

Our Young Folks.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR JESUS.

A Christmas gift for Jesus,
And what shall such gift be?
An offering of knowledge
To send across the sea,

Where many little children
Ne'er heard the Christmas story
Of Jesus' loving kindness,
His suffering and glory;

Where many little children
Ne'er heard of Christmas joys,
Or trees with presents laden
For happy girls and boys;

Nor read the Bible story,
How wise men came by night,
And saw amid the darkness
A wondrous star of light,

Which guided them to Bethlehem,
Across Judea's plain,
Where shepherds watched their flocks by night,
And heard the glad refrain

Of "Peace on earth, good will to men,
Behold, the Christ is born!"
And thus they heard the tidings
That blessed Christmas morn.

Shall we not tell to others
How Jesus, from above,
Brought e'en to little children
The blessing of His love?

"Twill be a gift to Jesus,
That we send across the sea;
He saith of all we do for these,
"Ye did it unto Me."

"Twill be a gift for Jesus
If we help the poor and old
To comfort, warmth and shelter
From Winter's piercing cold.

If we cheer the weary-hearted
By kindly word or phrase,
"Twill help to bless and brighten
This glad some day of days.

Oh, not alone for pleasure
Has this glad day been given;
'Tis a mile-stone on life's pathway
To guide us nearer heaven.

"Twill be a gift for Jesus
If we strive to do our part
In building up His kingdom
With true and thankful heart.

Let us bring a gift to Jesus
The coming Christmas tide,
Of earnest effort for the right,
And in His love abide.

CHRISTMAS TREATS IN INDIA.

To you, dear children, who have so many treats in the year, the "Christmas treat," with its Christmas tree, is, perhaps, the most loved of all. You can imagine then what a Christmas treat would mean to those who have but this one treat in a year. Our Hindustani school children think much of their Christmas treat. They know, first of all, in the Christian schools, that we have this "treat" to keep the birthday of the Lord Jesus—the Christ child whose name they bear, love and reverence. And then that they will get their suit of new clothes, and a "kháná" or feast.

Your Christmas trees are loaded with dolls and toys; I know we have to think of something to eat or to wear as prizes for our schoolgirls! A neat skirt and jacket is often beyond the means of those whom we teach, that a certain amount of covering is necessary to modesty and well-being, and then a feast of good things gives quite as much pleasure to a Hindustani as to an English child.

The teachers of these native Christian schools think anxiously sometimes of how these prizes are to be got in readiness; and they wonder if the dear Sunday school children in England will contrive to save a little pocket money to provide a "treat" for their little dark sisters in India, or how many skirts will be sewed by industrious fingers, and whether they will dress a few dolls for the wee ones that desire this luxury. Your English dolly, with its pretty face and flowing curls, is indeed a novelty. You should see the stiff, straight, rag dolls, with flat, painted faces that are made in this country. Their clothing you would think curious, but you would certainly think the dolls hideous.

The children are not often disappointed; some one is sure to be kind enough to think of sending a few dolls. When I came out to India, eight years ago, a lady said to me: "Come into this room; I will introduce you to some of your fellow-passengers!" and who, or what do you think I saw? A large bed covered with dressed dolls, ready to be packed into a box, to come out with me to India.

But I am telling you about a treat and prizes for poor children, to whom dolls are a luxury, and clothes and books positive necessities. The mission compound is a scene of excitement and bustle from the time of early morning service till evening, and we must follow the throng of women and children in their white cotton dresses, who, with clean, brown, shining faces, are entering the large "koti," and we shall see what fun is in store for them there. What would

you think of four large, well-lighted trees in a row without a gift or a toy upon them—nothing but tinsel flowers and such like paper decorations? You would ask: "Where are the prizes?" Well, on a large table at the end of the hall we find them, with the name of each happy recipient attached. You see such prizes as these, *i.e.*, clothes, books, etc., are too weighty to be suspended from the trees. Flat rice "barts" and vessels to drink from are among the prizes, and find great favour, as each member of a household has his own special cup or plate. These are of brass, or tin-ware, very bright and pretty-looking when new. Some curious hymns, called "bhajans," with strange tunes, are sung heartily, and then the prizes are given out, and the feast follows.

