

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 16, 1899.

No. 70.

## Christmas at Bethlehem.

By H. W. K.

O Bethlehem, keep the Christmas tide,  
For the glad that one was thine,  
Though thou didst not see, that quiet  
night,

Heaven's glory through thee shine!  
In thy sleep thou wert uplifted,  
And givest thy diadems;  
A light to lighten the ages,  
Blessed Star of Bethlehem!

All the world in darkness lay shadowed,  
In sin and sorrow, and blight,  
And the longing eyes of the wisest  
Could not pierce the heavy night.  
Hearts ached, but there was no  
healing;

Voices cried, but no answer fell,  
The grave and the cradle were  
hopeless,  
And no hand could the gloom  
dispel.

Then suddenly out of the blackness  
Flash'd a glory of heavenly light,  
Until every b and valley  
Was bath'd in its radiance  
bright.

Sweet music filled all the heavens,  
And thus the glad anthem ran:  
"Oh! glory to God in the highest,  
On earth, good will to man."

"The king of all worlds is your  
Father,

And from his fair home above  
His greatest treasure has sent you  
In proof of his endless love."  
Adoring eyes were uplifted,  
While the angels downward  
smiled;

They sought the gift of the Father,  
And they found—a little child!

That was the Christmas blessing  
That gladdened all the earth,  
That banished the clouds and sad-  
ness,  
And gave to our life its worth.  
And since that day all childhood  
Is a sacred and holy thing,  
Because of the Light of Bethlehem,  
Because of Christ the King.

## A LOG FOR THE YULE FIRE.

The ancient name for Christmas is Yule. It is said in Old England the most jubilant feature of Christmas Eve was the burning of the yule log. A great log was hauled from the woods and laid on the hearth of the wide-mouthed chimney, and what jolly flames went racing and roaring up toward the stars!

It is said that those passing the flame-lighted windows would raise their hats, for they knew the yule log meant the burning up of unkindness and dissension.

Can you not imagine a big yule fire, the flashes from its brightness coming and going across the window panes? A cheerful thing to see in the cold, dark night! Who would not make and also add a ragot to a yule fire if they could?

Red coals on the hearth and gold firelight in the chimney, proclaiming Christmas—who will add strength to these?

Can't you bring a bough, a fagot, a twig, an armful of dead leaves? If any chilled wanderer were out in the road and you saw him, wouldn't you bring him and warm him up with the fire you had replenished?

"No wood," do you cry? "And nobody to warm?" Let us see. There are some things that make excellent fuel for a yule fire, and maybe we can furnish them.

happy in the thought of its continuance. Why not dig that old root up, bring it to the yule fire, and burn it up? Let it go to ashes. The fire from it will warm up the heart of an old acquaintance, and we dare say it will warm you up. We never make another feet totter by any such forgiveness but that we make a very genial warmth in our own souls.

In this work of grubbing round for an old root we may find something else. A lot of curiosities may turn up at the end of our grubbing hoe, and not so very old may they be either. How we may envy some one who is more fortunate in life's possessions or life's honours! The

What a warming we shall get ourselves!

## CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

There is no need to study the almanac in order to be made aware of the fact that Christmas is coming. Everybody knows it instinctively, for when a friend approaches there is something in his proximity which communicates itself to us, and if Father Christmas is not our friend, who is? Besides, there are hosts of visible signs. Is there not a keen coldness in the air? Is not the ground covered with snow? Has not everybody

plans for the successful production of a charade, or the happy performance of blind man's buff? Is not everybody concerned about the satisfactory disposal of holly and decorations? And are not all the little ones eager to prove that their feet have grown, and that they must have larger stockings, both on that account and also in caso Santa Claus should visit them?

Yes, it is quite evident that Christmas is coming, and we are all making ready. The adults are preparing little surprises for the children, and the children have been hoarding their pennies that they may prepare surprises for their elders. And we are all going to be together as far as possible, and vexing differences are to be forgiven and forgotten, and care is going to be put to sleep, and we are drawing so close to one another that lust shall grow warmer and faith stronger while we sing in harmony the young shrill voices and the quavering old ones glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.

## THE CHRISTMAS FLOWER.

Itloomed and faded as the night-though it was Christmas Eve. The snow was falling fast, as Herman, the charcoal-burner, drew his cloak tighter around him, and the wind whistled fiercely through the trees of the Black Forest. He had been to carry a load to the castle nearby, and was hurrying home to his little hut. Although he worked very hard, he was poor, gaining barely enough for the wants of his wife and four little children. He was thinking of them when he heard a great wailing. Guided by the sound, he groped about and found a little child, scantily clothed, shivering and sobbing by itself in the storm.

