

words will come up before him like a revelation.

The time will come, before you think, when you would give the world to have your house tumbled by the dear hands of those very boys; when your heart shall long for their noisy steps in the hall, and their ruddy cheeks laid up to yours; when you would rather have their jolly whistle than the music of Thomas or the songs of Nilsson, when you would gladly have dirty carpets, aye, live without carpets at all, but to have their bright, strong forms beside you once more. Then play with them and pet them. Praise Johnny's drawing, Betty's music, and baby's first attempt at writing his name. Encourage Tom to chop off his sticks of wood, and Dick to persevere in making his hen coop. If one shows a talent for figures, tell him he is your famous mathematician; and if another loves geography, tell him he will be sure to make a good traveller or a foreign minister. Go with them to see their young rabbits and chickens and pigeons—and down to the creek-fall to see the flutter-mill in full operation. Have them gather you mosses, and grasses, and bright autumn leaves, and decorate their room when the snow is over all the earth. And you will keep yourself young and fresh by entering into their joys.—*Selected.*

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

WHEN marshalled on the nightly plain,
The glittering hosts bestud the sky,
One star alone of all the train
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.
Hark, hark to God, the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem,
But one alone, the Saviour speaks,
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was late, the night was dark,
And rudely wildly blew the wind
That tossed my foundering bark;
Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death struck, I ceased the tide to stem;
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the Star of Bethlehem."

SANCTUS KLAAS, OR ST. NICHOLAS.

BY J. K. BLOOMFIELD.



A GOOD deal of lively talk has been going on during the past month, among the young people, as to the coming of Santa Claus, or St. Nick, and what he was likely to bring in his pack. And even those of older growth will hang up their stockings with the little ones, near the grate or chimney corner, with a certain sort of faith that they, too, will be remembered.

But why St. Nick should especially favor chimneys or stockings, is difficult to tell. But so it is, and this absurd notion is spread far and wide over a broad continent. And certainly he does not disappoint the trusting little ones.

In France, it is said, the children put their dainty little shoes on the hearth Christmas eve, with the hope that during the night they may be filled with sugar-plums by the "Bon Homme Noel," twin brother, we imagine of Santa Claus.

In Germany, they have many mysteries going on for days, in preparation for Kriss Kringle. Child-

ren everywhere, in fact, eagerly watch for the coming of the mysterious being who is to bring them all that heart can desire. And they scamper off to bed early, that they may not be found up and about in the way, when he makes his appearance. How they tremble, too, if conscious of having been naughty, for fear all they will find in the morning will be a stick as a gentle hint as to what they deserve. Still they picture him as too good and jolly to punish them quite so severely.

Some austere people think it wrong to thus deceive children. "If not telling an actual untruth, it is implying one," etc. Not a bit of it! They would not be undecieved, or lose their pleasure, their real fun in getting ready for Santa Claus, for a good deal. You can't long deceive their wise little heads, either. Don't you suppose they are as ready to exclaim as any one much older: "How can an old man drive up the side of a house, over the roof, and down the chimney?" And yet they, with all loyalty and apparent faith, keep up the mystery as though Santa Claus was a real person. And they will be just as eager, year after year, to prepare for his coming, and repeat with spirit, as though they had actually seen him, the lines of Moore:

"His eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples,
how merry!
His cheeks were like roses—his nose like a
cherry,
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the
snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a
wreath;
He had a broad face, and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl
full of jelly;
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old
elf:
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of
myself."

It is through the above lines, and the portraits drawn of him by the good burghers of New Amsterdam, nearly two hundred years ago, that we imagine Santa Claus to be a sturdy, kind, jolly old Dutchman. But there was once long ago a veritable St. Nicholas, of a different make and character. At least we find that "there was many hundred years ago, in the age of Constantine, a saintly bishop by the name of Nicholas, at Petara, in Asia Minor," who was one of the early bishops of Myra in Lycia.

In the meantime, his anniversary was to be kept, and the children in the little hymn they used to sing in his honor were permitted to address him as "*goedt heyligh man*"—good holy man.

In Catholic countries he has long been regarded as the patron saint of the young, and particularly of scholars. In England we find his feast was celebrated in ancient times with great solemnity in the public schools. On the vigil of his feast, December 6th, a person of the appearance and costume of a bishop, assembles the children of a family, or a school, and distributes among them—to the good children, gilt-nuts, sweetmeats, and other little presents, as the reward of good conduct.

This good saint flourished in the third century, and is thought to have met with persecutions under Diocletian. He died in 326; but it was not until towards the eleventh century that his supposed relics were conveyed from the East to Bari, in the Kingdom of Naples. And it is considered a curious fact that in Roman churches the

anniversary of this translation, May 8th, is still observed as a festival in his honor.

In art, St. Nicholas is represented as clad in Episcopal robes and carrying either three purses, three golden balls, or by him three children; referring to three different stories relative to the saints' charities and mercy for others.

In Flanders and Holland the school-children put out their shoes and stockings in the confidence that Santa Claus, or Knecht Clobes, as they call him, will put in a prize for good conduct, before morning. And thus he became the patron of the young, and especially so of school-children.

You now have the history, or origin, as near as it can be ascertained, of Sanctus Klaas, or St. Nicholas. But don't, we beg, be over-wise in your own conceit, to the disappointment of others. "Keep dark," as far as the children's pleasure is concerned. Let them, as long as possible, enjoy fairy tales, and the coming of a mythical St. Nick down the chimney to fill their stockings. But in a kind, loving way, you may tell them why it is that once a year such great preparations are made for gift-making and receiving, and why we should all rejoice and be "merry" (light-hearted) over the advent of Christ—God's greatest gift to His children, old and young.

"GREAT JOY."

THERE'S a song in the air,
There's a star in the sky,
There's a mother's deep prayer,
And a baby's low cry.
And the star rains its fire, while the beautiful
sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King.

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Aye, the star rains its fire, and the beautiful
sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King.

In the light of the star,
Lie the ages impearled;
And that song from afar
Has swept o'er the world.
Every heart is aflame, and the beautiful sing,
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King.

We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night,
From the heavenly throng.
Aye, we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and
King.

—J. G. Holland.

GOD IN THE HEART.

A POOR wounded boy was dying in the hospital. He was a soldier, but a mere boy for all that. The lady who watched by his bedside saw that death was coming fast, and, placing her hand upon his head, she said to him, "My dear boy, if this should be death that is coming upon you, are you ready to meet your God?" The boy's dark eyes opened slowly and a smile passed over the young soldier's face as he answered, "I am ready, dear lady, for this has long been His kingdom;" and as he spoke he placed his hand upon his heart. "Do you mean," questioned the lady gently, "that God rules and reigns in your heart?" "Yes," he answered; but his voice sounded far off, sweet and low, as if it came from a soul already well on its way through the "dark valley and shadow of death." And still he lay there with his hand

above his heart, even after that heart had ceased to beat and the soldier boy's soul had gone up to its God.

CHRISTMAS SONG.

I came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing."

CHORUS.

Glory to God, the sounding skies
Loud with their anthems sing;
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven's eternal King."

Still thro' the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blest angels sing.
Chorus.—Glory to God, etc.

But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring,
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!
Chorus.—Glory to God, etc.

This day shall Christian tongues be mute,
And Christian hearts be cold!
O catch the anthem that from heaven
O'er Judah's mountains rolled!
When nightly bursts from seraph harps
The high and solemn lay,—
"Glory to God; on earth be peace;
Salvation comes to-day!"
Chorus.—Glory to God, etc.

CARD-PLAYING.

WHAT accomplished writer, the late Dr. Holland, of Springfield, Mass., said: "I have all my days had a card-playing community open to my observation, and I am yet to be made to believe that that which is the universal resort of the starved in soul and intellect, which has never in any way linked to itself tender, elevating, or beautiful associations—the tendency of which is to unduly absorb the attention from more weighty matters—can recommend itself to the favor of Christ's disciples. The presence of culture and genius may embellish, but it can never dignify it. I have at this moment," said Dr. Holland, "ringing in my ears the dying injunction of my father's early friend, 'Keep your son from cards. Over them I have murdered time and lost heaven.'"

Fathers and mothers, keep your sons from cards in the home circle. What must a good angel think of a mother at the prayer-meeting asking prayers for the conversion of her son whom she allowed to remain at home playing cards for "pastime?"—*M. P. Gaddis.*

The London *Spectator* furnishes the text for a volume in this sentence: "It has always seemed to us that the testimony of those little words, 'why,' 'because,' 'will,' 'must,' 'can,' 'ought,' to a class of notions, which, if they represent true illusions, could hardly have got into our minds at all, is decisive as against the philosophy either of pure agnosticism or pure fatalism."