



—Jamaica 'Times.'

(By Margaret Deland.)

At the break of Christmas Day,  
Through the frosty starlight ringing,  
Faint and sweet and far away  
Comes the sound of children, singing,  
Chanting, singing,  
'Cease to mourn,  
For Christ is born,  
Peace and joy to all men bringing!'

Careless that the chill winds blow,  
Growing stronger, sweeter, clearer,  
Noiseless foot-falls in the snow  
Bring the happy voices nearer.  
Hear them singing,  
'Winter's drear,  
But Christ is here,  
Mirth and gladness with Him bringing!'

'Merry Christmas!' hear them say,  
As the East is growing lighter:  
'May the joy of Christmas Day  
Make your whole year gladder, brighter!'  
Join their singing,  
'To each home  
Our Christ has come,  
All Love's treasures with him bringing!'

## 'Twins' and 'Twins.'

(Mrs. W. S. Farley, in the 'Observer,' New York.)

One couldn't see much from the small window near which the twin boys, Ralph and Chester Warren, were sitting as the short winter's day was closing. There was one thing, however, that they saw altogether too much of—the 'elevated' train. They often wished that they would never see it again. They wished, too, that they would never hear it again—never. But 'wishes' were very common things with the twins. I think they 'wished' every day of their lives; it was a sort of pastime with them, shut in, as they were, most of the time while their mother was away at work. But it seemed as if their wishes never came true.

This day, on which I introduce them to you, Christmas was near at hand. 'Christmas was in the air,' as some one said. The wishes of the twins flew about like birds in summer time.

'I wish,' said Ralph, 'that Santa Claus could find his way up here.'

'So do I,' chimed in Chester, 'I wish he'd bring us something real nice—something to play with or a book full of pictures, or a game. What would you like best?'

'Oh! oh! I hardly know what I'd like best, 'cause I guess I'd like most anything Santa Claus would bring. But, I think, maybe if I could really choose just what I've longed for most it would be a big book full of stories and pictures.' Poor little Ralph was a cripple and, as he had to spend most of his days sitting still, it was no wonder that his choice was a book.

'I'd like a livery stable,' cried out Chester; 'oh, wouldn't it be fun if I could have one like Tim Brown's, with some cunning little horses and a man to take care of them. I wish we could have a Christmas tree, too—a real tree, with bags of candy and oranges on it—don't you?'

'Guess I do.'

'And I wish Santa Claus would come and bring a new dress and hang it on the tree for mother. I guess she'd laugh if she had a real new one.'

'I never heard mother laugh, did you?' a sober look coming over the small face.

'No, I never heard her really laugh, but I'd like to.' Thus the boys talked until the small clock on the mantel pointed to five.

Then came the principal event of the day—for them—the 'getting of supper.' They were only eight years old, but they knew how to do many useful things, among these being the 'getting of supper,' which was not an elaborate affair, but varied according to the state of their larder. They always had supper

ready for mother's home-coming whenever she was out at day's work.

The material for supper that night was as follows: Part of a loaf of stale bread, one egg, one small onion, three cold boiled potatoes, a small piece of cold meat and a coffee cup of milk. There was, also, a very small quantity of tea in the canister, a little butter and 'drippings' in a cup, and some salt. This was really all. What kind of a supper could you have evolved from this slim material? It would not have been anything particularly appetizing, would it? But I must tell you what these two small boys got for supper, which will prove to you that—at least in some things—they were well trained.

Ralph, the little cripple, partly supporting himself by leaning against the table, chopped fine the cold meat, the potatoes and the one onion. These he seasoned with a little butter and salt and put on the stove with a cupful of hot water to simmer down and then brown a little. It looked good, and it smelled good, and when it was ready it tasted good.

Chester's share of the material was the egg, the milk and the stale bread. He sliced the latter, as his mother had taught him, beat up the former, and heated the milk. Then he dipped the bread in the milk and afterward in the beaten egg, and fried it. His mother had a long, low pan, which she called her 'dripping-pan.' This Chester put on the stove with a little of the drippings to heat, after which he laid the slices in carefully to fry. When they were a nice brown on one side he turned them to brown on the other, the result being some nice egg toast, really worthy of a place on a better table.

When Mrs. Warren returned, weary and worn from her hard day's work, her face brightened at the greeting she received. Her old cushioned rocking chair, with its two soft pillows, had been drawn close to the table by the boys, and they seated her in it, sitting down themselves on some old straight-backed chairs on each side of her. There was no table cloth on the table—they were too poor to own one—but the small-figured oil cloth, that answered the purpose, had been washed as clean as hands could make it. The nice brown hash, egg toast and the hot tea tasted good to the hungry people, and they were thankful. The trio bent their heads. Mrs. Warren said:

'For Thy many mercies, dear Lord, make us truly thankful,' and the boys said 'Amen.'

'I wished for you boys to-day,' Mrs. Warren remarked soon after the meal was in progress.

'You have been wishing, too!' exclaimed

Ralph; 'what made you wish for us?'

'To see what I saw,' was her answer. 'They're getting ready for Christmas over at Mrs. Fowler's, where I've been.'

'How, mother? What are they doing?' asked Chester, eagerly.

'Oh,' was her reply, 'it would be easier to tell what they're not doing. They're baking mince pies and fruit cake and jumbles and snow cakes, and they're cracking nuts and making candy and lots of other things.'

'What are they doing all those things for?' questioned Ralph, with longing in his voice. 'Are they getting ready for Christmas? Is Santa Claus coming there? Are there any boys at Mrs. Fowler's?'

'What a lot of questions!' his mother said, smiling into the eager face, 'but I'll answer them all. Yes, that's what they're doing—getting ready for Christmas. Santa Claus is coming there. Yes, there are boys there, two of them, twins like you, but older. Now, I've said yes to all your questions, and I've some to ask you. What have you boys been doing all day? And how has my little Ralph felt?' looking earnestly into the pale face of the crippled child.

'I've felt pretty well, mother,' answered the latter. 'We cut some of your carpet rags, and we had a good time wishing—Chester and I.'

'Ralph and I,' put in Chester, 'have been wishing for Santa Claus.'

'Don't you think, mother?' longingly, 'that maybe he'll come here this year?'—this from Ralph.

She smoothed his hair, which was curly and of a beautiful golden brown, looking at him wistfully.

'I wish he would,' she said, 'and I wish, too, that he'd give you and Chester what you want most, but—' She hesitated, not wanting to blast their faint hopes in regard to even the possibility of Santa Claus coming, and yet fearing that—as usual—he would pass them by. Fortunately the boys did not notice that her sentence was unfinished, being much interested in wondering what would come of their wishes.

'I wished for a big book full of pictures and stories,' said Ralph, 'so that when I get real tired with the pain in my legs I could read and maybe forget that they hurt so.'

'And I wished,' observed Chester, 'for a cute little livery stable, mother, like Tim Brown's—you know—with horses and a coach and driver and all. And we both wished for a beautiful new dress for you, mother.'

'So we did,' said Ralph, a glow coming into his face with the delightful thought of