

But now after long expectation the wax-works began, followed by *tableaux vivants*. "Simple Simon and his pail" were there, also the meeting of Amy Robsart and Queen Elizabeth, which last rather soared above the comprehension of the beds and cots, I fancy; but they could recognise and enjoy Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and other old friends.

And when at last the curtain drew back for the last time, and showed Father Christmas, seated in state in his velvet robes and flowing white hair, little Harry struggled off my knee, saying; "I want to kiss Father Christmas to thank him.

"But these presents are for the little girls, Harry," I explained.

"Never mind," said the little fellow, "he sent me this and this downstairs," holding up a muffler in one little hand and a toy in the other.

So Harry was lifted up on to the stage, and was kissed by Father Christmas, who could not let him go without another toy. I have wondered since what Harry thought of the red face mask when close to it, but up to the last that little one always thought it was really and truly Father Christmas he had kissed, and he never lost the illusion on this earth, for before another Christmas came round he had gone where his angel always beholds the face of his Father in heaven!

One word to end up with, paradox as it may seem. If you want to spend "A Happy Christmas," spend it—yes, in spite of all its shadows, spend it in a Hospital.

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

THE AUTHORESS.

PEN, paper, ink are all three cheap commodities, and to many the pursuit of book-making is highly fascinating. Then, as twin will-o'-the-wisps, the need of money and the love of fame lures the unwary young aspirant forward, forward, to perish, alas! only too often, in the miserable swamps of despair. For one who attains unto the coveted treasure, success, thousands fail, as testify the full waste-paper baskets in the readers' rooms and the overladen postman's bag, to be emptied of so much ballast when the publisher's door is reached. "To write for a living" needs, as Dickens and Thackeray proved, a hard apprenticeship first, and especially is this now-days. "Times are bad," sadly cries the author as well as the sweater. "But," will say the argumentative reader, "authors do make large sums of money sometimes." Ah, but sometimes

only. Once successful, however, and all will prove smoother sailing. The reader who tossed away the MSS. of the "happy ones" before with a scribbled "Returned with thanks" in the corner will discover good points in the self-same book now; for the one cry is "Name! name!" and a cheque to order is readily drawn to secure it. To take an extreme case. Lord Tennyson was offered and refused £10,000 for eight short poems of eight lines each. But genius is rare, and most folk have to content themselves with talent and mediocre writing. Success with a first book is unusual, though Miss Helen Mather's "Comin' thro' the Rye" was her first as well as her best known novel. Even Mrs. Hodgson, whose "Little Lord Fauntleroy," to use an Americanism, "took" so tremendously, had written several other less-known novels before, for few are wafled by fairy wings to the top at once; most have to climb the ladder of fame slowly. But there are many who, without being exactly famous, are yet competent writers, and are able, after some years' practice, to make a competence by their works. The times for authors are made worse by the epidemic now raging "to see one's name in print," and which has pervaded all classes of society, reaching even crowned heads. The prices also stated as given to popular authors grow "like Russian scandal" in repeating. Competition, too, rages, and even a clever book may be swamped by the hundreds of other craft set floating on the sea of literature. A book must have merit enough to force itself into notice, unless a favourable wind, a chance blast drive it thither. Popularity is as difficult of prediction and as capricious as any maligned lady. There are no openings now in the literary world, and to those who hope to find through the author's trade their daily bread I would give *Punch's* advice to those about to marry—"Don't," especially if they cannot add thereto the profession of journalism. But, in case the advice is not taken, I would say to would-be authors, choose your season. The spring or early autumn—the spring especially—is the best time for sending MSS. to publishers. Choose your publisher. Most have a certain favourite style—either biography, travels, three volume six shilling novels, one shilling series, goody books, scientific, &c., and to send to the wrong man is so much waste of stamps. Prices differ, for they depend entirely on the name or (change one letter) fame of the writer. £20, £30, £40 is considered good pay for an unknown author's works. Magazine articles are usually paid for when printed, and run from one to ten guineas, but the two styles of book and magazine writing are essentially different, as different as is the bold outline

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)