

## A CHRISTMAS SONG.

O time by holy prophets long foretold,  
Time waited for by saints in days of old,  
O sweet auspicious morn  
When Christ, the Lord, was born!

We think about the shepherds, who, dis-  
mayed,  
Fell on their faces, trembling and afraid,  
Until they heard the cry,  
Glory to God on high!

And we remember those who from afar  
Followed the changing glory of the star  
To where its light was shed,  
Upon the sacred head;

And how each trembling, awe-struck wor-  
shipper  
Brought gifts of gold, and frankincense,  
and myrrh,  
And spread them on the ground,  
In reverence profound.

We think what joy it would have been to  
share  
In their high privilege to come to bear  
Sweet spice and costly gem  
To Christ, in Bethlehem.

And in that thought we half forget that He  
Is where we seek him earnestly;  
Still filling every place  
With sweet abounding grace.

And though in garments of the flesh, as  
then,  
No more he walks this sinful earth with  
men,  
The poor, to Him most dear,  
Are always with us here.

And He saith, inasmuch as ye shall take,  
Good to these little ones for My dear sake,  
In that same measure ye  
Have brought it unto Me!

Therefore, O men in prosperous homes  
who live  
Having all blessings earthly wealth can  
give,  
Remember their sad doom  
For whom there is no room—

No room in any house, in any bed,  
No soft white pillow waiting for the head,  
And spare from treasures great,  
To help their low estate.

Mothers whose sons fill all your homes with  
light,  
Think of the sons who once made homes as  
bright,  
Now laid in sleep profound,  
On some sad battle-ground;

And into darkened dwellings come with  
cheer,  
With pitying hand to wipe the falling tear,  
Comfort, for Christ's dear sake,  
To childless mother's take!

Children whose lives are blest with love  
untold,  
Whose gifts are greater than your arms  
can hold,  
Think of the child who stands  
To-day with empty hands!

Go fill them up, and you will also fill  
Their empty hearts, that lie so cold and  
still,  
And brightened longing eyes  
With grateful, glad surprise.

May all who have at this blest season  
seek  
His precious little ones, the poor and  
weak,  
In joyful sweet accord,  
Thus lending to the Lord.

Yes, Crucified Redeemer, who didst give  
Thy toll, Thy tears, Thy life, that we  
might live,  
Thy Spirit grant, that we  
May live one day for Thee!

## THE MINISTER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY.

BY MAY BLOSSOM.

Smarttown is a thriving manufac-  
turing village about twenty miles from  
Boston. It is very much like a  
score of other towns in that locality  
—half city and half village. It has  
a main street with tall brick blocks  
upon it, two brick school-houses,  
half a dozen handsome churches, a  
few back lanes with licensed eating  
saloons upon the corners, two large  
cotton mills, and the usual mixture  
of good and bad, rich and poor,  
among its inhabitants.

The pastor of one of these  
churches, at the time of which I  
write, was Rev. Ernest Noble. He  
was a young man, full of zeal for his  
work, and accounted among the  
young ladies of his flock a model  
of perfection, until one day he re-  
quested that the unsexed parsonage be  
put in order, and soon after brought  
from Boston a bright little woman  
to rule over it. From that time  
much of the special interest in re-  
gard to him began to wane, and he  
was no longer overwhelmed with  
slippers, pen-wipers, paper weights,  
etc.

And the poor man, dazzled by the  
bright eyes of his merry little wife,  
seemed never to notice the change,  
but pursued the even tenor of his  
way, preaching, if possible, with  
greater fervor than before.

Thus six months passed, and the  
holidays drew near. One day in the  
sewing circle it was announced that  
the minister was going to have a  
party. There could be no mistake,  
for Sister Grundy's niece, Sarah  
Brown, the seamstress, while sew-  
ing at the parsonage, had overheard  
the minister and his wife talking in  
his study. She was in the next  
room, but, sitting near the crack of  
the door, could not help hearing the  
words "invite," "refreshments,"  
"games," "music," and something  
about "dancing," and she guessed  
they were going to have a high time.

"You don't say so!" cried the  
horror-stricken sisters in concert.

"Just as I expected!" said one.  
"I told you so!" said another.  
"It's all the doings of that Boston  
wife of his. Why couldn't he have  
been contented to have taken a  
good pious sister from his own  
church, instead of going way to Bos-  
ton after such a doll?"

"I shan't be surprised at any-  
thing after this. I never"—but  
here the Christian conversation was  
interrupted by the summons to tea,  
and the unexpected appearance in

their midst of the pastor and his  
"Boston wife."

