

Claus about the little girl, too, there was nothing else for Lillie and Nannie to do about her, though they could talk and think of nothing else all the rest of the day.

All the evening when the children danced in the broad hall, and sang their carols, Lillie and Nannie were full of their plans for the little girl's visit, and when the time came to send their letters to Santa Claus, this is what they had written about her:

"Please, dear Santa Claus, don't give me quite as much as you always do, but save out of my presents one for the poor little girl that is coming to-morrow who never had any."

Then the notes were sent with great pomp and ceremony to the library door, while Aunt Annie played a lively march, and all the children got down on the floor and poked the notes under the door as far as they could; and pretty soon, while they were looking—will you believe me?—the notes slid away under the door and were gone, and Bob said he was sure he heard Santa Claus step on the floor. After that the children were in a great hurry to go to bed, so as to make sure to be up very early in the morning.

Long before mamma was ready, Bob, Nan, and Lillie were in her room, dressed for church, all talking together about the party, and what they had found in their stockings. Coming out of the house into the soft gray twilight of six o'clock, Lillie looked all around for her little girl, but all the way to church she was disappointed, so disappointed that it didn't seem quite such a beautiful Christmas as usual till she thought of something, and when every one knelt again, she whispered very softly, "Please, God, let me make a little girl happy to-day."

Out in the street, which was still very gray with a flurry of snow on the stones, just enough to make very cold the chapped toes sticking out of broken shoes, two sisters were walking together. One was a little mite of a girl, with a tangle of yellow curls under the old torn shawl pinned over her head. The other one was a good deal older. Both their faces were so thin, and blue with cold! and they had only torn, thin dresses and shawls, worn-out shoes, and no stockings, that cold, cold morning. The tallest one, whose name was Mattie, had an old basket on her arm. She was talking to her little sister in this way:

"Sure, supposin' we was kinder goin' along, just as we is now, and we came to an ash barril, like as we is now, and I looked in and there I sees a "Christis" present for us—me and you and father—and there was dresses n' sacks n' stockin's and a real hot dinner with a turkey in it, and medicine for father, n' lots of things! My! wouldn't that be jolly?"

"Yes," said little Sarah, "n' awful jolly. Look in the barrel, Mattie; p'rhaps there's something there."

"No, there aint. I know all about them barrils." But before they reached the barrel some one came running up behind Mattie, and said, "Little girl!" Mattie turned around and looked over Lillie—for it was she—from the blue bows on the little silk bonnet to the warm, thick shoes on her feet, and thought how nice it would be to have just such a bonnet, and dress, and shoes to wear. And this wonderfully-dressed little girl said,

"Don't you want to come home with me and have a nice dinner and see our Christmas-tree and the party, and have some presents if Santa Claus only brings them? Say, little girl, wont you come? My mamma told me I might ask you. She's the lady in the long cloak coming, and that's Nannie and Bob with her. Did you ever see a Christmas-tree?"

Little Sarah had to pull very hard on Mattie's dress before she could find her tongue to answer. "No, I aint never seen a Christis-tree, only in the butcher's, nor a party neither. Yes, I'll go." But just then she heard a little voice say, "Oh, Mattie!" and felt some little blue fingers holding very fast to her dress. "No, I wont go neither. Here's Sary; she's little, and she aint never seen nothin'; she'll go. I don't care—that is not so very much."

Lillie's mamma was listening to this, and she assured Mattie: "I think you would like to see the tree, if your little sister came too. Wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes'm, awfully!"

"Then bring her, and come with us. I will show you the house, so that you may know where to come this afternoon."

"We live down in F. street. Mother, she's dead, n' father's been sick most all winter. He used to work always, and he's real good, is father; he don't never say nothin' cross to us. I sells newspapers n' pins when I can, n' beg some, and gets cinders out of the ash barrils. But it's awful cold, and yes'm, most allus we's hungry."

The children's mamma found Mattie's story was all true when she sent John, the servant, with some breakfast and medicine to their father. Early in the afternoon the two little girls came back. Nurse washed and dressed them in clean whole dresses, and oh, such a nice dinner as they had in the nursery! When it grew dark the candles on the Christmas-tree were lighted, and all the boys and girls went up stairs into the library to see the wonderful tree, loaded on every branch and twig with such lovely things—just what every one wanted most, I am sure. When the presents came to be taken down, Lillie found among hers, instead of the locket and chain she had been hoping for, a letter from Santa Claus, written in such a funny hand, something like papa's, only a great deal straighter:

"Dear little Lillie, you will see I have done as you wished, and instead of your locket and chain have sent for Mattie some things that will do her a great deal of good this cold weather. May you spend a very merry, happy Christmas, in the wish of Santa Claus." Nannie's note was very much like this, and so was Norman's; and for Sarah and Mattie there were a warm hood, shawl and stockings, besides the new dresses they had on, and a doll and some candy for each. All the little girls and boys that came to the party were very kind to the children, and they played "Hunt the slipper," and "Some still come," with the nuts.

