



The Home Department

God Bless Us All

(By Margaret E. Sangster.)

God bless us all! With Tiny Tim,
'Tis thus we finish prayer and hymn,
While cheerily from lip to lip
The Christmas wishes gaily trip;
God bless us all, the circle round,
Wherever are our dear ones found;
At home, abroad, please God, we say,
God bless his own on Christmas Day.

God bless the golden heads a-row
Where ruddy hearth flames leap and glow;

God bless the baby hands that clasp
Heart fibres in their clinging grasp;
God bless the youth with eager gaze;
God bless the sage of lengthened days;
At home, abroad, please God, we cry,
God guard his own, 'neath any sky!

God ease the weary ones who bear
A cumbering weight of grief and care;
God give the wage no ill can spoil,
The honest loaf for honest toil;
We sound the heartfelt prayer and hymn.

And breathe "Amen," with Tiny Tim,
As reverently, please God, we say,
God bless us all on Christmas Day.

Christmas Greeting

To our many thousands of readers, we are again permitted to send cordial Christmas greetings, with the sincere wish that health, harmony and happiness may dwell as guests at your home gatherings, and may go with you all the way throughout the coming years.

It cannot be a "glad" Christmas to all, alike; for unto some hearts, the year has brought silence and shadow, and their ears will be dulled to the song of the Christmas angels; their eyes may see only through tears. But we may all follow the light of the Star until it leads us to the birth place of the new light and life, in the blessed faith that, through sun or storm, "He doeth all things well." The "glad tidings" are for all the world. May you all have a blessed Christmas.

Christmas Contrasts

"When you were a little girl, what did you do?" The question is asked so often that memory is used to going back into the dead years, and resurrecting the thoughts and acts of the long-ago "little girl," the recital of whose doings so much interest the little daughter of today who sits, in her night-gowned ease, upon the rug in front of the fire, nursing one little knee in the clasp of her two tiny hands.

"O," I say, "we had merry times; there were so many of us. The snow always covered our little world at Christmas times; the trees were heavily hung with snow and icicles, and the hills and meadows were dazzling white in the light of the low-lying sun. The little stream that wound through the white-coated meadows was like a wavy blue ribbon, and the willows that drooped over it were like sheeted ghosts. The fields were all tucked away under the white blanket, and the fences were hidden by great billowy snow drifts over which little rosy-cheeked children, wrapped in bright woolen comforts, caps, hoods, leggings and mittens which mother always made, rolled and tumbled with their home-made handsleds, or pelted each other with the soft, fluffy snow. Everything was housed—the horses in their stables, the cattle in their straw sheds, the sheep in their folds, the poultry in

their cabin, the pigs in their chaff-piled nests under the big, wide granaries. The men folks, well wrapped in their home-spun coats, with big, furry gloves or tufted mittens, went scudding away to town in their light 'bob sleds,' drawn by big, fat horses, and returned, smuggling mysterious packages in at the pantry window where some one seemed always at hand to receive them. Mother and the big girls were bustling about in the steamy kitchen, from which a warm smell of mince pies, spiced cookies and fresh doughnuts, roasted meats, etc., pervaded the house.

"When night fell and the chores were all done, the firewood piled high in the corner back of the stove, the girls and boys—a noisy lot of us!—gathered in the big, bare kitchen, with bags of nuts, hammers and broken pieces of iron, strings of popcorn ears and skillets, the jug of molasses and a kettle, while the older ones engaged in some mysterious business from which we younger ones were debarred. When bedtime came, we went reluctantly to our trundle beds, determined to stay awake watching the stocking hung about the wide old fire place, waiting for a sight of Santa Claus. But we never saw him—not one of us. With the first hint of morning—long before the dawn of our belated day, the whole noisy crowd of us were awake and riotously 'catching' each other's 'Christmas gift,' and exploring the depths of our stockings. We were easily satisfied, our wants were few, and there was little discontent with the trifles left us by Santa Claus."

"And what did he bring you?" "O, an apple, maybe, though apples were scarce in those days; a handful of hazelnuts, hickorynuts, or walnuts; sometimes a few 'store' nuts, a few sticks of 'store candy,' but oftener the home-made taffy, wrapped in buttered paper; a liberal supply of mother's crisp cookies or sister Fannie's doughnuts, shaped into impossible animal forms; a bit of home-made lace, a yard of ribbon, or some little, home-made article for use or ornament, and for which we had full need. Then, as the day advanced, there were little extra gifts in the way of needed clothing, and we were thankful for all."

"And were there no dolls? No toys?" "No, dear, for dolls and toys were expensive articles in those days, and ours were all home-made and warranted 'to wear.' We were little country children, and we never missed that of which we knew nothing."

The little one lapsed into silence, gazing steadily and thoughtfully into the fire. "No dolls or toys," she repeated softly. "Ah, well, you were just as happy, though, because you were all there." And a spasm of pain clutched my heart as I thought how wide-flung by fate was the remnant of that merry band who, in the old days, were "Happy, because they were all there."

