

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY.

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 lo! 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.

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 't' 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 Christmas
cheer
Or the children who love them well!

How sweet that they should remember,
With faith so full and sure,
That the Children's bounty awaited them
The whole wide country o'er!

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,
So blessed a thing to do.

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

—Celia Thaxter.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT.

"GRANDMA, I am just tired making
Christmas presents."

"I feared this would be the result,
Floy, if you sowed steadily so many
days. Come, put aside your work
now, and let us have a nice talk before
dinner. Those tiny leaves are beautiful,
darling, and I am sure that when
papa sees these slippers Christmas
morning you will feel repaid for all the
patience they have cost you."

"Grandma, I like to make presents.
I did not mean what I said, only I am
real tired."

"Dear child, people much older
than you very often say what they do
not mean in a fit of impatience that
may be caused by fatigue of body.
Perhaps papa would not enjoy his
present if he had heard his little girl
utter this remark. Come, bring your
chair beside me."

Floy placed a low chair before Mrs.
Niles and nestled her little golden
head in grandma's lap.

The dear old lady tenderly stroked
the wavy hair a moment and then
said:

"Floy, will you have finished all
your Christmas gifts when these slip-
pers are done?"

"Yes, grandma, why?"

"I ask because you have forgotten
one dear friend whom you should
especially remember at Christmas-time."

"Why, grandma!" said Floy, whose
eyes glistening now with excitement
and whose cheeks aglow, as the fire-
light fell on her face, were as beautiful
a picture as one could wish to see. "I
have presents for you and papa and
mamma, Cousin Alice, and Aunt Kate
and those little Griggs children, and
something even for cook's sister's little
girl."

"I am very glad, but you owe to
the dear friend of whom I am speak-
ing far more than to any of these, and
yet I fear you have not thought of
making a present to this friend. At
least I have never heard you say any-
thing about it."

"Grandma, please tell me who it is
right away," eagerly pleaded the child.

Mrs. Niles drew her closer, and
after a moment's pause sang softly in
a voice that was still sweet though
broken and feeble:

"I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou mightst ransom me,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave my life for thee,
What hast thou done for me?"

"My Father's house of light,
My glory-circled throne
I left, for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee,
Hast thou left aught for me?"

"And I have brought to thee,
Down from my home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and my love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
What hast thou brought to me?"

For a few moments Floy's heart was
too full to speak; then she said:

"Grandma, I know what you mean,
I have no Christmas present for
Jesus."

"Yes, my child, and do you not
think you ought to give him the best
gift you can on his own birthday?"

"Why, grandma, what could I do
for him? If I were a grown-up lady
I could do something. I could have a
Sabbath-school class and tell children
how much he loves them."

"Darling, how old are you?"

"Eleven next month, grandma."

"Three long years, at least, the
dear Saviour has been expecting a gift
from you, and yet you have forgotten
him."

Floy buried her face in her hands.
The gloom of night settled without and
seemed for a moment to cast a shadow
upon her little heart. Then she looked
at the cheery fire, and a thought came
to her and she said earnestly:

"Grandma, there is my five-dollar
gold piece that Uncle Henry gave me.
I can put that into the missionary
box. Would not that be giving a
present to Jesus?"

"Yes, dear, but I have been think-
ing of a more costly gift than this.
What is the value of all treasures of
the earth to him compared to a human
heart? Floy, he wants your own little
self. Can you not give him that?"

"Grandma, I don't understand what
I ought to do," said Floy, impulsively.
"I love Jesus. Is that all? That
isn't any Christmas gift, though. I
love you, but I want to do something
for you."

"Floy, that is just the point of the
whole matter; to show your love for
Christ by that which costs you some-
thing. If I should tell you that when
you were a baby some dear, good man
had saved your life from drowning,
would you not want to show your
gratitude to him in some practical way
every day of your life? That is what
is meant by Christian consecration; in
every act of our lives to question of
ourselves whether or not he would
approve it, and to do everything as if
we were doing it for Jesus. We 'are
not our own. We were bought with
a price.' All our time and all our
faculties belong to God. If you go to
the piano to practice, remember you
are spending time that belongs not to
yourself and that you must not idle it
away. You are serving the Master
when you practice faithfully. If you
are sewing or studying your lessons,
do it with all your might and not waste
the precious moments God has given
you to use for him. If you feel list-
less and not in humour for the work of
the hour, breathe a momentary, silent
prayer to him to help you and the
answer will come sure and soon. This
is the service that God requires of you,
and in doing it you may believe that
your work is as great in his eyes as
that of any grown person.

