



A CHRISTMAS PARABLE.

ONCE upon a time a Big Family lived on a Small Island. There were so many Children that the old Home could not hold them. So they built ells on the cottage, until these, too, were crowded out, and some of the Boys had to move off the Island. They set up homes in new lands, and for a time had a hard struggle. But the Old Gentleman helped them liberally and shielded them from all danger. In the course of a generation or two the Inhabitants of the New Countries learned to respect the Sons, and sought adoption in the Family. So it came to pass that many races and creeds found refuge and content under their new Father. Great Prosperity came to all the members of the Larger Family, and with it came all the ills of Wealth. Independence and Selfishness were everywhere manifested. The Boys became arrogant and self-assertive, the Daughters clamoured for a full share of privileges with their Brothers. In the Old Home there was much discontent and faction. Some of the Sons entered Politics, and became corrupt and partisan—others entered Business and rolled up huge Fortunes. Many of the younger lads lived a life of utter Idleness, concerned only with Sport and Pleasure. A few desired to become Soldiers, but were told that an Army was unnecessary, as the Old Man in his pride believed that no one would dare attack his Home. Matters went from bad to worse, until Ease and Luxury had eaten the Strength out of the Family, and its dismemberment seemed a certainty. Cliques and parties sprang up everywhere, and discordant cries were heard on all sides. Prophets of gloom were ready to write "Ichabod" over the Old Home!

One Midsummer Night the shrill cry of a

Child came piercing across the waters, and fell upon the ears of the complacent Old Gentleman. He immediately leaped to his feet and went to the Rescue. He found a Monster Giant strangling the Child to death, so he cried to his Boys for assistance. And then a Miracle was wrought in the Family! Every cry of dissension was silenced, luxury was banished, ease fled away, and all the Household rose like a Mighty Host and went forth to battle. Sons came from afar, bringing with them their adopted brethren, eager to go against this Cruel Wrong. They had all become obedient Children again, anxious only to serve the Cause of Right. Wealthy Sons poured out all their Treasure, Daughters of refinement gave their hands to unaccustomed tasks, the Sports of the Family dropped their cricket bats and shouldered a rifle! There was more of Unity, Fraternity, and Charity than in the piping times of peace. No self-seeking marred the common effort—every member vied with his brother in deeds of unselfish service. The pain of their fight was but the birth-pangs which brought the Child-Spirit unto the Family again. Love, Brotherhood, Sacrifice, and Trust were incarnated in the Boys and Girls of this remarkable House.

When the Feast of the Christ-Child came round, the Old Gentleman hung these texts upon the Walls of the Room where his Children had played long years ago, for they represented the Great Truths of Christmas and were re-interpreted by the gallant deeds of his Sons and Daughters:—

"A little child shall lead them."

"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, be-