You may be sure that after this  
the parsonage was closely watched.  
No sentinel in time of war ever  
kept closer guard over an unsuspect-  
ing enemy, than did these faithful  
sisters over the movements of the  
clergymen's family.

Little Mrs. Noble wondered  
twenty times a day what had so  
suddenly interested the sisters in her  
behalf; for during the next two  
weeks she received more calls than  
during her previous six months.  
stay with its people. But never a  
hint did they gain from her of what  
was going on in her domains.

Yet, certainly, preparations of  
some sort were steadily progressing,  
and it was suspected that the "time"  
was coming off Christmas day.

Christmas came on Friday. Mon-  
day watchful eyes had seen a load  
of evergreens deposited in the min-  
ister's cellar. Tuesday, Mr. Noble  
was busy all day, but what was  
the nature of his business no one  
could learn; for when Squire Chea-  
tum's daughter had stopped her  
sleigh on purpose to invite his wife  
to ride with her on Christmas day,  
he politely informed her that she  
had a previous engagement and has-  
tened away to overtake a little boot-  
black.

Their conversation evidently had  
an exhilarating effect on the little  
fellow, for as soon as Mr. Noble  
had turned the corner, he turned  
several somersaults and pirouetted up  
and down the icy pavement on his  
hands, his feet suspended in the air.

Wednesday, the piano-tuner for  
two long hours vexed the peace-  
ful air in the vicinity of the parsonage  
with most unearthly sounds. Thurs-  
day, the expressman left a mysteri-  
ous box at the door. Some one, en-  
tirely disinterested, asked him what  
he supposed it contained; he replied  
curtly, "Cut flowers, of course!"

And so the wonder grew! But  
what was the most mysterious of  
all, it was impossible to find out  
who were invited. Squire Cheatum,  
who paid the most towards the  
preacher's salary, knew nothing  
about it; Mr. License, who kept the  
finest eating-house in the city, and  
only a few choice liquors for certain  
of his guests, you know; Judge  
Sentence, who always tried and de-  
cided his worst cases while intently  
listening to the sermon Sabbath  
afternoon; Deacon Smith, Sarah  
Brown, the seamstress, and her el-  
derly relative, Mrs. Grundy, were  
also excluded from the invitations,  
if, in fact, any had been issued.

Friday morning broke cloudless  
and bright, lighting up with myriads  
of sparkling gems the freshly-fallen  
snow.

"How beautiful! how delightful!"  
exclaimed Mrs. Noble, as she peeped  
through the frosty pane. "Don't  
you like to see fresh snow upon the  
ground Christmas morning, Ernest?"  
"Yes, dear, it seems a fitting em-  
blem of Him whose advent we ce-  
lebrate to-day. He found the world  
full of misery, wickedness and strife;  
He brought to it a religion of love  
and peace. He finds our souls full  
of all uncleanness; He washes them  
whiter than snow, and clothes them  
with the purple robe of righteous-  
ness. May all that we do to-day, be  
done to His glory, my dear."

"Amen!" whispered May; and the  
pastor went to his study where, un-  
interrupted, he always passed half  
an hour before breakfast.

"Tis ten o'clock, and Mrs. May  
Noble stands in her pretty parlors  
taking a final survey of herself and  
her apartments before the arrival of  
her guests. The gossips have guessed  
right for once, and there is to be a  
dinner-party at the parsonage this  
Christmas day. Evergreens, trail-  
ing woodland mosses and Hartford  
ferns adorn the picture-frames and  
mirrors, and bouquets of sweet-scented  
flowers greet one at every turn.  
The dining-room looks inviting.  
Here, too, we find pictures and ever-  
greens, and a table richly spread  
with cut glass, silver (which looks  
suspiciously like wedding presents),  
and rich flowers which fill the air  
with a delicious perfume.

No wonder the face of the young  
housekeeper wears a satisfied expres-  
sion, for all the arrangements are  
perfect. From the kitchen beyond  
comes the savory smell of roasting  
fowl, while a broad-faced German  
girl bustled about, her face aglow  
alike with heat and satisfaction.  
Mrs. Noble passed through all the  
rooms, lowering this shade a little,  
and raising that one, changing the  
position of a vase and moving a  
chair, peeped into the mirror, tossed  
back her curls, and repinned her  
collar, and finally sat down to her  
piano to await the arrival of her  
guests.

Suddenly it occurred to her that  
she had not the slightest idea who  
were to be the recipients of her  
bounty. In arranging matters with  
her husband he had said:

"Make what arrangements you  
please, little wife. Have your dinner  
fit for the king, if you wish, and I  
will invite the guests. Is there  
any one you wish particularly to in-  
vite?"

