It was Christmas Day. The snow was falling heavily in the streets. There was holiday cheer in the air. The Christmas bells rang out their message of gladness. The day seemed made for happiness.

Arline, who had invited twelve friends for Christmas dinner, stood at the front window waiting for her party to arrive. As she waited many sleighs flew by and happy voices rang out, but she saw or heard not, for she was lost in deep thought.

Arline had promised to give Dudley Grant her answer on Christmas Day, and although she had had two months to weigh this vital subject she had not yet come to a decision. Dudley was considered by all the first families as the most eligible young man of Arline's circle. He was a clean, good-looking, prosperous, healthy young man of fine family. If Arline had told any of her friends that she hesitated accepting this paragon they would have raised their hands in horror and cried, "What more does she want?"

She herself didn't know. That was the trouble. When he was not near she felt she loved him; but when he was with her often she became dissatisfied. Deep in her heart was a little uncertainty.

Once he had angrily kicked her brother's small tramp dog. This she could not forget. And then again, he made sport of her settlement work and her settlement friends. This she could not forgive. But she surely cared a great deal for him, whether the feeling was love or not—that was the question.

Turning toward the library table she tenderly toyed with the rich red roses that stood in the high Japanese vase. "He surely is thoughtful," she murmured.

"My love is like a red, red rose," sang out her small brother, with a twinkle in his eye as he passed through the room. "Say, Sis, can I be best man?"

A joyous confusion was heard and the merry dinner party came bounding up the front stairs.

"We're starved," cried Harvey. "We collected, one by one, as we came along—and we've brought our appetites with us."

"That's good news," laughed Arline with sparkling eyes, "for we have the biggest goose in goosedom for dinner and the rest of the family are going to Auntie's. Mother says we should leave nothing but the bones."

"But where is Dr. Keith?" asked Bernice as they removed their wraps. "He is the only one missing."

"Dr. Keith?" exclaimed Dudley in surprise. "Arline, why did you invite that man who lives in the settlement?"

"Because he is a friend of mine," answered the young woman simply. "He just telephoned, however, that he would be unable to come to our Christmas dinner as he had an emergency call. A doctor never can call his time his own, you know."

"I suppose not," asserted Dudley, with a shrug of his shoulders, "if he spends half his time with crying slum babies. This Keith cares more for his settlement practice than for all his millionaire patients put together. I wager this 'hurry call' was only to some little gutter creature."

Arline drew a long breath but said nothing.

The jolly crowd was soon seated about the beautifully decorated Christmas table. Fun rolled merrily on, but somehow for Arline there was a little rift in the lute of the words, "Only a little gutter creature," kept flashing across her mind.

In the middle of the dinner, as the laughter was at its height, the maid handed a note to Arline, remarking: "There's a little boy outside, ma'am. He says he'll wait for an answer."

Arline opened the folded paper and read:

"My Tiny was thron don by a automobeel. Can you com back with Jimmy. She cris for you. Pleas com. I'm sory on christmus to ask you. She is vere sik.
respectfully Mrs. Huggins."

Without a moment's hesitation Arline arose and with a little tremor in her voice said:

"My friend Tiny has been hurt. She is crying for me. You all will forgive me if I go, won't you? You can have just as good a time without me, and Tiny needs me."

The guests, knowing her interest in her settlement friends, readily assured her that they would take care of themselves—all but Dudley Grant. He remained silent. As she went for her hat and cloak he followed her, protesting.

"It's all nonsense your rushing off in this way—spoiling our whole Christmas party. Besides, you promised to tell me something to-day. Can't you send one of the maids to Tiny?"

"Maids!" gasped Arline, opening wide her soft gray eyes. "Tiny doesn't want a maid. She wants me."

"Well, I want you too," stated Grant. "It's absurd for a hostess to leave her party. Quixotic. There is a thing as being too conscientious—"

"Good-bye, Dudley," said Arline, extending her hand, and there was a tone in her sweet vibrant voice that the man had never heard.

Before long Arline and Jimmy arrived at the tenement house. Jimmy led the way up three flights of stairs, through a long, narrow, dark hall and softly opened the door of a dreary little room.

When Mrs. Huggins saw Arline her face lit up through her tears and she said, "I knew you would come, honey, even on Christmas Day."

"I'm glad I'm here," softly answered Arline as she knelt down by the coarse bed and placed her soft, cool hand on Tiny's fevered brow. At first in vain she tried to quiet the child, but by degrees the little girl became calm, and late in the afternoon sank back on her pillow in a deep and restful sleep.

Then Arline, rising, saw Dr. Keith for the first time since she entered the room. As they tiptoed into the next room she said, "So this was your emergency call?"

"Yes, but you did more for our little friend than I could," he answered as he gazed upon her with deep, sympathetic eyes. "I knew you wouldn't fail us when Mrs. Huggins sent for you. God bless you, little woman." The doctor took both her hands in his and held them tight.

Then again the troublesome words, "Only a gutter child," flashed across her mind, and in answer the thought came, "This is a man," and all at once, as a beacon light from the darkness, she knew her own heart.

