

The Silver Thimbles

and

The Happiest Christmas

BY CALLIE B. STEBBINS

Birth Offering Series Nos. 1 and 2

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INTRODUCTION.

We can not express in words how happy we were when first we presented the little children with this number of the Birth Offering Series. This true story, which tells of a little girl's unselfish act and the happiness it gave her, as well as those who loved her, can be understood and its teachings imitated by each one who is old enough to read it.

Would you like to know why we call it "Birth Offering Series, No. 1"? Let us tell you: Most of you will remember a corner in *Zion's Hope* in which is recorded from time to time the birth of each little one God sends into your homes. When such a notice is sent in, an offering for the new baby is sent with it. From the first, this money has been very carefully saved, and when we had nearly one hundred dollars we used it to pay for the printing and binding of this first little book, and this is the reason why we call it "Birth Offering Series, No. 1."

A series, you all know, means more than one of anything. "Are we to have more than one little book?" the children asked when first this one was printed. Then we could only answer, "We hope so." Since then, as many of you know, six others have been printed. In this volume and in one other, two books have been combined in one, so that in all there are now five books of the Birth Offering Series. We are still hoping to publish more for you, but if you want more, you will need to buy the ones we now have ready, so that with the money you pay us for them we can pay for having others made.

Buy the books, and when the little baby comes, ask mother to let you send a birth offering to the Hope for him or her, and we shall soon have a great many good books, written purposely for the little ones of the church. Will you do this? How nice it will be for each of you to have a little shelf of good books which are all your own and are written just for you.

The Silver Thimbles

Birth Offering Series No. 1

Lovingly dedicated to the memory of Helen, the sweet
sharer of her mother's pleasure in writing
this little story of her cousin's
triumph over self

The Silver Thimbles

“JUST three weeks to-day till Christmas,” thought Carrie Bell, as her fingers flew and the needle went in and out on a tray-cloth she was working in outline-stitch for mamma.

She sat curled up in the big chair by the parlor window, her favorite seat when she wanted to read or do fancy work, and of this she had done a good deal—neat little bits for her mother and the aunties—besides darning her own stockings, sewing on buttons, and sometimes helping with the mending.

Carrie had passed her twelfth birthday the summer before, and she was a natural little needle-woman; or, perhaps she seemed so because her mother had helped her so carefully ever since she began to use a needle.

She had pieced a stove-holder for Aunt Ida, when she was only five years old, with a diamond of red flannel in the center and the corners of black broad-cloth, and the stitches were quite fine and even, too.

Since then she had gone on learning and improving, and she really took pleasure in seeing how well she could do her work.

Last Christmas, mamma gave her a pretty work-basket, with cushions and pockets, and a pair of scissors for her own, so that she need not be borrowing of her, and this year she was to have a silver thimble.

It was of this that she was thinking as she worked, on that day, three weeks before Christmas.

She had a German-silver thimble that had been given her the year before, but she did think it would be so nice to have a silver one.

When she received this one, mamma had said that if she could keep it a year she would get her a silver one. How she had watched it, for fear she might lose it before the year should be over.

Sometimes she forgot and left it where she had been using it, but soon she had remembered to go and put it away in its little pocket in her basket. Once or twice she thought it was surely gone, but patient searching, with careful thinking as to where she had had it last, always brought it to light.

I think all this was teaching her so she would be more thoughtful with a silver thimble, and mamma thought so, too, when she wanted to try her for a year.

Now the year was almost over. Carrie worked faster than ever, as if she would hurry the days along with her stitches.

“All the girls have silver thimbles,” she thought, “and I shall be so glad to have one, too. Of course this one is good, but it will be convenient sometimes to have two; and then this will do for little Sister Addie before she gets old enough to have a silver one. Mamma hasn’t said anything about it lately, but I know she won’t forget; she never does if she promises anything. Perhaps she thinks I have forgotten, and she will surprise me. I haven’t, though. I have thought more about this than anything else

I would like for Christmas; maybe because I have tried so hard to earn it by being careful of my old thimble.”

A few days before Christmas, Carrie’s mother said to her:

“My dear, I want to ask you to make a sacrifice.”

“What is it to make a sacrifice, mamma?”

“It is giving up something we want ourselves, for the sake of some one else.”

“I don’t know of anything,” thought Carrie, “that I want so very much, except my silver thimble.”

And it was just this of which her mother was going to speak.

“I have thought for some time,” she continued, “that at this Christmas I would like to get a silver thimble for Aunt Evaline. You know she sews so much, and she has only on old brass thimble. I have not forgotten about yours, but, with other things that I have been getting, I do not think that I can get both. I will keep my promise to you, unless you are willing that I should get the one for her and let you wait for yours a little longer—perhaps another year. What does my little daughter say?”

A shade of disappointment passed over Carrie’s face as her thoughts ran back over her year of anticipation, forward to doing without the long-expected treasure, to the girls with their silver thimbles, and to Aunt Evaline with her brass one.

