The Christmas Guest.

FOR THE HOLIDAY REASON 1882-3.

"A MERBY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR-GOD BLESS US, EVERY ONE."-Tiny Tim.

AFTER CHRISTMAS.

epy eyes are softly closing with this fading Christmas day;

Little dimpled hands are folded—little forms are tucked away!

Little feet all day so busy-now so exquisitely curled;

Tother thinks the group before her just the prettiest in the world!

Bertie, lying like a picture, in his dainty little bed, With his "pretty Christmas playthings" close

beside his curly head! Books and pictures, tops and marbles, whistles, rocking-horse and drums-

Baby with her tiny stocking filled with choicest sugar-plums.

While sweet Minnie-precious darling! with her tumbled, sunny curls Falling o'er her "pitty dolly," robed in satin,

lace and pearls! Each is equally the sweetest, and we love them

all so well. Which of them we hold the dearest it would puzzle us to tell.

From our darling, fair-haired Bertie (the dear firstling of our flock), the precious, helpless baby, hardly old enough to talk.

Oft the mother-heart will question: "were we called upon to choose, Which of all the precious number we could best

afford to lose?"

Though I hold life's richest treasures, motherlove can ne'er lose sight Of the thousand sorrowing mothers who are left alone to-night.

Ah! how many hearts are bleeding! and what For the loved that blest their fireside only one short year ago!

How my heart goes out in pity for the motherhearts bereft-Some have given one sweet darling-others have

no baby left! And my present joy is shaded with the sorrow that must be

When our first sweet lamb is taken-one from out our precious three! And with all a tender mother's love and earnest-

"God in mercy spare our babies till another

BLAZER-HIS CHRISTMAS.

BY MARIE A. BILLINGS.

Tony and Blazer were brothers, Perhaps you never saw Tony, but I am certain that you knew Blazer. His business establishment was just off Broadway, on Canal Street. His stockin-trade consisted of a box of blacking, with brushes, a pair of lusty lungs, and an in-Soitesimal amount of "cheek." Blazer paid particular attention to the feet of the world in eneral, consequently he could well be excused for paying but little regard to his own face in

Tony took no part in the mercantile operaions; he remained at home.

The "home" consisted of a garret, not overspacious, either as to length, breadth or height, and furnished on the principle that "man wants but little here below."

Tony was a cripple. He had not always been a cripple; there was a time when he had run about as lusty and as impudent as Blazer.

"When wine is in wit is out." Sometimes that is not all that is out, either. Timothy Taylor-that's Tony and Blazer's father-came home one night with a large amount of spirits "in," and pretty near everything else "out." The evening repast was not such as pleased the critical taste of Mr. Taylor, hence the desire which arose in his mind to chastise Blazer. Blazer objected, stoutly. There was nothing

else handy to throw at the boy, and so the father flung Tony.

Tony didn't strike Blazer; he struck the foot of the stairs instead. It didn't kill him, hough; it only broke his back.

The law stepped in here, and kindly assigned Mr. Taylor "quarters out of town"; the gentleman through whose means Tony's back was broken was also kindly let alone. He was licensed to do it. Tony and Blazer were let alone, too.

Neither cared, though: every morning Blazer said "good-by" to Tony, and, with a cheerful heart, went down to business. Every evening, if trade was brisk, he went home whistling merrily, if business had been very poor, he went home soberly and silent until he was about a block away; then he began to whistle as cheerily as upon prosperous nights. So Tony

never knew the difference. On this particular evening Blazer whistled all the way home. It was not alone that business had been brisk; it was not alone that it was

Christmas Eve, either. Christmas Eve means a great deal of happiness to some people, while to others it brings simply the spectacle of other people's happiness. Blazer had seen the time when he had stood up on the pavement and hated all the world for going by him with such smiling faces. But to-night—ah! to-night—it was all different, for Blazer had a secret.

I am almost tempted to tell you his secret. I am afraid, though, almost, that Blazer would be angry if I were to let you know that, snugly incked away in an old tobacco bag, down in one corner of his ragged pocket, was, to him, a mine of wealth—an El Dorado—five dollars!

