

"Now, children, wait. Which of you can tell me what child it was that came into the world on the first Christmas morning?"

They had not been quite ready to answer a question that came so suddenly, and before any of them could speak, a clear, sweet little voice came right out of the middle of the tree:

"I know. And the shepherds found Him in a manger, and His mother was with Him. He sent down after my mother last summer."

"Bijah!" exclaimed grandfather, but grandmother was already pushing aside the boughs, and now they all could see him. Only his curly head and his little shoulders showed above the grain bag, and Uncle Hiram shouted:

"Father Vrooman, he is in your stocking! Who could have put him there?"

"I think I know," said grandfather in a very low, husky kind of voice; but all the Simpsons and Hopkinses and Hardys broke loose at that very moment, and it took them till breakfast-time to compare with each other the things they found in their stockings, and all the other wonderful fruits of that splendid Christmas tree.

Bijah was lifted out of the bag, and he got his stocking on, after it was empty. For some reason he couldn't guess why all the grown-up people kissed him, and grandfather made him sit next to him at breakfast.

That was a great breakfast, and it took ever so long to eat it, but it was hardly over before grandmother followed grandfather into the hall, and they heard her say:

"Now, husband, what are you wrapping up so for, just to go to the barn?"

"Barn! Why, my dear, I'm going to town. I told Pat to have the team ready."

"To town? Why, husband—"

"Mother, there'll be stores open to-day. I can buy cords of toys and candy and things. When I get to the Orphan Asylum, to tell 'em what has become of Bijah, and why he won't come back there again, I'm going to have enough to go around among the rest of 'em—I am, if it takes the price of a cow."

"Give 'em something for me."

Uncle Hiram heard it, and he shouted, "And for me," and Uncle John followed, and all the rest, till the children caught it up, and there was a contribu-

tion made by every stocking which had hung on that Christmas tree. They all gave just as fast as they understood what it was for, and the last one to fully understand was Bijah.

"You ain't going to take me?"

His lips quivered a little.

"No, Bijah, not unless you want to go. Wouldn't you rather stay here?"

"Course I would."

That was not all, for both his hands were out, holding up the store of things which had come to him that morning, and he added, "Take 'em."

Something was the matter again with Grandfather Vrooman's beard, but he told Bijah he would get plenty of other things in town.

"Keep 'em, Bijah. Good-by, all of you. I'll be back in time for dinner. Children, you and Bush must be kind to Bijah. He came to us on Christmas morning, and he has come to stay."

Bush and the children did their part, and so did all the rest, and so did Bijah, and so it was a perfect Christmas.

#### A Christmas Message.

It was Christmas eve.

The streets were full of people all rushing homeward with packages in their hands; some were carrying turkeys tied up in paper parcels, their fierce feet sticking out like weapons of defense. One man had a little rocking-horse, and another a drum, while a woman toiled along with a go-cart big enough for her crippled boy, and two little girls carried a high-chair between them. They were going to have it at the breakfast table in the morning for their beautiful baby.

One whole family, mother, father and children, were hurrying up the avenue with their arms loaded full. They were all a little anxious.

"Grandpa will be so lonesome," the children said.

"I expected to be at home an hour sooner," the mother said. "I know Christmas eve must be a lonely time for father. I'm sure it used to be for me after poor Sam was gone."

"Turkey to-morrow," chimed in the brave boy of six, who was almost lost in a small forest of celery he was carrying.

"An' plum puddin' an'—an' cranberry sauce," echoed his little sister.

"I've got grandpa's present," said

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