"None but Auntie and Fanny  
Gray. Fannie will help me enter-  
tain the children. You must invite  
the children, you know, for I could  
not endure a party of grown-up peo-  
ple solely."

Yes, this was all that had been  
said upon the subject. She was  
just crossing the hall towards the  
study to ask Ernest whom she  
might expect, when the door-bell  
rang.

Opening the door she confronted  
an old lady in a calico dress and  
faded shawl, whom all the town  
called "Aunt Patty."

Thinking Aunt Patty had come to  
tell her pastor some fresh trouble,  
she led her at once to the study.  
But Aunt Patty began removing her  
wrappings as soon as she entered  
the door, and just as she crossed  
the threshold of the study she hand-  
ed them to the astonished May, say-  
ing:

"Here, take um! Thought I'd  
be on hand in good season. How  
good them posies smell!"

Aunt Patty seated herself very  
composedly and took out her blue  
knitting-work as if she intended to  
spend the day. Before the hostess  
could recover herself, the bell pealed  
again long and loud. Opening the  
door quickly she was just in time to  
see a pair of shiny boots describing  
a semicircle in the air and the body  
of a very little boy assume a per-  
pendicular attitude. His eyes were  
bright and roguish, and his face  
somewhat streaked with cleanliness.  
Pulling off his torn cap, thereby re-  
vealing a most ludicrous attempt at  
toilet making, he said,—

"How d'y do, mam? Is the par-  
son to hum?"

The sound of crutches now arrest-  
ed her attention, and the one-legged  
soldier, who mended old umbrellas  
and sung camp-songs to the children,  
was seen coming up the steps. The  
street seemed to be full of the lame,  
the halt and the blind, and the peo-  
ple across the way were crowding  
their windows to see the odd pro-  
cession pass.

On they came, straight up the  
steps and into the door of the par-  
sonage.

May stood back too astonished to  
speak, and let them pass. There  
was the blind man who sold shoe-  
strings and lead-pencils on the cor-  
ner of Fair street. There was the  
man in the big army overcoat that  
she had many a time seen peddling  
oranges and peanuts on the next cor-  
ner. Here was little hunchback  
Jenny Wren who made dolls' cloth-  
ing for a store in Boston. Now  
came half a dozen children who  
worked in the mill, their jackets  
even now bearing traces of cotton  
that they had in vain tried to re-  
move.

Straight on to the study they  
went, scarcely heeding her. In the  
doorway stood Ernest with smiling  
countenance and warm grasp of the  
hand extending a cordial greeting to  
each of them.

"Ernest, do tell me what this  
means!" whispered May, as soon as  
she could gain his ear.

"These are our guests, little wife.  
Don't you remember the command,  
'Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of  
the least of these,' etc. Could we  
better celebrate His birthday than  
by caring for His poor?"

Away ran May to her room, and  
the minister was left alone with his  
strange guests. In ten minutes she  
came back, all disappointment and  
vexation gone from her countenance,  
and no one would have thought  
from any act of hers that the guests  
were not each of her own inviting.

Then came the dinner. And such  
a feast as it was to those poor peo-  
ple! I despair of describing it. Not  
so little Jim, the boot-black. He  
never tired of talking of the subject,  
and every gentleman whose boots he  
blackened for the next three weeks was  
regaled with an account of the won-  
derful dinner.

"I hear you were at the minister's  
party yesterday, Jim. Did you  
have a good time?" said a gentleman  
to him the next day.

"You bet we did!" replied Jim  
with a wise look.

"Do tell me about it. I really  
want to know. What did you have  
for dinner?" queried the gentleman.  
"Oh, lots and lots of nice things!  
We had soup with little white  
things like curly pipe-stems swim-  
ming round in it. Two turkeys  
with all the fixins! Oh, my! w'an't  
they nice! A great big pudding,  
steaming hot and full of plums. We  
ate with silver forks, and had our  
plates changed twice; and close by  
every plate was a little bunch of  
flowers that smelt like—like heaven,  
I guess. When we came away,  
Miss Noble gave us the flowers to  
bring home with us. I didn't have  
no good place to keep mine, so I  
put um in my pocket. Want to see  
um! They're mighty sweet, and I  
mean to keep um forever."

"Yes, that's all about the dinner,  
only all the time we was eatin' Miss  
Fanny and Miss Noble kept walking  
round the table and saying, 'Don't  
you want some of this? Shall I fill  
your glass?' just as if we were prin-  
ces."

