

take part, and in which music, recitations, stories and charades abound, drive away dulness and whet the ingenuity. Above all, in the leisure of country homes there is an element unknown in the city, where the excitements are so largely destructive of leisure and seclusion. Now it is that the family becomes an elastic and liberal school. Every evening the household group gathers about the fire, and, while little hands are busy with netting, knitting or drawing, some one reads aloud the story, the drama, or the biography, the travels or natural history.

IN EVERY HOUSE

there should be the indispensable concomitants of an encyclopædia, an atlas, a dictionary and a geography. At every step the hearers should see that every place, every personage, every city should be searched out, and thus poetry, novels and fanciful narratives should open the way to solid instruction. The habit of drawing real enjoyment from books will give to life more real satisfaction than honours or wealth, and a hundred times more than gay but effervescent fashion. The snow months should be the University of the year.

But let no one suppose that winter is without its natural history! A friend of ours with a kindly heart towards all living things, observing that many birds tarried through the winter, began to throw out food daily, adapted to their various habits of feeding. It was not long before it was known in air and forest, and birds came flocking by the hundred to the daily provisions—robins, sparrows, woodpeckers, bluejays, bluebirds, black-birds, and various others swarmed under his window; seeds, Indian meal, rice, and fragments of waste meat, finely chopped, saved many a bird-life, which repaid in summer by consuming the insect pests of orchard and garden. This daily banquet of the birds formed a charming episode of every day. How large a population of birds remain with us all winter no one can imagine until he frequents sunny nooks of the forests, and warm and sheltered places or hill-sides.

Let no one ever speak of the dull and cheerless winter! It is the holiday of the year! The sleigh-ride, the snowshoe, the skating, the tobogganing, the games upon the ice, the white battles of snow-balls, the gay assemblies, the radiant home and household of children, fill the days with excitement and the nights with tranquil joy.

THE BOY WHO DID HIS BEST.

HE is doing his best, that boy of sixteen, stretched out before a bright fire in an old tanning-shed. Reclining upon an old sheep-skin, with book in hand, he is acquiring knowledge as truly as any student at his desk in some favoured institution, with all the conveniences and faculties for learning.

He is doing his best too—this same boy, Claude—as he helps his master prepare the sheep and lambs' skins for dyeing, so that they can be made into leather. He is doing his best by obedience and respectful conduct to his master, in endeavours to do his work well, although he often makes mistakes, as his work is not so well suited to his tastes as the study of Greek and Latin.

"See there, young rascal!" calls out Gaspard Beaurais, the tanner. "See how you're mixing up the wools!" For Claude's wits were "wool-gathering," sure enough; but he was not sorting the wool aright.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the apprentice; "but I will fix them all right." And he quickly set to work to repair his mistake.

"He'll never make a tanner," said Gaspard to

his wife, "and much I fear he'll never be able to earn his bread."

"Sure enough," replied his wife. "And yet he's good and obedient, and never gives back a word to all your scolding."

And in after years, when the aged couple received handsome presents from the distinguished man who had been their apprentice, they thought of these words.

One evening there came a stormy, boisterous wind, and the little stream in which the tanner was wont to wash the wool upon the skins was swollen to a torrent. To attempt to cross it by the ford at such a time would render one liable to be carried down the stream and be dashed to pieces on the rocks.

"We must get all the skins under the cover," said Gaspard to his apprentice. "A storm is at hand."

The task was finished, and the tanner was about to return to his cot and Claude to his shed, when the boy exclaimed:

"Surely I heard a cry. Some one is trying to cross the ford!" And in an instant he darted toward the river, followed by his master carrying the lantern. Some villagers were already there; and a strong rope was tied around the waist of the brave boy, who was about to plunge into the stream. For a man upon horseback was seen coming down the river, both rider and horse exhausted. Claude succeeded in grasping the rein; and the strong hands of his master that held the rope, drew him to the shore and all was saved.

Soon after, the stranger sat by the tanner's cheerful fire, having quite won the hearts of the good man and his wife by his kind and courteous manners.

"What can I do for your brave son?" he asked.

