

THE BEST CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY KATE M. FRAYNE.

"PLEASE, grandmamma, tell us a story," cried the children one and all, from three-year-old baby Alice to Harry so grave and tall. "We'll be just as still, and listen to every word you say;" thus coaxingly pleaded the sweet voice of merry, mischievous May.

Then grandmother looked up smiling, from her seat in the old "arm chair," with a twinkle of pride in her eye as she gazed

On her grand-children rosy and fair, "Well, dears, what shall the story be? You've most exhausted my store; Grandmother scarcely knows what to tell. That she has not told before.

"Oh, anything you tell, gran'ma, is nice as nice can be;" and the little eager faces looked up in expectant glee; when Harry spoke out gravely—"Grandma, please tell us the story of the Babe in the lowly manger, born in Bethlehem far away."

"I've heard you tell that story just often and often before, but it never grows old or tiresome, and I love it more and more." Then grandmother told the story that her heart held of priceless worth, the story of glad redemption for the sinful millions of earth.

And the little upturned faces grew strangely bright to hear again that wondrous story in accent tender and clear, while the children, from baby Alice to Harry so grave and tall, pronounced the grand "old story" the very "best of all."

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

BY MRS. M. F. BUTTS.

CHRISTMAS Day, holy day, Day of all the year, Green with holly, glad with smiles, Full of human cheer. The sun goes low, love rises high; Cold is the mother earth; But tender thoughts, and fragrant deeds, And fresh hopes have their birth

Christmas Day, holy day, Welcome once again! With gifts and garlands, songs and bells, We usher in thy reign; But under all our careless mirth, We think of what we owe To Him who came that Christmas Day Long centuries ago.

Christmas Day, holy day, Thy gifts have little worth, If we with outward sign of joy Forget that wondrous birth. The world breaks out in winter bloom, To make for Him a crown, Who left the realm of truth and peace, And to our world came down.

Christmas Day, holy day, Thy voice says far and wide: All who have lands or love, some part Of what thou hast, divide. Bound to the poor is bound to Christ, "The poor ye have always;" He maketh thus, to hearts that love, All time a holy day.

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THE announcement of the METHODIST MAGAZINE for 1883, is omitted from this number of PLEASANT HOURS. See last number for our splendid programme and premium. Several schools have taken the Magazine in quantities of from 4 to 10 for several years. They find it cheaper and more popular, than library books. Write for our special rates to schools and for specimens, which will be sent free on application.

CHRISTMAS MISSIONARY OFFERINGS.

WE wish every teacher and scholar in our Sunday-schools the happiest Christmas and New Year that they have ever known. We know that our faithful, hard-working teachers have all the past year through been sowing the seeds of happiness in their own souls and the souls of others, from which we trust they shall reap a rich harvest of reward. We wish at present, however, to tell our younger friends how they may make the Christmas and New Year season doubly happy to themselves by the consciousness of doing something for the cause of God, and at the same time gladden the hearts of many a missionary's family sorely straitened on account of their narrow income, and also help to send the privileges of the Sunday-school and the preaching of the gospel to many who have them not.

God is opening doors of usefulness in different parts of our own country, among new settlers in the backwoods, the fishermen in Newfoundland, the French in Quebec, the Indians in the great North-West, and the nation of Japan, faster than the Church is prepared to enter them. Everywhere the cry is heard, "Come over and help us." The fields are waving white unto the harvest on every side, and the Church of God is bidden to thrust in her sickle and reap this harvest of immortal souls, and it may not without guilt neglect this solemn command.

Now all this requires money. These people to whom our missionaries minister are many of them very poor and can do little for themselves. But what little they can do they do cheerfully. At one mission, at French River, nearly a hundred miles from the nearest white missionary, and only receiving his visits about once a year, a single family contributed one year \$26. Now we want every girl and boy in our schools to feel interested in these Home, Indian, and Japan Missions. Have your missionary box, and always put in it some of your pocket-money, especially at Christmas time. Every school, every class should have one of the boxes. The Rev. Dr. Sutherland at Toronto, or your minister will be glad to give them if applied to.

Our schools in the past year have done nobly, raising \$21,560, an increase of 5,737 in two years. Can we not have another increase like that or greater? We hope that all our Sunday-schools will put forth a vigorous and systematic effort to make the juvenile Christmas offering this year larger than it has ever been before. In recognition of God's great Christmas gift to all mankind, let them lay upon His altar an offering that shall declare their zeal, their diligence, and their desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Now for a general and a generous effort for the largest Christmas offering ever presented by the schools of our Church to the cause of Christian missions.

"GIVE me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergymen or laymen. Such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of God upon earth."—Wesley.

CHRISTMAS BALLADS.

BY ALEXANDER R. THOMPSON, P. D.

THE night our Saviour Christ was born,— So ancient legends say,— The bird that crows to call the morn, Crows every hour till day, As it he sought, with quivering throat, The world to waken wide, With thankful heart and hymn to note The holy Christmas-tide

How grew the legend, who can tell? But one thing we may know, That nothing e'er before befell This weary world below, Like that same Christmas-gift of love, