

Christmas Time.

Come, children, make ready your stockings again,

For old Santa is coming this way;
He's a wonderful fellow who never forgets
His chief duties for Christmas day;
His heart is as big as a barrel, they know
Who have tested the little old man
And his motto is: "Always be merry, my dears;
Or at least be as gay as you can."

"How does Santa Claus look?" asks my wise little Ted.

Ah, where is the mortal can tell?
Some say he is fat, and some say he is lean;
And all of us know very well
That he fits a big chimney with tolerable ease,

And can squeeze through a keyhole—ah, yes!

And when he drives up with his reindeer and sleigh,

Who amongst us can give a right guess?

He comes in the night with his bundle of toys;

And yet, where is the child whose bright eyes

Have seen the sly fellow all busy at work
And planning his Christmas surprise?

"I'll watch!" cried my Ted, when last Christmas was here;

"I will watch if I don't sleep a wink!"
So he lay in his bed, with his eyes stretched apart,

And yet, my dears, what do you think?

Along came old Santa, and laughed to himself

At the soft little snore that he heard,
As he filled the wee stockings, and, kissing my boy,

Flew off into space, like a bird,
While Teddy, in Dreamland, still fancied that he

Was watching the chimney and door.
Alas, for poor Ted! With the morning he found

Himself puzzled the same as before.

But there's one thing we know; he will visit us all,

And bring sunshine and peace and good-will;

And I hope he will give us an extra gift, too,

In the shape of a longing to fill
The hearts of the poor and the sorrowing with joy

And a part of our sunshine and peace;
And the gladness that came with the dear Saviour's birth,

In our own hearts, we know, shall not cease.

—MARY D. BRINE, in *Independent*.

SUNDAY SAM.

BY J. WINTHROP PLATNER.

"ANY of you men going into the city to church with me?" asked a bright-looking boy of about fifteen, of a group of rough men who were hanging about the yard of an old, second-rate inn near Albany, New York.

"Goin' where?—to church?" answered one. "Why, bless your heart, old parson, what do ye mean?" And a general laugh went up from the crowd.

"I mean," said the boy, sturdily, "that I am going to walk to Albany and attend church, for this is Sunday."

"By George, so it is!" exclaimed another of the crowd, "and I forgot to put on my good store-clothes: so, you see, I can't go. I'm awfully sorry too," with a grin; "but Mike, here, and some of the other fellows will go 'long."

"Dunno 'bout that," said the person referred to as Mike. "I looked at one 'o them 'Piscopal books one day, and every page or two it said 'collect.' That was more'n I could stand, 'cause one collection a week is enough for me."

The laugh was renewed with applause, and our young friend Sam began to think he had got into a hard crowd of men. He had left his New England home only the week before, and, like so many other youths of fifty years ago, had started out to seek his fortune. The first opening he met with was a position on a railway in progress of construction out of Albany, and here we find him.

The idea of attending divine service struck all the men so strangely that they could not refrain from using Sam as the butt of good-natured joking. He, seeing that he was not likely to get any company to-day, started off down the road, followed by various comments and words of advice from the men.

"Give my respects to the parson," said one.

"Say 'amen' at the end of each prayer," added another.

"You better come out before they take up all them collections!" shouted Mike.

Sam did not heed them, but kept on, knowing that he was following the path of duty and happiness.

"Well, here he comes back," cried one of the men at the inn, as Sam slowly approached the group a little after noon.

"Hello! Sunday Sam; how's the dominie to-day?"

This nickname seemed to please the men greatly, for they immediately adopted it, and always after this our young friend was known as "Sunday Sam."

He took all their jokes in a pleasant manner, and at last succeeded in telling the men two or three things the minister had said.

"Twa'n't so bad now," said Mike to his two cronies that evening, "to have that 'ere little chap a-tellin' of us 'bout the sermon."

"Let's go to church with him some time and see what he gets that makes him so pleasant like," answered one.

When Sunday came around again Sam repeated his invitation of the week before, expecting the same reply. But to his surprise and pleasure, Mike and his two friends said:—

"We'll go a ways with ye, anyhow."

"You don't mean to say that you're goin' to meetin', be ye?" exclaimed one of the toughest members of the party. "Well, I'm blessed!"

And with this benediction on himself sunk back into a sort of amazed stupor, in which he gave vent to his feelings by an occasional grunt.

Fewer jests followed the church-goers to-day, and when the third Sabbath came, one more joined the party.