She considered it all; but presently her face cleared up and she said:

“You may get the one for her.”

Then her mother kissed her and said:

“I am very glad that my little girl did not give way to selfish feelings, but decided to act generously. I will get the thimble, and you may take it out on Christmas morning.”

Aunt Evaline was Carrie's great aunt—her mother's mother's sister. Cousin Ella was her only daughter. She was married, but still lived at the old home. She had for years worked at dressmaking, and, though Aunt Evaline was growing old, she, too, did a great deal of sewing, making nearly all the buttonholes and helping with the other parts of the hand sewing.

She was a lovely old lady; not, perhaps, in looks, but in other ways. Her hair was not smooth and glossy; for she had had a great deal of sickness, and pain in her head, and it had caused her hair to be dry and rough. She had often said that she admired smooth, shining hair, especially for an old lady. She had always hoped hers would be so when she grew to be old, and she felt sorry that it was not so. But no one else who knew her minded, for they forgot her looks by becoming interested in her wise counsel, and loving her for her just and generous soul.

And she was such a friend to all the boys and girls. In her busiest times she could always get them something good to eat, or tell them where to get it—a doughnut, or some bread and jam, or a piece of gingerbread.

Years ago she was a capital story-teller, but now she did not often feel able or have time to instruct and amuse her little friends in this way.

She could always give them good advice, though; and she knew how to talk in just the right way so that no one ever took offense at what she said. She seemed to know everybody's weak points, and just where they needed help the most.

Her heart was always tender for the ones who were not doing right, and she was always interested in any one who was sick, or poor, or troubled, even if only with childish troubles.

So you see there were more reasons than one why Carrie was willing to make this sacrifice for her.

Christmas morning came at last, and Carrie was a very happy little girl. Her stockings were filled with pretty and useful presents, her brothers and sister fared as well, and each enjoyed his own and all the others.

Carrie had made a pen-wiper for papa; for mamma, the tray-cloth; for her older brother, a bag for his skates; for the younger, a marble bag; and for the little sister, a crocheted dolly-cap and cape.

She was glad in seeing the pleasure with which these were received; glad in everything around her; and still it seemed to her the best was yet to come, and she could hardly wait till time to go with the thimble.

Breakfast time came, and you would have thought it a pleasant sight could you have looked in at the happy, orderly family group gathered around the table in the cheery dining-room, where a bright fire glowed, and the plants drank in the sunshine at the window.

It was a rule in this home that on Christmas morn-

ing they should all be dressed and washed, and their hair combed, before they came down-stairs to look at their stockings.

Papa and mamma thought they could all enjoy the time better this way; and then, if they lingered long over their presents, no one would be taking cold from not being wholly dressed, and there would be no scurrying around to get ready just at breakfast time.

After breakfast some of the neighbor children came in, and of course they had a merry time chatting and looking at all the new things. When they had gone the boys went out to play, papa was reading to Addie from her new book, mamma was busy up-stairs, and with her consent, Carrie started on her errand.

The air was cold and the wind blew, but she did not mind that. Her wraps were warm, and the wind only sent her long curls dancing around, and brought a little more red to her cheeks and brightness to her eyes.

It was quite a long walk; but she went skipping along, now and then putting her hand to her pocket to be sure the thimble was there.

Other presents for the family had been sent the night before; but this was a special one, and it could not go with them.

Carrie found the family in the sitting-room, all except Aunt Evaline; she was busy in the kitchen. So Carrie passed on through, after stopping a moment for the Christmas greetings.

Aunt Evaline was attending to something in the

oven and did not see Carrie, who came in softly and stood still behind her. When she did turn around it was a very happy face she saw before her, and a very cheery voice that said:

“Merry Christmas, Aunt Evaline. I have something for you.”

“You have? Well, wait a minute,” she said, as Carrie felt for her pocket, “till I wash my hands and get my glasses; then I will sit down and rest while I see what it is.”

When she was seated Carrie took the rubber band from around the little plush-lined box, took off the cover, and handed her the box where lay the bright new thimble.

“Mamma sent it, and she said I might tell you it is partly my present to you, because she had promised to get one for me and I told her she might get yours instead.”

Of course you want to know how Aunt Evaline looked and what she said.

We will hear what Carrie told her mother about it when she went home.

Eager to find her mother, she ran into the house and called:

“Mamma!”

“Well?” sounded the loving voice from the kitchen, where mamma was helping to get the big turkey ready for the oven.

“Oh, mamma!” she said; “I’m so glad you didn’t get the thimble for me. Aunt Evaline was so pleased. And just think, mamma, she said she never had a silver thimble in all her life before. You ought

to have seen her eyes when she saw it. She opened them so wide, and smiled; and then, when I told her why it was partly my present, there came such a solemn, earnest look in her eyes, and she took my face between her hands and kissed me; and she said:

“Carrie, dear, I am more glad of that than of all the rest, though I am pleased with the thimble. For I have never had a silver one before, and I have always wanted one. It is such a beauty, too. Tell your mother I thank her very much.”

