

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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Glory to God in the Highest.
At Bethlehem the night lay still.
The shepherds kept their flocks from ill.
When round about them shone that light—
When burst that chorus on the night,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

And, "Peace on earth, good will to men,"
The angel choir soft chanted then;
But on the wondering souls there fell,
At that first word, a mighty spell,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

Straightway they left their flocks alone;
They found the babe, as it was shown;
They knelt upon the stable floor,
And came repeating o'er and o'er,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

This was the first glad Christmas tide,
Which now we herald far and wide,
The angels taught the song to men,
And men took up the strain again,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

But now with much of pomp and show,
With holly and with mistletoe,
With glitter oft instead of gold,
We keep the feast without the old,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

The peace on earth we ne'er forget;
Good will to men is potent yet;
From earthly grapes we press the wine,
But miss the flavour so divine,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

Forgive us, Lord, that we should dare
To reap the harvest of thy care,
The joy and peace we have not sown,
Yet fall with grateful hearts to own,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

And while so warm our pulses beat,
And gifts and greet'ings seem so sweet,
May deep within our hearts this song,
In undertone, be flowing strong,
"Glory to God in the highest!"

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

Most children have seen a Christmas tree, and many know that the pretty and pleasant custom of hanging gifts on its boughs comes from Germany; but perhaps few have heard or read the story that is told to little German children respecting the origin of this custom. The story is called "The Little Stranger."

In a small cottage on the borders of a forest lived a poor labourer. He had a wife and two children. The boy's name was Valentine, and the girl was called Mary, they were obedient, good children, and a great comfort to their parents. One winter evening this happy little family were sitting quietly round the hearth, the snow and the wind raging outside, while they ate their supper of dry bread, when a gentle tap was heard on the window, and a childish voice called from without, "O let me in, pray! I am a poor little child with nothing to eat and no home to go to, and I shall die of cold and hunger unless you let me in!"

Valentine and Mary jumped up from the table and ran to open the door, saying, "Come in, poor little child, we have not much to give you, but whatever we have we will share with you."

The stranger-child came in and warmed his cold hands and feet at the fire, and the children gave him the best they had to eat. After supper they said, "You must be tired, too, poor child; lie down on our bed; we can sleep on the bench for one night."

So they took their little guest into their sleeping-room, laid him on the bed, covered him over, and said to each other, "How thankful we ought to be we have warm rooms and a cosy bed, while this poor child has only heaven for his roof and the cold earth for his sleeping-place."

When their father and mother went to bed, Mary and Valentine lay quite contentedly on the bench near the fire, saying, before they fell asleep, "The stranger-child will be so happy to-night in his warm bed."

The kind children had not slept many hours before Mary awoke and softly whispered to her brother, "Valentine, dear! wake, and listen to the sweet music under the window!"

Then Valentine rubbed his eyes and listened. It was sweet music indeed, and sounded like beautiful voices singing to the tones of a harp:

"O, Holy Child, we greet thee! bringing Sweet strains of harp to aid our singing."

The children listened, while a solemn joy filled their hearts; then they stepped softly to the window to see who might be without.

In the east was a streak of rosy dawn, and in its light they saw a group of children standing before the house, clothed in silver garments, holding golden harps in their hands. Amazed at this sight, the children were gazing still out of the window, when a light tap caused them to turn round. There stood the stranger-child before them clad in a golden dress, with a gleaming radiance round his curling hair. "I am the little Christ-child," he said, "who wanders through the

world bringing peace and happiness to good children. You took me in and cared for me this night when you thought I was only a poor child, and now you shall have my blessing for what you have done."

A fir-tree grew near the house; from this he broke a twig, which he planted in the ground, saying, "This twig shall become a tree, and shall bring forth fruit year by year for you."

No sooner had he done this than he vanished, and with him the little choir of angels. But the fir-branch grew, and became a Christmas tree, and on its branches hung golden apples and silver nuts every Christmas tide.

