

# PEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

ENLARGED SERIES.—VOL. II.

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## THE CHRISTMAS SHEAF.

**T**HERE is a pretty and curious custom in Norway. A pole is fastened up over the door of the barns and the farm

house, and on the top is tied a little sheaf of wheat. A traveller was for a long time puzzled to understand what it could mean. He did not know the language well enough to understand the answers of the peasants when he asked them about the sheaf, so he had made up his mind that the little sheaf of corn must be an offering set out for the use of Nigel, or one of the spirits of wind, water, or storm, in whom the peasants of Norway more than half believe. But he was wrong.

One day he fell in with an old Norwegian gentleman, who stopped at the same farm-house, and who spoke English. He asked him the meaning of those mysterious sheaves of corn. He laughed heartily at the traveller's guesses, and then told him that the little sheaves were put out at Christmas-time every year, "that the birds might have a merry Christmas." Every Christmas-eve the old sheaf is taken down, and a fresh one put up. This Norwegian custom is worthy of imitation.

## HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED.

"CHANGED!" exclaimed Deacon Green to the dear Little School-ma'am, a year ago come Christmas, "I should think they had changed. Why, many's the time I've heard my dear old father tell how, years ago, when he and Aunt Mary were children living on their father's farm in old England, the least little present used to delight them.

"They were well-to-do people, the Greens were; but to find one book or a ball or a shepherd's pipe in the Christmas stocking would make father perfectly happy when he was a boy; and his sister thought a box of sugar-plums, or a new doll, or any one pretty gim-

crack, was a joy indeed. Changed!—well, I'd like to know! Why, I'm told that a boy of this day, a real boy of the period, would consider himself a much-abused fellow if he didn't find on his Christmas-tree a ball, a six-

cars, a box of parlor magic, a pistol, a performing acrobat, a real watch, a gold scarf-pin, gold cuff buttons, a bound volume of *St. Nicholas*, and twenty or thirty other books, more or less, besides a pocket-book with gold

## AN ANGEL IN AN ULSTER.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D.

"WELL, sir, I am sorry; but I've done the best I could for you."

It is the conductor of the night express on the Eastern railroad who is speaking, and the passenger, to whom his remark is addressed, stands with watch in hand, near the door of the car, as the train draws into the Boston station.

"I do not doubt it," is the answer. "You cannot be blamed for the delay. The other train must have left the Western station already."

"Undoubtedly, the time is past, and they always start on time."

"And there is no train that connects through to Cincinnati before to-morrow morning."

"No."

"Well, that settles it. Thank you."

Mr. Halliburton Todd steps down from the platform of the car, and walks slowly past the row of beckoning and shouting hackmen. He is too good a philosopher to be angry with the freshet that delayed the train, but there is a shade of disappointment on his face, and a moisture in his eye. He is a wholesome-looking man of forty-five, with greyish hair and beard, with blue eyes, and a ruddy countenance. Probably he is never much given to grinning, but just now his face is unusually grave; nevertheless, it is a kind face; under its sober mask there is a world of good nature. In short, he is just the sort of man that a shrewd girl of twelve would pick out for an uncle. If anyone thinks that is not high praise, I should like to have him try his hand at commendation.

There are, indeed, quite a number of boys and girls to whom Uncle Hal is both a saint and a hero. At that Christmas party, in the home of his sister in the Western city to which he has been hurrying, these boys and girls are to be assembled. All the married brothers



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bladed knife, a scientific top, a box of carpenter's tools, a printing-press, a jig-saw, a sled, a bicycle, ice-skates, a Punch-and-Judy show, a telephone, a steam-engine, a microscope, a steam-boat, a working train of

money in it, and a pair of kid gloves. "I may have forgotten something," added the Deacon, wiping his brow, "but, so far as I can make out, that's the proper thing for an average boy's Christmas, now a-days.—*St. Nicholas*.

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