"Why, little one, have they left thee here all alone to face the cruel blast?"

The child answered nothing, but looked up piteously into the face of the charcoal-burner.

"Well, I cannot leave thee here. Thou wouldst be dead before to-morrow."

So saying, Herman raised the child in his arms, wrapped it in his cloak, and warmed the cold hands in his bosom. When he reached his hut, he put the child down and tapped at the door, which was immediately thrown open, and the children rushed to meet him.

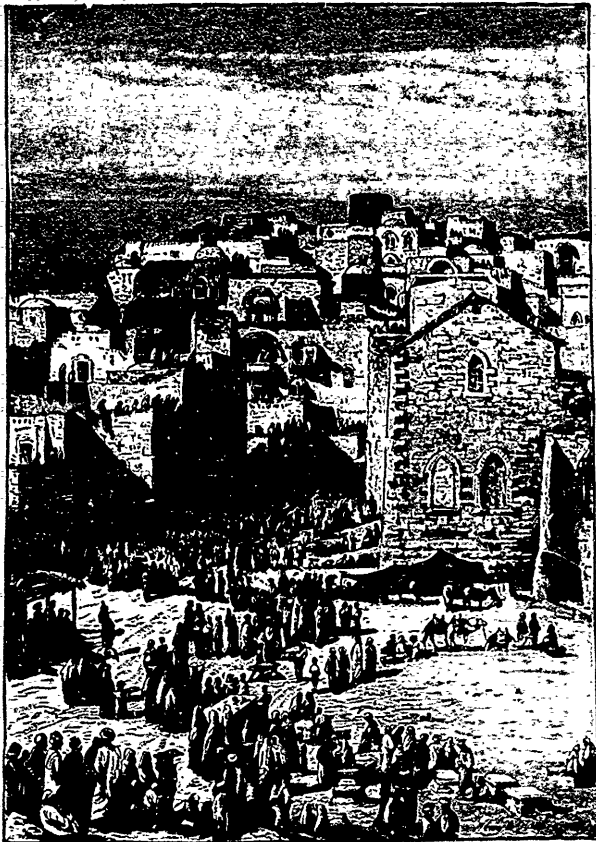
"Here, wife, is a guest for our Christmas Eve supper," said he, leading in the little one.

And welcome he is, said the wife. Now let him come and warm himself by the fire.

The children all pressed round to welcome and gaze at the little new comer.

Their father had cut them one of the prettiest little firns in the forest, although, at the best, it was a hair, and, as they gazed the child's face grew more radiant, a halo of light surrounded his head, his eyes beamed with a new lustre, and before their weary eyes he seemed to grow larger and larger, and then the beautiful vision vanished, spreading his hands as in benediction over them.

Herman and his wife fell on their knees, exclaiming in awe-struck admiration: "The holy Christ is here!" and then embraced their children in joy and thankfulness, that they had entertained the heavenly guest.



CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM.

lucky in this world are sure to arouse the envy of some of us unucky, and unkind things may be said. Here is something for the yule fire. Give it to the flames quick.

Then unhappiness may be occasioned by a greed for honours and an unwillingness to honour somebody else. It is a source of discomfort to some people, this disposition to grab for position, for an empty chair, rather than let another have it. More wood here for the yule fire!

Come, good friends, we want this Christmas the biggest, jolliest fire of yule logs ever kindled! Ha! ha! ho! how they flame and crack and laugh and roar! What a warming we will give somebody!

bought a new pair of skates, or dusted the old ones? and is not the frozen surface of every pond as gay as a fair?

And then only to pass through the streets is to see the preparations for Christmas. Are not the shops like pictures? Is there not plenty of good fare for the person or the mind, for the house or the household? Tabic luxuries and books, dolls and dresses, embroidery and embellishments, furs and fancies, games and goodies, hams and hampers, illuminations and illuminations, and nobody knows what beside, all proclaim in unmistakable terms the good news that Christmas is coming. Besides, are not the children none from school and the grandchildren coming? And are not grey heads and black alike busy in laying

under the snow

Then they sat down to supper each child contributing of its portion for the guest, looking with admiration at the child's face, and as they gazed the child's face grew more radiant, a halo of light surrounded his head, his eyes beamed with a new lustre, and before their weary eyes he seemed to grow larger and larger, and then the beautiful vision vanished, spreading his hands as in benediction over them.