

The Fireside.

WHEN CHRISTMAS COMES.

BY WILLIAM LYTLE.

Have you any old grudge you'd like to pay,
Any wrong laid up from a bygone day?
Gather them all now, and lay them away
When Christmas comes.

Hard thoughts are heavy to carry, my friend,
And life is short from beginning to end;
Be kind to yourself, leave nothing to mend
When Christmas comes.

Do you know some fellow stranded and poor,
As good as you, but with much to endure?
Do not forget him, however obscure,
When Christmas comes.

Are there not some little ones, fair and sweet,
Who know not as yet what they have to meet?
Perhaps with joy you could make their hearts beat
When Christmas comes.

Any cloud you can lift from their hearts of care?
Any kind word needed—try to be there,
And always add help to sympathy's prayer
When Christmas comes.

Fear not, my friend, giving more than your due,
Remember the gift presented to you
In the long ago, and try to be true
When Christmas comes.

Brother Beamer's Christmas Dinner.

MARIE M'CLLOUD.

I know it is bad form to tell the truth when one is expected to write a story, but I must tell you about Brother Beamer's Christmas dinner.

In the first place I must tell you about the Beamer's lovely home. It is not one of these fine, large houses, with crooks and corners and windows where you do not expect them, and none where you do, with towers for winding stairways, and cupolas and all sorts of fancy trimming, from a minaret to a mortgage. No, indeed; Brother Beamer has a lovely home. Now, the parlor is very much like anybody's parlor, with French windows, and pretty things all through it. But the sitting-room! It lacks just three feet of being as long as the town lot is wide, with a window on the east to catch the first bit of morning sunlight, and a great bay window on the west, where the last rays of the setting sun still linger over the easy chair that was grandfather's, though his sun has risen "on the other side" these two years ago. But the sitting-room is lovely. Come to think about it, it really isn't the furniture that makes it seem so. The carpet—well, it was a beautiful body Brussels when they set up housekeeping, but for a fact there are one or two places where little Joe and his schoolmates played pretty hard that there is more body than Brussels. Now, perhaps you think I am going to tell you how Sister Beamer managed to persuade Brother Beamer to get her a new carpet, but you are mistaken. She doesn't want one;

she wouldn't put it down in that sitting-room if she had it, for fear she might be tempted to say, "Now, Joe, don't play so hard." So she just tacked a rug over Joe's favorite play spot, and told him to go ahead. Then she put another down in front of the organ, for every evening daughter Serena plays the organ, and they all gather around her and sing—sing until the gas-light fairly dances, and the autumn leaves and grasses in the big vase quiver as though a breeze from heaven had caught them, and the very pictures seem to smile more brightly.

And then the large, shining kitchen—but there, I must stop now to tell you about that, or you will think the story as long about coming as Christmas is said to be.

It was a week or so before Christmas that Bro. Beamer had a long talk with Sister Beamer about the Christmas arrangements.

"It has been hard times, Katie."

Katie knew that. She knew as well as anybody that the great shops and mills, where most of the men worked, and upon which the whole town depended, had been very silent. Sometimes there had been but four hours' work in a week, and sometimes there had been none at all. And that meant credit till credit was gone, and after that real want to people who had never before known what want meant. And Sister Beamer, remembering what the quick charity workers had told her, said, "Yes, it has been hard times."

"But we have a great deal to be thankful for, Katie. I have had rather more work than most of them."

"Yes," said Sister Beamer, "and wisdom to save a little when work was plenty."

"Well, we will not ask any of our relations to dinner this Christmas. They all have enough to buy their own dinners. But get the mince pies, and cranberries, and fixings ready, and we will have our turkey just the same."

Christmas morning came. Santa Claus visited the house while Brother Beamer was down town—little Joe thinks it so queer that he always comes when papa is down town—and left on the sitting-room table just what half-frightened Joe and smiling Serena had expressed a desire to have. So the children were pleased.

But at eleven o'clock Bro. Beamer appeared in the kitchen doorway looking somewhat dissatisfied. His wife was spreading the white cloth on the dining-table while Annie had just drawn the turkey from the oven to be basted, already a rich brown and almost bursting with juicy richness. On the side table stood a dainty row of mince pies, and close by stood the glasses of crisp celery and the tureen of cranberry sauce, while from the open cupboard the glasses shone and many a savory dainty waited for its place upon the table. But in the face of all these appetizing sights and smells, Bro. Beamer exclaimed, the dissatisfied look melting into one of appreciation, "There's not enough."

"Why, yes, there's plenty," said Sister Beamer. "There are a dozen more pieces in the cellar, and Annie has very nice bread. Why, there's enough for a dozen."

And Annie looked wonder-struck, and declared, "Es ist tsu much."