Now at another Christmas treat, at which the children of three non-Christian schools were present, the portion of the feast allotted to each child is taken away in their little "barts" or trays to be eaten at home, as the differing castes are unable to eat together. After which came the distribution of prizes, which were more fanciful than those described above; dolls, toys and work-bags, and even pencil-cases and drawing-slates were among them. Then followed a magic-lantern exhibition. This the children called "pictures of light," and they were somewhat alarmed as the bright pictures glowed on the sheet in the midst of surrounding darkness. But as they gradually became accustomed to this, and interested in the descriptions given of the subjects as they were displayed, they forgot their fear and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Some of the pictures were about the Scripture lessons they had in school, and they answered questions on these with ease and readiness.

Very pretty they looked, about 200 children in gay-coloured gauze and muslin "chādāhs," or veils, trimmed with gold and silver (tinsel) embroidery. On wrist and ankle smart bangles and bracelets, large silver rings on their big toes, and a few high-caste girls had rings in their noses, eight or ten inches in circumference—some larger, reaching below the chin. Silk trousers or divided skirt complete the costume, for the veil reaching to the feet is considered sufficient covering for the neck and arms, unless the long chains about neck and waist are counted clothing. Many of the parents and friends of these children were present, and thought the lighted pictures a great marvel; and numbers of uninvited guests filled every available space to view the tamāshā (sight).

As you would expect, the parents of this class of scholar contribute something in fees towards the education of their children, but they care so little about having girls taught that they will pay but little; and thus it is left for us, who know the value of knowledge, to provide the necessary funds, which we do willingly, rather than let these little ones grow up to be as ignorant and bigoted as their parents are. And the successful examinations prove that girls can learn as well as boys; and their awakened interest and intelligence is our best reward, for we know that education, with godliness, prepares them for a happy, useful future.

BUT TWELVE HOURS LONG.

The great Indian Rajah Montja, it is said, had but one son, to whose education he gave much time and thought, in order that the boy might be fitted for his high place. Among his devices for the wise training of his son was the placing near him an old man whose duty was to say to the prince, whenever he was enjoying any pleasure keenly: "The day hath but twelve hours."

When the lad, on the other hand, was sick or in trouble, he changed the warning to the night is but twelve hours long."

The poor lad, struggling through college in a crowd of wealthy, class-mates, fancies the mortifications and humiliations which he endures will last as long as life itself. He forgets how swiftly in this country social condition changes. In twenty years not a man in his class probably will stand where he does to-day. Each man will have found his place for himself. There are among our readers, too, many plain, unattractive girls, who find themselves neglected while their prettier companions are admired and courted. Their suffering is not a thing to smile at; it is real and sharp. They are at the age to which beauty and grace are fitting, and they have neither wisdom nor experience to bear disappointment coolly.

But they should remember that there are other and more potent charms than pink cheeks and bright eyes which will tell in the long run.

The night, however dark, is but twelve hours long; with each morning come fresh chances and possibilities for all of us.

WHAT CAN A GIRL OF SIXTEEN DO?

This question is not easily answered, but it will be attempted in the next volume of *The Youth's Companion*, in a series of helpful papers by Amelia E. Barr, "Marion Harland," Mary A. Livermore and "Jenny June."

PERHAPS the finest book premium ever offered in Canada is Dr. Farrar's "Life of Christ." Of this work—richly illustrated and appropriately bound—*Zion's Herald* says: "If we were asked by a young minister, by a Sunday school teacher, or by the intelligent head of a family which 'Life of Christ' would be the most serviceable to him, we should answer, Farrar's." You can get it by sending us the names of six new subscribers to THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, one of the most popular family papers in the Dominion. Specimen copies sent free on application.

Sabbath School Teacher

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

Jan. 4,
1891.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.

1 Kings 12:
1-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.—Prov. xvi. 18.

INTRODUCTORY.

The kingdom of Israel under Solomon had attained its greatest magnificence. His reign had ended and the glory had departed from the kingdom. Rehoboam was the legitimate successor to the throne, but during the first days of his reign the kingdom was divided, and has never been re-united. The division took place nearly a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

