

## Children's Department.

### CHRISTMAS TREES.

HAVING promised to acknowledge all the gifts received by us (Church Women's Mission Aid) from Sunday-school children in the city, to be given to those in the country, I must now do so; and, while thanking those who answered my appeal, I must say that I was surprised at not having more answers. But I suppose I was rather late in asking, so I must hope next year you will all think of us, and be ready to give when asked; for we shall be doing (D.V.) just the same work next Christmas as we have done this.

We have received toys, books, &c., from children of St. Stephen's, St. Luke's, St. Peter's, Holy Trinity, St. Bartholomew's, and from a church in Brampton, and the gifts were all very nice and useful; but all together were not enough to furnish one box; and we sent twelve. A lady of St. Peter's was kind enough to undertake the furnishing of a tree for forty children, and did it in a most liberal way; but that cannot be said to have come from the children. What I am anxious to accomplish is that the children should help the mission work, and I do not see how it can be better brought about than by their giving of their own, or really working with their own hands for it.

We are now going to work for twenty Church families in Muskoka, who were burnt out last summer, and are now suffering for want of clothing and bedding. We shall send a box up in about three weeks to the clergyman, who has asked for it, and who has promised to give everything out with his own hands to those he knows to be most in need, and we shall be very glad if anyone who can assist us in this, will send their contributions to the Church Women's Mission Aid rooms in the Mechanics' Institute, Church Street, as soon as possible. We meet for work as usual on Fridays at 2 p.m.

Address, Mrs. O'Reilly, 81 Bleeker Street, Toronto.

### ALMSGIVING.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

IN the north of France, on the river Somme, stands the ancient city of Amiens. Though French summers are far warmer than English ones yet the winters (at least in the north of the country) are fully as cold as ours, and it was on a bitterly cold day about 1,500 years ago, that a detachment of Roman soldiers entered that place. The ground was hard and white, the sky black and gloomy with east wind and impending snow, and the men marched on as swiftly as might be, to get under shelter before it fell. At the city gate crouched a poor beggar, cold, hungry, and almost naked. He held out his hand for alms, but the soldiers, impatient to be under cover, pushed by him without a word. At last a young officer came by, a lad not under eighteen years old. He looked with pity on the poor creature, and felt in his purse for a piece of money, but it was quite empty. The cold winter had brought so much distress that all had gone in charity to the starving poor. Deeply grieved, he looked at the beggar. How could he leave him to perish in cold and nakedness; yet what could he do for him? place. Some blushed for shame at

All at once he tore off his military cloak, drew his sword, and cut it into two parts. One of these he gave to the beggar, and flinging the other round his shoulders, he hastened after his comrades. They were looking back, and had watched what had taken having done nothing themselves for the poor man, while others mocked him and said, "What a strange figure you look! I wonder you are not ashamed to go into the town with only half a cloak on!" But the young man cared for none of them. He went straight on his way through the streets of Amiens, and that night he was visited by a dream which was strange yet comforting to him. He seemed to see the whole court of Heaven, angels and archangels, and among them our Lord Jesus, wearing the half cloak which he had given to the beggar that day, and saying, "Martin, yet but a candidate for Baptism, hath clothed Me with this garment."

Surely this young soldier fulfilled thoroughly the apostolic commands recorded in to-day's Epistle, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." Surely he "distributed to the necessities of the saints." Nor did he stop in the way so well begun; he became a zealous Christian and a bishop of the Church. We now call him St. Martin, and many of our churches bear his name. Much might be said about him, but we have only time for a slight sketch of his life.

Martin, the son of an officer in the Roman army, was born about A.D. 316. Though his parents were pagans he early sought Christian teaching, and at ten years old got his name enrolled among the candidates for Baptism. Five years later he was pressed into the army: this was much against his will, but still he served the Emperor faithfully, and learned all the duties of a soldier. At the age of eighteen, soon after his adventure with the beggar, he was baptized.

A short time afterwards the Germans, then a barbarous nation, invaded the country. An army was sent against them, and a present of money made to each soldier on the eve of the expected battle. But Martin, who was among them, declined the proffered gift, saying that it was his wish to leave the army as soon as possible. His comrades taunted him with cowardice; but he said, "Not so, I am no coward; place me in the front of the battle without helmet or buckler, and in the strength of the cross I will thrust myself into the thick of the enemy without fear." The night was spent in expectation of a battle the next morning, but to the surprise of all, the Germans asked and obtained peace, after which Martin easily got leave to retire from the army.

