

said mamma, "when they refuse Jesus Christ for their Saviour. He is God's great Christmas Gift to us all, and we must not forget to say, 'Fank you, Farvor,' as Robin says, every day as well as Christmas Day."

Mamma's story was done; but what was that clicking sound? The front yard gate! And the next minute three pair of feet pattered down the stairway, and three young voices shouted, "Father has come!"

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Happy Days.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 23, 1899.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

A merry, merry Christmas to every boy and girl of the big HAPPY DAYS family! May the day be to each one a day of right blessed cheer, and may it be followed by many and many another even more bright and blessed!

Christmas is the first of all the children's days, because it is kept in memory of the birth of one perfect child who came from heaven to found a kingdom of child-hearts. The true child-heart is loving, faithful, and obedient, and it is the gift of the Child-King, the gentle Jesus, who reigns Lord of all in heaven and in earth.

Any one who can receive the gift may enter this kingdom, and what time can be better for one that is yet outside than is this lovely Christmas time, when the very air seems full of giving and receiving?

Come, dear children, come now and give yourselves heartily to the blessed Lord who gave himself so completely to you on the first Christmas Day, and who has been giving, giving every day since! If you have already entered his kingdom, give yourself to him now for fuller love and service, and let this Christmas be the time we shall learn how truly blessed it is to give.

A REAL CHRISTMAS SURPRISE.

BY ELIZABETH P. ALLAN.

"What is Buster whispering about, down behind the sofa?" asked mamma.

"Oh! it's a great secret, mamma," laughed Jamie; "Buster wants us all"—

"No, Jin," cried the little boy they called Buster, "you said you wouldn't tell."

"Sure enough, I did; but mamma don't count."

"You said you wouldn't tell anybody," persisted Buster.

"Take care, Jamie," said the mother; "a promise is a solemn thing, and especially a promise to a little one. If anybody 'offends,' by making such a one think less of truth, which is the pillar of God's throne, 'it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck'—you know the rest."

"Whew? Do you hear what mother says, Sue? We have got ourselves 'into it' by promising to agree to Buster's plan for Christmas."

"Buster and Santa Claus must settle that," said Sue carelessly. She evidently looked upon Buster's plan as a joke.

But the little boy was very much in earnest. He had gotten his brothers and Sue to agree, and now there was only one more thing to do, and for that, it was necessary that he should have the sitting-room to himself. Buster watched his chance.

One morning, a week before Christmas, the boys and Sue being off at school, papa at his office, and mamma up in the nursery bathing the baby, Buster found himself in possession of the room. He carefully shut the door, and going to the register, softly called "Santa Claus; old Santa Claus!"

There was no answer.

"I'm afraid registers are not so good as chimneys," said Buster to himself, feeling discouraged; but he called again, "Santa Claus; old Santa Claus!"

This time there was a rumbling sound somewhere, or Buster thought so, and with sparkling eyes, he called through the grating: "Santa Claus, all the children in this house think you give too many presents down some chimneys, and skip over the others; that isn't fair, Santa Claus, and if you haven't enough things in your pack, next Christmas Eve, just give all of us one thing; and give some to Johnny Banks' folks. They live round on Prettyman Street, and you can easily get down their chimney, 'cause they don't hardly have any fire. Will you, Santa Claus?"

But no answer came. Perhaps Santa Claus, if he was really listening at the chimney top, was too surprised to answer, for I must confess he was used to hearing boys call up the chimney for everything they could think of, but I doubt if ever before the old Christmas giver had heard a fellow say he had more than his share.

Christmas morning came on apace. At one breakfast table the children were silent from utter surprise; for instead of

heaped-up parcels, and overflowing plates, like other Christmas mornings, there was just one present for each! Just one; and not a very big one at that!

Buster was in such a state of excitement that he could hardly eat a bite of his buckwheat cake, and nothing would do but that the boys and Sue must go with him round to Prettyman Street to see how Johnny Banks' folks had fared.

For now the secret was out: Buster had gotten the family to agree in his asking Santa Claus to divide things up more, and here was certainly one-half of his answer in their small pile.

I wish you could have paid that visit to Prettyman Street with Buster. You would have seen Christmas cheer where it had never been before, and little eyes dancing with joy that were all too used to weeping. I doubt not you would have said with Jim and Charley and Sue, when they went back to their one Christmas present apiece, "Old Santa Claus must do this every year."

A MOTHER'S EXCUSE.

It comes again, the blessed day
Made glorious by the Saviour's birth,
When faintly in a manger dawned
The light of God which fills the earth.

Along a weary, wintry waste,
My heart a loving pilgrim wends
Her pious way, this holy time,
To greet you, oh, beloved friends!

Fondly I long to take my place
Beside your hearth, its joys to share—
To sun me in the summer smiles
Of the dear faces gathered there.

But baby eyes upraised to mine,
And baby fingers on my breast,
Steep all my soul in sweet content—
Charm even such longings into rest.

Yet, dear ones, let my name be breathed
Kindly around your Christmas tree,
And the still presence of a soul
Make welcome in the place of me.

No unadorned and humble guest
Comes that fond soul this blessed even,
She bears a jewel on her breast
The fairest of the gifts of heaven.

A rose that breathes of paradise
Just budded from the life divine,
A little, tender, smiling babe,
As yet more God's and heaven's than mine!

Born in the Saviour's hallowed month,
A blessed Christ-child may she be,
A little maiden of the Lord;
Room for her by the Christmas tree!

It is all very pleasant, sitting there, and imagining all sorts of nice things, but it is very selfish, to say the least; run and do something for somebody, and see how much happier you will feel.