

HOUSEHOLD.

Changes.

(Valentine March, in the Presbyterian Banner.)

Years ago we hung the stockings
By the open fireplace old,
And the treasures found within them
Were as precious, then, as gold.

There were seven little stockings—
Seven hanging in a row;
Then the longest one was Martha's,
And a tiny one for Joe.

I can see them as they hung there;
(I had knit them, every one,
When the winter shadows darkened,
And the day's toil all was done.)

I can see them by the fireplace,
With their shadows on the wall,
As the Christmases long vanished,
Come to-night, at mem'ry's call.

Ah! how swift the years have travelled,
Led by that old trickster—Time,
And I see the Christmas stockings,
Like a sweet old pantomime.

Yet, I do not grieve me sadly,
Grieve not for the years long flown,
For to-night, the dear God willing,
We will welcome back our own.

Yes, to-night they will be with us,
And their wee ones, not a few,
But instead of seven stockings,
We will hang up twenty-two.

Mamma's Christmas Gift.

'Mamma,' said Billy, 'what do you want for Christmas?'

'Dear me,' said Billy's mamma, 'I don't know of a single thing that I want.'

'But you must say you want things,' said Billy. 'You must—it's a sort of game. It doesn't matter whether you really want the things or not.'

'Oh, I didn't understand,' said mamma, entering into the game. 'Well, then, let me see. I should like a diamond pin.'

'And what else?' said Billy. 'You must want more.'

'I want a long sealskin ulster.'

'Say something else—say lots of things.'

'I want a new carriage and a lace collar and some curtains for baby's room.'

'Mamma,' said Billy, coming close to her side and speaking earnestly, 'don't you want a card like that one I painted this morning?'

'Oh, dear yes,' said mamma, quickly, 'I should love to have a beautiful card like those you paint.'

Billy went to the window and looked out at the snow, and the sparrows hopping on the walk that ran down to the street.

After a minute or two, he came to mamma's side again. 'Mamma,' he said very solemnly, 'I won't say which, 'cause I don't want to spoil your surprise; but one of those things you told me you want you're surely to get for Christmas.'

Mamma leaned over and kissed his bright little face, and said, softly: 'I do wonder which it will be.'—St. Nicholas.

Don't Hurt the Little One's Heart.

Several Decembers since a little boy in a Boston kindergarten—a child who was accompanied by his nurse every morning—toiled long and patiently on a Christmas present for his mother. After the holiday had passed the kindergarten asked the children what the recipients had said about the gifts prepared with so much care. It was Robbie's turn to answer. The child's lips trembled as he whispered in shame and sorrow, 'Mamma didn't want my stamp box, she said I might keep it myself.'

A darling eight-year-old girl asked her father for money with which to buy Christmas gifts. She was told that she might have money for materials, but that it was better

for her to make the presents than to buy them outright. 'But, papa,' said the child, 'I don't know what to make myself, and mamma won't help me, she says she can't stop.'

There are memories in many of our own hearts of Christmas saddened and almost lost, because parents failed to see the necessity of troubling to make the blessed day a season of joy. Listen to the words of the Great Teacher: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.'—School Journal.

A Wise Plan.

Already preparations are beginning for baby's Christmas. A flood of toys will be thought out and provided for the child that is likely to inundate the nursery and make all semblances of order impossible. These gifts become so numerous that satiated little owners turn from one to another without gaining any thorough enjoyment, or their fancy lands on one to the exclusion of the others. Certain it is that the toys are no longer attractive after the first novelty wears off, and many of them become more or less broken or marred, and the little ones become discontented and long for new pleasures to conquer. Now the wise mother has a little scheme which she does not reveal to the child, and which averts this undesirable Yule-tide reaction. She selects from among the mass of toys a number which are to be laid aside for some future time. The upper shelf of some closet or a large box in the attic serves as a store-house for some of these treasures. There they keep fresh and are a hidden treasure that is sure a little later to provide a delightful revelation. When the playthings in the nursery have become an old story, they, in turn, are relegated to the attic and are replaced in the playroom by the fresh toys, which have been sent down, and which are hailed with delight by the little ones, who have forgotten them.

It is a good plan. It keeps the nursery from being overcrowded with toys, and, best of all, it varies the monotony.—Selected.

Christmas Truths.

'Tis not the gifts so much as 'tis the giving
That makes for Christmas mirth,
'Tis not the dying, rather 'tis the living
Which is the test of worth.

Not by the deed so much as by the doing,
Doth God the Judge decide.
Not in the wealth, but in the slow accruing,
Exists the keenest pride.

'Tis not the word itself, but how it's spoken,
That soothes or wounds the heart—
For censure still may seem but friendly token,
While praise may leave a smart.

—Edwin L. Sabin.

What is the thought of Christmas? Giving.
What is the heart of Christmas? Love.

Before and After Christmas.

'Aren't you sorry Christmas is over, Elsie?' somebody asked a little girl of quick fancy and quaint speech, her arms full of toys as she stumbled sleepily upstairs on her way to bed. The drooping figure became alert for an instant, the blue eyes flashed widely open, and she answered joyously:

'But it isn't, Auntie May! Just one of the nicest things about Christmas is its being fringed out 'so at both ends.'

Only after the excitements of the festal day are over are some of the best joys it brings thoroughly appreciated. It is not until mother reluctantly pierces with a first pin the silken surface of the cushion her youngest has made for her that she can stop to examine the painstaking tiny stitches, to note where an error has been made and patiently rectified, to picture with misting eyes how Nelly, the restless and romping, must have sat soberly bowed over the pretty trifle, faithfully tugging the needle in and out, eyes downcast and fluffy curls falling forward, sturdily resisting the temptation to run away and play.

It is only when father ventures, gingerly at first, to use his new pen-wiper—only after the

inner flaps are irredeemably inky and it sinks from dignity of an ornament to the serviceable familiarity of an implement—that he realizes how exactly Marion has made him what he wanted. And how, until Jack has worn his new tie and Amy her new furs, and both have discovered that others besides themselves consider the effect to be all that it ought to be, can they appreciate to the full the elegance of those new adornments?

Day by day, too, the new picture in the parlor grows into the affection of the family. Mother and the girls, who come to dust, remain, duster in hand, to gaze; its glimpse of wide woodland gradually becomes familiar and dear as their own garden. To lose it would be as if one of the windows was closed in with a blank brick wall.

Every one knows that Christmas comes long before December 25th, every one, that is, who has planned and toiled and looked forward in the true Christmas spirit. Moreover, if this loveliest of all seasons is slow in coming it is still slower in going. It vanishes so reluctantly, so imperceptibly that we scarcely know when it is gone. In the happiest households Christmas is never ended; for there is always enough of its bright and generous charm, its peace, good-will and unselfishness left over from one year to last until the next.—Selected.

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