Five dollars !- I didn't mean to tell, but now it's out and can't be put back again-some in mickels, a few scattered quarters, and a great many coppers, but five dollars, nevertheless. How did he get it? I shall not tell you that. I might say how he had resolutely gone by the open theatre door—he who loved the lights and open theatre door—he who loved the night place will as any who went in; I could hint now he had denied himself the pleasures of the five-cent restaurant, contented with a crust instead; I might let you know of the really Spartan fortitude with which—but no, I shall not say a word, for Blazer would not like it.

Five dollars! what will it not buy for Tony? Apples, too—red-cheeked big apples; oranges.

oh, yes! Tony thinks so much of oranges grapes, figs, candy! what will it not buy?

How his eyes sparkle—how merrily he runs
up the stairs, to their great detriment and imnent danger to his own neck! how blithely

he calls out, "Tony, old feller!"

He always calls this when he comes in, and Tony always opens his eyes and says "Blazer." Then Blazer bends down to the bed and says,

"Old boy, how are yer?" And Tony smiles, always, and says, "All right, Blazer."

Something in Tony's voice to-night, and in his wan smile—such a pitiful little smile as it is!-arrests Blazer's laugh. He cannot tell why he stops so suddenly, nor why he comes up closer to Tony's bed and says, again:

"How are you, Tony?"
"Why, all right, Blazer," and Tony laughs.
Then Blazer laughs, too; his heart is light

luxuries; but to-morrow night-here Biazer's eyes shine in the gloom.

Presently he speaks: "Tony."
"Well, Blazer?"

"How would you like"-hesitatingly; he so afraid Tony will suspect—"how would yer like to hang up yer stocking, jest fer fun, you know, Tony?"

"Oh!"-Tony's eyes grow bright in the gloom-"'twould be prime." "Yer might pertend, you know, Tony; yer allers wor good at pertendin'. Yes, Tony "allers wor good at pertendin'," poor Tony; it was pretty nearly all he ever had,

the pretending. "Yes"—Tony is quite excited. "Say, Blazer, yer could roll up some papers, couldn't yer? 'Twould be jolly to open em in the morn-

ing and make belief they wor presents."
"Yes, indeed"—how the boy is laughing to himself; he is so afraid Tony will see or hear him. "You can pin it onto yer pillar, Tony; I've got the stockin'."

Blazer produces it forthwith, and Tony's weak, thin hands hang it at the "pillow." "Put in a big ball o' paper, Blazer," says Tony; "that'll be fur oranges and—oh, dear! I oughtn't ter tell myself "-with a little laugh, for Tony is in such good spirits.

As for Blazer, he is almost wild with excite-"Paper for oranges, indeed," he chulckes, inwardly, in the darkness. He is glad Tony

cannot see his face. After Tony is asleep he will go out and buy all these things. A popgun, too; he is sure

Tony would like a popgun.

And Tony is asleep at last. Blazer, waiting patiently beside him, slips his hand from his grasp and rises. It is chilly in the room—very chilly; he wonders will Tony be cold. It is Christmas Eve, too; Tony ought to be warm tonight. After a pause he takes off the ragged coat he wears and carefully wraps it about

He laughs again as he looks at the stocking. He will not care for the cold. Then he goes to the door, but with his hand upon the latch he stops. It is the remembrance of the wan. pitiful smile that causes him to pause; he is not a lad given to sentimentality-oh, no-but tonight something seems to move him; he comes back through the darkness, and, bending, softly kisses Tony. Then he goes out, down the stairs, out into the crowded street, with a heart

light as the garments he wears. Christmas Eve! The bustle and hurry, the shops and windows, so full of pretty thingsfairy worlds, almost. Christmas Eve, with the crowds of men and women-the Santa Clauses of every household. Christmas Eve, with the light and laughter, and the tinkling sleighbells, and the joy everywhere, the "good-will

to men." Blazer stands on the corner; he has the bag tightly grasped in his hand. "Five dollars!" He cannot help saying it over and over; he does not think, either, that

he is saying it aloud. "Five dollars!" First the oranges, then the apples. There is an evil-looking face coming up quite close to Blazer; there is a wicked smile upon the face, but he does not see.