The tears might have come into Aunt Evaline's eyes if she had been like most people, but for years she had never shed any tears.

When she felt very deeply there always came into her dark gray eyes that deep, earnest look which meant more to those who knew her than tears might have done.

Carrie, as we have seen, felt amply repaid for her disappointment.

But there was still a pleasant surprise in store for her because of it.

For, after Christmas, her mother in writing to Aunt Ida, told the story of the thimble, and she, enjoying it herself, read it to a very dear friend, who was also a friend of Carrie's mother, and Miss Jennie said:

“Wasn't that nice! I would like to get the child a thimble and send it to her at once; and I think I'll do it.”

In the small place where she lived she could not find one to suit, so she sent to Chicago for it, and in course of time it came,—one pretty enough to satisfy

the longings of any little girl with a desire for a silver thimble.

So it happened that one morning in January, when the mail carrier stopped at Carrie's home, he left a letter in a pink envelope, and a little square package, both addressed to her.

At noon, when she came home from school, she found the letter and package lying on the table in the sitting-room.

She hardly knew which to open first; but the package looked the most enticing. So, taking off the wrapping, she found a little box, and in it—a silver thimble.

“Why, mamma!” she exclaimed.

And mamma was as much surprised as she.

“Who could have sent it?”

“Read your letter,” said mamma; “perhaps that will tell.”

Carrie cut off the end of the envelope and drew out the pink tinted sheet; and this is what she read:

“*Dear Carrie:* When I heard of a little girl who was willing to give up that which she so much desired, and for a long year had anticipated having, I felt as if I wanted to reward her for her unselfishness. Not that she expected reward. No, indeed; but because she so lovingly and cheerfully gave up her thimble, and was willing to wait another whole year for it.

“That, dear, is just why I wanted you to have one now. As you use it, if you are ever tempted to be selfish, (and you know the temptation to selfishness comes to us all in many ways,) may the thimble be a

reminder to you that it always brings peace and happiness to sacrifice our own comfort and pleasure for others.

“The good book, which is light to our pathway, teaches us that ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ This is true in more ways than one, as I trust you may prove by a life of unselfishness.

“Work done and sacrifices made for love, are sure to bring a reward with the doing; and then, at the end of the race, will come the great reward.

“May you, dear child, so strive that at the last it may be said to you, ‘Well done.’ Please accept the thimble with love from,

“Your friend,

“JENNIE C.”

And now it was Miss Jennie’s turn to get a letter. It was handed to her through the little window at the post-office, and she knew by the writing that it must be from Carrie.

It was a very nicely written letter; for Carrie had had good training at school, as well as at home, and she was as careful with her writing as with her sewing. This is what the letter said:

“*Dear Miss Jennie:* I thank you very much for the thimble. It is such a pretty one, and I so much wanted one. Before Christmas mamma told me that she had intended to get me one, as she had promised, but that Aunt Evaline had no silver thimble, and she asked if I would give up mine for her.

“It was pretty hard to give it up; but when I thought all about it I was willing to let her have it.

“I took it out to her on Christmas morning; and

when I saw how pleased she was, it did me more good than twenty thimbles. She said that she never had a silver thimble before. How glad I was that I gave it to her.

"I didn't think of any one but mamma giving me a thimble, and did not expect it now at all, so it was a great surprise when this one came from you.

"I had some nice Christmas presents, and since you sent the thimble I have everything I wanted.

"I thank you for your kind letter, and will try to remember what you said about being unselfish.

"Your little friend,

"CARRIE BELL."

Do some of the children say :

"That's the way things always turn out in stories; the people get just what they want, in the end"?

We grant that it happens there more often than in real life; in fact we rarely see it happen so. However, this is a true story.

But, while it was kind in Miss Jennie to give the thimble, and pleasant for Carrie to have it, that is not the best part of the story. Now is it?

Are not Carrie's struggles with herself, resulting in victory, and the pleasure that followed, (her own and her aunt's,) the best parts to remember?

We read in the Bible that the things which are not seen are the ones which are eternal. Carrie might lose or wear out the thimble, which she could see and handle, but she will not lose the memory of the pleasure she gave and gained; or, if she should, the effect upon her life of her triumph over self will not be lost.

“Each victory helps us, some other to win.”

Our thoughts and the intents of our hearts are not seen, but it is from them that our characters are built; and these will remain with us to eternity.

“Fill up each hour with what will last;
For life above, when this is past,
Will be ripe fruit of this thou hast.

“Be pure and true in inmost thought;
From threads of purpose, deftly caught,
The warp and woof of deeds are wrought.

“Be kind in act and speech; one word
May soothe some heart by trouble stirred,
And be by listening angels heard.

“And heart and hand shall both be strong,
And life itself shall prove, ere long,
A prelude to the perfect song.”

CHRIST AND THE LITTLE ONES.

“The Master has come over Jordan,”
Said Hannah, the mother, one day;
“He is healing the people who throng him,
With a touch of his finger, they say.
“And now I shall carry the children,
Little Rachel, and Samuel, and John,
I shall carry the baby, Esther,
For the Lord to look upon.”

