

Sunday Reading

Christmas Eve.

The children dreamed the whole night through
Of stockings hung the hearth beside; 1;
And, hound to make each dream come true
Went Santa Claus at Christmas-tide.

Black stockings, red, brown, white and gray—
Long, little, warm, or patched and thin—
The kindly saint found on his way.
And, smiling, p'pped his presents in.

But, as he felt his head grow light,
A tear drop glistened in his eye;
'More children on this earth to night,
Than stars are twinkling in the sky.'

Upon the white and frozen snow
He knelt his empty bag beside—
'Some little socks must empty go,
Alas!' said he, 'this Christmas-tide!

'Though I their stockings may not heap
With gifts and toys and Christmas cheer,
These little ones from sorrow keep;
For each, dear Lord, to Thee is dear!

'Thou wert a little child like them,'
Prayed he, 'for whom I would provide
Long years ago in Bethlehem,
That first and blessed Christmas-tide!

'As soothed Thee then Thy mother's kiss,
And all her comfort, sweet and kind,
So give them love, lest they may miss
The gifts I know not where to find!

'That sweetest gift, dear Lord, bestow,
On all the children far and wide;
And give them hearts as pure as snow,'
Prayed Santa Claus, 'at Christmas-tide!'

The Right Kind of Boy.

'Oh, say, Mr. Bradford, are you in a hurry?' panted bright, rosy-cheeked George Ellis, running up to the sleigh from which that gentleman was alighting on a bright, frosty morning of Christmas eve.

'In too much of a hurry to stand long in this snowy air. Come into the store if you wish to speak to me.'

'Thank you, sir,' and picking up a basket the driver had set upon the curb, he opened the door of the large general store, and held it for the proprietor to pass through.

'Thank you,' said the gentlemen. 'Now, what is it?'

'My mother slipped and broke her ankle.'

'Yes, yes, I heard of it. Very sorry! Hope she is doing well, and hope she may have as happy a Christmas as the circumstances will permit.'

'It takes time, of course, sir, and it is so hard for her to lie on the sofa all day. I came to ask if you would allow her to use that wheel-chair in the back store for a few weeks, and let me work for you to pay for it.'

'Did she send you to ask this?'

'Oh, no, sir, I thought of it myself.'

'What could you do? I never have had a boy about the place.'

'I know it, sir, but I can see things that might be done. The plants there in the front window will lose their leaves if they are not watered pretty soon.'

The gentleman stepped to the window and glanced at the plants before he replied: 'How did you happen to notice them?'

'Mother has taught me to care for hers. These are fine ones. Every time I pass the window I wish I could arrange them so that they would show better.'

'I dare say they have been neglected. I bought them to make up an assortment. Fix up the window to suit yourself. I will send up the chair tonight or first thing Christmas morning.'

'Oh, thank you, sir!' and the lad's mittens and coat were off and he was at the other side of the store after water before Mr. Bradford had even turned toward his desk.

George found real delight, as a genuine plant-lover, in seeing the thirsty green things drink up the needed refreshment, and noting how quickly they responded by an added appearance of freshness and luxuriance.

He then polished the plate glass window spread down green straw carriage mats to resemble grass, grouped the plants tastefully upon them, and then pushed a green-covered lounge around so that it had the effect of a mound of moss and disposed a large landscape upon an easel as a background.

Being near the entrance, he politely opened the door for every lady who came up the steps, and when Mrs. Nevers drove up with a portfolio of pictures to be framed, stepped out and brought them in for her.

Mr. Bradford from his desk could not help noticing this spontaneous anticipatory service and was interested when the lady said: 'I am so glad that you have George Ellis here. I am afraid he and his mother are having a hard time to get along. He is in my Sunday School class, and the brightest, most obliging lad I know. Did he arrange that window? I might have known it. It is a perfect picture, or what is better, a bit of summer. No wonder

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that every passer-by stops to look at such a delightful contrast to the world outside.

Mr. Bradford, whose store was known as the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' or 'The Museum,' had never felt so complacent over his surroundings in his life, and was now most pleasantly surprised by an acquaintance coming in to ask the price of the landscape in the window, and by his purchasing it at once, saying, 'My shut-in sister has been asking for a picture of green fields, but I didn't suppose I could find one in town. It will be a delightful Christmas surprise for her.'

'That picture has stood by that window all winter.'

'Well, I never looked in your window, and if I had I could have seen nothing for the dust, but your show this cold morning would attract anyone. What's up?' and the man went off laughing.

'Where is George? He must find another picture to replace that one,' said Mr. Bradford.

'And what then, sir?' asked the boy respectfully.

'Anything that suggests itself to you.'

'Oh, thank you, sir! There are so many nice things here your store should be one of the prettiest in the village.'