"Five dollars—then the popgun—oh!" Blazer is jostled against the wall; there is only time for this cry; then he stands, empty-

Yes, it is gone-all gone. For a moment he stands like one suddenly turned to stone, then, with a cry like that of a wild animal, he starts ipon a mad run.

Jostling the people right and left, unheeding their imprecations, unmindful of threatening looks, he rushes straight into the arms of a burly policeman with a vise-like grip.

"Ah, ah! young man! Caught at last!" says "Bobby," and, "Hold him tight, policeman," cried another voice. Dazed and bewildered, smarting under the sense of his own wrong, dimly conscious of this

injustice, Blazer frantically kicks and twists, endeavoring to escape. In vain. The chains that bound Prometheus were not stronger than these encircling arms. "That's him," says some one, in a tone of

triumph-"that's the little wretch who stole my "Twas another feller!" cries Blazer, thinking only of his own.

The policeman laughs grimly. Blazer is marched off to the station-house. He is searched; it is short work-there is not much to search; no money. Well, but his excited accuser is positive. Blazer is shut up for the

He thinks of the stocking, the promised feast, the boy who lies dreaming of the morrow's "pertendin'." Alas! there will be not even that. Tony alone through all the night; Tony alone in the morning, waking up to find the stocking empty—poor, poor Tony! In the dim silence of the night the hot tears roll down the dirty face, and now and then a sob breaks the stillness.

Ten o'clock. Tony opens his eyes. "Blazer"—it is very soft, only a whisper, but Blazer always hears—"Blazer!" No answer. Tony lifts his head, only a very little, and tries to look through the darkness. Perhaps Blazer has gone out; he does not know

In the darkness, Tony lies and thinks. He thinks of a great many things. He wonders how the streets look; he sees the children with their happy faces; he hears their merry laugh; he counts the stockings hanging by the

Eleven o'clock. Tony listens to the great bell. How it peals out over the city !- how it echoes and re-echoes through the vast darkness! The children are all asleep now, tucked snugly in bed. Tony shivers a little. He is cold; he wonders if his stocking were hanging up among those bright-colored ones if the good Santa Claus would fill it, too. He wonders then if Blazer has put in the paper balls; then he thinks where is Blazer. He lifts his head again-only a very little this time. He calls again, "Blazer!" How very weak his voice sounds, even to himself, and his head feels so queer! Oh, and it is so lonesome here, alone.

Why don't Blazer come? A great sob rises in Tony's throat, but he shuts his eyes; he will Such a strange idea comes to him here. He wonders-do they keep Christmas in heaven. Twelve o'clock. Again the whisper-a faint whisper now-"Blazer!" Again the stillness. Then there comes a great light, as if a hundred bonfires-no, not that kind of light-a great golden splendor-a dazzling radiance. There is a tree-a great Christmas-tree.

river, too, flowing between it and the boy. There is a boat, and a face smiling upon him. He is not afraid. "Blazer"-a very faint murmur-"I'm agoing across. I'm all right." Silence again. The clock strikes one, and two, and three, four, five, six, but Tony does not lift his head again and whisper, "Blazer."

There are stars shining upon it. There is a

He lies quite still, with the ragged coverlid drawn up over his face, and the thin hands crossed under it. Christmas morning! Happiness, joy, "peace on earth." Blazer stands and confronts the man who last night called him "thief." There is a quiet

dignity about the boy-a dignity that the man "Colors seen by candle-light do not look the same by day." After a great deal of perplexity the man decides that Blazer is not the thief. "You are discharged," says the officer; but

the boy does not stir. A man comes in and says, "Merry Christmas" to the gentleman. They shake hands and begin

"You may go," says the officer, tapping him on the shoulder. "You had a night's lodging, anyhow." Blazer goes out slowly, his head bent down his eyes blind. He is thinking of Tony. Go home? No, not yet. He cannot say

and upon the steps he seats himself.

