

The next morning, as Herman passed by the place where he had found the white flowers, he saw a cluster of lovely white flowers, of a dark-green tawny, looking as though the snow itself had blossomed. Herman plucked some and carried them home to his wife and children, who treated them with reverence and tended them carefully in remembrance of that wonderful Christmas Eve, calling them chrysanthemus; and every year as the time came round they put aside a portion of their coat, and gave it to some poor child, according to the words of the Christ—"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Such is the beautiful legend of the origin of the chrysanthemum, the Christmas flower.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.
Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 16, 1899.

An announcement was made on page 196 of Pleasant Hours, for December 3, with reference to schools needing help from the Sunday-school Aid Fund. This was inserted by mistake. All such applications should be sent to the Hon. A. C. Crowe, who, as Secretary of the Sunday-school Board, makes all Sunday-school grants.

THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTMAS.

BY EDNA TURPIN.

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ men kept feasts in honour of the birthdays of dear and revered ones. It is no wonder that it came into the hearts of Christ's followers to set apart a day to celebrate their Lord's coming to earth. But what day should it be? For all exact knowledge of his birth date was lost very early. Historic probability pointed to some day in spring—the twentieth or twenty-first of April, or the twelfth of May. The oriental Christians wanted, for various reasons, to celebrate a day in January, but Rome favoured the twenty-fifth of December, and Rome ruled the world, so it is the birthday of Christ. The oriental Christians wanted, for various reasons, to celebrate a day in January, but Rome favoured the twenty-fifth of December, and Rome ruled the world, so it is the birthday of Christ. The oriental Christians wanted, for various reasons, to celebrate a day in January, but Rome favoured the twenty-fifth of December, and Rome ruled the world, so it is the birthday of Christ.

Gradually old customs were adopted—as hanging garlands and wreaths, decorating trees and giving presents. The church fathers tried to explain these "heathen rites," and the protest was raised again and again—as in Puritan England and in our New England forefathers—but in vain. For my part, I think we are happier and better for keeping the glad human side of the holiday. But if we devote it merely to our selfish pleasure, we degrade our Christmas festival to the old heathen level. Let us keep it holy with the sweet, unselfish spirit of Christ, and make it in deed and in truth a season of "peace on earth, good will to men."

Mrs. G's Letter.

BY MRS. EVA W. MALONE,
Dear Santa, I know you are busy; An 'no I have cluded to tie. To tell you just what I want, zackly. Bossa that you will get it all rite.

NOW Ned sez that Santa can't bozzer With rendin' a letter from me: An when they go up in the chimbley, Old Santa won't never see.

But boys don't know much about Santa, Or t'rewly they wouldn't talk so. For when I-tell you that I want things I get em, an that's what I know.

In course, I mus' have a new dolly, For this one is roolned, you see. She went off to nusb'n' the soljers, An' got her leg slob in the see.

An', then, of you please, while you're fixin', Jes' put in a cradle an' 'bed, With sweet little covers to fit 'em, An' 'pillers for dear dolly's head.

An' a beuro an' dresser for Dolly; For our things is all jes' so tall. That dolly mus' stretch 'er neck off, A-tryin' to primp for a call.

An', then, ef you'll bring me a branslet, An' ef you can spare it a ring; An' 'ohshuns an' 'ohshuns of cad, Why that's all I'll ask you to bring.

For mamma sez some littlo children Don't never have good times like me. O won't you please hunt 'em up, Santa, An' make 'em as glad as can be?

But ef you don't have enuf munny, Sech myllyns of stockin's to fill, I know that my papa will help you, Ef only you'll send 'im the bill. Yoro little friend, Mage.

CHRISTMAS AND ITS MEMORIES.

BY THE EDITOR.

What heart does not beat faster at the thought of Christmas? With tender recollections, joyous or pathetic, it awakes! How the ice of selfishness thaws under the genial influence of this season. Its nature must be callous indeed, who does not feel some generous impulse, or is not touched to gentleness and ruth at the anniversary which commemorates God's great gift to all mankind. The echo of the angels' song upon the plains of Bethlehem is now more clearly heard than at any other time. Even the poorest realize something of the brotherhood of man, and let us hope, something of the Fatherhood of God.

Our genial-hearted Anglo-Saxon ancestors especially designated the season as "Merrie Christmas," and celebrated its return with boisterous mirth and jollity. They dressed the yule log to the ampie hearth, and heaped the hospital table, and filled the floor-high, and with song and dance and merry jest wore the night away. Their rude feasting parlour more like the Roman December Saturnalia, from which many of our Christmas customs are lineally descended, than of the character of a Christian festival.

Many of our Christmas usages have their roots away back in pagan or papal antiquity. The very date of Christmas was probably determined by the great Celtic or Teuton Yule-feast of the winter solstice, a commemoration of their heathen gods. The use of holy and mistletoe in Christmas customs, and the Druidical custom, these being sacred to Balder, the sun god, and therefore employed as spells against evil spirits. The pleasant custom of Christmas gifts is a reminiscence of the offerings of wheat to the Infant Christ. St. Nicholas' feast to all children as Santa Claus, was a wealthy Greek, living in Constantinople, who at Christmas time gave rich presents to the poor. The Yule-tide and charity to the poor was canonized in the Greek Church, and became the patron saint of Russia,

and patron friend of children throughout the world. Christmas has ever been a favourite theme with the poets. But no singer has ever presented such a noble tribute to the incarnate Lord as Milton, in his "Hymn on the Nativity."