The father looked at her kindly,
But he shook his head and smiled:
“Now who but a doting mother
Would think of a thing so wild?
“If the children were tortured by demons,
Or dying of fever ’twere well;
Or had they the taint of the leper,
Like many in Israel.”

“Nay, do not hinder me, Nathan;
I feel such a burden of care;
If I carry it to the Master
Perhaps I shall leave it there.
“If he lay his hand on the children,
My heart will be lighter, I know;
For a blessing for ever and ever
Will follow them as they go.”

So over the hills of Judea,
Along by the vine-rows green,
With Esther asleep on her bosom,
And Rachel her brothers between;
’Mid the people who hung on his teaching,
Or waited his touch and his word,
Through the row of proud Pharisees listening,
She pressed to the feet of the Lord.

“Now why shouldst thou hinder the Master,”
Said Peter, “with children like these!

THE SILVER THIMBLES

Seest not how, from morning to evening,
He teacheth, and healeth disease?"

Then Christ said, "Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto me!"

And he took to his arms little Esther,
And Rachel he set on his knee;

And the heavy heart of the mother
Was lifted all earth-care above,
As he laid his hands on the brothers,
And blessed them with tenderest love;

As he said of the babes in his bosom:
"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven;"
And strength for all duty and trial
That hour to her spirit was given.

JULIA GILL.

The Happiest Christmas

Birth Offering Series No. 2

Lovingly dedicated to Class Number Eleven of the
Star of Bethlehem Sunday-school as
Numbered in the year 1891

The Happiest Christmas

CHAPTER I.

THEY talked it over in the teachers' meeting first. The superintendent proposed it and all the teachers were in favor of it.

It was a plan to remember with some kind of a gift, those for whom Christmas would lack brightness, either because they were lonely, or sick, or poor, or old.

Every member of the Sunday-school, young or old, was to have a part in it, and the work was to be done by classes.

On the next Sunday the lesson time was shortened so that the teachers might talk with their classes about it.

Some of the children were asked, "Why do we keep Christmas day?"

"To remember the time when Christ was born," was answered.

"Yes. And why do people give presents at Christmas time?"

"Because nearly everybody is in the habit of it," answered one boy.

Another said, "Because they love their friends and want to make them happy."

"Well, why did they get in the habit of it, and why do friends choose this time more than others to make each other happy?"

The children did not know just how to answer these questions, so their teacher asked them another.

“Has God given anything to us?”

“Oh! yes; a great many things; everything we have that is good!”

“There is one gift he has given us that is best of all. Can you tell what it is?”

“The gift of his Son,” was answered, and this was right.

“Now, what are the words in our Christmas carol that the angels sang when Jesus was born?”

“Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good will to men.

“Yes, the angels praised God because he loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save us. In this he showed his good will toward us.

“Jesus loves us, too, or he would not have been willing to leave his Father’s glorious home, to go through this life that we may have eternal life, and to die so that our bodies may be raised from the dead as his was.

“Jesus came to show us how to live; to teach us how we can have peace, and that we ought to have good will to one another.

“But many people, though they know that Christmas is kept in honor of the birth of Christ, still forget that when they give, it should be with love and thankfulness to God for his great gift, and because they, too, want to show ‘good will to man.’

“How many think that Christmas is the only time for us to show good will to one another?”

No hands went up.

“You think there are other times. Yes, and we all think so, too. What does the verse that we learned tell us about doing good? Let us say it all together.”

These are the words they repeated and they are good ones to remember :

Do all the good you can,
In all the ways you can,
To all the people you can.

“This is the way that Jesus teaches us to do, and there is no time in the year when we ought not to use every chance we have for doing good.

“But doing good is not always in giving. We may sometimes do good just by being pleasant and willing to do as others would like to have us do.

“We need to have kind feelings, or good will to all, and this will lead us to see where we may do good.

“But while we should always be thankful for the Savior, and be seeking to do good, yet it is a pleasant way to keep one time in the year with special remembrance of the things which happened at the birth of Christ, and as a time of giving, because at that time God’s wonderful gift was given to man.

“If we have the right thoughts about these things they will help us to be more anxious all the year to please the Lord and give happiness to others.

“How many of you think more of what Christmas will bring to you than of what you will give to others?”

Slowly the hands were raised till all were up.

“You find it very pleasant to think of, don’t you?”

They all agreed that they did.

“Well, when you have learned to think more of giving to others, than of receiving, you will find this to be still greater pleasure. Jesus says, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

“Each Christmas the most of you give to members of your own families, and they in turn give to you.

“Now, this year we want you to let your good will reach out to some beside your own friends. We want each one of you to help in giving pleasure to those who are not very likely to have much to make the day a happy one.

“Every class will be asked to do the same. And all together, who knows how much we may add to the Christmas cheer that will be enjoyed in Lamoni.

“We would like you to talk with your fathers and mothers about whom you shall give to and what you can give.

