

into the world to the Resurrection of the fallen, and the Life of the dead.

The Gospel is, an Incarnation. Christmas is not only one of its festivals: rightly understood, it includes them all. Christ born on purpose that He might die—Christ partaker of our very flesh and blood, that through death He might atone for sin and open heaven—this is Christmas, and this is the Gospel. At this season we give thanks for "the Redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, as one act and one message. We have no need now to break it up into its parts: we are to take it as a whole. The proper thought for this festival is, What would this world, what would this life, have been, but for Jesus Christ? Place yourself for one moment, in imagination, out of the light of Jesus Christ—imagine yourself, imagine your family, imagine this country, without the Saviour—imagine the Calendar no longer dated from Him, imagine the cross a name of mere ignominy, imagine these churches levelled with earth, imagine the Holy Communion abolished, imagine births and marriages no longer consecrated, imagine sickness and death no longer comforted, by thoughts and words of Christian hope—imagine infidelity triumphant, and a vague theory of resolution into elements or reabsorption into nothingness established on the ruins of Gospel fact and Gospel promise—then you will see what it ought to be to us to have a Revelation of Redemption in Jesus Christ—you will be able, at least for that, to give thanks, humble and hearty, to the Father of mercies—you will be competent to hail this Christmas festival as the very life of life, because it brought to us from heaven good tidings of great joy in the birth of a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

It is well to have one holy season of which joy shall be the prominent feature. The Gospel must not be robbed of this characteristic by all the forces which surround and counteract it.

"Good tidings of great joy," the Angel said, "which shall be to all the people." If by "people" we understand the Jewish people, still we do not limit and we do not narrow the joy promised. That Jewish people was the sample of all peoples—nay, it had in it the most adverse influences to Gospel joy that any people ever contained—it had in it the Caiaphases and Barabbases and the Judases, who set themselves most conspicuously against its joy—and yet "to all the people" is a part of the message, and no condition and exception is made in it.

It is so now. Joy to all peoples, and joy to the whole of each people—this is on the front of it. "Whosoever will," is the call—"him that cometh I will not cast out."

CHRISTMAS GIVING AND GETTING.

"I suppose you are anticipating a happy Christmas," said one, in lack of a topic of conversation, to the son of a friend while waiting in the parlor for his mother.

"Yes, I expect it will be a happy time, but I can't tell yet, for I don't know what I shall get."

"Well, the best gift is ours already, is it not? And, if we have nothing else, that's enough to make it a happy day."

The lad opened his eyes wide with a look of surprise and amusement, as if he had suddenly become the victim of a conundrum, which the entrance of his mother saved him the trouble of solving. How often the words of a child make the text for a sermon, or, indeed, a whole sermon, if only our hearts were open to the words of the unconscious preacher. Here was this little fellow, the child of Christian parents, the inmate of a Christian home, the pupil in a Sunday-school, believing that his having a happy Christmas-time would depend altogether upon what he might get. Entirely child-like and natural, we admit, but it forces one to consider whether, after all, there may not be some defect in training that allows young people to live, in the midst of all that the gift of Christ has brought to us, in such uncon-

sciousness of the true significance of the gift, of the true reason why there should be gladness on the Christmas-day.

Are we not, in our eagerness to gratify every childish want, in our longing to see them utterly satisfied and happy at least once a year, in danger of fostering a spirit wholly at variance with that of the loving Christ? Should we not be doing better service for the Master whom we love if, instead of making Christmas for our children so purely a matter of getting, we made it a matter of giving also? I do not mean the kind of giving practised by mothers, that while buying one toy for Johnny buys a duplicate for Johnny's cousin, to be presented as Johnny's gift, often without the giver's knowledge or desire. I do not mean the purchase for a child of whatever, according to the parent's mature judgment, it may be proper to send to some relative or friend, who will probably return a gift of equal value. I do not mean any giving that grows out of the descent upon childhood of the conventional necessity which older members of the family feel. There will always be these artificial demands resulting from our social relations; there will always exist the people to whom we must give for some reason other than that the heart prompts a token of love.

But let us spare childhood this artificial giving as much as possible, and, however hampered we may be ourselves, try to make the season one of a blessed education to them in the holiest lessons taught of him whose life and death was one great gift of love for us. Practically the task is not so hard a one as we suppose, for youth is tender of heart and generous of impulse. Its desire to make others happy needs not to be created but directed. Nothing is easier than for the instructors, and by these I mean not the teachers only, but the parents, and especially the mother, to induce a child to feel that the joy of his Christmas-tide depends less upon what he gets than upon what he gives; less upon the number of people who remember him with gifts than upon the number for whom he can show his love. Talk with him freely; take him into your confidence; tell him what you would like to do for others of the family, and why you choose as you do. If your own heart grows with gratitude that the dear Christ-child came to earth, do not be afraid to let your boys and girls know that you are grateful and glad. Tell them in natural and easy conversation what are the comforts, privileges and blessing that they could never have known had Christianity never been given to the world. Show yourself eager to give back something to One who has given so much to you, and then be quick to recognize when it dawns upon the young heart, as it surely will do, the wish to help, or to do something of themselves.