The choir are singing within—the grand old Christmas hymn. Now the singing stops, the

It is a beautiful sermon, all about charity and brotherly love. Many a hearer is enraptured; but Blazer does not hear it. There is an orange stand across the street. If he only had an orange-just one! He thinks of the empty stocking and Tony-poor Tony! The man's back is turned. If — Blazer rises. He sits down suddenly; a hot wave of shame comes rushing over him. He was going to offer Tony an orange—a stolen orange—Tony!
Blazer, Arab, bootblack, gamin, has the oldfashioned idea of honor and honesty.

"Oh, Tony, I'd bring it if I could!" It is a little despairing cry-a cry that comes to the ears of a man hurrying by. There is something touching in the cry. The man stops—comes back.
"Well, my man?"

Blazer looks up. He springs to his feet; it is the man who accused him of stealing his money. In the light of the morning the man looks different, too. It may be that he is a second

scourge. He stops the boy.
"Come," he says, "tell me all about it."
And Blazer tells. There is a suspicious moisture in the man's eves after the telling. He takes Blazer's hand and leads him away. Half an hour later two forms enter the dirty court-Blazer, with eyes shining, and a man

with a basket. Such a marvelous basket!-such wonderful things that it contains! "Bless me," pants the gentleman, as he climbs the rickety stairs, "we must get you out

of this !" Blazer opens the door and goes in. Silence, deathlike, answers. He goes over to the bed on

"Tony!" No answer. A great terror comes over Blazer. "Tony, old feller!" No answer yet. A pause now. After a moment Blazes bends down, and with a hesitating hand removes the coverlid from the face. Silence, strange, sacred. In a momen Blazer lifts his head.

"There ain't any use," he says, a dry, hard sort of sob choking his voice; "he's had his Christmas a'ready.' Ah, yes, indeed! Tony had just "crossed over." He is "all right."

A Sad Christmas.

A room is opened up, at one end of which are half a dozen musicians playing loud selections of popular dance music. Around the room are tables, at which sit men and women and a few mere boys and girls drinking, shouting, laughing and applauding the dancers, who mimic the revels of notorious Parisian gardens.

Gilding and glittering mirrors and gaudy paint make the room bright. The music is noisy, the liquors fiery, and the associations of the worst. Language that none of these boys have ever heard in their homes is repeated by one and another, painted women outdoing the oldest and most hardened men in their vileness of utterances.

"Look at this boy."

Suddenly breaking away from his companions on the ball-room floor, a young lad walked rapidly and unsteadily into the open air. He was hardly twenty years old, handsome and refined in appearance, but flushed with liquor and showing lines of dissipation already on his boyish face. Intoxication showed in his walk and in the dishevelled, untidy appearance. of his dress and his hair; but as he came into the clear starlight, and the fresh, cold night air struck his face, it seemed to recall his senses, and he looked upward with despair and remorse in his gaze. His thoughts were audible to the two who watched him, for the magic of Christmastide was spread over him by the

"Yes, it is Christmas," thought the boy; "and in the old farm-house on the hill they are looking for me to-night; Mother is there praying for her oldest boy, little thinking of what I have come to. Father is there, as proud as he always was of me, and all the children are looking for the Christmas box I was to bring them; and Alice is looking for me, too, God help her. And I-what have I done? I dare not go, for I cannot leave my books for others to examine. This is my Christmas, and this is what I have come to by "seeing life.' God help me, there is no hope unless I can win back what I have stolen."

A burst of song and discordant laughter, and the confused sound of glasses clinking and the ringing voices of young girls came through the half open door behind him, and he shuddered

and turned away. "This is what I have bartered my honor for," he muttered hoarsely, and he walked swiftly up the street to the next corner, and passing a policeman who stood on the sidewalk talking to a painted, gayly-dressed woman, he sprang up the steps of a brown stone house and rang the bell. An obsequious servant admitted him, after peeping through a hole in the door, and the boy passed into the parlor, where there were a dozen men playing faro.

