

**Children's Department.**

What Christmas May Mean to a Child.

BY MRS. GEORGE A. PAULL.

Just as all roads lead to Rome, so all days and all events lead up to Christmas in a child's thoughts. It is the one day of all the year that stands out in memory with a white light; a day that never fails to bear its wonderful fruits of delight, and but few of us in after life ever again reach the full, unblemished happiness with which in our childhood we greeted Christmas morning, when our fondest dreams were realized. Ah me, it takes so little to make children happy, that it seems passing strange that an undried tear should ever be left upon a child's cheek.

As we grow older we learn that the purest and sweetest joy of this blessed holiday season lies in making others happy, and most of us experience at that time, even more appreciably than at others, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"; for the most part, though, we leave the little ones out of that blessedness. We think it is beyond their childish comprehension, forgetting how near they are to the kingdom of heaven, and so, in our very love for them, we are apt to make this anniversary of Christ's birth the Feast of Selfishness. Yet there is no reason why it should be so. It is almost an instinct with children to give. It is an exceptional baby who, as soon as it has learned to distinguish taste, and recognizes the pleasure of gratifying that sense, does not thrust his dainty morsel into the mouth of his caretaker, be she mother or nurse, in order to share with her that which is making him happy. The little beings are so susceptible to the influences about them; they respond so readily to our training, that it is not strange that if we teach them selfishness rather than thoughtfulness for others, our lesson is speedily learned, and not

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soon forgotten. If self is to be monarch, and pleasure associated only with the gratification of self, then we may naturally look for the fruits of this teaching as soon as the child is old enough to assert his own individuality.

If on the contrary, the ability to give some one else pleasure is looked upon as the highest honor and privilege that can come to any one, be he child or man, the little creature will unconsciously develop into thoughtful unselfishness, and will, moreover, find his chief gratification in doing for others, or sharing with them, that which he prizes himself.

Especially should we be careful on this greatest of days in a child's life to let him experience the highest happiness which comes from giving. Do not let the receiving of gifts be the only thought, and the only happiness. It is a very exceptional child who will not readily respond to the suggestion that he shall do something to make the day a happy one for others, and still more exceptional, if he does not experience a keen delight in having accomplished this object. Only the solemn glory of the day when Christ wrought out the atonement of the world by His dying agony, can equal in meaning, to the Christian world, this great day when He took upon Himself humanity, with all its limitations, and became a helpless infant. It is fitting that this day should be especially glad some to little children, but it is depriving them of the best part of their right to the day, if its whole beauty and meaning is not explained to them,

and if, in commemoration of the Great Gift to mankind, they are not encouraged to offer their childish gifts to others in His Name.

I have in mind a family where the two little children spent an hour each day for weeks before Christmas in preparing such gifts as their small fingers could make unaided, for the children of the poor in a memorial kindergarten. The scrap books, the paper dolls, the candy bags and pretty boxes, fashioned so patiently and lovingly by the childish hands, were the source of even greater happiness to the children who made them than they were to the poor little ones whose lives they brightened.

Happy as these children were when the day came which brought them a tree laden with every conceivable gift, overflowing stockings and hosts of mysterious packages, yet it was plain to be seen that this delight in receiving could not rival the happiness that was theirs when, with loving touch, their little gifts, which had cost hours of patient work, were packed carefully by their own hands "to make the little children who haven't anything to make them happy glad that it is Christmas, and that Jesus was born," one of them explained. "You see we can't give Jesus Himself anything, and so when we give anything to anybody else, because we love Him, why it's just like giving it to Him, for it pleases Him," she went on.

Can you not imagine the blessedness of Christmas to these little ones, and could the wisest theologian explain more to them of "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"? I trow not. Thrice blessed little ones, who learn so early in life the blessedness of ministry to others. And it is every child's right to be taught this sweet lesson. They will learn it so readily, these trusting little ones, before their hearts are encrusted over with the selfishness that comes to us later in life, when we recognize that we live in a self-seeking world, which is very apt to care for itself first of all, and then give the crumbs that remain to others.

When Christmas may mean to a child the Feast of Love, and can be full of lessons that their very joy at that time shall help to imprint more firmly upon their memories, let us see to it that the day does not fail in its holiest meaning because we do not do our part well in teaching them how infinitely more blessed it is to give than to receive.—*The Churchman.*

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**Little Annie and the Sparrow.**

Little Annie was full of joy and brightness, skipping from room to room, carolling many a sweet note. She was the life of her home, yet she had learnt to care for others, and desired that all around should partake of her own happiness. She would often watch the little birds as they came hopping along the terrace walk in front of the dining-room window, and sometimes fear lest her fav-

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