

Blind Agnes' Christmas.

BY E. L. T.

AND is to-morrow Christmas, the day I've longed for so?
The year, so strange and pleasant, has yet seemed loth to go;
The fragrance of the May bloom is faint and far away,
The scented rose of summer I scarce recall to-day.

I heard the spring birds chatter and chirp in guileless glee,
I knew when honeysuckle gave nectar to the bee,
I felt the first stray leaflets get tangled in my hair,
My heated brow was fanned by cool October air.

Yet, constantly I've prayed for this season of the year,
For I think that Jesus must now, indeed, draw near,
Remembering the morning when He became a child,
And lay within a manger, in winter cold and wild.

Although I cannot see Him when He comes from above
With myrrh of trustful waiting and frankincense of love,
I'll humbly kneel before Him and touch His garments white,
And He will smile and answer, "My child, receive thy sight."

I cannot be mistaken; it must be He will come;
And though, for awe and gladness, perhaps I shall be dumb,
Yet He will take the worship and gratitude I bring,
And He will hear the anthem my lips refuse to sing.

The Christmas dawn is lifting the world from night and gloom,
The Christmas gleam is ruddy within an upper room;
A little shout of triumph, "Mamma!" a child's tones ring,
"I see Him in His beauty, my Lord, the Christ, the King!"

The happy words grow softer, grow softer and then cease;
Upon the pallid features sleeps an eternal peace;
The sweet young mouth serenely is smiling, but is dumb;
The long years' wish is granted, the tender Christ has come.

Among the priests and prophets and martyrs grave and grand,
Among the shining seraphs of heaven's holy land,
To-day a child is kneeling, her sight no longer dim,
Beholding what God keepeth for those who "wait for Him."

Jack's Merry Christmas.

BY SARAH ORNE JEWETT.

JACK and all the rest of the boys were very fond of their Sunday-school teacher. Miss Duncan was somehow very good company on Sunday, and she continued to find things to say about the lesson which the boys liked to hear, and she had a fashion of making that hour on Sunday a good deal to do with the rest of the week. I think it was a very pleasant class myself; one or two of the boys were not good boys by any means, but every one of them liked Miss Duncan and would do a great deal to please her. They had liked her from the beginning (she had had the class for two years), and I believe that was the secret of her success.

One Sunday in the middle of December, while the rest of the Sunday-school were singing, these boys who were not as a class gifted with musical powers, were talking together, and Miss Duncan who could not sing herself, found that the whispering was all about Christmas, and that they were planning what they should do. Jack sat next

her; she always was very good to him, for he was a lonely boy who seemed to have nobody to care for him. There was something very pleasant in his smile, and he had the most honest, cheerful blue eyes which looked straight in everybody's face. His father had been a soldier and had died soon after the war when Jack was a baby, and his mother had been dead for several years too. Jack lived at old Mr. Josiah Patten's, some distance out of the village, and worked for his board and clothes and schooling. It was a good home for him; but Mr. Patten and his wife, and her sister, Aunt Susan, who was lame, were all elderly people, and the house was not very near any other houses, so sometimes after supper our friend felt a little bit sad and wished for some of his cronies to keep him company. They were very kind to him and he had plenty to eat, and old Mr. Patten always spoke of him as a good steady boy; but, to tell the truth, Jack felt restless and tired of things sometimes, and wondered if it wouldn't have been splendid if his mother were alive and they had kept house in the village somewhere. The Pattens didn't like to have him go down to the village in the evening; they did not think it was a good plan for a boy to be out after dark, and at any rate it was over two miles. But once a fortnight the class was always invited to Miss Duncan's to spend the evening, and Jack never missed going. They never came away until nine o'clock, for most the boys lived close by. So the Pattens went to bed between eight and nine, as usual, and put the key of the end door outside the window. It was a great sacrifice for Jack's comfort, though he was quite unconscious of it. They said at first that he had better leave before the rest did, but he looked so disappointed that Mrs. Patten, who was very kind-hearted, put in a word for him. But old Mr. Patten always kept awake and listened until he heard Jack come in, and then stole into the cold side-entry from his bedroom to be sure that the door was locked.

Jack's own room was up-stairs, and he used to go up softly and throw off his clothes, and tumble into bed as quick as he could. The window faced north-east, and all winter there was a great bright star that used to look in. On these nights when Jack was awake later than usual, the star was almost at the top of the window, and it seemed to have been waiting, to be sure that he was safe in bed, before it climbed higher in the sky, and went out of sight. Somehow that star was a great deal of company for Jack.

But I must go back to the Sunday morning when they were talking about Christmas. Miss Duncan suddenly moved closer to them along the seat, and looked very good-natured. "It seems to me we are all thinking about what we are likely to get," said she. "I was wondering what somebody would be likely to give me myself. I'll tell what we will all do. Suppose we try to see how many people we can surprise on Christmas day, by doing something to make them have a good time, and we will make it a rule, as far as we can, to give things without asking anybody for the money. Of course that won't be a strict rule, but I think you will be astonished to find how many little pleasures, and great ones too, we can give people without buying them. And we won't think so much

about our fathers and mothers—whom I hope we shall give to anyway—as about outside people, whom we never thought of before at Christmas time. I always find myself thinking about what I am going to have," said Miss Duncan, laughing; "and this year I'm going to try to give my whole mind to what I can do for my friends. I believe it would be the best Christmas we ever spent in our lives."