"Give me two stacks of reds," said he, and

without more words he joined the game. He won and lost and won again; but Satan was dealing the cards and was not to be cheated of his stakes, and all he had was lost. Honor had gone before it. The unequal duel was over, and the boy reeled over to the sideboard and drank a glass of brandy. Who shall wonder that next morning his body is taken from the river to the Morgue?

The Christmas Clearing-House.

A well-known student of social science, who is at present one of the intellectual ornaments of Boston, has devised a plan for the regulation of Christmas gifts which seems to be perfectly satisfactory. He proposes that each person shall give away precisely the gifts which he or she wishes to receive, and that on the 1st of January there shall be a clearing-house established in each family, by means of which a general exchange of gifts shall be arranged. For example, A has a wife-B-and two sisters C and D. On Christmas he gives to his wife a box of cigars, to his sister. C a new male overcoat, and to his sister D a new meerschaum pipe. His wife gives him a new bonnet, to one of her sisters a diamond ring, and to the other a sealskin coat, and in like manner C and D give to A and B and to each other whatever objects C and D particularly wish for. Each member of the family professes to be delighted with the gifts received, and the joy of the household is unfeigned. A week later the clearing-house is opened and a general exchange of gifts takes place. A receives back all that he has given to B. C. and D. and each of the latter similarly receives back her own gifts. The final result is that A possesses the cigars and pipes which he coveted, B has a bonnet, a sealskin sacque and a diamond ring, and C and D are equally well satisfied.

It is now some eighteen hundred years since the world began to count its Christmas tides. If chronology had not blundered we might call the present by its actual numerical; but it is out by some three or four years in the annals of our Christian era. However, we are certainly verging fast toward the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ. Far back in time, but near by familiarity, seems that epoch—that point which divides the past into ancient and modern. As long ago as stretched the ages of Assyrian and Egyptian dynastiestwice as long as the rule of Rome-and still the story is as "household" to us as the things which happened yesterday. Who can conjure up, at a word, its scenes? Jerusalem! Nazareth! the long file of camels striding over the dark desert by night, toward the solitary star glittering so suddenly and with such mystery to beckon their swarthy lords from the Orient hills! Who has not made from all the old and new masters his own picture of the wayside inn at Bethlehem? The crowding pilgrims, the patient cattle, the traffic, the dust, the tumult; and in the midst of all the Christ and His Hebrew mother! And how quietly we receive, on the strength of a story made for all times and peoples, "the adoration of the Wise Men." We never wonder to find those grave and reverend seniors clad in early Italian or mediæval costume, presenting, on bended kneea salutation unknown to the East-jewels and

confections of the manufacture of the "streets of the jewelers" at Florence, or the Don Platz of Cologne. What, if under porticoes, which the Romans only built, horses are waiting which the Magi would not ride; and the Madonna smiles upon the wistful travelers in a Greek "peplus," her features and the features of her divine child profoundly European? What of all this? We are no more disconcerted than to know that the three wise men died and were buried at Aix-la-Chapelle. We listen to the tale like children, who hear an under-meaning in every word of their narrator's story. Beyond and behind it all is that eternal revelation, that ineffable message of love, which is the heart and soul of the religion which sprang from the manger and blossomed on the cross. World's wisdom falters in the presence of that truth which the best of us can only half comprehend. Tell it as ye will, Signori, the painters! Tell it as ye list, Monsignori, the preachers! At this season of Christmas we shall listen as to our children, who say that on the Christmas Eve the dark-eyed oxen talk together in the stall, and the bird who stained his breast red with chirping on the cross sings all the night long in the fir thicket. What might not be. indeed, in picture or reality, on the anniversary of the night when the shepherds tended their flocks by Jordan, when they heard, or seemed to hear, out of heaven that voice which frighted

Pan from his Greek forests, and Apollo from his oracles? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Divine ambassage !- august and awful utter-

ance!-sounding down to all time and languages the diapason of the harmony of heaven and earth!

