

## A Christmas Heart to Heart Talk With Girls.

By MARCARET E. SANGSTER.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim.

If you will take down an old volume of Dickens and read again the imitable tale called "A Christmas Carol," you will learn all about Tiny Tim. You may have forgotten the story in which he appears. There are so many books in the libraries now, and so many authors with whom we must have a friendly acquaintance, that some of us are in danger of overlooking the friendliest good comrade in literature, and the sweetest message in modern romance may pass us by unheeded and unheard. One of the pleasant things to do in the weeks that lead us on to Christmas is to read Dickens over again, in his Christmas stories. It is always a part of my Christmas treat to do this and I wish it might be part of yours. "God bless us every one!" That crystallizes the whole spirit of Christmas.

I am sure the best talk I can give you this month and the one you will find most suggestive will be on the line of helpfulness in little every-day ways. I will tell you of some things girls have done and some that girls may do to bring Christmas cheer to themselves and others.

### The Right Sort of a Christmas Party.

There is an old mansion on Second Avenue in New York, still wide and ample, with lofty ceilings and broad stairs, though several families live in it, where in the old days it was occupied by only one. It has become an apartment house and Christmas trees are lighted on every one of its floors and three or four Christmas parties are going on, in the different homes, at the same time. A young girl who lived in this house observed one cold winter, not so very long ago, that she had neighbors, a square or two away, who were very poor and very forlorn. As she walked along one crisp December morning she picked out the little children, boys and girls, who seemed to her most destitute. Asking their names she went to their homes and talked with their mothers, inviting finally twenty small guests, ten boys and ten girls, to come to her house on Christmas morning. On Christmas Eve a bundle of generous size was left by a messenger at each of the tenement doors, basement, garret, or whatever it happened to be, addressed to the guest of the morrow. It contained a new frock, new shoes, a warm jacket and hat for each little girl, and a new suit and reefer for each little boy, with a stout pair of shoes to complete his outfit. Radiant in their brand-new toggery, the children appeared the next day on the very stroke of ten, and then they had a party.

Young ladies played games with them, and made music for them; they had nice things to eat, and every child was presented with a doll or a pair of skates, the final touch being a package containing a present for each to carry to the mother at home.

It was a rich girl who did this lovely thing out of her large allowance. Not many girls could afford so much, but a group of friends, or a Sunday-school class, or the members of a grammar school or High School senior grade, might adopt the idea.

### Christmas from College to Alley.

One of the gayest evenings I ever spent was in a New England college for women, just before Christmas. The faculty parlor and the parlors of all the houses on the campus were overflowing with finery, ribbons, laces, embroideries, muslins; and dolls, big and little, sat stilly up to be measured, or looked proud and pleased when their dresses were finished. You know how much personality a doll has, and how superior most dolls appear, calm as queens, or as the Sphinx, no matter how much fuss goes on around them. These learned college people, from the president to the most frivolous freshman, were dressing dolls for a College Settlement in a great city. One feature that appealed to me as very practical was the addition of a small box in which were needles, thread, a thimble, and material for a doll's trousseau from flannel petticoat to picture hat, so that the little mothers might make new clothing for their dollies, and incidentally get some knowledge of sewing for themselves.

I saw with my own eyes the rapture those Christmas dolls brought to a good many little hearts and homes. The ecstatic faces, the mother-love shining in the bright eyes, the hugs and kisses lavished on their treasures would have repaid over and over the effort of the young women who took time from their hard work over books to get ready the Christmas box for the Settlement.

One doll had not gone to a child in years. High up in a dark, ill-smelling, crowded East-Side rear tenement, in a small room, seldom visited by the sun, there was a crippled girl of twenty. The doll that had injured her limbs had hurt her head. She will never be more than eight years old, even if she should

have eighty birthdays. A friend who made some visits just before Christmas said to her, "Jenny, what do you want more than anything else in the world?" "If," said Jenny, "I could only have a doll, like the other children, but they say I'm too big!" Jenny had her Christmas doll.

### What the Parsonage Children Did.

In a tiny parsonage in the suburbs of a town there is a bonny brood of children. They crowd the home, as birds the nest. It is a home where there is very little money, and it is not easy to make the money go round. But the children always have a Christmas tree. They go to school on a trolley car, and one kind conductor has taken special pains to help the smaller ones on and off the platform, once carrying Midget in his arms through a snowdrift to the sidewalk. So Midget thought of this scheme to make him happy at Christmas. She and the others gave up their own Christmas presents and spent the money on a pair of warm gloves and a jersey for the conductor. Papa found out where he lived and the children kept the secret. Their friend wore their presents to their delight, and he never suspected where they came from. To be perfect, there should be some mystery about Christmas gifts. They are simply ruined if the givers sound a trumpet before them.

### Christmas in the Old Ladies' Home.

Homes that begin with a capital H try to be homelike, but they sometimes fail. In a peculiarly well-ordered "Home for Aged and Indigent Women," the beds were soft, the rooms were airy, and the wholesome cleanliness fairly shouted at one. Nothing could have been more comfortable, except that some of the old ladies missed certain little comforts they had always had before they came there. An old English woman, for instance, was lost without her cup of five o'clock tea, but when she went to the kitchen for it, though it was not forbidden, she was made aware that the cook did not like to have her fussing about. The Board of Managers had trouble enough to keep fifty old ladies from quarrelling, and they could not order anything beyond three meals a day. Two or three girls, whose mothers were managers, sent as a Christmas treat to the old ladies something that each had at some time expressed a wish for. To one, knitting wools and needles; to another a packet of tickets for rides on the electric cars; to another a subscription to a favorite magazine; to still another a good supply of writing-paper, envelopes and pens, and to my English friend a pound of good tea, a little tea-kettle with an alcohol lamp, a teapot, cup and saucer. There was real festivity in that shelter of lonely old age on that Christmas Day.

### A Dinner and a Word of Comfort.

Most desolate home under the stars and sun is the home from which the husband and father, paying the just penalty for his crime, has been carried away to prison. Often the loyal wife and mother hides from the little ones the sad truth, though their cry, "I wonder where father is," breaks her heart anew. A group of girls, or of sisters, may ascertain where there is a household thus shadowed by bitter sorrow, and delicately send a Christmas box there.

Nothing will usually come amiss, for when the man goes to prison the home loses its breadwinner.

### Season Tickets for Concerts or Lectures.

In an inland town each winter brings the announcement of most fascinating lecture courses, or delightful concerts. Certain families always have tickets to these as a matter of course. Certain other families cannot afford even a single ticket now and then. Among the luxuries of giving at Christmastide and among the gifts in which several girls can unite, always keeping it a secret, remember, few things surpass this, the sending of a season ticket by mail to a friend who will hail it as manna from the sky. Think of the sadness of wasting such precious bits of pasteboard, yet I have known a season ticket for the Philharmonic to lie unused an entire winter while its possessor was enjoying herself in Florida.

### The Christmas Chance.

Only once a year do we have the Christmas chance to play the role of good angel to the lonely, the discouraged and the world-worn. To the neighbor and the brother we may then lend a hand. We may be children again, in the blessed kingdom of the Child, and make all children happy. So we all repeat reverently the prayer of Tiny Tim: "God Bless Us Every One!"

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