

PLEASANT HOURS

PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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HANGING THE HOLLY.

The little Miss in our picture is just carrying out the old practice of hanging holly, not in the church but in the home. With this in England is associated the custom of hanging the mistletoe bough with its pure snow-white berries. This custom is derived from very ancient times going back to the days of the Druids. If you do not know what to be caught under the mistletoe means, ask your elder brothers or sisters, or cousins and aunts, and they will tell you.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY SOPHIE BRONSON TITTINGTON.

It was a Christmas Eve in a large city. The Christmas spirit was in the air, bringing joy to most of the hearts in the busy town. Even the poor felt its brightness and warmth, and although gifts and comforts might be scarce, yet the joy of the birthday of the Christ-child was such that it reached most of these souls. If the true spirit of Christ was in actual possession of all those he has favoured with plenty, the joy would go quite around, until sin and sorrow, want and hunger, should flee for at least one glad day in the year.

On this particular Christmas Eve, a drizzling rain was falling. In happy homes this was unheeded, as the inmates gathered around the bright fires to share the Christmas cheer. But alas for the poor, whom stern necessity drove forth into the pitiless storm!

Among these was Mrs. Lane. She had been to take home some sewing, and as she had no one with whom to leave her child, she wrapped her in a shawl, and carried her all the weary way.

On her return she bought a little food, and a candy toy for the baby, the only Christmas gift she could afford.

Hastening homeward, an exclamation from Baby Bess caused her to pause. Bessie's arms were stretched toward a window from whence the bright light illumined the street. Within was a beautiful Christmas tree, covered with all the lovely things that delight the hearts of children.

In former days Mrs. Lane had lived in such a home; but a sorrowful fate had left her adrift, among the struggling poor, a widow, with little Bess clinging to her for support. She held the child up to the window to see the pretty sight, the memory of the past almost breaking her heart.

Within was joy, plenty, and peace; without was storm, cold, hunger, and weariness.

The wistful child's face at the window was seen by the happy children; and soon mother and Bess had been taken in to share the Christmas festivities. Best of all the two found a home within, sheltering kindness and care; and were no longer without in the cold and hunger of the past.



HANGING THE HOLLY

A pleasant humble home was found for Mrs. Lane, with plenty of work for which she was well paid. Bessie grew up with a tender heart for those still without, in the sad poverty of her own early life.

THE PULLMAN STOCKING.

"SAY, mister, Santa Claus doesn't travel on this train?"

"Oh, I really don't know," was the reply. "Well, I suppose not."

"That's what mamma said she s'posed," with a little sigh. "But of course he couldn't," with a half laugh. "Santa

Claus has too much to do Christmas eve to be takin' trips."

"And he doesn't travel by rail," someone suggested.

"Course he doesn't," with enthusiasm.

"He goes kitin' along with his reindeer, scootin' over the roofs and down the chimneys—my! But," with another sigh, "I don't know how he'll find me!"

The porter now came to make up the berths, and mamma led the boy to another seat. The next man behind, coming to his berth a short time later, stopped with a stare of surprise, and then met with a smile the smile of the lady across the aisle as she nodded towards the curtains which closed outside the boy who had missed a

visit from Santa Claus. Up to the bottom of the drapery hung a small stocking.

"A poor place for that sort of thing, I'm afraid," said the next behind to the lady across.

"Perhaps not so bad as one might think," was her answer. She had opened a lunch basket, and, just as the man, after fumbling in his pocket, dropped a silver dollar in the toe of the stocking, drew out a box of candy, which followed the dollar.

But the gifts did not stop, for the spirit of the season was fully awakened. Small coins were passed from one hand to another, and shaken well down into the toe by the hand next behind. A woman, with a bag of Christmas gifts for a family of expectant small friends, made a selection from them and brought her offering.

"Why, the stocking's full," said the man next behind. "But here—this'll do."

He pulled out a large silk handkerchief, and when she laid her gifts inside tied it by the four corners and pinned it to the stocking.

The word had passed along, and travellers in the next car came through to take a peep at the travelling stocking. Scarfs were tied around the stocking, and handkerchiefs, filled out with nobody knew what, fastened on. In short, if Santa Claus was not travelling on that train, some of his near relatives must have been.

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

FATHER Christmas is coming again. What is he bringing the boys and girls, and what is his message to all little hearts? Such toys he brings, such picture books, such pretty cards and tempting cakes! He makes the shops bright and beautiful. When his steps draw near, the shops are full of yellow oranges, rosy apples, "sugar and spice, and all things nice." And at home there is so much to do. We must make or buy a present for our loved ones, and the pudding and the mince-meat must be made. "Christmas is coming!" the children cry. "Oh, welcome, Father Christmas, happy, joyous Christmas! you bring us holid-

ays, and, oh, so many lovely things." Children, what will you bring to Jesus at this joyful time? Give him your young hearts, brimful of love. Be gentle and kind at home, and try to bring some joy to boys and girls who may be ill, or poor, or sad. Then your Christmas will be happy indeed.

THE proudest man we know of is always pluming himself on his humility.

WHEN God is satisfied with us we shall be satisfied with God.

WHAT a man knows is worth more to him than what all other men may know.