There are people that tell you, says Charles Dickens, that Christmas is not to them what it used to be; that each succeeding Christmas has found some cherished hope or happy prospect of the year before dimmed and passed away; that the present only seems to remind them of reduced circumstances and straightened incomes_of the feasts they once bestowed on hollow friends, and of the cold looks that meet them now, in adversity and misfortune. There are few men who have lived long enough in the

world, who cannot call up such thoughts and

Christmas Time.

day in the year. Then do not select the merriest of the 365 for your doleful recollections, but draw your chair nearer the blazing fire-fill the glass and send round the song-and if your room be smaller than it was a dozen years ago, or if your glass be filled with reeking punch instead of sparkling wine, put a good face on the matter and empty it off-hand and fill another and troll off the old ditty you used to sing, and thank God it's no worse. Look on the merry faces of your children, if you have any, as they sit round the fire. One little seat may be empty; one slight form that gladdened the father's and roused the mother's pride to look up may not be there. Dwell not upon the past; think not that one short year ago the fair child now resolving into dust sat before you. Reflect upon your present blessings-of which every man has many-not upon your past misfortunes, of which all men have some. Fill your glass again with a merry

Chrstmas Tree Cultivation.

face and contented heart. Our life on it, but

your Christmas shall be merry, and your New

Year a happy one.

Plant your tree in a small washtub, filled in with brickbats, or a hod of hard coal, or anything that is heavy and will keep it in place, and cover over the tub with a gayly-striped afghan, or a fur robe, or a flag, and upon this base many of the larger articles, such as books, desks, etc., can be arranged. The children can manufacture many beautiful decorations for the Christmas tree, in which they will take quite as much pleasure as if they were from the fancy shops. With a few sheets of gilt, blue, scarlet and silver paper cut into tiny strips four inches in length and half an inch in width, you can make long chains to entwine from bough to bough of the tree. With a bottle of mucilage paste the two ends of the strips together until half of them are made into rings; then make up some more by slipping one end through two rings and joining them together. Let the three rings become dry and then join them into four garlands. Suspend around the outer branches of the tree from top to bottom. Twenty yards will be needed to trim a large tree, twelve for a small one.

If you possess a broken looking-glass carry it to a glazier and have it cut into bits three inches by two. Paste a bit of brown paper over the back of the glass and bind the edges with strips of gilt or scarlet and blue papers. and paste a bit of ribbon or paper at the top to suspend them from the boughs. You cannot have too many tiny mirrors.

Little lace bags made of bobinet lace or wash illusion, by running them together with scarlet, blue, and gold colored worsteds, and using a bit of it for a string to draw them together, are also very pretty and desirable when filled with nuts, raisins, and sugar plums for the children. | blessed as we are.

Ring your Ch "Peace on earth, good will to men," Give to Christ all glory. Ring, ring out from steeples high, Send your message to the sky.

Ring, ring, ring, ye Christmas bells, Ring a kindly greeting To all mankind, for on this day Warm hearts and hands are meeting. "Peace on earth, good will toward men," King it once, and once again!

Happy be the Christmas songs Which our hearts are singing, Keeping time to merry bells From tower and steeple ringing. 'Merry Christmas !" through the land, Love and peace go hand in hand.

FILLING THE STOCKINGS.

Pussy got into the house somehow, just as the least little streak of morning light was beginning to peep through the window curtains, and stole up stairs. She jumped upon the bed, and rubbed her cold nose against Lill's face, and

Lill sprang up in bed, for it came to her like a flash, "It's Christmas day!"

"Bessie, wake up! Merry Christmas!" she cried, and in half a minute four little bare feet were pattering down stairs to the sitting-room, after the Christmas stockings. They hadn't a doubt of finding them full.

Santa Claus had never forgotten them yet.

You can imagine, then, their dismay when each little girl clasped a limp and empty stocking, with not so much as a sugar-plum to fill out the toe.

They ran to mamma's bedroom to pour out their complaints.