"Nor war nor battle sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung,
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained by hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed
throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign
Lord was nigh."

"The helmed cherubim,
And sworded seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with
wings displayed;
Harping in loud and solemn choir,
With unrepealed notes to heaven's
new born heir,
And all around the courtly stable
Bright harness'd angels sit in order
servicable."

Many of the simple carols which from time immemorial have been sung on Christmas Eve are of remarkable beauty, and laid with an infantile expression that renders them angularly attractive. Some that for centuries have floated out upon the midnight air, mingling with the sweet jangling of the Christmas bells still linger in quaint villages in England, France and Germany. The following will serve as familiar examples in our own language. One of the most common, the air of which is very sweet and simple, is this:

"God rest ye, merry gentlemen!
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's thral,
When we were gone astray,
Oh, tidings of glad tidings!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day."

"In Bethlehem in Jewry,
This blessed Babe was born,
And laid in a manger,
Upon this happy morn,
And this disguise, the mother woe,
Did nothing take in scorn—
Oh, tidings of glad tidings!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day."

Still more ancient was this, whose tender pathos made it a universal favourite:

"As Joseph was a-walking, he heard an
angel sing,
'This night shall be born our heavenly
King;
He neither shall be born in house nor
in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise, but in an
ox's stall."

"He neither shall be clothed in purple nor
in pall,
But in fine linen, as we babies all,
He neither shall be rocked in silver nor
in gold,
But in a wooden cradle that rocks upon
the mould."

"Then be ye glad, good people, this
night of all the year,
And light up all your candles, his star
to light us here,
And all in earth and heaven our Christ-
mas carol sing:
'Good will and peace and glory,' and
all the bells shall ring."

The following has a quaint ballad refrain that lingers pleasantly upon the ear like the ringing of the Christmas chimes:

"I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Xmas Day,
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Xmas Day in the morning.
"And what was in these ships all three?
On Xmas Day, on Xmas Day,
Our Saviour, Christ, and his Ladie,
On Xmas Day in the morning.
"And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Xmas Day, on Xmas Day,
And all the angels in heaven shall sing:
On Xmas Day in the morning."

"Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Xmas Day, on Xmas Day,
Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Xmas Day in the morning."

The ecclesiastical origin of many of these carols is seen in the Latin refrain which many of them possess. The following is still a favourite:

"When Christ was born of Mary free,
in Bethlehem; in that fair city,

Angels sang there with mirth and glee,
in Excelsis Gloria."
One of the oldest carols is that familiar one entitled, "Christus Natus Est." It ran something in this manner:

"The cock croweth—Christus Natus Est.
(Christ is born.)
The ox mused—Quando. (When?)
The crow replied—Hinc nocte. (This night.)
The ox cryeth—Ubi? Ubi? (Where? Where?)
The sheep bleateth—Bethlehem I Bethlehem."
A voice from heaven sounded—Gloria in Excelsis Deo.
One of the most beautiful and musical of all the following monical hymns, whose Latin refrain rings like the clash of Christmas chimes:

"Christ was born on Christmas Day;
Where the holy, true, the bay.
Christus natus hodie,
The Babe, the Son, the Holy One of
Mary;
He is born to set us free,
He is born, our Lord to be,
Etz Maria Virgine,
The God, the Lord, by all adored for-
ever
Drawing to this holy morn,
Very, very early, Christ was born."

But the sweetest of all were the carols that were sung by the clear, glad voices of children from door to door in the village streets:

"Here we come a-wassailing,
Among the leaves so green—
Here we come a-wandering,
So far to be seen,
Love and joy come to you,
And to your wassail, too,
And God keep you and send you
A Happy New Year too."

"We are not dally boggers,
That beg from door to door;
But we are neighbours' children,
Whom you have seen before.
God bless this house,
God bless the mistress, too,
And all the little children,
That round your table go."

As rude and simple as a nursery rhyme, the old song has still power to stir a thousand tender recollections in our hearts. There is a light and tripping movement in the following that sets itself to music like a lark's song:

"Carol, carol, Christians,
Carol joyfully,
Carol for the coming
Of Christ's nativity;
And pray a gladsoom Christmas,
For all good Christian men,
Carol, carol, Christians,
For Christmas comes again."

"Carol, carol, Christians;
Like the Magi, now,
You must lade your caskets,
With a grateful vow;
Ye must have sweet incense,
And frankincense and gold,
At our Christmas altar,
If faintly to unfold."

Through the ages this ministry of song has not been unavailing. In an era of violence and rime and blood, pale hearts were touched to tenderness, and the exercise of gentle charities was cultivated by its hallowed influence. Nor is the returning season without its lessons of brotherhood and peace to us. Its first avang was that of peace on earth and good will to men. Let souls estranged be once more knit together. Let us manifest our good will by good deeds. Let us seek to comfort the afflicted, let us by remembrance of his suffering poor us. As we sit at our Christmas board, let us not forget those whose table is bare, whose hearth is cold, and whose homes are desolate. In ministering to their necessities, we shall experience a nobler joy and share a richer feast than earth's most sumptuous banquet can afford.

What Distressed Her-
I love a young lass of summer's scarce five,
Whose houny has kept many creatures alive,
The last private collection that grand
her play-pen
Was a sheep and a goose and an aged
sheep that
clucking hen
Sho's just in from her pets with eyelids
quite red,
Explaining to "mammas" the old goose
is dead
As she stepped on it so
with its head."