

their astonished eyes nearly popping out of their heads, said, "Yes, dear Little People, you can understand now what a fix I was in, when you see what has to be sorted and packed before tea-time to-night. And that's what you're going to help me to do. I've arranged all the REQUESTS sent to me from Earth, into Lists—twenty-four of them to match the Letters of the Alphabet. I only made twenty-four instead of twenty-six, because X, Y, and Z can go together into one List. Now, what I would like you to do, is to take up your places in front of the List which is the Letter Initial of your name. Not your Christian name, but your surname, because that will make a better division. You'll find the Lists in the Third Room, where I've hung them on to COMET TAILS, so that they would be safe. By the way, did you know that's what Comet's Tails are for? On those Lists you'll see what each parcel is to contain, but you WILL NOT FIND THERE THE NAME OF ANY PERSON, because that is a Christmas-Land Secret, known only to me. I think if the Biggest Little People will make up the parcels they will be made as safely as if I made them myself. Then, if they will ask the Middle Size Little People to bring the different things to them for the parcels, the Littlest Little People can bring the finished parcels to me and help me pack them into my SACKS. That will give everyone something to do, and "Anne" can check the parcels off as each one is done. But I want you all to be most careful, or else someone who asked for an Electric Train will find a Tin Whistle in his stocking. I know you won't make any mistakes. Please get ready now, and see how well you can do this most wonderfully important work. We won't chat while we work, or we'll make mistakes. Indeed, we won't have time to talk, there's so much to be done. I'm going over to my Desk now, and we'll start right-away."

What a busy room that was for the next few hours, and how those Little People worked—the A's, the B's, the C's and all the other Letters of the Alphabet. The Tiny Tots were kept busy running with the finished parcels, and Father Christmas had to stop several times to wipe his forehead. They worked on WITHOUT SPEAKING A WORD until 5 o'clock, the Christmas-Land whistle was just blowing when the M's finished their last parcel. There are always more M's than any other letter, in names, and at the finish everyone had to help with this mighty long list which was a terrible length. It took Father Christmas a minute or two longer to tie up his Sacks and put them out on the porch for the Reindeer to pick up on their horns and load into the Sleigh, and while that was being done Father Christmas told the Little People to get themselves ready for home.

"I'm going to take you home myself," he said, "we'll put all these Sacks into the big Trailer, and there'll be plenty of room for you all with me. Before we start we're all going to have a cup of steaming hot Star Dust Coffee and another slice of Christmas Land Loaf, and this time you won't stop to wash the cups and saucers will you?" I was watching through the Peep Chink when you wanted to wash the Glasses, and I did laugh, although I loved you for

being tidy. I'll get the Coffee now."

Father Christmas went away to make the Coffee and seemed only gone one wink of time, when he was back again.

"Here you are Little People, these are my very best cups, I don't believe anyone but fairies have drunk out of them till this very night. I call them my "Angels' Whisper" cups, because, when I'm very tired, the dear little cups, which I always use for my coffee, whisper "Rest" to me. I believe, your dear Grown-up Mothers, say about the same thing of their Cups of Tea. But they think it's the Tea that refreshes them! Drink then, and eat your slice, we'll be off in a few minutes."

The Little People drank their Star Dust Coffee, and ate their slice of Brown Bread. They put their cups down on the table, only to see the funny little things twirling themselves away to the corner of the room where they washed themselves, dried themselves till they shone, and then twirled off into the cupboard. Then a Horn Blast was heard, and the Little People hurrying out, saw Father Christmas already in his place with the Trailer tied on to his Sleigh.

"Climb in Little People, and, on second thoughts I have decided to ask the Boys if they'll be good enough to ride in the Trailer with the Gifts. We'll have to travel so fast that I'm half afraid some of the Sacks may bump off, and what a disappointment that would be, wouldn't it?"