"That's just what I meant," said Brother Beamer. "There are not enough of us to eat it all. Here, let us put all the boards in that extension table and you put on a dozen plates, and I will find men enough to take the places. I have just been down town," he explained, as the table was being stretched to its fullest capacity, "and I find it a sorry Christmas for a good many. I asked Will Phillips where he was going to take his dinner, and he looked half cross and said something about not expecting any dinner of any account. Fill up the tea-kettle, Annie, I'm going now."

"I'll begin right here," he thought, as he closed his own gate, and saw coming one of the unfortunate workmen of his acquaintance. "Merry Christmas!" called Brother Beamer, heartily. "Come in and take dinner with us."

"No, thank you; not to-day. I'm going home to dinner; they are expecting me, you know."

"That's all right; going to have a feast?"

"No; the fact is, we couldn't, this year. Have to put up with beefsteak and mashed potatoes; but we will have the best dishes on the table."

"Beefsteak and mashed potatoes are pretty good. Better than a good many have this winter. Be sure you return thanks before you eat it. Here, Joe, bring out one of those pies."

"It is a hard heart that forgets to return thanks on Christmas day. Thank you, sir. Merry Christmas!"

Down on the corner, where an electric light was being repaired, had gathered a group of young men. "Dirty and discontented," describes their appearance. They were dressed in their working clothes, and their hands and faces, grimy with the ever-falling soot of the mills of the city, showed that they had made no effort to brighten up in response to the general Christmas cheer. Yet they had not forgotten the day, for one of them, with shining eyes, was telling of his last Christmas at home. Then a mere boy, with dark, heavy brows and straight lips, almost hissed a wild interruption about "tyrants" and "oppression," with a vengeful taunt as to what Christmas ought to be. A firm-faced, blue-eyed young man made some reply about the company doing its best, not making any money themselves, and they would all do better another Christmas, at which a wild discussion arose, and the bright-eyed young man's eyes darkened as he stood beside the heavy-browed boy who spoke so vehemently.

What might have been the conclusion no one can tell, for suddenly a clear, cheery voice, of Christmas good-will ran among them. It was no louder than theirs, but so different in tone that they couldn't help stopping to listen. They didn't know just all it said, but before they all really understood what they were about, Brother Beamer was marching them all, just twelve of them, home with him for dinner. And the young man who spent last Christmas at home, his eyes had brightened again, and he left the dark-browed boy's side to walk beside the blue-eyed young man.

By the time they reached the house they were all in high spirits over the novelty of the situation and the expectation of a good dinner. The first number on the programme was a good wash in warm water and plenty of soap, in which Bro. Beamer led by way of example. And then they were marshaled in and seated at the clean, bright, well-loaded table, Bro. Beamer at the head, little Joe at the foot, and six

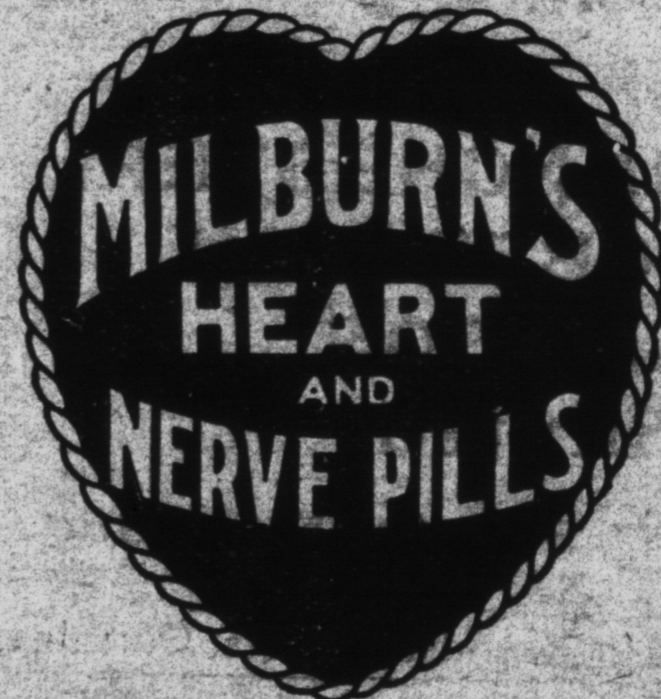
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young men at each side. Then Bro. Beamer returned thanks, not forgetting the precious gift of the Christ-child and the blessings he had brought to earth, and asking, with a great peace in his own heart, that peace might reign on earth; and little Joe thought he almost heard the blue-eyed young man say, "Amen." And then they ate dinner, somewhat bashfully at first, but soon encouraged by Bro. Beamer's hearty good cheer, they ate just as hungry men always eat when food is plenty. They stayed a little after dinner, while the little daughter played her prettiest pieces on the organ. Then with many thanks for their unexpected entertainment they went away.

At the corner they paused to ask each other, "Why did he do it?"

"It was surely for our sakes, and not to please himself," said one.

"But it did please him," said another, "to see us so well pleased. Don't it

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