Turning away so as to hide her real feelings, she murmured, "And Tiny will get well?"

"She surely will," the doctor answered, coming close to her. "And now—as you were so successful with one patient, can you give your attention to another case?"

"Now? To-day? On Christmas?" Arline asked in surprise.

"Yes, to-day and every other day," Keith replied with a quaver in his voice. "You are the only one who can cure him."

"Who is he?" she softly asked under her breath.

"A man who needs you more than Tiny—more than any one else in the world—a man who loves you with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his might. Will you accept the case?"

"I'll try," murmured Arline, and as Keith opened his arms, without a moment's hesitation she nestled close to him. Then raising her radiant face she said:

"And on Christmas, too."

## Their Treasured Gifts

"There's usually one gift that impresses me more than all the others I receive on Christmas. It may be the least attractive one or it may be the most expensive. Expense has nothing to do with the impression it makes; it is the motive of the giver that moves me.

"I recall a little tumbler doily with exquisitely crocheted edge that came from a girl who formerly worked for me and of whom I had not heard for three or four years. I had never given her a gift nor had she so honored me before. Every time I look at the doily my heart is warmed."

The speaker was one of a group of women engaged in Christmas work.

"I agree with you," said another member of the group. "The expensive gift is as capable of inspiring the true Christmas sentiment as is the lowly one. The Christmas I love best to remember was the one which brought me my watch. I was eighteen, teaching a country school and sorely wishing for a timepiece. My brothers and sisters teased me about it. 'Susie's wishing for a watch,' 'Ever watchfully waiting,' 'Watch and pray,' and such nonsense they flung at me. You never saw a more surprised girl than I on Christmas morning when I found a little gold watch in the toe of my stocking! 'From an ever watchful family,' the card read and Mother explained how those little tormentors had been saving all the money they earned that year and supplemented by contributions from Father and herself, had enough to buy a watch belonging to an old lady who needed money worse than watches"

"Last year," said a third member of the workers, "a girl sent me a pretty breakfast cap. The ribbon had been carefully laundered. I almost wept over it for I knew how my friend must have wished she could buy new ribbon but not one word of apology did she send—our friendship was too sincere to need that. She sent me a token of love. It went straight to my heart and to my head as well, for I wore the cap she made in preference to a more costly one."

An elderly woman paused in her knitting. "I cannot recall any gift that uplifted me so much," she said, "as two tickets to a play which came enclosed in a Christmas book from my aunt in the city. I was living in the country then, working very hard, and as my children were small, I did not go to town more than twice a year. 'I'll ride out in the car,' my thoughtful aunt wrote, 'and send you and John back in it while I stay with the babies.'

"The book was the story of a woman with many obstacles to overcome and how she made good. Those two bits of cardboard and the book made a Christmas gift whose helpfulness lasted over many other Christmases." Thoughtfulness counts.

## Queer Christmas-Trees.

A Christmas-tree of solid gold, two feet high, and plentifully supplied with branches, is not an ordinary sight or fashion. Such is the description of a "tree" given by an Irish gold-miner to the late Pope a few years ago. The man had made a fortune in the Klondyke, and spent a large slice of it on the gift mentioned.

Very different was a "tree" improvised by some British sailors wrecked off the West Coast of Ireland a few years ago. Landed on an island, and unable to make the mainland owing to storms and lack of adequate boats, to help pass the time and also please the kiddies of their temporary hosts, the men resolved to make a Christmas-tree.

On that desolate spot—a mere rock in the sea—nether bush nor shrub was to be found; but after much searching they unearthed a derelict umbrella-frame. Even this was an alien to the island, but the sailors did not trouble to discuss its presence or manner of coming. They simply rigged a few extra "spars" to its "mainmast," and with scraps of green paper and rags converted the brolly into a passable imitation of a fir-tree. Odd pieces of wood were then fashioned into ships, Noah's ark animals, dolls, etc., and the tree duly decorated with the toys.

Rather more quaint was a tree annually set up by a lady in Philadelphia. One Christmas this lady's house caught fire during the night, the inmates being warned of their danger by the howling of a dog. As a sort of reward, for several years afterwards the animal's mistress made a tree in its honor, the "decorations" including beefsteaks and toy rats for the dog's consumption and amusement.

## Coming Events.

I just sit and close
My eyes
And rows of cakes
And apple pies
Go dancing past.
Brown turkey wings
And all the treats
That Christmas brings.

## Christmas Carol

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

"A Christmas Present for Uncle Bill."

## In the Good Old Days.

Years ago an English country gentleman's home was "Liberty Hall" on Christmas Day.

All the tenants looked to the "big house" for their jollifications, which varied according to the degree of their lord. At daybreak on the eventful day all the tenantry were gathered in the master's big hall, whither also were invited a sprinkling of the surrounding gentry. The strong beer was broached, and the black-jacks went plentifully about, with toast, sugar, nutmeg, and good Cheshire cheese.

If the hacken (the great sausage) was not boiled by daybreak, two young men took the cook by her arms and ran her round the market-place until she was ashamed of her laziness. The tables were never cleared, but remained constantly spread throughout the joyful season with huge sirloins of beef, capons, turkeys, geese, plum-porridge, plum-puddings, and mince pies.