Be very patient with their troublesome little schemes; for know, O mother, that to have the Christ-spirit of human helpfulness or desire to bless born in the heart of your child, is like having the Holy Child born anew under your own roof-tree. Make room for him, and watch and cherish every budding impulse toward making any other heart glad.

Having brought the child to the desire to give, direct and educate the desire. Let him choose those to whom he would show his love. The boy he likes may be the child of poverty, quite out of the range of your future hopes for your son. No matter. The book, the jack-knife, the toy your son may bestow, because he likes the other lad, may be, to giver and recipient both, better than something that seemed to you more "suitable and proper."

Let the heart speak everywhere that it can without wrong, and then, when it has chosen from its love the little gifts for those to whom it longs to give, try to turn the heart's new stream of kindness toward those for whom the dear Christ cares. And this as a little token of gratitude and love to Christ Himself, as something done to show his own gladness that Christmas ever dawned upon his life.

Just here let the personal effort and even sacrifice

be made. Lead on to the trying to do something personal for the suffering, the needy and the distressed. Discourage no impulse, but encourage the saving of money, the denying one's self, the actual working in order to be able to help somebody who would have no happy Christmas but for him. Be assured, if for weeks, or even months, before the happy morning dawns, your boys and girls are busy-ing their heads and hearts and hands with the problem of how many they can make happy on that day, you have made certain their abundant delight. To grow up with the blessed feeling that Christmas is for all the boys and girls, as well as for one's self; that the dear Christ's coming meant the uplifting and blessing of all; that "the best love man can offer to the God of love, be sure, is kindness to his little ones and bounty to his poor;" to know that this love they can show by personal self-denial and work is certainly a Christmas gift worthy of bestowal on any child. Mothers and fathers and teachers have it in their power to endow their little ones with this gift. It is the real Christ-life begun in the soul. It is the Babe of Bethlehem cradled in the heart of a child.—*Mary Lowe Dickinson.*

A CHRISTLESS CHRISTMAS.

The manger and the grave are both empty, and many of the festivities of Christmas are without pertinence, while some better become the manger before Christ found it, and since He left it, than any intelligent reverence for his mission or devotion to that sacrifice which at the manger he began to make. This world of humanity is by nature piratical. It does not care from where or whom it steals. Its nature is to appropriate to itself whatever it chooses, without any kind of recognition of ownership or equivalent for values. Nor is it in anywise particular whether these appropriations are from God or man. Christmas was in the beginning purely the memorial of the manifestation of the divine-human, of the launching upon the world, through the Incarnation of the Divine Life-boat, to rescue its sinking hopes. Yet its dawn is now hailed without any reference to the glorious person around whose Advent it is but the faintest halo. Its sanctities are seized without gratitude other than an occasion of the gratification of the senses, so that to multitudes it has been turned into the worst of dissipations.

Christmas and drunkenness! how does this sound? And it looks worse than it sounds. Christmas without prayer, without gratitude—Christmas without Christ—what a bathos! Think of that piracy that steals the swaddling bands of his infancy, but leaves the living Saviour all unhonoured in the manger, on the cross, or in his intercessions at the right hand of God. Man is not only wicked, but absurd; and as wicked, absurd, and ridiculous, is ever appropriating to himself husks and leaving the kernels, for which husks were created, despised and neglected. As it now stands, Christmas is for a holiday, not for joy in a Redeemer—a holiday over which a jubilant semi-Christianity rejoices, instead of gratitude for deliverance, instead of penitence for sin, whose course is ever to be more sinful, even unto death. We have mirth unrestrained over the cradle, but no tears and no joy over the cross.

The exchange of presents, by which homes and friends are gladdened, and the merry laugh of childhood sent through the home circle, and the wrinkles of age changed into wavelets of smiles, was introduced into the world by the great Advent gift, sanctified also, and perpetuated in the presence of a Redeemer, and can no more be separated from his life than color from sunshine. And yet how much of the millions of money spent in connection with this event does Christ get? Who gives Christ costly treasures when memory brings to our homes the event of his birth? Who introduces Christmas as a day of thanksgiving, by first reverently acknowledging Christ's most costly gift?

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