"He's none of ours, and not much credit will be to any one, we fear. He wastes too much time over useless books," was the bluff reply of the honest tanner, who could not see what possible use Claude's studies would be to him.

"May I see the books?" asked the stranger.

Claude being called, brought the books of Greek and Latin classics, and stood with downcast face, expecting to be rebuked. But, instead, he received words of commendation from the gentleman, who, after some talk and questions, was astonished at the knowledge the boy had acquired.

A few months later, instead of the old tanning-shed for a study, Claude might be seen with his books in a handsome mansion at Paris, the house of M. de Vallais, whose life he had saved, and who had become his friend and benefactor. The boy felt that he had only done his duty, and that he was receiving much in return; and he determined to make every effort to meet the expectations of his patron.

He succeeded. Claude Capperonier, the boy who did his best, became the most distinguished Greek and Latin scholar of his time. At the age of twenty-five, he filled the chair of Greek professor in the Royal College of Paris. More than this, he became a man who feared God, and was much beloved for his goodness and amiable qualities.

He never forgot his former master and wife. Their old age was cheered by many tokens of remembrance in the form of substantial gifts from the man who, when a boy, studied so diligently by the fire of their old shed, but who would "never make a tanner."—*Well-Spring.*

FOUR-YEAR-OLD Belle had been watching Tom, the cat, squeeze through a very small hole under the house. "O mamma," she said, "you ought to have seen Tom! He just mashed and went under!"

A Song of Kriss Kringle.

HARK the music of Kriss Kringle,
Hear the sleigh-bells' merry jingle!
From the tall tower, claugle-clangle,
List the joyous peal!
Up and down, with fearless clatter,
Little feet go patter, patter,
Tripping, toe and heel.

Set the baby's cradle rocking,
Hang the baby's tiny stocking;
To forget her would be shocking
On this happy night.
'Tis a Babe who brings us pleasure,
Fills the weary world with treasure
In the Christmas light.

For the poorest, food and fire,
Loaf and cup and heart's desire,
While the thankful thoughts aspire
To the holy Child,
Who, with rosy hands o'erflowing,
Gift and grace on all bestowing,
On the world hath smiled.

What though wild the winter weather,
Where the fluffy snow-flakes feather,
By the shining hearth together,
Here we meet at home.
Oh, so happy! Father, mother,
Litter sister, little brother,
None would wish to roam.

When the little ones are sleeping,
Not a single bright eye peeping,
Only blessed angels keeping
Watch above their beds,
Then the angel-whispers mingle
With the music of Kriss Kringle,
Wafted o'er their heads.

For he comes to high and lowly,
Makes the children happy wholly,
Laughing silently and drolly
In the dead of night.
Oh, the fun when they shall waken,
Shouting till the roof is shaken
In the morning light!

Who will dread a frosty tingle
In the air that brings Kriss Kringle,
While the bells in chorus mingle
Peals of thrilling cheer,
And from every silvery steeple
Comes the cry to all good people,
"Christ, the Lord, is here!"

HELPING OTHERS.

MR. MARKHAN was telling his boys, as they walked home from the village a few days before Christmas, that this year he wanted them to try and do something for others, instead of thinking about what they should get themselves. So that evening the boys and their sisters called a council to see what could be done.

Charlie had two sleds, the "Gen. Boreas" and "The Reindeer" (a recent present from Uncle Charles); and Harry was the possessor of two pairs of skates, while Carrie and Jennie had dolls and playthings without number.

It was finally decided that the "Gen. Boreas" should go to Ned Slicer, and one of the pairs of skates to Tom Slawson—two boys whose parents were too poor to buy such things for them. Carrie and Jennie made a liberal consignment of their dolls and trinkets among their poorer playmates; and on Christmas Eve, when the four little people started out to play Santa Claus, I think they were happier than they would have been had they really seen the fabulous old gentleman, with his sleigh and reindeer, halt before their own door.

The Bible says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." These boys found it true in their own cases; and I am quite sure that, if my little people would try the experiment, they too would find it so.—*Open Eyes.*