All were welcomed, and ate heartily, which gave rise to the saying, "'Tis merry in the hall, when beards wag all."

Even the small farmers made big outlays, their fare consisting of "good drinks, a blazing fire in the hall, brawne-pudding and souse, and mustard with all; beef, mutton, and pork; shred or minced pies of the best; pig, veal, goose, capon, and turkey; cheese, apples, and nuts, with jolie carols."

## Christmas Cards.

Seventy years ago there was no Christmas cards. At the close of 1844 one lonely greeting was entrusted to the post office, in England, and from that one have sprung all the various and beautiful specimens that form such an important feature, both socially and commercially, of this season of the year.

This one Christmas-card is believed to have been sent by W. E. Dobson, R.A. He had a friend from whom he had received many kindnesses and attentions during the past year of which he wished to show his appreciation in some way.

After some thought he painted a small picture, symbolizing the spirit of Christmas, and sent it by post to his friend. It was a sketch of a family gathering drinking a toast to "Absent Friends," and surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of Christmas time.

This sketch was about twice the size of the postcard of to-day, and was painted on a piece of Bristol board.

## Rhymes For the Gifts You Give.

"They hadn't a single penny
And they couldn't borrow any,
And they owed exactly five cents for coal;
So they thought they'd run away,
But the tollkeeper did say,
"You must pay me two cents apiece for toll."

Do not you remember the old Saint Nicholas rhyme, and the downcast family of three geese standing abashed before the stern tollkeeper? Sometimes at Christmas we feel as poverty-stricken as the geese! There may be worlds of fun in a jolly Christmas with gifts limited to a cost of five and ten cents each.

For the many dear friends whom one desires to greet in some way at Christmas, the inexpensive postcards which load the postman's Christmas pack are deservedly popular. Still, the purchased card sadly lacks the personal touch. A letter bearing a message in the handwriting of the giver is more satisfying.

A verse composed particularly for the recipient is delightful, but an appropriate rhyme, copied in the friend's handwriting, is next best.

Here are a few stanzas that I have used:

With heartiest holiday greetings
I send this wee message, my dear,
And wish for a merry Christmas
And a blessed and glad New Year.

A little more serious was the following:

A loving thought of the old friends,
A loving thought of the new,
A loving thought of the Best of Friends,
Whose tender care of us never ends,
May Christmas bring to you.

This was sent to a chum of old days:

You're the very best kind of a very best friend,
You never fail doing your part,
And I wish you a very glad Christmas
From the bottommost depths of my heart.

This was written for one from whom I have received many favors:

The merriest kind of Christmas
Is my grateful wish to you,
With thanks for your kindnesses many
And the very nice things you do.

A combination of these seemed more appropriate for another:

It's loaded with hearty good wishes
This letter I'm writing to you,
And thanks for your favors so many
And all the dear things you do.
They are more than I ever could reckon
Though I tried all the days of the year,
May joy be your portion forever,
Is my very best wish for you, dear!

A girl named Mary perhaps smiled at this:

A merry, merry Christmas,
To Mary, Mary, Mary,
And a New Year full of gladness
Without a thing contrary

The Lady Bountiful of the community received these lines:

Merry Christmas to the kindest
And most helpful friend I know!
May she live long years to greet us
And to bless us here below!

To the friend who is sorrowful or suffering, a gift of flowers or a plant in blossom is always acceptable. These lines are in keeping:

A loving greeting for Christmas
And a thought that my heart holds fast!
As the flower to the bud unopened yet,
The future is to the past.

Sometimes it happens that the recipient has to know beforehand what the gift is to be, perhaps even purchase it. In such a case it restores not a little of the missing joy of surprise to receive it wrapped in an unexpected way with some such jingle as this:

Here's a s'prise,
Ope your eyes!
Within this package here
A gift for you is hid.
You never guessed what it would be;
I'm sure you never did,
Your hand the string unties,
Behold! The sp'rise!

Cash is cold and love is warm and a thought of love warms the heart and gives the real Christmas joy.

## Under the Mistletoe.

The harmless and good old Christmas custom of kissing under the mistletoe is a perennial source of discussion and dispute, but have you any idea how it originated? This is the story:

Balder, the Scandinavian god of poverty and eloquence—so says the legend—sought immunity from the violence of his enemies by extracting from everything, in earth, fire, and water, a promise to do him no hurt. Foolishly, he forgot to obtain this assurance from mistletoe: and Loake, his great enemy, on learning this, induced a hireling to shoot Balder with an arrow made from a bough of mistletoe.

Now, the other gods and goddesses, on hearing of the death of Balder—who was a great favorite with them—prayed that out of the love they bore him he might be restored to life. Thus, when this came to pass, mistletoe, instead of being an emblem of death, became the emblem of love, and, as such, was given to the goddess of love to keep and guard, whilst everyone who passed under the bough she held in her hand was expected to salute her with a tender kiss.

It is better to make and keep ONE New Year's resolution than to make and break a hundred.