"Grandma, I wish I could live in
that way, but I think I cannot. I
am afraid if I give myself to Jesus, I
shall want to take myself back again."

Mrs. Niles waited a moment and then
continued: "I am glad you do not
promise hastily—that you are counting
the cost. Floy, do you remember the
day you came to me to know what you
could make for a Christmas present to
papa that would be very nice and that
he would like very much? When I
proposed that you make him a pair of
slippers and showed you this pattern
that I had once worked myself, you
said it was very difficult and that you
thought you could not do it. Finally,
you decided that no amount of work
was too great to undertake for papa
and that you would try to have
patience enough to do it well. Now,
are you not willing to do as much for
Jesus, who has done so much for you?"
"Dear Saviour," said grandma,
"here is a little girl that wants to give
herself to thy service. She is afraid
to trust herself to promise to do all
thy commands, but she is willing to
try to do thy will. She asks for thy
help, for she will need it every moment.
Take this little life and bless it for
thine own name sake."

The dinner-bell rang just then and
prevented any further conversation,
but Mrs. Niles put into Floy's hand a
little book entitled "Kept for the
Master's Use," saying, "read this and
think of and pray over this matter
until Christmas morning; then come
and tell me if you have decided to give
to the Master the gift of all others
most precious to him."

The time passed slowly until the
25th of December. Some days all
went well. It was easy for Floy to
do all her duties faithfully and with
enthusiasm, and then came days when
it cost a real struggle not to pass over
her lessons with indifferent prepara-
tion in her haste to read an interest-
ing book; and to practise the required
time on the scales when there was a
bright, pretty exercise she liked to
play for her own amusement. Then
she was discouraged.

She rose early Christmas morning.

The church bells were pealing their
"Merry Greeting" to all Christendom,
and seemed to say to Floy: "Come to
Jesus, Come to Jesus just now."

She hastened to Mrs. Niles' room.
The dear old lady was awake and
evidently expecting her.

"Grandma, I'm going to do it. I
know Jesus will help me. Hear the
bells saying 'I will, I will.' Grandma,
this is going to be the happiest Christ-
mas I ever had."

"I knew you would make this
decision, Floy," said grandma, kissing
the little face so full of love. Then
she bade her leave her until the bell
rang to call them to the breakfast-
room.

When all the family were assembled
and the gifts from each member to the
other presented, all were surprised at
Floy's beautiful work, and the younger
Mrs. Niles said: "Mother, this is all
due to your kind teaching. How bless-
ed she is in having such a grandma!"

"My children, there is yet another
gift that Floy has made this morning
that is more valuable than any of these
things that will perish some day. It
is a gift that will grow more beautiful
with the using. My pet, can you not
tell mamma and papa about it?"

"I have given myself to Jesus for
a Christmas present, and I am going
to try every moment not to take it
back again," answered the little girl
courageously.

"Thank God for those words, my
child," said her mother as she tenderly
embraced her.

When young Mrs. Niles looked up
her husband had left the room. She
knew why he had gone. Although
the best husband and kindest, most
affectionate father, he was not a pro-
fessing Christian.

His wife was sure his heart was
right, but why was he so reticent
about confessing Christ before men?
This was the burden she and his
mother had so often taken to the
throne of grace. She went to his room
to seek him, and he said: "Bring my
little Floy to me."

The child came quickly. Her father
clasped her in his arms, saying:

"My precious, precious child. You
have taught me my duty. I, too, will
give myself to the Saviour as a birth-
day gift. May he forgive me that I
have delayed it so many years."

There was rejoicing in that home
that day, and there was rejoicing in
heaven. All felt it to be the happiest
Christmas of their lives.

A PRECIOUS LITTLE HERB.

Two little German girls, Brigitte
and Walburg, were on their way to
the town, and each carried a heavy
basket of fruit on her head.

Brigitte murmured and sighed con-
stantly. Walburg only laughed and
joked.

Brigitte said: "What makes you
laugh so? Your basket is quite as
heavy as mine, and you are no stronger
than I am."

Walburg answered: "I have a pre-
cious little herb on my load which
makes me hardly feel it at all. Put
some of it in your load as well."

"Oh," cried Brigitte; "it must in-
deed be a precious little herb! I should
like to lighten my load with it; so tell
me at once what it is called."

Walburg replied: "The precious lit-
tle herb that makes all burdens light
is called patience."