“In making choice of some one to give to, try to think of those who will have the least to cheer them.

“I know of some little girls who had no presents at all last Christmas. We hope that this year there will be none like that here, but if you know of any who might, they would be the very ones for you to choose.

“Then again; I know an old grandma who lives all alone, and who is seldom able to get out to see any one.

“Once she had children of her own, but now they are all gone, and sometimes she is very sad and

lonely. When Christmas comes she feels so more than ever, because of the good times they used to have when all the family were at home.

“I think that the sight of some children’s faces in her home, with some little gift that they might leave, would warm up her heart, and make her glad that she was not forgotten.

“Let the gift be your own as much as possible; either of your own work or your own earning, or of something which belongs to you.

“But I have not asked you whether you would like to give in this way, and we do not want any to give unwillingly. It is the cheerful giver that the Lord loves.”

“I would, I would,” they all said, eagerly.

“Well, then, talk it over at home, and come to my house on Wednesday afternoon and we will plan what we will do.”

All of the classes arranged to meet at some time during the week, for they needed more time to talk than could be spared from the Sunday-school hour.

Then the teachers had to talk together and get advice from the superintendent, so that all the classes would not give to the same ones. But finally all the plans were made.

Some classes put money together and bought one or more presents with it. Others gave just the money. Still others got together a basket of good things for Christmas dinner. And there were yet other plans.

One class of little girls were to select some child

and make, or buy, or choose from their own treasures, such things as they could give.

They met with their teacher on Monday after school; and we are sure that you would like to know of all that they did.



CHAPTER II.

THERE were seven of them, all about the same age, from ten to eleven.

Not long after school closed they were all there, seated around their teacher.

They had a whole host of names of children for whom they wished they could do something. But their hearts were larger than their purses, and they could not give to all. So each chose one family and was to give to one or more of them.

One wanted to give a toy, another had a doll to spare, and would dress that to give. One would like to make one thing, another something else.

The teacher took the name of each child, then the names of the children to whom they would give. Then she wrote what it was that each would make or give.

When this was done, and she saw that it would not take very much work to do what they had agreed upon, she suggested something more for them to do.

She said, "Sometimes the children get all the Christmas presents and the mammas are forgotten.

“Now, wouldn’t it be nice for you each to make a pincushion, or a fancy holder to use about the stove, for the mother of each house where you go?”

They all thought that it would, and they would like to do it, but they did not know how.

So Aunt Mary, as she was lovingly called by her pupils, said that she would show them.

She told them to ask their mothers for some bright pieces, either of silk, plush, or wool, a square of calico to baste them to, and some bits of floss to work them with.

Then they were to ask permission to come to her house again on Saturday afternoon.

The appointed time brought them all together again.

What a happy group they were, as they sat around their teacher, some on chairs, some on footstools.

She showed first one and then another, and it kept her busy to pay attention to all as they asked:

“Is this right?”

“Shall I put this piece next?”

Little ripples of laughter kept bubbling up, and sometimes they all joined in a hearty laugh over their mistakes.

Such funny work as they made at first!

There were not many pieces put on that did not have to be taken off, sometimes more than once.

Some were puckered, some had corners sticking out, some were not turned under at the edges. Some were wrong in one way and some in another.

It was encouraging to their teacher to see with what earnestness and perseverance they worked,

and how good-naturedly they sewed and ripped and sewed again.

For a time she almost gave up, and thought they would not be able to do it themselves, but at length she began to see improvement, and after awhile she saw that they were doing nicely.

So, by showing and praising and encouraging she felt, as the twilight drew near and it was time for them to go home, that the afternoon had been well spent.

The children declared that they had had a delightful time. They had learned how to make "crazy patchwork."

But this was only getting ready for the far happier days to come.

As Aunt Mary bade them good-bye she told them how to finish their work, and added,

"Now if you need showing, ask mamma, or come to me, but be sure you do it all yourselves."

When their work was finished they were to bring it to her and she would keep it until Christmas morning.

Then they were to meet there again and she would look at their work and label it for them, and all together they would go from house to house and leave their presents.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was one little girl, who, though she enjoyed the afternoon with the others, was still not quite so happy as the rest of them.

But she might have been much more unhappy if she had not struggled bravely with her feelings.

The trouble came about in this way, and she was not at all to blame.

Her mother had not so much faith as her teacher had in what little people can do; or rather, she knew what a task it was to show one of them how to do such work, and she thought that it would be almost more than one person could do to attend to so many and get them so that they could do the work well enough to use. She thought it would be asking too much of Aunt Mary.

She did not know what wonders the patient teacher and the persevering children could accomplish in one afternoon.

So, when she was getting the pieces ready for her little daughter, she chose some strips of ribbon, partly because they were brighter than other pieces that she had, and partly because they would not need to be turned under at the edges.

Then she found that they just fitted the square of calico by putting the longest across from opposite corners and the shorter ones graded down to the other corners.

This she thought would be better than to try to make crazy work, and would do very nicely for a holder.

