

## CHRISTMAS LOVE.

By AUNT MAY.



The love of Christ constraineth us.

IT was Christmas Eve, and Harry Vane walked, or rather limped, through the village. A group of boys lay in his way, and at a glance he saw that they were teasing Jim Jones, a bad boy, 'tis true, but one who had never had any one to teach him better. His home was with old Silas Bla; though how it was so I can tell no more than you. Still, I think that Silas found him useful in lighting his fire, and doing little things in the house; for Silas had no wife, so you may fancy the life they led in the dirty cottage they called home, and to which Silas staggered as tipsy as he could well be, every night in the whole year.

Well, it was Christmas Eve, and because of that, Jim thought that he should like to earn a penny: all the other boys had oranges, whereas he had none. So as the woman in the cottage hard by had promised him one, if he would but sweep the snow well away from her doorway, he was, poor boy, trying to do his best in return for the coming Christmas joy. But the other boys were hindering him, and now had actually knocked him down in the snow, and were keeping him there too, as Harry Vane came up, and stood with his crutch firmly planted, so as not to share Jim's fate. He feared the boys, but he was resolved to take Jim's part, so he said mildly, in his usual timid way, "Leave him alone." But Jim was in a great passion, and so cared neither for friend nor foe. Harry was weaker than himself, and he struck blindly at him and his crutch as well, shouting out at the same time cruel words which went straight to Harry's tender heart. "Ah, well, 'tis a queer world!" poor Harry sighed, as he limped away, the cry of "Hoppy" echoing after him down the lane.

But that night there was a cry of "Fire! Fire!" and looking out through his window, Harry saw that it was Silas Blake's cottage from which the flames came, and there in the flickering, uncertain light, he saw, too, poor Jim shivering in the cold; for he had had but scant time to wrap clothes about him, ere he had been dragged from the burning pile. No one thought of the boy as he stood—and he was burnt a little, too—no one, I mean, but Harry Vane, and he, weakly cripple

though he was, remembering as he did Jim's cruel words and blows, dressed himself in all haste and went out. It was Christmas time! Somewhere the glad bells were pealing; somewhere waiting hearts were welcoming Jesus anew; and, full of the sweet tenderness of the season, Harry made his way to Jim's side. "Jim, come home to our house," and he touched the shivering boy on the arm.

Jim started, and turned first red and then pale. But just now Jim stood to Harry in the stead of the dear Saviour, who when on earth had had no place to lay His head, so he would take no refusal. He would act kindly, lovingly, thinking of the dear Lord who takes all acts of love as done to Himself. So he drew Jim back to his own home, and coaxed his mother into asking him to spend Christmas Day there, as his own dear guest. And so they had a merry time, and after that the poor orphan was never so lonely again, although he went back to old Silas, who had another house, and lighted his fires and waited upon him as before. Harry was his friend, and Jesus was with them both.

Dear children, can you not give a Christmas joy? Can you not be a friend to *someone* in the stead of the Babe of Bethlehem, that so He may look down from Heaven upon you, and prepare a place for you beyond the clear, bright stars? Jesus said when on earth, "Ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always," which means that *they*, and not He, stand in need of our love and help, and more especially when we remember that now at Christmas time He came into the world for us, a little babe without a cradle or a home. We were not alive then to carry him, as did the "wise men from the East," "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh"; but we can give Him our worship and love, and we can give the best we have to those of His people who are about our paths. We can -

Help *someone* to keep Christmas morn,  
The day our Saviour Christ was born.

## ACCIDENTS.

By REV. J. H. McCARTY.

ONE-HALF of the world is quite forgetful of the other half. There is a wedding-party in one house, while a funeral *cortige* passes from the door of the house adjoining. Here they are singing and making merry, and just across the way they are watching by the bedside of the sick and dying. Plenty crowns the board in one house, while want pinches in another. Human life is made up of these extremes.

But, then, we do not believe that, because there are sorrows and sickness and want and death in the world, there should be no cheer and gladness. If my neighbour is too poor to own a carriage, that is no reason why I should not. If my next door neighbour has the gout, that is no reason why I should screw up my face as if I had it too.

The more of cheer and joy there is in the world, the better for the world. We should sympathise with those in affliction, and help them; but we should not aim at hanging the whole world in weeds of mourning. All accidents affect, more or less closely, human life. We are everywhere exposed to them. In this world neither life nor property is anywhere safe, excepting in a comparative sense.

There is in us, and in all our works, an element of frailty—imperfection. The laws of nature are perfect; the instincts of the animal world operate with certainty—animals make no mistakes: but when you come to man, the being of reason, then you find a being of error in judgment and sinfulness of heart. Let him be as careful as he will over all his actions, yet he will find himself where he will say: "If I had done this, or left undone that, this would not have happened."

Then there is in the very constitution of things an element of weakness. The very rocks are temporary: they crumble under the hand of time. The granite or iron shaft will fall; the most gigantic engine has its weak part, which, under some pressure, will give way. The steamer may go safely on many a voyage over the stormy sea, triumphing over wind and wave; but in the end sinks to the bottom, or falls a prey to the consuming flames.

The human judgment is weak; and often, when man would be true to himself and to others, he makes mistakes, and ruin comes on others, disasters ensue, which shroud whole communities in gloom. We are bound to protect life and limb, but we must be merciful in our judgments of men. The patient may die, though the best medical skill be