Christmas in the city's streets, crowded by the restless, pushing, jostling throngs—always restless; always pushing; always surging; always hurrying, eager-eyed and aggressive; yet trebly so in the Christmas season. The shop windows blaze with light and flare with color, filled with gaudy devices, and wonderful arrangements to draw and attract. Beautiful music strains out through the ceaselessly opening and shutting of doors; in some of the great stores whole orches-

tras or bands of brilliant players are performing hour after hour. Inside, flowers, souvenir cards, and wonderful attractions serve to draw the crowds. A living stream forces you along with its restless surging; you can not stop, if you would. Here and there a policeman forces a pathway through some densely packed crowd, massed about some wonderful display, and you are carried on with the tide. Fakirs encroach upon the sidewalks, forcing their cheap wares upon your notice; cheap-toy dealers confront you, everywhere, urging you to buy; the space about you seems full of cheap toys, novel devices, pastesweets, chalk candies, marvelous boxes, gloves, suspenders, mouth organs, bird whistles, collar buttons, picture books, circulars, cards, shoe strings, bunches of holly, wreaths of evergreen—a wild chaos of things which you don't want and would not have, which is yet forced into your hands and under your noses, until you dodge into some opening doorway for escape, only to find yourself in a still greater crowd, struggling to "get loose" from a pressure which is stifling.

The streets are a pandemonium, and the shops are no better. Inside, every inch of space is packed with eager would-be purchasers, and while you are trying to "make up your mind," bewildered and half-crazed by the wild bustle about you, you hear the warning cry "Look out for your pocket book," or feel some one jostle you in the endeavor to find your purse, and when you turn back to make your purchase, you find some one else has taken it and your place at the crowded counter, and you must await your turn again. You hear the tired shop girl's shrill cry for "Cash," and see the tired little child pushing, dodging and endeavoring to reach the caller, while the sharp ring of the pencil on the counter tells of the worn nerves of the saleswoman as she impatiently awaits the coming of her cash girl or boy. The floor walker calls sharply to the exhausted clerk as the impatient customer complains, or turns to leave, while the little cash girls worry through the packed masses with the purchaser's package and change. Overhead, there is a whirl of boxes or cars going to or from the bundle wrappers; the distracted clerk looking searchingly into the faces to find her customer, and the fear of making a mistake brings its strain upon her nerves until the mistake is made at times, and then "things" must be straightened before you are free to go your way. The noise, the glaring lights, the heat, the unpleasant aroma arising from the dense, perspiring crowd packed about you; your frantic clinging to your parcels that are almost torn from you by some struggler passing out, the worry about your pocketbook, the almost endless waiting, for the long, long time before your purchase and your change reaches you, brings you, exhausted to the end of the day, and at last you force your way out to the sidewalk, where another wait is made for the street car. You probably have to stand up and hang on a strap until your "crossing" is reached, and when you do get home, you are mentally, physically and financially exhausted, every nerve quivering, every atom of patience pressed out of you; irritable, aching all over and on the verge of hysteria because you just know that every one of your purchases will probably turn out "misfits," because you had to grab

what you could get, and got nothing you wanted. And you declare that Christmas shopping is one of the awfullest things you have to do, and end up by wishing you had never attempted the foolishness of giving.

Talks With Our Readers

A sister editor has just said to me, "It is no use trying to get up a good page for the week before Christmas, for not one woman in a hundred will have time to even glance at the paper, as every mother's daughter of them (almost) has waited until the last moment to begin their Christmas preparations, and now they are rushing frantically about from one 'special sale' to another, or working their finger-ends off at home, trying to do a thousand things where they have neither time nor strength to do anything properly. Half the women are on the verge of a nervous collapse, and the other half are over-doing, in the vain hope of 'catching up.'"

And I am afraid the picture is too nearly true to be pleasant, but we should consider the "one of the hundred," and question her to find out how she gets out of the crowd. A small company of such ladies met recently at the home of one of their number, and this question was under discussion. Some very good schemes were elucidated, and several methods for the prevention of the "hurry" fever were given out. But I think I must wait to tell them to you until I am sure you will have time to read them, and that will not be this week. One woman, however, was enthusiastic in expressing her approval of the plan of giving gifts that will at one and the same time convey our good wishes and accord with our pocket money. It is not yet too late for you to try it, on a small scale. In all the large department stores, and in many of the smaller ones, as well as in the widely distributed "five and ten cent" stores, and in a few of the most progressive village general stores, are to be found many really pretty and useful, as well as ornamental, articles, quite a few of which may be had for even as low as "two for five cents," and are worth it. If you had thought of it in time (as many women do) you could purchase materials at these counters from which many acceptable things might be made, at a very small cost in money. These things will be even cheaper, as soon as the Christmas whirl is over, yet still in time for belated presents.

Christmas Superstitions

When the holly and ivy are taken down at Candlemas (a Catholic festival celebrated on the 2nd day of February,) girls throw them on the fire to see if their lovers will be faithful. If the withered branches burn with a clear flame, and make a loud, crackling noise, the course of true love is supposed to run smoothly; but if they smoulder slowly, or the blaze dies out, the lover is growing cold and faithless.

In some parts of England, there is quite a contest between the men and women of the household as to whether the prickly or smooth holly is brought first into the house on Christmas eve, for the two kinds are called "he" and "she" respectively, and if the smooth holly is the first to enter the house, the "mistress will be master" for the coming year, and vice-versa. Similar superstitions were once attached to the holly and ivy, the former being considered a masculine, and the latter a feminine plant. Old songs

BETTER THAN SPANKING

Spanking does not cure children of bad habits. If it did there would be few children that would do it. There is a constitutional cause for this. Mrs. M. Summers, Box 118, Notre Dame, Ind., will send her home treatment to any mother. She asks no money. Write her today if your children trouble you in this way. Don't blame the child. The chances are it can't help it.