She pressed the pieces and laid them in place,

and then, as it would take but a minute to do it, she took needle and thread and fastened them on.

"But, mamma," said the little girl, "Aunt Mary wanted us to do it all ourselves, and we were going to make crazy work."

"Well, dear," replied her mother, "I thought that crazy work would be hard for you to do well, and this will be all right for a holder. But perhaps I ought not to have basted on the pieces."

She did not cry and say, as some children might have done, "I'm not going to have it that way. That isn't the way my teacher wants me to have it."

She was used to taking her mother's way and nearly always her way was best.

So she kissed her mother and ran away bright and happy, except for a lingering doubt about having any of the work done for her.

Her mother thought what a pleasant time they would have working together, little thinking what a trial she had caused for her.

Of course, when all the other girls were having such a merry time getting their pieces in place, she could not help wishing that she were doing the same. But she laughed with them when they had to rip and do their work over.

Her teacher was not pleased that she had had help with her work. This was hard for her to bear, for mamma did it and she couldn't help it.

She had to wait until Aunt Mary got the other girls started before she could show her how to do the stitching with the floss.

When she got to work, one of the girls said:

“O, she’ll get hers done first, because her piecing is all done.”

To this Aunt Mary replied:

“Well, it won’t be half so nice. Yours will be all your own work, and crazy work is ever so much prettier than straight stripes.”

She said this to encourage those who were having to work so much harder, not knowing how it was hurting this child, who was really very dear to her.

Just then some one said that the room seemed cool, and they found that the fire was getting low.

This little girl, with a lump in her throat, rose quickly and said:

“I’ll get some coal, Aunt Mary.”

“I went fast,” she said, telling her mother all about it after she got home, so that no one else would get to do it, for if I had stayed in just then, I couldn’t have kept from crying. I cried a little out in the coal-house, but nobody knew it.

“Then when I went back the girls were having such a good time that I laughed and had a good time too.

“But, mamma, for awhile I felt just like throwing it in the fire. Then I thought that wouldn’t be right.

“But I didn’t like to have Aunt Mary talk that way, and I wish you hadn’t fixed it for me. All the other girls are going to make pincushions, and I could have done it just as well as they can, and it will be all their own work, and mine won’t.”

As she talked about it now, it seemed to grow worse and worse, until her heart was so full that she could not keep from crying any longer.

She leaned her head against her mother, who hugged her up close and said.

“Mamma is so sorry.”

While the child had talked, her mother had been thinking and struggling with her feelings in almost the same way that the child had done.

She loved her little girl so much that she could not bear to see her troubled in this way.

She, too, really felt tempted to burn the piece of work which lacked so much of being what was wanted.

But what good would that do? And had she not a few moments before said:

“No, dear, that would not be right, and I am glad that you did not yield to the temptation.”

She began to think that the teacher was altogether at fault, and said to herself:

“She needn’t have talked that way to the child. She might have given her some other pieces and let her commence like the rest.”

Then she thought:

“She couldn’t be expected to do that. She wouldn’t know whether I would like her to make the change. I suppose she was disappointed that any of them should have help. And then she was so busy with them all.

“No, it is my own fault. But what can I do to make things any better?”

When she spoke again she said:

“I am very, very sorry that I made such a mistake.

“I can see now that Aunt Mary’s plan was a nice

one, and it was good of her to be willing to help you all.

“It is too bad that any of the class should be kept from doing as she asked. But you were not at all to blame.

“I know you will forgive mamma, and Aunt Mary, too. When she spoke as she did, it was to show all of you how much better it is to learn to do things yourselves.

“This is a disappointment such as we sometimes have to bear. Now, will you try to take it patiently and be cheerful again?

“You may finish the holder for some one else. And how would it be to make an apron in the place of it? I know you could do that all yourself, and do it well.”

The old lady to whom the present was to go had had rheumatism until her hands were so badly crippled that it was hard for her to sew, and so they decided that this would be the very thing.

They bought some light calico, white, with a little black figure in it, and during the next week the apron was finished.

In the pleasure of making it, and feeling sure that the lady would be pleased with it, every shadow of sorrow was chased away.

So this child was ready with the others to have part in the joy of Christmas giving.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day before Christmas, they or their mothers brought their gifts to the teacher.

One mother said, as she began to unwrap her little girl's cushion:

"I want you to see how nicely Clara has done her work. It quite astonishes me, for it is the first fancy work she ever did."

Miss Mary said:

"Please don't open it. I promised the children not to look until all of them are here. Then I will look at their work and praise them as they deserve."

So the parcels were put away to wait until morning.

Morning came, clear and cold. During the night just enough snow had fallen to make it seem like Christmas. And the children had caught the spirit of the day.

They came skipping in, and wishing Aunt Mary "a happy Christmas"; they handed her a package, saying, "Here is your Christmas gift."

Carefully taking off the paper, she found a pretty glass globe for flowers. This was from all the class.

Then there was a nice little basket for spools or cards which one member of the class had made for her.

