

But there was joy in other homes as well as in the rectory on that merry Christmas eve.

Miss Matheson sat alone by her fire, her brother's picture was open by her side, and tears were falling upon it, though she was struggling very hard to keep back the regrets which crowded into her heart, and to think only of the *real* joy which Christmas could bring to the most lonely and sorrowful. For *her* the Saviour had deigned to come down to earth; for *her* there was peace with God; for *her* there was a home purchased by the death of her Lord,—

"Where grief, and disappointment, and fear could never come;"

and she felt that while she could think on these things she ought not to murmur, or sorrow, but rather join her heart and voice in the glad song of thankful praise, which should rise from the world on Christmas Eve.

Presently her landlady came in, bearing a large covered basket.