

MORE BLESSED TO GIVE.

BY MISS M. B. WINSLOW.

"No, I'm not glad at all," said Belle, "not one bit."

"Not glad that Christmas is coming?" said Eustace, quite unable to comprehend such an astonishing speech.

"No, not one bit," re-asserted Belle. "What does it all amount to? Gaudy Christmas trees, unlike anything in heaven or on earth, toys, candy, books—why, I've had so many Christmas presents that there is nothing new to have, and one year's things are just like the last, only different people give you different things, and perhaps, after all, the very things you want are the ones that nobody thinks of and you have the mortification of seeing some one else get just what you had set your heart upon."

"I'm sure I always like my presents," said Eustace; "and Christmas is a holiday, that's one thing that makes it grand." For Eustace showed the usual school-boy aversion to school days.

"Yes, I suppose it's well enough for boys; they can go skating and slide down hill and do lots of things. I used to like Christmas, too, when I was little [Belle did not look very big now], but I'm sick of it; it's always just the same, and of the two I'd rather go to school and have fun with the girls."

Eustace could not at all understand her, but then he did not try very hard. When he first came to his uncle's, that he might attend school, he had puzzled a good deal over the airs and graces of his city cousin, but he had given her up as an unguessable conundrum, liking her perhaps all the more for her incomprehensibility. He was going to take her home with him for his winter vacation, and it was in discussing the plans for this expected pleasure that the above dialogue occurred.

Belle was an only child, whose parents had spared no pains to gratify every wish and to load her from her earliest infancy with everything that could conduce to her health, happiness and pleasure. Every Christmas eve her stockings had been filled to overflowing by Santa Claus, as for some years she devoutly believed; and since she had outgrown that myth, her plate at the breakfast table on Christmas morning was literally buried by piles of book, *bijouterie*, and nick-nacks of every description; she had had Christmas trees at home, and attended Christmas entertainments abroad; secular teachers and Sunday-school teachers had given her Christmas gifts, and every one had endeavored, since the time when she was old enough to lip the word, to make the Christmas festival as gay and happy as it could possibly be for the little girl. The consequence was, that Belle was tired of everything—*blase*, as the French express it—and even the prospect of spending Christmas in the country gave her no pleasure, except in the idea of taking a journey and seeing her aunt and cousins.

School closed that year several days before Christmas, and the very moment they were free, the children set off for Eustace's country home; Belle's father and mother seeing them safely on the cars, and repeatedly charging their daughter to enjoy herself and have a good time. It was great fun to travel with only her cousin as escort, and it made her feel quite like a grown-up young lady.

Just at nightfall they reached Ponkoke, where a large sleigh piled with furs and blankets awaited them. Among the furs nestled innumerable children, great and small, who all hugged their heretofore unknown cousin, wishing her "Merry Christmas" and giving her a warm welcome. They all chattered at once all the way home; the coming Christmas, of course, supplying an inexhaustible fund of conversation.

"I'm so glad Belle has come. She'll be able to tell me just how to finish mamma's toilet cover."

"O Belle, don't you tell Eustace, but we've each made some pretty thing for his room, and Christmas eve father'll take him to the village, and we'll all go in and fix it up just like fairy-land. You'll help, won't you?"

"I just want to show you my screen. It's to shade father's eyes from the light. I made it all myself, but it is not quite finished, Eustace was to bring the mountings from the city. You'll be able to tell me just how they ought to go, I'm sure."

"Isn't it nice to have Belle here? We can each tell her all our secrets and about

the presents we've made for each other, and we can put all our things in her room as fast as they are finished, and she won't let any one see them that should not, will you, dear?"

Such was some of the talk as it reached the visitor in confused fragments; and two things struck Belle, as she listened: first, that no one seemed to be speculating as to what Christmas was to bring him or her; and second, that all seemed to take it for granted that she was as much interested in giving as they were.