A little later, when the party was over Lillie's eyes were very heavy, and she kissed mamma good-night, she whispered, "I'm so glad they had such a good time and had such nice presents, though I didn't get my locket. It's such a nice kind of a time when you see somebody else having fun that never had any. And what do you suppose Bob did when he thought I wasn't looking? Why, he gave little Sarah all his candy, and Mattie that Chinese puzzle that I know he wanted ever so much. It's been just the nicest Christmas that ever was, and I guess Mattie and Sarah think so, too."

CHRISTMAS.

DEAR EDITH AND HERBERT:—The happy hours of Christmas-tide have come again, and I know your young hearts are full of joy and pleasant things in these merry holidays.

Those lives, dear children, are most perfectly and completely fashioned which, in the midst of pleasures, remember duty also.

The next clause in the Apostle's creed which your faith must accept, is, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost—born of the Virgin Mary," the great truth, the incarnation." "God was made flesh, and dwelt among us," which the Festival of the Nativity, for Christmas day, so sacredly commemorates. Did not your young minds go to Bethlehem in the service on that day, and almost see the Holy Babe in the manger?

I would have your simple faith take hold of this great central truth—that God took upon Himself our human form. Why? To save us from our sins.

So sublime and real a fact, that many have suffered death rather than deny it. The Church have thought fit to teach us this, for she follows the great feast by holding up to us three classes of martyrs. The proto-martyr, St. Stephen, martyr in word and deed. The beloved St. John, a martyr in word but not in deed. The Holy Innocents, martyrs in deed but not in word.

This will reach you before the octave of Christmas, the Festival of Circumcision. Ponder its truth, well, and how it became Christ to be obedient to the law.

Our Christmas festivities do not cease until Twelfth Night, the Festival of the Epiphany, or Manifestation, when the Infant Jesus was made known to the Gentiles also, by the miraculous

guiding of the Wise Men, by a star, which "went before until it came and stood over the place where the young child was."

You will recall they brought gifts. Let your young lives during this season also bring the incense of prayer, the fruit of good works, and the offering of a pure heart. Learn and use daily the Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany; also commit the 45th Hymn from the Hymnal:

"As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hail'd its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led by Thee."

Remember also the Festival of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25th). You will find this wonderful story of the Apostle of the Gentiles, in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

May God's blessing follow you, and the unctio that comes from the knowledge of the blessed Christ Child.

Affectionately,

AUNT MARGARET.

CAST A LINE FOR YOURSELF.

A young man stood listlessly watching some anglers on a bridge. He was poor and dejected. At last, approaching a basket filled with whole-some-looking fish, he sighed:

"If now I had these, I would be happy. I could sell them at a fair price, and buy me food and lodgings."

"I will give you just as many, and just as good fish," said the owner, who had chanced to overhear his words, "if you will do me a trifling favor."

"And what is that?" asked the other.

"Only to tend this line till I come back; I wish to go on a short errand."

The proposal was gladly accepted. The old man was gone so long that the young man began to get impatient. Meanwhile the fish snapped greedily at the baited hook, and the young man lost all his depression in the excitement of pulling them in; and when the owner returned he had caught a large number. Counting out from them as many as were in the basket, and presenting them to the young man, the old fisherman said:

"I fulfill my promise from the fish you have caught to teach you whenever you see others earning what you need, to waste no time in foolish wishing, but cast a line for yourself."

A CHEERFUL VIEW OF THINGS.—"How dismal you look!" said a bucket to his companion, as they were going to the well.

"Ah!" replied the other, "I was reflecting upon the uselessness of our being filled; for let us go away ever so full, we always come back empty."

"Dear me! How strange to look at it in that way," said the other bucket. "Now I enjoy the thought that, however empty we come, we always go away full. Only look at it in that light, and you'll be as cheerful as I am."

Children, always seek to make your sport lead to happiness. Never injure another in sport. Take a hint from your "Merry Christmas" of this week, which will be followed by your "Happy New Year" in the week following. Do some kind act that will make you happy throughout the year.

"Self praise doesn't go a great way," therefore the most unmistakable indication of true greatness is self-condemnation.

—A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

If you have talents, industry will strengthen them; if moderate abilities, industry will supply the deficiency.

—The scales of justice are for the weight of the transgressor.

—A moment of eternity will serve to solve the riddles of all time.