"And, sir, I wondered if heaven  
wasn't something like that—if we  
should sit down to great long tables  
all loaded with good things and the  
angels with shiny wings should wait  
on us just as Miss Fanny did.  
'Twouldn't be no stranger, nohow,'  
he added musingly.

"What did you do after dinner?"  
"After dinner, Miss Noble's aunt  
talked with the old women about  
rheumatiz and fevers, and Miss  
Fanny showed us pictures and told  
us stories. Then Miss Noble played  
something quick on the piano, and  
afore I thought I found myself walk-  
ing afore all the company on my  
hands. Miss Noble didn't scold a  
bit, only everybody laughed. Then  
she taught us a song about Christ-  
mas. It's mighty pretty. I sing it  
every time I'm cold or hungry, and  
then I don't mind so much. Then  
Tom the soldier sang a song, and we  
all sang the chorus—'Glory, glory,  
hallelujah!'—just as loud as we  
could holler, and Mr. Noble clapped  
his hands and said 'twas splendid."

"After the big-faced Geiman girl  
got the dishes washed, we children  
and the minister all went out into  
the big kitchen. We played 'puss  
in the corner,' 'hide the handker-  
chief,' and lots of nice things. Then  
the minister said, 'Let's tell stories.'  
So we all sat down on the floor close  
together. I told a story about a  
bear, Bill Larkin told one about a  
ghost, and we all told some sort of a  
story. When it came Mr. Noble's  
turn he told the best one of all. It  
was about a little baby that was  
born in a stable on the first Christ-  
mas mornin' that ever was. When  
He grew up He loved poor little  
fellows like me, 'cause He was poor  
once hisself. By and by wicked  
men killed Him, but He come to life  
again, and knows all about us this  
very minute. What do you souse  
this man's name was? Mr. Noble  
almost whispered it to us, 'cause he  
said we must never say it when we  
are mad with anybody. I guess you  
know who I mean, Mister?"

But the gentleman only said,  
"Go on."  
"Well, that's 'bout all. By'm  
by they lit the gas, and then we all  
went into the eatin'-room again and  
had some ice-cream and cake. After  
that we sat down in the parlor, Bill  
Larkin and me on the floor, while  
Miss Fanny played on the piano and  
we all sang, 'Gather at the river.'"

"Then the minister prayed that  
we might all be good and get to  
heaven, where the streets are all  
gold and it is never cold. I'm going  
to try to go there, ain't you, mis-  
ter? That's all. Then we all come  
home."

The last guest had departed. May  
closed the door gently and came  
back into the parlor where Ernest  
was standing alone. He came for-  
ward quickly, and took both her  
hands in his.

"May, do you forgive me for not  
telling you of our guests before their  
arrival?"

"Freely, Ernest, for this has  
proved one of the happiest days of  
my life. After the first shock wore  
off, I was glad you did not tell me,  
for I fear I should not have ap-  
proved of the plan and so have spoiled  
a great deal of pleasure for several  
people. But what made you think  
of inviting such a host of queer  
people?"

"Something I read a few days  
since. I assure you it was by no means  
an original idea," and opening the  
family Bible, he read these words:

"When thou makest a dinner or  
a supper, call not thy friends, nor  
thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen  
nor thy rich neighbors, lest they  
also bid thee again, and a recom-  
pense be made thee. But when thou  
makest a feast, call the poor, the  
maimed, the lame, the blind; and  
thou shalt be blessed, for they can-  
not recompense thee; for thou shalt  
be recompensed at the resurrection  
of the just."—Selected.

## TRIUMPHS.

How often we hear people speak  
of dying in the triumphs of faith,  
but is it not much better to live in  
the triumphs of faith? Do we not  
need this triumph much more in life  
than in death? For "to die" is to  
the Christian "is gain." To die is  
to pass from toil to rest, from death  
to life. In death we know all our  
struggles are at an end, that there  
the enemy loses all hope of ever re-  
capturing our souls and that we are  
going where Jesus is, to live and  
sing the song of redeeming love dur-  
ing the endless ages. It will be easy  
to triumph then, but it is something  
more to triumph now, amid the toils,  
temptations and afflictions of life.  
Thank God it is our privilege to  
triumph in life as well as in death.  
We may triumph when pain afflicts  
the body and anguish the mind. We  
may triumph in joy; we may triumph  
in grief. We may triumph when  
wounded in the house of our friends,  
and when our hearts are crushed  
with the ills of life. We may  
triumph when compelled to yield to  
the human will which denies us the  
privileges God grants. We may  
triumph as we stem the tide of sin  
and temptation. We may triumph  
through life.