Somehow the way Miss Duncan said this made a great impression on the boys. And Jack more than anybody else, perhaps because he wished to please Miss Duncan, felt a warm little flush come into his cheeks as he thought he would do ever so many things that people would like. He had not been looking forward to Christmas very eagerly, except on account of the present that Miss Duncan herself might give him, as she had the year before. The day was never noticed at the Pattens; they were old-fashioned people, they always spoke sedately of its being Christmas day, and then turned their minds at once to other more important subjects. At New Year's Mr. Patten always gave Jack a dollar, and last year Aunt Susan had added fifty cents, because she said he was very obliging about bringing in wood for her. She could hardly stir out of her chair, she was so stiffened with rheumatism. "I don't know there was any good of it," she said, by the way of apology to Mrs. Patten. "It aint everybody would do so well by him as we do, but I thought I'd encourage the boy, and he would be full as likely to keep stiddy."

Jack did not know a great many people, and he was a shy boy. He did not dare to offer anything to strangers, and as he walked home after meeting along the rough frozen road, he felt a little discouraged, for there seemed to be nobody to do anything for. Then he said to himself that there were the folks at home; they weren't his father and mother, so he could put them on the list. And he remembered that he had a good stock of walnuts, and he made up his mind that he would carry a bag of them to each of the boys in the class. Walnuts had been very scarce that year, and he had been lucky in finding some trees a good way out of town. Then there was Miss Duncan; he must find something for her. He thought everything of her, and she had lent him ever so many books, and had been very kind to him. He never felt afraid of Miss Duncan.

When he was nearly home he caught sight of an old black house over in the field. An old woman lived there all alone whom nobody liked. She was thought to have considerable money laid up, but she was very stingy. She was an untidy, cross-looking old creature, who seemed in the course of a long life never to have made a friend. She was growing very feeble now, everybody knew, but she was so disagreeable and insolent when any of the farmers' wives, who were her neighbours, undertook to do anything for her, that they seldom offered their services. She would call to Jack, as he went by and ask him to do errands for her, but one day she accused him of stealing from her some of the change, and he had never been hailed since. Poor old Becky Nash!

Jack looked at the house (there did not seem to be any smoke coming out of the chimney), and wondered if she had grown so stingy that she could not

afford herself a fire. Perhaps she might be sick or even dead. Sometimes it would be many days that nobody would see her. He wondered if she had ever heard of Christmas, and then he laughed as he thought how angry she would be if he tried to do anything to make her have a good time. But something kept the thought of doing it still in his mind. No matter if she were angry he meant to try; there were so few people who belonged to him in any way. The door opened as he watched it, and old Becky came out slowly, as if she moved with great pain, and gathered up a few sticks of wood. She had a little wood lot, not far away, but Jack noticed that her wood-pile had quite disappeared.

"I guess she's sick," he said to himself, and after hesitating a minute he ran up the lane.

"What do you want?" the old woman growled when she saw him; she had been stooping over the ground to fill her apron with chips, and she could hardly straighten herself up again.

"I'll take in some wood for you if you want me to," said the boy.

"I s'pose you'll want to be paid all outdoors for it," she growled again. "I can't afford to hire ye."

Jack laughed and said he was hired out already, he would take it in for her and welcome. "You're most out o' wood, aren't you?" said he.

"There's plenty over in my wood lot that was cut last winter, but I can't get nobody to haul it," said the old woman.

Jack gathered up what wood he could find, and took it into the house, which was forlorn and cold as a house could be. Somehow he pitied her more than he ever had before, and he made up his mind that he would get her some wood, if Mr. Patten would lend him the old horse to haul it, and he could saw it and split it, and have a load ready for Christmas day. The thought of doing this gave him great pleasure. He was sure that Miss Duncan would say it was a kind thing to do, and beside that, he knew it was right. Jack was trying to be good, and sometimes it was very hard work, for he was quick tempered, and was always getting angry before he knew it. When he reached home the Pattens were wondering why he had been so long. He took his seat at the dinner table, and began to eat his Sunday dinner of baked beans, for he was a growing boy, and as hungry as they are apt to be. "I stepped up to old Becky Nash's," he said; "she's sick, and she was trying to lug in some wood."

"You have gone and got pitch all over your best clothes," said Mrs. Patten, who did not seem to be in a very good humour. "She's got money to hire help if she wants it," and Jack flushed a little, and felt chilled and discouraged. "Well, he ought to think of his clothes, but it was right of the boy to do her a kind turn, seeing she was sick," said Mr. Patten, and Jack felt very grateful to him for taking his part.

It was two or three days before he ventured to tell Mr. Patten of his plan for getting Becky a load of wood, and he was very pleased because the old man was willing, and gave a most cheerful consent. It was to be a secret, and Jack hurried through with his work, so that he could have time to saw or split for a little while every