'And it's only a lumber room; but I give you liberty to make whatever you can out of it.'

Before evening the front of the store was so pleasantly and artistically arranged that every customer had some complimentary remark to make, and two drummers running in, one exclaimed, 'I thought I was in the wrong store. I have been describing your 'Old Curiosity Shop' to my friend here, and telling him he could buy anything from a humming bird's nest to a second hand pulpit, but—'

'But altogether order is being brought out of chaos I have the same variety,' and he told the story of how it all happened, adding, 'I have not the least particle of order about me, and I never yet employed a clerk who had interest enough in the business to do anything except what he was told, until this lad came in.'

'That is just the kind of a boy we are looking for. There is always a place for that kind of boy. You'll have to pay him well or you won't keep him long. There's our train. I'll run in on my way back and have a talk with the fine little fellow.'

'Fine little fellow, indeed,' said Mr. Bradford to himself. 'Think they can get him away from me, do they? I guess not!' and, calling to George, he said: 'Here is the balance of what you have earned over and above paying for the rent of the chair; and tell your mother I am coming in tomorrow to see about your staying on with me for a year out of school hours. A lad with your head for business mustn't neglect school.'

'My head for business is following mother's way—doing whatever is to be done and doing it well. You are very kind, Mr. Bradford,' and the boy's feet kept pace with the wind as he flew up the street to tell his mother the good news—that he was sure now of steady work and she needn't worry any more, for he could take care of them both.

Only a few Christmas eves have come

and gone, but it is Bradford & Ellis now, and you wouldn't know the place; but there are always picturesque effects in the windows, and Mr. Bradford is never weary of telling how his young partner made himself a necessity to the business.

Enjoying Religion.

The people that enjoy religion most are those who are not seeking for enjoyment but to accomplish a great and good purpose. Paul du Chailu, speaking in Boston, of the hardships through which he had had to pass in the course of his African explorations, stated that while he was in the forest three years he ate five pounds of quinine, sometimes 150 grains a day. He had had to submit to all sorts of unique and disagreeable experience. He however advised young men to rough it when they could. He had eaten snakes, monkeys elephant meat, and a little of everything, but had never had a dyspeptic symptom in his life. The reason this great traveler could do this was that his mind was buoyed up with another purpose. A purpose large enough to make a diet of snakes seems a very insignificant factor. So if you will fill a man with the great purpose of pleasing God, of being a friend and disciple of Jesus Christ, of helping to cure the world's sorrows, he will rejoice in the midst of trials and hardships, and the real abiding joy of his life no combination of evil circumstances will be able to take from him.

A Graceful Setting.

Our religion ought to have a graceful setting. We should make our goodness attractive to people. There is a Scripture admonition which says, 'Let not your good be even spoken of.' A gentleman paused the other day at a push-cart standing by the sidewalk to buy an apple. He dropped a nickel which fell between the curb and the wheel of the cart, an inconvenient place from which to recover it. As he stooped to pick it up, the peddler said, 'Don't!'—and he handed him a nickel from his own pocket. He would pick it up. How graceful and gracious that was. It left a sweeter taste in the gentleman's mouth than the apple did, tho' it was a good one. The Christian graces of gentleness and politeness and forbearance adorn our religion and give us joy in it.

The Spur of Love.

Bishop Randolph Foster, in an address to a company of ministers in Buffalo not long since, speaking of his own denomination, and of the need for greater results in the conversion of the world to Christ, and what was necessary in order to bring it about, said: 'The fault of the Methodists is laziness. They have resources and men and money. All they need is a spur.' I presume thoughtful men in other denominations would accept that as a pertinent criticism on the Christian churches generally. The only way we can get the 'spur' is by meditating on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, made in our behalf, until our gratitude and love and appreciation of His love shall spur us to seek after and save our brethren who are also the subjects of his deathless love.

Christmas on the Heartstone.

The blessed Christmas festival is the one day in all the year when care should be put aside. The 'bad days and sad days' of the year that is almost over lie behind us; let the very memory of them be banished as we prepare to make the feast a joyful one to the children around us. What better possession can we give them for their future lives than the remembrance of hours of unclouded happiness in their childhood's home? When they are old enough to appreciate them they will recall with inexpressible tenderness the sacrifices that were made to give them pleasure.

The Importance of the Standpoint.

Mr. Zangwill, the brilliant Hebrew novelist, recently said that a baby is a joy to its mother, an heir to its father, a charge to its nurse, a soul to the clergyman who baptizes it, a new biological specimen to the physician, a new customer to the shopkeeper, and a nuisance to the neighbors. This characterization suggests how important it is to take into ac-



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count the standpoint of observation in measuring the value of the opinions of people on any given subject.

A Pastoral Episode.

A shepherd boy sat on the brow of a hill,
And played on a crinkled horn,
He played to the sky to the woods, to the rill,
And 'twas a summer morn.