How pleased she was to know that the dear little ones had so lovingly remembered her!

The parcels were all brought out and, one at a time, opened, examined, and praised.

And indeed they deserved to be praised. Any one seeing the work would never have guessed that children of their ages had done it.

The apron was a surprise to them all. The little girl explained:

“Mamma let me make this so that it would be my own work.”

“Did you do it all yourself, dear?” asked her teacher.

“Yes, ma’am; every stitch. Mamma wasn’t sure whether I could get the gathers just right, but I tried hard. And I scratched them, too.”

Each child was called to see how even the hems and the machine-stitching were; and to look at the gathers which were so evenly laid. All the work was done so neatly that no one could find any fault with it.

Each of their gifts was labeled, to show from whom it came.

The label also bore these words:

STAR OF BETHLEHEM
SUNDAY-SCHOOL.
CLASS NUMBER ELEVEN.

To this the teacher added that the work was all done by the giver.

Then she labeled some things which she wished them to deliver for her.

When all were wrapped and ready, she said:

“Before you go, I want to give you your Christmas presents.”

She took from the table for each of three new scholars, a pretty handkerchief and a string of beads.

To the other four, who had been in her class for nearly two years, she gave each a silver thimble.

They were tied with pink ribbon to cards upon which were written words of praise for faithful work and good behavior in the class at Sunday-school.

Such looks of surprise and delight as beamed upon their faces!

They kissed Aunt Mary and told her over and over how pleased they were and how much they thanked her.

Soon they were ready to start. Their arms were loaded until each one looked like a little Santa Claus.

Then their teacher was left alone to think. What happy thoughts passed through her mind!

She thanked God for the loving, innocent, light-hearted children, and for these dear ones growing up to useful lives.

She prayed that their feet might never be turned aside from the path in which they had so early started to do the Master's service.

The time passed quickly, and before she looked for them, they were back again.

It was a very merry group that came dancing in.

They were so much at home at Aunt Mary's, that they did not need to wait for her to open the door.

Their cheeks were rosy, their eyes sparkling, and they were fairly bubbling over with joy.

Two or three of them exclaimed almost in the same breath,

"Oh, Aunt Mary! We had such a good time! This is the very best way to have a happy Christmas!"

What a pretty picture they made!

They all talked at once, telling how they marched two and two, and sang; how everybody was so pleased, and it had given them more happiness than anything they had ever done before.

It was nearing noon, so they said good-bye and went to their homes, having learned in a way they will never forget that "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

One of the girls had asked,

"Do you think mamma would care if I would wait until you go?"

Her teacher had been invited to eat Christmas dinner at her home.

"No, I think not. I will soon be ready," was the reply.

So the dear child kept up her chatter, telling over the pleasures of the morning.

Soon they were ready, and now again she was the bearer of a token of love, this time from her teacher to her mother—the same mother who a little time before had felt so grieved toward Aunt Mary.

On the way, both teacher and pupil agreed in saying,

"This is truly the happiest Christmas I ever had."

And again at night, when the little girl went to bed, she said to her mother,

"I never had such a happy Christmas before."

The children were happy in making others happy. Their teacher was happy in seeing them so full of joy, and in knowing that she had helped them to find where the secret of happiness lies—in unselfishly, lovingly trying to make others happy.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW days after Christmas, an old lady came in to sit awhile with Miss Mary, who asked her:

“Did you have a pleasant Christmas?”

To this her visitor answered:

“Oh, such a happy day! I want to tell you about it:

“In the morning I saw a group of little girls coming along the street.

“I watched them, for they looked so pretty; like a lot of little snowbirds, not caring at all for the snow and cold.

“They surprised me by turning in at our gate. Then came a rap at the door, and when I opened it, one little girl said:

“‘We wish you a Merry Christmas.’

“At the same time she handed me a parcel.

“They all smiled, and I thanked them. Then they turned away and went on down the street sweetly singing a Christmas carol.

“My husband was at work in the yard, and before he saw them, he heard them singing as they came.

“He said the music sounded heavenly, and he wondered where it came from. He thought of the angels who sang when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

“Tears filled his eyes as he heard the words, ‘Fear not, for unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord and King.’

“Then he heard parts of the chorus, repeating the angels’ words of praise: ‘Glory be to God; glory, glory. Peace on earth, good will to men.’

“As the children came in sight he watched them, with his heart full, and he thanked God for the thoughts they had brought to him.

“They had made him feel almost as if he had been standing with the shepherds who really heard the angels sing, that night when Christ was born.

“I watched them till they passed from sight, then I sat down and unwrapped the package, which held a nice apron.

“There was a ticket pinned to it, and on this I read that it was all made by the one who gave it.

“To think that that little girl should remember me in this way made me cry. I folded the ticket and laid it carefully away, for I want to keep it.”

And now she will prize it more than ever, for just one month from the day of the children’s visit, when they were all so bright and well, this little girl’s spirit left her body and went to the heavenly land, where there are no more frost and cold, and where all the days are more full of joy than the happiest Christmas here.