They were busy days, those that preceded the great Christmas birthday, and Belle found herself quite carried along by the general tide of delightful mystery, and even commenced some small ventures on her own account, which, as she was not a great adept at needle work, and had commenced altogether too late in the day, were not a great success.

Christmas eve came all too soon for those whose preparations were not in a state of completeness. One after another slipped into the closed parlor with honorably shut eyes, and deposited their small packages directed in large round characters; and Belle, being a sort of neutral ground, was very useful upon this occasion. The children had taken possession of papa's study, and when the two bright rooms were thrown open, the old-fashioned Christmas tree, lighted with wax candles and hung with strings of pop-corn, failed to attract attention till the graceful oak-bough, hung across the study window in imitation of the yew of the older world, had been admired by the parents, for whom it had been prepared. Suspended from its stout trunk were gifts from each one of the country minister's children, mostly the work of their own hands, the materials having been supplied from the few pennies called "pocket money" obtained by them. Yet surely no costly city Christmas gifts ever excited so much delight, not so much in the parents, though they gave full praise, as in the givers, each of whom seemed brimming over with Christmas joy.

It was the same way in the parlor around the Christmas tree where everybody had been remembered by everybody else. Such little gifts as they were—needle-books, pen-wipers, knitted wristlets, and crocheted scarfs—but loving consideration of the tastes and desires of those to whom they were given was apparent, and the joy of giving was even greater than that of receiving. There was a box of elegant and beautiful presents sent by Belle's parents to herself and her cousins, and the little girl really enjoyed much more highly the comparatively small gifts for the others than the elegant ones for herself. It seemed to put her on the level of the little givers, each of whom had remembered her.

Christmas day came, and after the morning service in the church and the moderate Christmas dinner to which the healthy country appetites imparted a special flavor, the great celebration of the day began. This consisted in the packing and distributing of six large baskets for certain poor families whose whole lives blessed the children of the parsonage. Every one had a share in the work, which was made possible and greatly helped by the different Christmas donations sent in to the minister by various members of the congregation.

We have not space to record the various visits paid by the little flock—to Jan, the crippled shoemaker, to old blind Betty and her sick granddaughter who took care of her, to Widow Brown and her four small children, and to all the rest. Nor can we tell of the thanks bestowed upon the young folks, the eyes that brightened at their coming, and the loving looks cast at the happy faces. How busy those children were, packing and unpacking, setting out tables, warming up messes of pie and pudding, and wrapping up feet and rheumatic limbs in comfortable flannels.

Belle shared with alacrity in all the pleasant work. Her eyes flashed, her cheeks glowed, and it was not at all with a *blase* expression that she answered Eustace's question as they walked homeward in the gathering twilight over the crisp snow,—

"Yes, indeed, I am glad that Christmas has come, and that I came here. I never had such a grand Christmas in all my life."

"Belle," said her uncle, to whom Eustace had repeated her words, "do you know why you have enjoyed this Christmas day so much? It is because you have had fellowship with Christ, the great Christmas Giver,

and have learned the secret of even his greatest happiness. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"—*Zion's Herald*.

Question Corner.—No. 25.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Who are the only three Bible characters whose names commence with F?
2. Who are the only four Bible personages whose names begin with V?
3. How many days for repentance were granted to a city doomed to destruction?
4. Who was translated?
5. What man's hair when cut weighed over four pounds?
6. What is the name of the only person whose name commences with Q?
7. What king and what patriarch planted trees?
8. What king and his queen appropriated the vineyard of a poor man?
9. Who was clothed in camel's hair?
10. Who put goat's hair on his arms with intent to deceive?

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS NO. 24.

1. Gen. 10: 8-11.
2. Gen. 10: 15-19.
3. Gen. 11: 10.
4. Gen. 11: 27.
5. Gen. 14: 13.
6. 2 Peter 2: 6, 7.

SCRIPTURAL ACROSTIC.

Initials, Issachar.
Finals, Naphtali.

1. Imrj.
2. Samuel.
3. Syria.
4. Ararat.
5. Cush.
6. Harp.
7. Arbana.
8. Roman.

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