Such is the story told to German children concerning their beautiful Christmas trees, and though we know that the real little Christ-child can never be wandering cold and homeless again in our world, inasmuch as he is safe in heaven

by his Father's side, yet we may gather from this story the same truth which the Bible plainly tells us, that any one who helps a Christian child in distress, it will be counted unto him as if he had indeed done it unto Christ.—Children's Prize.

Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished and become nourishers of each other.—Bunyan.

O that Christ would break down the old, narrow vessels of these narrow and ebb souls and make fair, deep, wide, and broad souls to hold a sea and a full tide, flowing over all its banks, of Christ's love.—Rutherford.

And then through the frost locked country,
There happens a wonderful thing—
The sparrows flock north, south, east,
west,
For the children's offering.

Of a sudden the day before Christmas,
The twittering crowds arrive,
And the bitter, wintry air at once
With their chirping is all alive.

They perch upon roof and gable,
On porch and fence and tree;
They flutter about the windows,
And peer in curiously;

And meet the eyes of the children,
Who eagerly look out,
With cheeks that bloom like roses red,
And greet them with welcoming shout.

On the joyous Christmas morning,
In front of every door
A tall pole, crowned with clustering
grain,
Is set the birds before.

And which are the happiest truly
It would be hard to tell
The sparrows who share in the Christ-
mas cheer,
Or the children who love them so well!

When this pretty story was told me,
By one who had helped to rear
The rustling grain for the merry birds
In Norway, many a year,

I thought that our little children
Would like to know it, too,
It seems to me so beautiful,
Such a blessed thing to do—

To make God's innocent creatures see
In every child a friend,
And on our faithful kindness
So fearlessly depend.

—Independent.

LINCOLN'S BOYHOOD.

There were no libraries and but few books in the "back settlements" in which Lincoln lived. Among the few volumes which he found in the cabins of the illiterate families by which he was surrounded were the Bible, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Weems' "Life of Washington" and the poems of Robert Burns. These he read over and over again, until they became as familiar as the alphabet. The Bible has been at all times the book in every home and cabin in the republic; yet it was truly said of Lincoln, that no man, clergyman or otherwise, could be found so familiar with this book as he. This fact appeared both in his conversation and his writings. There is hardly a speech or State paper of his in which allusions and illustrations taken from the Bible did not appear. Burns he could quote from end to end. Long afterward he wrote a most able lecture upon this, perhaps next to Shakespeare, his favourite poet. Young Abraham borrowed of the neighbours and read every book he could hear of in the settlement within a wide circuit. If by chance he heard of a book that he had not read, he would walk many miles to borrow it. Among other volumes he borrowed of one Crawford, Weems' "Life of Washington." Reading it with great eagerness, he took it to bed with him in the loft of the cabin, and read on until his nubbins of tallow candle had burned out. Then he placed the book between the logs of the cabin, that it might be at hand as soon as there was light enough in the morning to enable him to read. But during the night a violent rain came on, and he awoke to find his book wet through and through. Drying it as well as he could, he went to Crawford and told him of the mishap, and as he had no money to pay for it, offered to work out the value of the injured volume. Crawford fixed the price at three days' work, and the future President pulled corn three days and thus became the owner of the fascinating book. He thought the labour well invested.—Arnold's new "Life of Abraham Lincoln."



TIDE IN NORWAY.

Christmas in Norway.

BY CELIA TRAXLER.

In the far-off land of Norway,
Where the winter lingers late,
And long, for the singing birds and
flowers,
The little children wait.

When at last the summer ripens,
And the harvest is gathered in,
And food for the bleak, drear days to
come,
The toiling people win;

Through all the land the children
In the golden fields remain
Till their busy little hands have gleaned
A generous sheaf of grain.

All the stalks by the reapers forgotten,
They glean to the very least,
To save till the cold December,
For the sparrows' Christmas feast.