I take my stockings, Christmas eve,
And by the chimney-side,
I hang them while I wish that they
Were twice as long and wide,
And wonder how the chimney
Lets him down, that jolly man!
Of course I truly know it can't,
But I pretend it can!

And when, on Christmas morning,
All the things I wanted so,
Are sticking from my stocking tops
Or standing in a row,
I hug and kiss my mother,
And my father too, because
I know it's mostly them, though I
Pretend it's Santa Claus.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT.

WHAT is it? It is a person! "A person?" Yes, a real live person, as much so as papa, or mamma, or yourself. "A funny Christmas gift," you say. But mind it isn't "a" Christmas gift. If it were, it might be a mere thing—a doll, or sled, or box of candies, which would soon be gone. It is "the" Christmas gift, that is the gift that makes Christmas, without which there would never have been any Christmas, and with which every Christmas must be a Christmas. "Christmas" is Christ-mas, that is, the feast or festival of Christ. And Christ is a person. "God so loved the world (and boys and girls are a big part of the world) that he gave his only begotten Son." Isn't a Son a person? It's true then, isn't it? God so loves each one of you, no matter how selfish and naughty, that he has given his Son—not his love, but the Lover; not his papava letters (the Bible), but the writer; not his garments (outward gifts, land's, houses, goods, books, playthings, etc.), but himself, the Giver.

What is to be done with it? Well, dear me, what are you doing with the Christmas gift? Are you accepting him or rejecting him? Mind, he has been given to you. God "gave," not will give if you ask him. It would be a funny Christmas gift, wouldn't it, for which you had to beg and plead before you could have it? Real

Christmas gifts don't come that way, do they? It would spoil half the delight, wouldn't it, if you even knew what gifts were to fill your stocking, much more if you had to beg for such beforehand? So with the Christmas gift. It has been given to you without your asking—so that you're forced either to take him or to reject him. You don't mean to refuse any other gift that may be given you this Christmas, do you? But are you going to take them and yet reject the Christmas gift? Now just let me whisper a secret in your ear. You have no right to take any other of God's gifts (and that means all things) without taking this gift. Why not? Because all those things have been given to you in Jesus Christ—the Gift. They belong to you in him, and not apart from him, and for you to take them out of him, or without him, is to take what does not belong to you, and to take what does not belong to you is to —!

Why don't you take the Christmas gift? Maybe you think you've got to earn it before you claim it. But that isn't the way you get any other gift is it? Wouldn't your Sunday-school superintendent laugh if, when he was distributing Christmas gifts next week, you should hesitate to take your share because you hadn't earned it? "Earn it," he would exclaim, "why it wouldn't be a gift if you had earned it." So just take this and enjoy it." And then if the superintendent himself had really taken the gift, he would probably tell you that you couldn't really take what he offered you without doing as he had done. To really take a gift, that is, to get out of it all that God puts into it, you must see back of it, and in it, the Gift. John 4. 10.

Or, maybe, you think it is too big, too wonderful a gift to be given to you. And your thought would be just right if it wasn't for that little word, "too." The Christmas gift is a wonderful gift to be given anybody, old or young. But not too wonderful to be given, because the Giver is so wonderful, and because he wants us all to know something of his wonderfulness. His very name as a child Saviour is "Wonderful." God says, "Thou shalt call his name Wonderful." But before he says that he makes the prophet say something else, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given!" Only those who take the Gift know how really wonderful he is.

God says this wonderful gift is for you, dear one, and he means it. Will you take it?

WHAT UNCLE TENNIS BROUGHT.

UNCLE TENNIS travels a great deal and visits many strange places. When he comes home on visits he always brings something interesting with him. When he came home at Thanksgiving he brought a big bird, an Australian crane.

The bird walked into the hall, gazed at the gas, and then went upstairs, looking for a roosting-place. Not seeming to find any place in the house to suit its taste, it went to roost in the carriage-house,

and afterward retired there every evening soon after dark. In the daytime it preferred that part of the yard where the sun was shining.

BOYS AND MEN.

You are boys now, but you will soon be men. Then you will have your own way to make in the world. Do you mean to be idle and fretful, and deceive people, and give them a bad opinion of you? Or do you intend to go to work, and act bravely and nobly, and do your duty, and leave a name behind you when you die which the world will love and respect? Take care—now is the time! Did you ever notice a large tree that grew crooked, and was an ugly eye-sore on that account? Perhaps it stood on the lawn right in front of the porch, and your father would have liked very much to have straightened it. It was impossible to do so. A hundred horses could not have dragged it erect. And yet think of the time when the large tree was a small sapling. A child might have straightened it then, and it would have grown properly, and everyone would have admired it. By this we mean that boys should grow straight, not crooked. You are young now, as the tree was once; begin in time, and you will be as straight as an arrow, when you are a man. If you wait, it will be too late. The way to make men erect and noble is to take them when they are boys, and show them that there is nothing in this world so noble as doing their duty. Once more, we say, remember that, though you are boys now, you will be men soon.

You may do good or evil. If you are false and worthless, you and everybody else will have a hard time of it. You may be soldiers, judges, statesmen, and president. What you say or do may decide the fate of millions of other people. These will look to you; and, more than all, God will watch you and hold you to a strict account. If you are brave and true and unselfish, heaven will bless you, and every one who knows you will love and respect you. If you are mean and cowardly, and think of nothing but your own pleasure, God and man will be displeased with you. Which will you be? The best of all things is to be pure and do your duty.

SIN HURTS.

ONE day Charley was very naughty. He would not obey his mamma, and spoke very rudely to her.

By-and-bye he felt sorry. He asked mamma to forgive him. But even after she forgave him and kissed him he could not feel right. He went away to his room alone and cried bitter tears. Do you not see that sin hurts, even when it has been forgiven?

Will you learn this pretty verse?

"Jesus, if thy child should stray,
Heedless from thy side away,
Let me hear thee kindly say,
'Follow me!'"