Blithe lambs, encircling the dusky lad,
Browsed as they heard him play.
The ewes and the wethers and all were glad,
And the youth ceased not his lay.

When a maid'en, with eyes of an evening hue,
And cheeks of a morning glow,
Silently passed, as the zephyr that blew
Thro' the verdant vale below.

She looked but once, on the shepherd's care,
And on him but once looked she,
She parted her lips and tossed her brown hair,
Then tripped by gracefully.

A shepherd boy sits on the brow of a hill, rill,
And plays on a crinkled horn,
But not to the sky, the woods, nor the
Thro' 'tis a Christmas morn.

AN ARMY INCIDENT.

One of the Most Touching Episodes of the Late War.

A pathetic story comes from a Pittsburgh hospital to which a number of soldiers wounded and ill were taken after the war with Spain. One soldier, having been told that he could not live, begged the nurse to see that he was buried in his uniform.

She went to find it, and was told that it was so ragged and stiff with blood that it had to be burned. 'What am I to do?' she cried. 'I cannot find a uniform anywhere!'

Hearing this, a poor fellow from West Virginia, who was just able to hobble about, went to his room, stripped off his uniform torn and worn, but it was all he had, and clothed himself as best he could in some old rags.

'Take him this,' he said coming out. It doesn't matter what for me I want clothes I wear.'

The uniform was taken to the dying man, closed his eyes satisfied that he should sleep in his grave clad in the livery of his country.

It is pleasant to know that the story reached some friends of the soldiers, and that the generous-hearted West Virginian went home also clad in the uniform in which he had served his country so well.

Descriptions of the campaigns are full of individual instances of the fine temper, the courage and unselfishness of the American man in his new work of fighting. Captain Arthur Lee, the English attaché, says:

'I saw many thousand shots fired, but not one in anger. Most men were anxious, many excited, but they never seemed to be angry with the enemy.' Again he says, 'I found in one spot' (at El Caney) 'over a hundred killed and wounded lying so close that one could only pass by stepping over them. There was a strange silence among these men, not a whimper or a groan; each lay with closed eyes and set teeth. Some of the more slightly wounded were tending those who were badly hit. Nothing could have surpassed the unselfishness of these men.'

Mr. Harding-Davis, writing of the Battle of San Juan, says: 'As to their suffering the wounded were silent, they neither groaned, nor complained, nor cursed. White men and colored men, veterans and recruits lay waiting for hours to be carried away to safety, but not one questioned or complained.'

These scattered facts and others that can be printed, exhibit a gratifying phase of American character, one that holds within it a promise of study and generous manliness, which we trust the future will show as a national characteristic manifested by our people—not in war alone, but in every department of life.

Something Like a Butler.

Sir Edwin Landseer, the famous animal painter, had an old servant, his butler, valet, and faithful slave, named William, who knew and understood his master's ways and habits perfectly. Though Sir Edwin, when he was put out, would bully this man at times, he thoroughly appreciated his usefulness, and could not have got on at all without him. William was particularly assiduous in guarding the outer portal no one could by any possibility gain direct access to Sir Edwin, even though an appointment had been made. The answer would invariably be, 'Sir Hedwin is not at home.' Even the Prince Consort himself once received the answer when he called, amplified on that occasion by the assurance that he

had gone to a wedding, an entire fiction on William's part, as His Royal Highness found; out; for, on walking boldly in and around the garden, he noticed Sir Edwin looking out his studio window. The same faithful attendant one day, when a lion had died at the 'Zoo,' and his corpse came up in a four-wheeled cab to be painted from, started his master with the question:—'Please, Sir Hedwin, do you border a lion?'

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If you are sick, ailing and cannot enjoy life, try one bottle of Paine's Celery Compound.

Marking the Goods.

Old Johnson, a veteran on the road, and a well-known commercial of Newcastle-on-Tyne, always delighted to take a rise out of a fresh man. On one occasion seeing a new traveller, enter the room, he told his friends to prepare for fun.

'For whom do you travel?' inquired Johnson.

'Noses,' replied the young fellow.

'Moses and Co., the tailors?'

'No, no. Noses, human noses.'

'No one will sell his nose.'

'Oh, yes. We pay cash down and don't require delivery until death.'

'Will you pay me cash down and not require delivery until I am dead?'

'Yes; a nose like yours is worth thirty pounds.'

'Done,' said Johnson. 'Thirty pounds down, and either party refusing to complete the bargain forfeits glasses round.'

'Agreed,' said the young fellow, at the same time putting the poker in the fire.

'What is that for?' asked Johnson.

'Oh,' replied the young fellow, 'we always mark our goods when purchased, to prevent mistakes.'

The bargain was not completed, and Johnson stood glasses round.



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