He went straight to Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, and after being instructed by him, set out to see his parents in Italy, promising to return again to Poitiers. The journey was a long one and full of dangers. He had to cross the Alps, and there he fell among bandits who seized him for their prey. The fiercest among them raised a sword to kill him, but one of his comrades, touched by the young Christian's composure, seized the extended arm and diverted his purpose. They asked Martin if he were not terrified at the danger in which he found himself. "No," he replied "for I am a Christian, and under

God's protection. I only grieve for you, who by the wicked lives you lead hinder God's mercy from touching your souls." The robbers listened, and at last they actually set him free. The man who had attempted his life was the most deeply moved. He conducted Martin through the mountains in safety, and then giving up his evil courses he became a Christian, and was accustomed in his old age to tell this story of his past days and his conversion.

Meanwhile Martin reached his home in safety, and there was the instrument of bringing his mother to the Christian faith. He went back to Bishop Hilary, and was ordained deacon, priest, and finally Bishop of Tours, a city in France. His life was an active one. France was still in part a heathen country, and there was a good deal of missionary work to do in it. And this St. Martin did most zealously, sometimes at the risk of his life, till idolatry was quite rooted out of his diocese. He was spared to his people till he was four score years old, then illness came on, and he felt sure that his end was near. The aged saint felt no fears, and he longed to be at rest; but his disciples were miserable at the thought of losing him. So they crowded round him, saying, "Father, why will you forsake us? When you are gone the ravens will fall upon your flock. We know it is well with you, you desire to depart and to be with Christ, but have pity upon us who will be left in such a danger. Who will have pity upon us? Who will have care for our souls?" Moved with their grief, St. Martin wept too, and uttered this prayer, "Lord, if I am still needed for Thy people I refuse not to labour. Thy will be done." But his time for rest was at hand. He lingered only a few more days, which he passed in constant prayer, his hands and eye raised to Heaven. Those around would have placed him on one side, thinking that change of posture would give him ease, but he said, "Allow me, my brethren, to look rather to Heaven than earth, that my soul may be directed to take its flight to the Lord to whom it is departing." Soon after this he expired, November 8, A.D. 397.

**NO MORE HARD TIMES.**—If you will stop spending so much on fine clothes, rich food and style, buy good healthy food, cheaper and better clothing, get more real and substantial things of life every way, and especially stop the foolish habit of employing expensive, quack doctors or using so much of the vile humbug medicine that does you only harm, and put your trust in that simple, pure remedy, Hop Bitters, that cures always at a trifling cost, you will see good times and have good health.

### GOING BACK.

How few press on in the steps of Christ, as years go by! How few grow ripe in soul, as their bodies age. How few add new gains, day by day, to their store of truth and grace. How few even think it needful to go on at all, past the first weak state of their soul's infant life. Also! things are worse than even this. Are there not few who hold fast what they have won,—who do not, from time to time, let all go, so that they have to begin again. In most parishes there are crowds who once were communicants, once were Church goers, once were men and women of prayer, but who have gone back. Why is this?

What can be the cause of such wide-spread falling away from grace? Is it God's fault? Have these people taken Him at His word, and found the promise false? Have they tried what God gives, and proved it not worth having? No one dare think of this being the truth. It cannot be that God mocks men by vain hopes of good. It seems hard to think that those who so lightly turn away from the Lord, can have truly tasted that He is gracious. The blame rests with men; but how?

The fall of some is not hard to explain. They are not whole-hearted in their religion. It is a restraint to them, but not a new life of freedom. They do not get near enough to God to know and love Him. They do not think of Him, or read His Word, or speak to Him, or use the higher means of grace aright. So their religion is not a part of themselves; God has no hold on their hearts. In time they grow weary of what they feel is only a weak attempt, a badly done work. When trial comes, they are prepared to part with what they will not be thoroughly in earnest to make worth keeping.

So, men pray without heart, with no thought beforehand, with no faith in God's pledges, looking for no answer. Prayer, of course, is vain; their words do not reach heaven; they become a mere form—empty, with no aim. They are left out with no loss; and the life becomes prayerless. So again with the Holy Communion. Men draw near after no preparation, or a hurried one. They do not put before their faith the meaning of what they do, and what God gives. They are stirred by little or no feelings of holy, thankful gladness when they go away.

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