"Why, I hain't seen the inside of a church for twenty years," said the new

recruit; "since I was a boy about like Sam, here, when I went to please my mother. How she used to pray for me those days! and seems as if she was glad to see me going again."

One day, as they were blasting rock to make a cut for the railroad, the blast exploded prematurely, and two of the men were so badly hurt that they had to leave work and enter the hospital.

Sam had done so well that he was given the place of one of these men. This gave him quite an increase of pay, and made that dim shadowy thing called Fortune appear much more real and near.

The summer passed rapidly now, and the winter was fast drawing on, when all on the railroad would have to be suspended. Sam now lived in eager expectation of returning home.

Going home! You who have been long absent from that haunt of peace and blessedness can feel the comfort of the thought.

The twilight of a bleak November day was fast deepening as Sam trudged along one of the hilly roads that led through Berkshire County. Over his shoulder was slung a stout canvas bag, which seemed to be quite heavy, and was held in a tight grasp.

"One mile more will bring me in sight of Stockbridge Bowl, and then I will soon be there," said he to himself, and passed on more eagerly than before, as if cheered by the prospect. Now he could see the glimmer of the dear home-fires, shining at a little distance off. He hastened to a window through which he could see the family—father, mother, and five brothers and sisters just sitting down to a hearty supper which smoked upon the table.

As he listened, he heard his mother speak his own name with a touching fondness, and say how joyful would be their Thanksgiving if Sam could only be at home to complete the family circle.

"I'll give them a little surprise," thought Sam, and he stole up to the door, opened it softly, and threw his canvas bag into the middle of the room.

Drawing quietly back, he peeped through the door-crack to observe the result.

Little Fannie was the first to recover from the shock of surprise, and cried:

"I guess that's Sam. He always used to frighten me like that when I was only a wee bit of a girl."

At this they all laughed, for Fannie was now just four years old. Her father, during this time, had been examining the strange bag, and, untying the neck he poured out in a heap one hundred and fifty bright silver dollars! A prolonged "O!" burst from every tongue, but Sam had, by this time, slipped into the room unperceived, and now exclaimed:

"I earned every cent of that myself on the railroad."

It would be hard to tell who were the proudest—the parents of the sturdy young workman or the boy himself.

But all thoughts of money were abandoned for a time, while the long-separated family was reunited in love and caresses.

"Now tell about it," they asked, as soon as the first outburst of affection had subsided.

"Well, there isn't much to tell," answered Sam, slowly, "except that I had my wages raised and a better position given me that time when the two men were hurt by the blasting. I was laughed at a good deal at first because I wouldn't drink with the others."

"The hardest thing, though, was to keep Sunday. All the workmen used to play cards and smoke all day long, and when I said I was going to church, four miles away, everybody began to make fun of me. But in a couple of weeks two or three of them wanted to go with me, and before I left over half of that gang of men walked to Albany to church. I got the name of 'Sunday Sam' for it, however."

His mother folded her boy in her arms once more, blessing God that he had given her son strength to walk without falling, in the midst of such temptations.

"Do you know, mother," said Sam to her at his bedside that night, "the minister preached once about giving part of our money to the Lord, and it seems to me I should like to help some of the poor folks to have a good Thanksgiving day."

"I am glad you think of others, my dear son," answered his mother. "Our own day will be much brighter for having helped to give others joy."

And when Sam sat down to his own Thanksgiving dinner the following Thursday, he knew of several turkeys which gladdened the hearts of other boys and girls, whose hearts, but for him, would have known no happiness; and the thought of their pleasure gave new zest to his own.—*Well-Spring*.

BECOMING POLITENESS.

A BEAUTIFUL fact on this subject is related of Prince Albert. On one occasion a humble, worthy man, who had befriended the prince in early life, called to see him, and was invited to come to the family table. He began to eat with his knife, as he had been accustomed, and the young people smiled. Prince Albert looked round upon them, as if to say, "Stop that!" and at once he himself began to eat with his knife, and did so to the end of the meal. After dinner, one of the children asked him why he did so. Prince Albert replied, "It is well enough for us to observe the etiquette of the day, but it is far more important to avoid insulting people. I wanted my old friend to enjoy his dinner, which he could not if he had seen you laughing at him. He is accustomed to use the knife, and it would be quite difficult for him to use his fork instead."

This was genuine politeness. The world would be happier and better if there were more of it.