

Christmas Coming.

FEATHERY flakes are dancing, dancing,
In the grey morn's frosty gleam;
Heralds they of reindeer prancing
From the gardens of our dream—
From the bright land of the elf-king,
Where the bonbons gaily grow,
Just like sweets of summer gardens,
Where the tulips smile in row.

Feathery flakes are falling, falling,
From the skies in softest way,
And between are voices calling,
"Soon it will be Christmas day."
Don't you know how in the spring-time
Wintry snows are scattered wide,
Ere the lovely purple blossoms
Dare to peep from where they hide?

Feathery flakes are sifting, sifting,
Through the chill December air,
Here and there and yonder drifting,
Making everything more fair;
Laying whiter folds than linen
On the houses and the trees,
Softer than the richest damask
Spread our dainty guests to please.

Soon the bonbons will be falling
As the flakes have fallen to-day,
And the children will be calling
To their patron saint so gay—
"Ah! we knew when came the snowflakes
You would come, dear Santa Claus;
For we always (you remember)
Know the wind's way by the straws."

Soon the trees, as fair as any
That the elves have wreathed with snow,
Will be planted—oh, so many
In our many homes; and lo!
Something better far than snowflakes
Shall be hung about their green—
Candies, toys, and fairy tapers
Lighting up the merry scene.

And the children, dancing, dancing,
Till all tired their little feet,
Shall, with half-shut eyes up-glancing,
Wonder, "Why is life so sweet?"
And some tender voice shall whisper—
Flake-like, falling from above—
"Christmas is so sweet, my darling,
Just because its King is Love!"

—Mary B. Dodge.

Christmas Time.

THE anniversary of our Saviour's advent to earth will soon be observed with joyous festivities, devout prayers, and with discourses delivered in the name of Him upon whose shoulder rests the burden of all government. Our homes will resound with Christmas carols, and tokens of affection will gladden many a child-heart.

We would not check one up-rising of joy. Our religion is given, we believe, to brighten life, not to becloud it with dismal forebodings, not to depress the heart with serious contemplation; but reflection is a duty, and often stimulates, rather than detracts from joy.

Are we mindful of the destitute poor during this holiday season? Think of one year ago. Have any little hearts in homes of poverty sighed for some Christmas token—some gift that our own hand might then have bestowed? Go! rescue that lost opportunity by kind offerings before the New Year is ushered upon us. How little it will cost to fill the home with sunshine. Especially let the widow and the orphan share our plenty. Many are they upon whom the burdens of life rest with ponderous weight.

Once the wife leaned upon the husband, the child upon the father. He reared the Christmas tree in the parlour, loaded it with gifts, and tied upon each little limb the burning taper. But now, the Christmas has come, and he has gone. The welcome footstep is no more heard—the affectionate embrace and the evening song are only in the memories of bygone days. Where are these dear ones? Let us search for them. We may not fill that terrible void, but we may suppress a few burn-

ing tears by our kind words, uttered in Christian love and faith. If possible, He would in spirit enter our own dwelling, and repay us ten thousand-fold. But it is reward enough to hear the Master say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

At this period we are reminded of the rapid march of time, and the momentous concerns of eternity. Our life is brief. We shall enjoy on earth but few more such festive seasons. Let us begin the year 1884, not only with acts of charity, but with self-consecration to God. It may be our last year. In view of such a possibility let us refrain from countenancing those vices which destroy our youth. Especially give not the wine-cup a place in the home. Let us exhibit that moral courage which is so befitting moral intelligences. Let us not be disloyal to our religious convictions, under all possible circumstances, however severe the test may be.

The Name on the Rock.

"MAMMA, do tell me the story you were telling my brother Edward the other day, about the name on the rock and the little boy."

"It is a story full of teaching to us all, John. We should always try to learn some good from such a story; then we shall be all the better for knowing it, especially if it helps us to persevere in the right."

"There was in a distant country a very high rock. It had ledges in it on one side here and there, but its top was very high, and it hung over a deep kind of chasm below. There were several names cut out in this rock by different people who had climbed up a little way, from time to time. There stood their names out out in the rock. Now, this little boy (the story tells us) wished to cut out his name on the rock higher than any one else. Hence he climbed up a little way, and he saw some names higher up, so on he went, higher and higher. Still there were some names above him, and on he climbed, higher and higher, till at last he found a place very high up indeed, and there he cut his name with his knife. But, now he had done it, how was he to turn round and come back? He had climbed up so high that it was impossible for him to turn round; it would have made him so giddy, he would most likely have fallen directly he saw the height he had gone up. While he was climbing up some one had seen his danger, and had gone and told his parents; so they came and stood at the bottom of the rock, and his father shouted, 'Don't look back! Go on, and look up! Here we are all down here—your mother and I, and Harriet, and Jane, and Tom. We are all here praying for you. Look up, look up, and go on!' On went the boy, cutting a notch here for his foot to rest on as he climbed on higher and higher, till his knife had worn right through the blade, and the handle slipped from his hand, and fell down at his mother's feet. Just then an old sailor, seeing the boy's danger, leaned over the very top of the rock, and, letting down a thick, strong rope, told him to put the rope round him. This he had just strength enough left to do, and then the old sailor and another or two up at the top pulled away with all their strength, and drew him up to the top of the rock and clasped their arms

all round him, shouting out to those below, 'He's safe! he's safe!' So he was saved."