She was a loving child, and many people loved her. She was a little worker for the Savior, and all can be workers for him, who for his sake will try to live sweet, good, helpful lives, to learn his ways and walk in them and help others to do the same.

CHAPTER VI.

IT WOULD take too long to tell of all that the other classes did, but you may be sure that they had a good time, for when another Christmas came, they were all ready to take part in this giving by the school.

And this time the little tots were out. There were two big sleigh-loads of them, and their teacher let them take turns riding in the sleigh with her.

But first you will want to know what they had to give, and where they were going with it.

They had met with the teacher, at their Sunday-school room, to work and get the things ready.

It is not every primary class that has such a pleasant room to meet in as they had.

It opened off from the big Sunday-school room in the basement of the church; and Sunday morning, after the singing and prayer at the opening of the school, they marched in there two by two.

When they were all in, the teacher closed the door. So they were all by themselves, and they could sing their little hymns and have their lesson without disturbing anybody else.

There were so many of them that they could not have done very well without this room.

Sometimes there were as many as sixty.

And there were sixty little red chairs, just the right size, so that their feet could reach the floor.

There was a pretty carpet on the floor, and the walls were covered with nice, light-colored paper.

Then there was the stove and the table and the

blackboard, which was hung in a frame so that the teacher could draw it up where they could see, when she drew maps for them, and pictures of the things that they learned about in their lessons.

They liked their room, and when the teacher told them that she would meet with them there to get the Christmas presents ready, they were glad.

They met one Thursday morning. The whole class was not there, but there were Leland and Roy and Edna and Nettie and Zadie, and ever so many more than we can name here.

Most of us might wonder what such little people could do, but their teacher knew.

She was used to planning for tiny tots and she had thought up some of the nicest things for them to do.

They were going to visit all the old ladies in town.

Now, nearly all old ladies wear spectacles; so of course they like to have spectacle wipers.

Most of them read their Bibles, too, and a book-mark is very nice to have to keep the place.

So there were two things that they could give.

Then there was something else that would make the grandmas remember the little givers with pleasure many times, when their eyes would be tired with sewing and they could hardly see to thread a needle.

They took spools of thread and threaded a whole paper of needles to each one of them, and then fastened the end of the thread to the spool again.

In this way one could take a needleful of thread with one needle, pushing all the rest along, and so

have needles ready-threaded as long as there were any left on the spool.

Even the smallest children threaded needles; and they helped about the other things. They could hold the two round pieces of chamois skin for the spectacle wipers while the teacher tied them together and made the bow of pretty blue ribbon.

And they fringed the ends of the ribbon for the book-marks.

The teacher clipped along the edge of the ribbon as far up as she wanted it fringed, and they picked out the threads with a pin.

Wasn't it nice? The youngest were working for the oldest. And how they did work! They were just as busy as bees.

One little boy was working so hard threading needles that he got right down on his knees on the floor with spool and paper of needles before him.

His curly head was bent low over his work, and he had them nearly all on, when, some way, he hit the spools and pulled the thread so that all the needles slipped off.

"Oh! teacher, Albert has spilled all his needles!" cried some of the children, who were not quite so busy as he.

"Well, that is too bad," said the teacher.

He did not complain about it at all, but began anew, and after awhile had them all on again.

They had such a good time working together that they were sorry when it came time for them to go home to dinner.

They had finished the work, all but a little that

the teacher would do. There were so many of them that of course they could do a great deal in a whole forenoon.

But there were two little ones who liked the work so well that after dinner, when they had their wraps on to play out of doors, they started off to find if there wasn't going to be "some more sewing."

That morning, when they started out to make visits, (it was the day before Christmas, for that year Christmas came on Sunday) the teacher carried all the presents in a box, which she held in her lap.

Stanley was the smallest of all the children, so he sat on the seat between the teacher and the young man who so kindly gave them the use of his team and sleigh, and went with them to act as driver.

The rest of the children all sat down in the beds of the sleighs.

At most of the places where they stopped, the teacher chose two of the children to take the things in.

It was fun to watch them as they climbed out and ran up to the door so eagerly.

Some places they all went in, but the snow was deep, and the teacher thought that it was not best for them to get out so many times.

So, when the door opened for the two who carried in the presents, the rest called out from the sleighs:

"Merry Christmas. Wish you a Merry Christmas."

No two said it just alike or at the same time, and some got it "Happy New-year," instead of "Merry Christmas."

At one place, just as the door was opened to let the little ones in, there happened to be several other teams in front of the house at the same time, and the family thought that a whole procession of people was coming to see them.

They were very much pleased, and will long remember their Christmas visit from the Primary Class.

Many of the eyes that were dim with age grew bright with tears at sight of the tiny visitors with their welcome little gifts, and their cheery words of greeting.

They told the ladies what the things were for:

“These are to shine your glasses with, and this is to mark the place in your Bible, and these are to use when you can’t see to thread your needle.”

“God bless the little people,” said some of the grandmas; and so say we all.