I. Rehoboam's Coronation.—In 1 Kings xiv. 21 it is said that Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began his reign. This, however, is supposed by commentators to be a mistake on the part of a transcriber, since the Hebrew letters used in notation for forty-one and twenty-one are somewhat similar. It is thought that he began to reign in his twenty-first year. That age would at least comport better with the description of his character here given than the more advanced age that appears in the text. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess, and a heathen who after her marriage with Solomon continued to practise heathen worship. Since a mother's influence is great either for good or evil, this young Hebrew prince had the misfortune to have an idolatrous mother, and the consequences of his early training were felt by him as long as he lived. Under David and Solomon the kingdom of Israel had been consolidated and attained to a high degree of material prosperity. The population about this time is supposed to have been about 6,000,000. Had Rehoboam been gifted with ordinary prudence and foresight, the prosperity of the nation might have been continued throughout his reign. The people had assembled in large numbers to witness the coronation ceremonies at Shechem, an important town in central Palestine, lying in the valley between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. It is now known by the name of Nablous. Here then the people were gathered in public assembly. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was a man of much capacity and energy, and possibly rather ambitious. He had been selected as overseer over the forced labourers whom Solomon called forth. It had been foretold by the prophet Ahijah that he would succeed Solomon in the government of the ten tribes. This coming to the knowledge of the king, it was unsafe for Jeroboam to remain in the land of Israel. He, therefore, sought an asylum in Egypt, where he remained till after the death of Solomon. Many of the people looked to Jeroboam as a leader. They desired his presence in the assembly at Shechem.

II. A Remonstrance.—During the later years of Solomon's reign the people were beginning to feel that their condition was becoming burdensome. Enforced labour and heavy taxation were things to which they could not easily be reconciled. At the commencement of a new reign it was desirable, therefore, to come to some understanding. They were in hopes that the new king might remove their grievances. They selected Jeroboam as one of their representatives who should prefer their request. They state plainly to the king: "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." In presenting this request there was nothing disrespectful or inconsistent with the rights of citizenship. A people have the right to say how they shall be governed. An unmixt despotism receives no countenance in Scripture. The only sensible thing the king did in the circumstances was to take time for considering the request presented. He did not answer offhand. He might, however, have done so, for all the use he made of the delay he sought. In seeking the advice of others older and more experienced than himself, he did right, and it would have been well had he followed the advice they gave. These old men who had been in the service of his father knew well the condition of the people, and what would be the best course to pursue in the circumstances. They counselled the young king to listen to the grievances of which the people complained, and to promise them relief. Concession by the king now would be gratefully accepted by the people. Kindly words would go a long way, and they would continue loyal in the future. This advice was not pleasing to Rehoboam. He was foolish enough to reject counsel because it was not agreeable to him. He turned now to the young men who had grown up with him, those he had selected as his advisers. With the rashness of youth they have no hesitation in giving counsel entirely different from that tendered by the old men. They suggest that the remonstrance of the people be repelled in insulting terms. In figurative terms they suggest that he intimate to the people that his determination was much stronger than his father's, and that they need look for no relief from him. Instead it should be his purpose to make their lot harder than before. If the blows of the taskmasters' whips were stinging before, now they should be chastised with scorpions, that is they would feel more bitterly than ever the severity with which they should be governed by the new king. The advice of the young courtiers was about the worst that could have been given in the circumstances. It was dictated by ignorance, self-conceit and pride. They thought possibly that by suggesting this course to the young king they would thereby advance their own interests, but in this they were mistaken. Their advice was utterly discredited by the results that followed.

III. The King's Foolish Answer.—Three days after the request had been presented to Rehoboam he was prepared to return an answer. "He answered the people roughly." His answer was ungracious and his manner no doubt more ungracious still. He appeared as a tyrant, not as a wise ruler. When his father succeeded to the kingdom he too sought advice, but he sought it from God. It was given him and he followed it. There is no mention made of Rehoboam's having asked for divine guidance. He sought the counsel first of the old, then of the young men, and "he spake to them after the counsel of the young men." He did not consider the possible consequences of his folly. Headstrong and rash, he did in a few moments what he never could undo. The Lord guided events so that the king suffered the consequences of his own folly. The rending of the kingdom had been foreshadowed in the prophecy of Ahijah, 1 Kings xi. 26-40. The people were no doubt astounded at the king's declaration. Their mind, however, was soon made up. In words more dignified than the king's they renounced their allegiance to the house of David, saying: "What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; to your tents, O Israel; now see to thine own house, David." This was the language of unmistakable revolt. The people dispersed and the king was left to meditate, too late, on his folly. Those of the ten tribes living in the cities of Judah remained the subjects of Rehoboam, but all others had renounced his sovereignty.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

A foolish son may succeed a wise father. Wisdom from on high is at all times necessary for the guidance of life, but there are turning points where it is specially needful.

If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.

The wisdom and experience of the old should not be despised. Evil consequences attend acting on bad advice. Wrong action invariably produces wrong results.