## A CHILD'S LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS.

On Saturday one of the mail  
sorters in the post-office found a let-  
ter addressed to "Santa Claus." As  
that mythical personage has no local  
habitation within reach of the car-  
rier, the officials opened the envelope,  
and read the contents. The letter  
was written by a little girl named  
Amy MacKenzie, living at No. 58  
Emerald street, and in it she made  
a touching appeal to Santa not to  
forget her or her folks. Her little  
brother wants a new pair of shoes;  
father would like a new hat; mother  
would be pleased with a new dress,  
and the little writer adds: "Now  
dear Santa Claus, if you have just  
one little doll left, please bring it  
around to me, and I'll promise to be  
a good girl all next year."

The touching pathos of the mis-  
sive; and the simple faith of the  
little girl, made a deep impression  
on the officials. The postmaster and  
one of his clerks drove to the resi-  
dence and found that the statements  
of the little girl were correct. They  
drove around to several business  
acquaintances, and in a short time  
collected enough to satisfy the long-  
ings of the little petitioner. Shoes  
were got for the different members  
of the family; the father's and  
mother's wants were supplied, and  
a handsome doll was secured for  
Amy. A purse of \$25 was made up  
and sent along with the other gifts;  
and in no house in Chicago was  
there a happier Christmas than that  
whose guardian angel is Amy Mac-  
kenzie.

## CHRISTMAS IN WALES.

The Welsh poor are really in  
clover at the Christmas-time. They  
are never neglected then, no matter  
what their lot at other seasons. The  
out-door poor of every parish are  
visited with the baskets of benefac-  
tion in the hands of the well-to-do.  
A species of festivity, arbitrarily  
termed a "tea and treat," at which  
all poor people may come and sit  
down who will, is spread in Wes-  
leyan chapels and like places. The  
Wesleyans do not adorn their places  
of worship with flowers and ever-  
greens, but they spread these tables  
for the poor with most liberal hand.  
Whatever meats are left over, after  
all have eaten who will, are given  
in baskets to those who ask for  
them. There is no distinction made  
in the matter of religion—enough  
that you are hungry; it is the Christ-  
mas-day; eat and be filled. So,  
seven hundred people ate a Christ-  
mas dinner—for such it was—at the  
Wesleyan chapel near my home in  
Cardiff last Christmas. In the min-  
ing town of Merthyr Tydfil they  
give a Christmas dinner to the poor,  
which is perhaps the best patronized  
in Wales. For seventeen years past  
they have never dined fewer than  
two thousand people at their Christ-  
mas-table.

But nowhere are we more jolly  
than in the infirmaries and the  
workhouses. If Christmas is a  
merry day nowhere else in the wide  
world, be sure it will be merry in a  
Welsh workhouse. For then our  
bare walls hung thick with the holly  
and the hawthorn, with cedar and  
with ivy, with ferns and with flow-  
ers, nor is the mistletoe forgotten in  
its appropriate place, handy to be  
kissed under. Wherever else that  
old custom of kissing under the mis-  
tletoe may have gone out—and I  
hear it is going out everywhere  
among quality-folk—it is not gone  
out among the Welsh poor, whether  
paupers or independents. At one  
o'clock, in the poor house, we sit  
down to the one luxurious feast of  
the year—our jolly Christmas din-  
ner—where there be soups of a  
savoriness to put an appetite under  
the ribs of death, and joints of a  
size and fragrance to stir a fever in  
the blood of age, not to speak of  
steaming plum-puddings that would  
warm the cookies of a mummy's  
heart, and good old ale that would  
soften the bosom of a Bashi-Bazouk.

Then, after dinner, well—fun is no  
word for it! The pauper who plays  
the harp is installed in state, and  
the pauper who plays the fiddle is  
established by his side, and they are  
allowed to display their gifts; and  
the afternoon and evening are passed  
in dancing and in singing songs and  
choruses.

## ARE YOU SAFE?

"Auntie," said little Alice, "when  
people put their money into a bank,  
do they worry about it because  
they're afraid it is not safe?"

Her aunt replied: "That depends  
upon the character of the bank. If  
the officers who manage it are reli-  
able men, those who place money  
there have no reason to fear of its  
safety."

"I thought so," said Alice. "And,  
auntie, I was thinking about my  
soul—whether it is safe; and I have  
given it to Jesus, and I feel as if it  
must be safe there, and I need not  
worry about it. He will take care  
of it, won't he?"

"Yes, dear; it is perfectly safe in  
the hands of Jesus," replied her  
aunt.

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