

## Christmas Guests.

THE quiet day in Winter beauty closes,  
And sunset clouds are tinged with crim-  
son dye,  
As if the blushes of our faded roses  
Came back to tint this sombre Christmas  
sky.

A lonely crow floats o'er the upland ranges,  
A robin carols from the chestnut tree.  
The voice that changes not amid our chan-  
ges  
Sounds faintly from the melancholy sea.

We sit and watch the twilight darken  
slowly,  
Die the last gleam upon the lone hill-  
side,  
And in the stillness, growing deep and  
holy,  
Our Christmas guests come in this even-  
tide.

They enter softly, some with baby faces,  
Whose sweet blue eyes have scarcely  
looked on life;  
We bid them welcome to their vacant  
places;  
They won the peace, and never knew the  
strife.

And some with steadfast glances meet us  
gravely,  
Their hands point backward to the paths  
they trod:  
Dear ones, we know how long ye struggled  
bravely,  
And died upon the battle-field of God!

And some are here whose patient souls were  
riven  
By our hard words, and looks of cold dis-  
dain;  
Ah, loving hearts, to speak of wrong for-  
given,  
Ye come to visit our dark world again!

But One there is, more kind than any other,  
Whose presence fills the silent house with  
light,  
The Prince of Peace, our gracious Elder  
Brother,  
Come to His birthday feast with us to-  
night.

Thou who was born and cradled in a man-  
ger  
Hast gladdened our poor earth with hope  
and rest;  
O best beloved, come not as a stranger,  
But tarry, Lord, our Friend and Christ-  
mas guest.

## Jessie's Christmas Guest.

"MOTHER, I should like to make this Christmas different from all the others I have spent," said Jessie Winton, as after a day of pleasant holiday shopping, the mother and daughter rested in the bright, warm parlor.

"Different in what way, my dear?" and Mrs. Winton looked fondly at the fair face opposite, just now wearing a sweet thoughtfulness which enhanced its beauty.

"Why, mother," answered Jessie flushing a little, "I've been thinking a good deal about Christmas lately—my holidays in particular, and I don't feel at all satisfied at the review of them. We are supposed to rejoice over the birth of Christ; but it seems to me, that in most of our preparations and rejoicing we almost lose sight of the first Christmas, and now, just as it was then, there's no room in the inn for Jesus."

"Yes, dear, I am afraid that is often too true. But, Jessie, child, I have noticed when we are specially desirous to honour our Lord, He sets some open door before us. As in the beautiful incident in the life of Falk, of Weimar, if He comes not Himself, He sends some one in His place, sometimes, 'the least of these.'"

"I wonder where the door will be in my case," said Jessie. "I have tried to remember our poorer neighbours

and friends in my purchases and home-made articles."

"And that was kind," said her mother. "Be very sure, Jessie, what-  
ever is done 'for Jesus' sake' fails not to be owned of Him, whether at this time or any other. And now, here is father, and we will have tea."

The days sped on towards Christmas, and Jessie was busy with all the pleasant stir and preparation incident to the festal season. There were the last graceful touches to put on the daintily embroidered banner for mother; the tasteful arrangement of home decorations, the wreathing of ivy sprays here, the bright holly-berries amidst their shining leaves to be delicately caught up there, all the various pretty duties which fall to the deft fingers and light feet of an only and willing-hearted daughter. Ah, young girls, make much of your place and life at home! It is in your power to be the veriest sunshine and music there.

It was but a few days before Christmas, when, one morning, Mrs. Winton entered the dining-room, where Jessie was busy taking out and wiping the best china.

"Jessie," said her mother, "here's a letter from Charlotte Moore. She is on her way to her brother's, and will spend Christmas with us."

"Cousin Charlotte?" exclaimed Jessie, with a look of dismay. "Oh, dear, I never know how to entertain her. She's too old for my set, and rather youngish for yours. If it had only been Belle Rivers, now, what fun we could have had!"

"Charlotte is not the most enjoyable of guests, I must own," said Mrs. Winton. "Still, Jessie, we must make her welcome, and try to enjoy her visit, too."

"She is so tiresome," said Jessie. "No matter what one does for her, she always wears such a martyr-like air. I had rather be found fault with, than never to have one respond to any advances."

But Jessie and her mother aired and warmed the guest chamber; and Jessie brought up some evergreens to give holiday token, and a few pretty things from her own room to beautify the bureau and mantel. When a bright fire glowed in the grate, and a low easy-chair was drawn invitingly before it, the room was cosy enough to win a smile even from Cousin Charlotte. On the expected day she came—a slight, pale person, who spoke but little, and, as Jessie said, rather difficult to entertain, as she was one of those unfortunate persons who seem to have but little tact or ability to show pleasure. But her eyes brightened when she entered the room prepared for her.

"What a pretty room!" she said. "I am afraid you have taken a great deal of trouble for me."

"Oh, no!" said Jessie, heartily. "We hope you will be comfortable in it."

"I shall be, I know," said Charlotte, "but I am used to a very plain room at brother's."

As Jessie left her cousin and went down stairs, Charlotte's last words echoed in her mind, and along with them came the memory of her own inhospitable thoughts when first hearing of the proposed visit.

"I shall be very kind to her. I think she has what I call a colorless life. I just take pretty rooms for granted, but she really looked surprised to see the fire and the evergreens."