"Santa Claus forgot us!" cried Lill, with starting tears. "He didn't bring us anything !" said Bessie, throwing herself across her mother's feet in an

agony of grief. "I think it's too bad!" said Lill. "He's real mean. I'll never like him again !"

said Bessie. "Oh, go back to bed," said mamma. "You've got up too early. How do you expect Santa. Claus can always get round before daylight? There are such numbers of little boys and girls, the wonder is that he gets round at all. He'd never forget you, I'm sure. Go back, and curl down in bed till it's really light. Then get up and dress yourselves nicely, before you come down, and you'll see what you'll see.

Rather disconsolate, the little girls went back to bed. "You needn't feel so bad, Bessie Bradley. Haven't you found out more'n a hundred times,

that mamma knows about things better'n we "I ain't feelin' bad, any more'n you are! and

Santa Claus is a comin' in 'bout nine or eight minutes," said Bessie. While waiting for daylight they talked of the presents they hoped to have, and as soon as the sun peeped above the eastern horizon they were

up, and putting on their clothes as quickly as possible, went down stairs. There was nobody in the sitting-room. A fire was burning in the grate, and the stockings. hung against the mantel, but they still looked

They were not near enough to be sure they were empty, when a loud "Toot! toot!" sounded from somewhere with a jingling of bells, and a tramping of feet.

"He's coming! Oh, Lill Bradley, old Santa's a coming!" said Bessie, clinging to her sister's skirts. Lill held her breath, and said nothing. The door flew open, and in bounced Santa-Claus, sure enough! He wore a very furry coat, and a red cap, high and pointed at the top, and bound with fur. His eyes were hidden behind great silver-rimmed spectacles, and his hair and beard were long, and white as snow.

and Bessie and Lill sidled up to her, and caught each one of her hands, feeling half afraid of the queer, "jolly old elf," and then stood, silent and watching. The great pack upon Santa's back didn't seem to be empty yet, and there was packages peep-ing out of every pocket, out of the breast of his

Mamma came out of the bedroom just then,

coat, and even out of his sleeves. He seemed in a tearing hurry. "Whew! Whew!" said he. "This is the first chance I've had to take breath since I started out last night. So many youngsters to visit this year! I thought I should never get round. Whew! how hot it is here. Well, let's see!"

the rug, and began rummaging vigorously among the packages within it. "Only two stockings to fill here, and little ones at that. I've lots of presents left over." He drew out a package, held his head on one side with a funny little grimace as he peeped into it, and then thrust it into Lill's red

He whirled the pack from his back, down on

stocking. "That's a doll, I know!" whispered Lill, squeezing her mother's hand. A similar package went into Bessie's blue one. Then other, smaller packages, till the stockings

would hold no more. All the time he worked he kept jerking out funny little speeches about the children and their wants, as if he knew all about them. Lill and Bess were in state of joyful excite-ment. Lill thought there was something familiar about the voice, or the motions, or

something; she couldn't tell what. "I believe I've seen him before! Else I dreamed I did! Else he's some like father!" she whispered. Her mother laughed aloud at this. It made old Santa Claus look up from his work, and he

seemed to espy the little group in the corner for the first time. "Bless my stars!" he ejaculated, beginning to gather up hastily from the rug the parcels that had fallen out of his pack.

"Bless my stars and stripes! Folks mustn't see me about this business!" He threw his pack over his back, and then putting his hands deep in his side pockets, drew them out full, and a shower of sugar-plums pelted the little girls, as he hurried out of the

Just as he was going he threw a big package at their mother, saying,—
"That's for the old lady, there! Came pretty near forgetting her!"

Lill knew the voice in which this was said. and cried out,-"It's papa! It's papa!"
They sprang after him, and led him back into

the room, in laughing triumph. They took off the pointed cap and the blue spectacles. They brushed the flour from his-eyebrows, and rubbed the red from his cheeks. They robbed him of the pillow that had made him look so "chubby and plump," and the gray wig and beard that made him look so venerable. And when they came to examine the contents of the stockings they were more than ever delighted to have for a Santa Claus their own. dear father.

On CHRISTMAS DAY.-Let us assemble about. the festive board on Christmas Day with joy and happiness. Let us enshrine the day in our memories and make it another star in our sky. While we enjoy the hospitality of our own home, let us remember those who are not