

CLARA DELANO.

Late in the afternoon Clara put on her bonnet and shawl, and taking her little cross from the drawer, she went out to her mother that she must go out and procure some little dainties for Christmas. Hallie, who saw that Clara was going out, begged so hard to go with her, that she might see the pretty toys in the shop windows, that she consented; and soon brother and sister were wending their way with the throng that were crowding every street and avenue.

A few doors from the pawnbroker's to which Clara was going, was a large toy-shop, brilliantly illuminated, and so enticing and fascinating did they appear to Hallie, she pleaded hard that Clara would let him stay there and see the pretty Christmas gifts until she came back.

Clara could not resist his pleadings, and so stepped with him inside the door, and placing him where he would not be in the way of customers, she retired his brother a look, which she knew she could depend—that he would remain just where she left him until her return, and then left for the pawnbroker's.

For a while, so engrossed was Hallie in watching the pretty toys that the clerks so rapidly did up and delivered to the customers, and following with his eyes little boys and girls leaving the store, with papa or mamma, with arms loaded with bundles, that he thought not of himself and his loneliness.

But when a man entered, leading by the hand a boy about as big as himself, and when he saw the father buying a rocking-horse, and a train of cars with engine attached, for him—things which so delighted a boy—his little heart grew sad, and thinking of his lonely condition, he involuntarily said aloud:

"I wonder why the 'Christ-child' doesn't love poor little boys like me! If I were Kris-Kringle I would not forget a boy who has no father, and whose mother is sick."

A bright, blue-eyed little girl, some three or four years older than Hallie, who had been drawn to him by the earnest, longing look in his big brown eyes, overheard what he said, and drawing close to him, she pressed into his hand a roll of bank-notes and pennies, saying as she did so:

"You, the 'Christ-child' does love poor children."

Mrs. Lee looked on for a moment, hardly comprehending the scene. But when Lily had told her all, she gave her little daughter a look of approval, and bade the boy keep the money. She then asked him something of his history, and learning that he was fatherless and poor, and that his mother was sick, she took his name and address, which, thanks to Clara's careful thoughtfulness, he was able to give correctly; and then, having other purchases to make, she left, promising to call upon his mamma in the morning, and bring them some turkey and pudding for Christmas.

"I wonder if that isn't a little fairy and her godmother!" said Hallie to himself, as he saw them depart from the store.

Just then Clara entered, but suddenly stopped upon beholding the look of wonder and surprise in Hallie's brown eyes, the joy and delight depicted on his countenance, and his hand filled with bank-notes and pennies.

Hallie just now caught sight of her, and exclaimed:

"Oh, sister, see what some little fairy, or 'Christ-child', has given me for Christmas!" holding up the money which he tightly drew.

After a time Clara drew from him the whole story, and blessing the pure heart that had added thus to the happiness of her little brother, she helped him to count over his treasure, that she might know what he could obtain there-with.

"Five dollars," said Clara. "So you can buy a nice present for yourself, and then have enough to get mamma a pair of warm shoes."

"And you, too, must have a present," said Hallie, in a comical, fatherly way, as though feeling the importance of being the possessor of property in his own right. "Ah, you shall have a pair of warm gloves," said he, looking at her little bare hand red with the cold.

"Well, we shall choose your first, Hallie. Now what shall it be?"

"O, I want a little train of cars and engine, like that the man bought for his boy just now. He wound them up with a key, and they went round the floor like fun. Any chap would be glad of such a present, I guess," he said, with sparkling eyes.

Soon the coveted train of cars was in Hallie's possession, and no king ever felt richer or happier than he did as he left the store with his newly acquired possession.

A pair of nice flannel-lined shoes were then bought for mamma, and warm gloves for Clara, after which Hallie had still twenty-five cents in his pocket. Clara then made some purchases of sugar, tea, fruit, etc., and then the two wended their way homeward with happy and thankful hearts.

"Well, what has my little sister bought me for Christmas?" partly asked Charles. "She took Lily on her knee, and kissed her for me, and she helped her to undo her warm wrappings."

"O, Uncle Charles, I didn't buy you a present after all; for I saw a poor boy in the store with such a wonderful, jingling little face, who had no father and a sick mother, and was so poor he had not a penny, with which to buy anything for Christmas. He stood there talking all alone to himself, and the clerk said that the little 'Christ-child' did not love poor boys like him; and I felt so sorry for him, that I felt as though the 'Christ-child' wanted me to make him happy, and so I gave him all the money he had saved up in my bank for you. Do you care much, Uncle Charles?"

"Care, my blessed child; no, indeed. You made me the richest present you could, by thus making glad the heart of a little child. I would rather you had done this than have bought the most costly gift in the city." And kissing her tenderly, he had her tell him the whole story of the poor little boy.

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