Before Father Christmas had finished speaking, all the Boys lined up beside the Trailer, and you should have seen his happy face. "That's the way, Boys. Never shirk a rough trip if you can be helpful by taking it. You make me wish I could ride with you. Now, we're off. If you don't grow up altogether, we may have another Christmas eve in Christmas Land, packing parcels."

What a fine ride they had back to Homeland. It was even more fun than in the morning because the Stars were beginning to twinkle, and The Man in the Moon was smiling. About half way, Father Christmas changed over to the Trailer, saying, he must really go and be a Boy for a little while again. On they sped, never thinking what was in store for them when they finished their trip back to Earth. Once they saw a very bright light, a big lot of lights in fact. "What's that, Father Christmas" they asked? "That's the Dunedin Exhibition" Father Christmas answered. "A number of you will be going there during the holidays. Will you tell all about it afterwards, and I'll give a Prize to the one who has taken most notice of that wonderful place?" The Little People promised they would, but ever so many said they would not be going to the Exhibition.

"Very well," said Father Christmas, "I think we'll get round that trouble quite nicely. I think we'll have a choice of two subjects for our next Competition. We'll have a Garden Competition for those who do not go to the Exhibition, and the Garden may be REAL or IMAGINERY, but it must be what is known as a COTTAGE GARDEN. I'll explain to Anne just what I mean and she'll tell you next week all about it. That will be something for you to think about. And now, Little People, I'm going

to let you help me deliver all these parcels.

What do you think of that, isn't it a great surprise? This would never have happened if you hadn't been such wonderfully helpful Little People. Indeed, I don't know what I would have done without you. Father Christmas would have disappointed thousands of Little People." And the tears rolled down his poor old face, and right into his long white whiskers.

"But, first of all," said Father Christmas, "we'll go make a Visit to the Holy Crib of Nazareth, in the church. The Grown-Ups are going to Midnight Mass presently, but they don't have Little People at Midnight Mass because, of course, someone has to be left to go to the other Masses on Christmas Day!"

And Father Christmas, followed by "Anne" and all the Little People, went quietly into the church, which was all dark excepting for the bright Star shining above the Crib. Kneeling before the Crib, and gathering the Little People round him, Father Christmas spoke to the dear Little Infant Jesus. "Sweet Little Lord of the World," he said. "I who bring so many gifts to the people of this Earth, have nothing beautiful enough in any of my sacks to offer Thee. Not one thing among all those things which are valued for their Beauty, their Brightness, and their Usefulness, can I lay at thy Feet. But dear Little Infant, I can and do offer to Thee, these Little People, who are more precious than anything else on Earth. Take them dear Jesus, love them and help them, for they love Thee very much. Not as the great Saints have loved Thee and suffered for Thee perhaps, but just as little children, with little children's goodness and badness, with little children's happiness and sorrow, do they love Thee, Sweet Baby of the Crib. Some of them have already offered Thee their hearts, and the rest will do so here in the quiet of the Crib. Help our sick Little People who cannot be with us this Christmas Eve, our little Paula about whom we have just heard. And help too all our dear Grown-Ups who have taught us about Thee and done so much for us. Good-bye dear Little Jesus, as long as they leave Thee here in the Crib we'll visit Thee often and tell Thee how much we want to please Thee. And then Father Christmas put a silver sixpence into the Offering Box beside the Crib, because that is for the poor. Quietly they all went out of the church, and in a second were gone, and the fun started. All of us who were there know what happened, but as Father Christmas made us promise not to tell anyone we can't speak about it. But when we remember that joyous night we have to laugh out loud. The Grown-Ups stop and look at us, wondering what can be the matter, but they'll never guess where we went, what we saw, and what we did on that Christmas Eve. But the most wonderful thing of all was that, although we didn't see Father Christmas filling our own stockings, they were CHOKKER BLOKKER FULL when we got home. How he got away from us, and when, we will never know. But we though we had watched him every minute of the time! We weren't a bit tired when we went Home and to bed, and yet, we had never worked so hard before!

Good-bye Dears, till next week,

ANNE

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