

KATHLEEN.

A HOLIDAY STORY OF MERRIE ENGLAND.

It was the merry Christmas-time ! Year after year had gone by, but though separated far from each other at all other times, at this annual festival we all met together in the old ancestral hall of our family. Some were rich, some were poor ; but we were all *Percys*—all one family, after all. And so Sir Robert Percy, my uncle, to whom, as eldest son, the family estates had fallen, assembled all his relations yearly, young and old, rich and poor, in the old family mansion, to spend the gay season of Christmas with him. The silence and gloom that all the year round hung over it was banished then ; merry voices made music through the great, dim, echoing rooms ; fairy forms flitted like sunbeams up long, winding staircases, through stately galleries and grand old chambers. Such a racket and uproar as resounded through the dear old homestead those merry Christmas days ! scaring even the sober old mastiff into a game of romps, and making Sir Robert's mellow laugh ring out at the gambols of us youngsters.

It was Christmas Eve ! The Yule logs were piled high, and roared and crackled up the huge chimney, filling the wide hall with light and heat. The Christmas tree, loaded with gifts and bon-bons, stood on one side, glittering and flashing in the light of the tall Christmas candle above it. The windows and walls were draped with evergreens and scarlet hollyberries, while wreaths of mistletoe hung from the doors and ceiling.

It might have been a picture for an artist, the group assembled in that great hall. In his large carved oaken chair, in the chimney corner, sat the host, Sir Robert, his pleasant countenance and mellow laugh diffusing an air of home-like mirth around.