"What shall I give Cousin Charlotte for Christmas, mother?" asked Jessie, when alone with Mrs. Winton.

"That is my own query, dear. She is a peculiar person, and so sensitive, the present we might choose would perhaps be something she did not desire."

"One is safe to give a book or a lady's companion, or even a fan," said Jessie.

"Yes, I think so. I will give her a book and, you can select something else."

But as the time went by, and Jessie was thrown more with the retiring cousin, the younger girl's warm heart and quick perception began to note many things which led her to believe, "Cousin Charlotte had led rather a hard life. Perhaps that has made her so quiet, mother." (Jessie had a sweet way of having little confidences with her mother.) "Anyway I am glad she came."

"This visit may be your open door, daughter," said Mrs. Winton, quietly.

"Oh, mother!" said Jessie, with a little start, "I had nearly forgotten. I should feel ever so solemn if I thought Cousin Charlotte had been sent here as the one to serve in the Lord's stead."

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto Me" was all her mother's answer.

Mrs. Winton looked a little doubtful as she saw Jessie's purchase of a pretty, tasteful lace fichu for Charlotte.

"I've changed my mind about the lady's-companion," she said in answer to her mother's inquiring look.

And when, on Christmas morning, Mrs. Winton saw the expression of mingled surprise and pleasure on Charlotte's face, as she opened Jessie's present, the mother was assured that her daughter had made no mistake in her selection. There were other and tasteful gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Winton, but Charlotte regarded the laces with almost childish admiration. The first time she was alone with Jessie, she said in her timid way:—

"It was so kind of you to get me this. It is something I have really coveted, when I saw you wear one. I have presents, of course, at Christmas and New Year, but almost always some one gives me a lady's companion (Jessie's heart beat a little faster), or a darning bag, as if they wanted to remind me I am an old maid and must be content to take a useful, not an ornamental, part in life."

"Well, you shall be ornamental here," said Jessie, laughing, but her eyes had gathered moisture at Charlotte's words. "You are to wear that lace to-night, and when I have put some garnet ribbon about your gray silk, you will hardly know yourself."

The parlors at Mr. Winton's were bright and beautiful that night, and Jessie herself a perfect picture as she fitted hither and thither. A lovely bouquet, delicate and costly, had just been sent her, and her face glowed as she bent over the sweet, fragrant gift. Then a sudden thought sprang into her heart, and she ran up to Charlotte's room.

"Would you like a flower for your neck, or hair, Cousin Charlotte?"

"Oh, I love flowers," said Charlotte; "but don't spoil the bouquet by taking any out."

"Yes, I will," said Jessie, "and," hesitatingly, "would you like me to fix your hair? Mother thinks I am a great hair-dresser."

"Thank you, I would like it ever so much. I never could arrange my hair to look any way."

So Jessie, armed with the comb and brush, hair-pins, etc., deftly brushed and braided Charlotte's really handsome hair.

"I think I'll call you Lottie," she said. "It sounds more affectionate than your whole name. Now look in the mirror and see how you like those puffs."

But Charlotte did not look up, and Jessie discovered to her concern that her cousin was crying softly.

"Why," she stammered, "I did not mean to hurt your feelings. I am very sorry"—

"No, no," sobbed Charlotte, "but you are so kind; and—and somebody used to call me Lottie once; its a good while ago. Since father and mother died I have had such a lonely life—teaching here and there, and, oh, Jessie, I didn't always expect to be an old maid, and your calling me that made me remember so much."

Jessie's own eyes were wet, and she could only bend over and gently kiss her cousin. After this bit of confidence, Jessie seemed never weary of ministering to Charlotte's comfort or pleasure.

"Are you not tired of so much going out?" asked Mrs. Winton, as Jessie came in from a long round of sight-seeing with Charlotte.

"No, mother. She enjoyed it so much she spoke scarcely a word; but I know now, when those great gray eyes light up. She says this is the best and happiest holiday she has known for years."

"And is it a different Christmas to you?"

"I think it is," said Jessie softly. "Since I began to think of her as one sent in the Lord Jesus' place, it seem to me it is almost a holy thing to entertain her. Yes, He must have sent her. And, oh, I am so glad she came!"—*Wide Awake.*

## Cheer up the Sorrowing.

"GLOBE to God!" the song rang out:  
"Peace on the earth below;  
Good-will to men!" with joyous shout,  
Let the blessings ever flow.

The old, old story is new again,  
At the merry Christmastide;  
For the Christ-child, born at Bethlehem,  
Is Prince of Peace beside.

To make our Christmas the merriest day  
Of the swiftly passing year,  
Bring some sad heart a joyous ray  
Of light for Christmas cheer.

A FALLING off of \$129,000 in the revenue of Montreal for the month of October is attributed by some to the shrinkage of business in spirits and beer occasioned by the Scott Temperance Act. If so, our neighbors may rejoice in the shrinkage. If temperance laws diminish tax receipts from this source, they also diminish, in far greater ratio, the burdens of taxation for which the liquor traffic is directly responsible. In this country the national receipts from liquor may be stated, in round numbers, at \$100,000,000; but the cost to the nation of the liquor traffic cannot be less than \$1,000,000,000. We can well afford to dispense with the receipts if we can only get rid of the iniquitous traffic. This "question of the age" cannot be put off. It demands, and will secure, attention—*Advocate.*