

## HINTS FOR DECEMBER.

BY THE EDITOR.

Lift your thoughts up high,  
Great hearts are glad when it is time to give.

*Henry Newbolt.*

As Christmas draws near we all want to be in the spirit of Friday's child, "loving and giving." There has been a wonderful manifestation of this spirit in the year that is past, drawn out by the war and its call for brotherhood and service. As we think of this aspect of the national struggle, we realize that it is a glorious time for children to be growing up in. It is our business to see that they get this impression of the war, an impression, not of hate and ambition and cruelty, but of love and loyalty, of service and self-sacrifice. But our loving and giving are imperfect, marred by selfishness and weakness and passion. It is only in the coming to earth of the Son of God that we can see perfect love and perfect sacrifice. Do your very best to help your children to see that it is because the Christ Child came in this love for us that we have love in our hearts, and that is why we show our love, especially at the time of His birthday, by trying to make other people happy.

Be particular in your selection of Christmas poems. For several years the REVIEW has printed in December poetry suitable for different ages. For the older ones, I always recommend Ben Jonson's noble verses, "I Sing the Birth." They are set to music by Sullivan. Milton's "Ode" should also be known. Longfellow's "Christmas Bells" is too well known to need quoting. It is well suited to this year, and lends itself to concert recitation. All should learn Phillips Brooks' "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Apart from the rehearsing of programmes for closing day, certain Christmas preparations may be made part of the regular work for several days before the holidays. For instance, in the time of the regular writing lesson, give a Christmas parcel tag — a large one, with good space for writing — to each child. Write or print on the board several simple greetings or verses; let the children copy these on the tags in their best writing, and take them home to put with their presents for father and mother, or to send as a Christmas card. Even the small ones can print "A Happy Christmas" or, "With love from——." If tags are

not to be had, the children may gum a tiny spray of fir or hemlock to a plain card, and write the greeting below.

Many children are not taught at home how to thank the donor of a gift. They will perhaps say "thank you" if the present is put into their hands, but they do not know how to frame a sentence of thanks, nor to write a courteous note. During the last week of the holidays, have a game of "going to say thank you," on the lines of the game of visiting that most children play. The teacher will be the "lady of the house." Let two children at a time go out of the room, and upon admittance, go through the ceremonies of a call, after the greeting, saying, "I came to thank you for, etc., etc.," according to what has been agreed upon beforehand. A little conversation follows, then the leave-taking. Older children should also be taught to write notes of thanks.

Some people object that drilling in manners makes children stilted, and that if they have the right feeling of what is due to others, it is better to let them express it in their own way. All very well, but some children have the right feeling and are uncomfortable because they do not know how to express it. Better be stilted than rude. And if the right feeling is not there when it ought to be the outward form of courtesy saves other people's feelings, and in time may induce the inward grace.

If you are planning your closing exercises simply to give your children a treat, you will find some suggestions in "A Christmas Surprise," printed on another page. The plan there outlined may be simplified or elaborated. In one school that we know of, an older girl, dressed as Santa Claus, left a package on each desk. When the teacher clapped her hands, the children lifted their heads to see Santa Claus standing in the door, and he waved a farewell and cried "Merry Christmas" as he vanished. In another school the older girls dressed a small Christmas tree for the children. The little ones went through a programme of simple recitations; then the tree was carried in, and the head girl read a funny little verse about each child as she distributed boxes of candy. Another year, the little ones were the givers. They were asked to bring something of their own to give to the children in one of the poorer kindergartens in their town. The gifts — toys, candy, cakes, etc., were put in pretty boxes, made in the manual work hours. Far more pleasure was felt