"Oh, mamma, how dreadfully frightened his poor mother must have been! Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do indeed; but, you see, she knew who to go to in trouble. The father shouted out, 'We are all here praying for you;' and, however dangerous the path may be, or whatever the trouble may be, if we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our Friend, we know there is nothing too hard for Him. This poor mother had nowhere else to look herself but to the Lord for help at this trying time, and He heard her cry, and blessed the means used to help her poor boy."

"But it was very foolish of the boy to want to write his name so much higher than any one else, was it not, mamma?"

"Yes, John, it was. This was ambition, and a sad plight it brought him into. Left to himself, he would most likely have fallen a victim to his sin. How mercifully the mother's prayer was heard, and the strong arm sent to save him! Had he been contented to take a lower place, it would have saved all the trouble and danger too."

The First Christmas Morn.

CALM on the listening ear of night
Comes heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judea stretches far
Her silver-mantled plains!

Celestial choirs, from courts above,
Shed sacred glories there;
And angels, with their sparkling lyres,
Make music on the air.

The answering hills of Palestine
Send back the glad reply;
And greet, from all their hoity heights,
The Day-Spring from on high.

On the blue depths of Galilee
There comes a holier calm,
And Sharon waves, in solemn praise,
Her silent groves of palm.

"Glory to God!" the sounding skies
Loud with their anthems ring;—
Peace to the earth,—good will to men,
From heaven's Eternal King!

Light on thy hills, Jerusalem!
The Saviour now is born!
And bright on Bethlehem's joyous plains
Breaks the first Christmas morn.

Merry Christmas!

BY MRS. J. F. WILLING.

CHRISTMAS is our general festal day; and it brings more genuine happiness than all the others combined. It commemorates the gladdest event of human history—the one on which are hinged all great possibilities in time and eternity. We who make such drudgery of our merry-makings have not learned to let the effervescence of the coming jollity boil over upon the preceding eve, as fully as the people do where they go about singing Christmas carols, arousing those who are snug in their beds, just enough to set them thinking drowsily of the snugness and comfort, and that it is all through Him. One day in the year everybody has to speak His name, who was born in Bethlehem of Judea. It slips over the land like a hum of gladness from the Atlantic crags to the Pacific slopes. Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Lonely and dismal must be the den where the happy sound does not find an echo. This is All-children's day, to be sure. For weeks before its dawn they are thinking what Kris-Kingle (Christ-

kindlein—the Christ-child) will bring them. St. Nicholas, the good bishop of Myra, is known as Santa Claus, and in Germany he comes by some representative, who, dressed like a bishop, gathers the children of a family or a school together, and gives presents to the good ones, and the "Klnaubaut" to those who have been naughty. Whether the little Teutons need more frequent discipline than the small people of this wide-awake land, or whether they are surer of salutary "attention" we cannot say; but for some reason, their Santa Claus is not the jolly, fat fellow with his reindeer-sleigh and jingling bells, and his arms full of presents that young Americans expect on Christmas eve; but a staid, even-faced bishop, with a bundle of switches in his hand. The difference may be due to the honest German conscience. However that may be, our Santa Claus makes merry music upon the Christmas morning from one end of the land to the other. At least a half dozen millions of little tousel-heads are making a dash for the rows of little stockings hung conveniently near what answers for a chimney. Black eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes, grey eyes, are dancing and sparkling over the pretty gifts that make this the jolliest day in the calendar. The children's joy is the freshest, purest spring in the household. No other bubbles over with such full gladness and glee. Lonely, indeed, is the group where the sweet bird voice that rippled with merriment last Christmas day, is heard only by the angels now, leaving a

"Silence 'gait' at which we dare not cry,
That aches around like a strong disease,
and now."

We forget that the dimpled hands that were folded so still, and laid under the snow, are at play with the unfading flowers beside the river that is clear as crystal. But we must give Christ our sorrow, and help the rest be glad this Christmas morning. Great preparation has been made for this red-letter day. All manner of small conspiracies have filled every house in the land—as many as there have been people in each household, and from each only one excluded—the one most interested. Heads have been laid together in counsel, plans made on the sly, pretty little knick-knacks suddenly whisked out of sight when a certain pair of feet came stamping up the steps; then the demure looks, and the cautious little shakes of the head, and the warning glances from among the crow's feet at the corner of the eye, and, in spite of all, the wee titters that just save themselves by turning into apologetic coughs.

Christmas sends its gleam ahead like a locomotive in a snowy night; and then it brings in its train of unselfish surprises with a long-drawn shout of glee. Surely every one ought to give it welcome; and each ought to contribute his share to the general joy by sending something from his abundance into the wretched homes where the poor little children are growing cross and sour in their long waiting for the Christ-child to come. If we would do all our best, it would not be very long till He would come to reign in every heart; and all homes, rich and poor, would be full of peace and good will.

WHY are books your best friends? Because you can shut them up without offending them.