

CHURCH and HOME

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Christmas.

Christmas is the children's festival. Its memories cluster around a manger cradle bed and the Holy Child. It is the festival of the children because they gather many of them from the school to the dear old home. The Yule log blazes up the chimney, the holly berries and evergreens cover the walls, there is good cheer and gladness. Father forgets his cares, mother her anxieties, and they wait to welcome their rosy-cheeked children under the Christmas tree. In far off years these dancing, merry children will remember the Christmas-tide. When in life's battle temptation assails, and courage flags, and hope grows dim, this scene of home at Christmas time will rise in the weary heart, and all its sacred memories will come with strength and with comfort. No barrier is so strong against all evil as is the bright memory of a pure and happy home. The family circle, father, mother, sister—this is the golden band of life. The man who has such memories is rich beyond the dreams of avarice; he has motives to nobleness which impel him to act worthily; he has pride of birth kings might envy, which saves him from every thought which would dim the beauty of the pictures which are enshrined in his heart of hearts. Let,

then, father and mother abound in the wealth of affection. Their image as it is now, the mother as she meets her boy at the gate; father as he takes his tender, sunny girl on his knee—these are pictures which, taken by instantaneous and mystic photography, shall remain upon the children's hearts indelibly. Nor ought the vacant chair to mar the general joy. Is the absent lad not rising in the esteem of his employer in far distant city? Is the girl who is not here with her young husband gathering around her bright and affectionate hearts who shall rise up and call her blessed? Are these letters not pleasant reading from absent loved ones? Do these Christmas gifts not have a double blessing—gifts which come from son or daughter to aged parents to cheer them at this Christmas-tide? Not even where the chair is vacant because a dear one has gone never to return, should grief be allowed on such a day to dim the joy. For have they not reached home and await to welcome their loved ones? The Star of Bethlehem is bright with hope, resplendent with the light of heaven. But there are those who have no home; sad and weary they tread the horrid solitudes of crowded cities; they see through windows Christmas cheer, or as they pass an opened door they hear the laughter of children, the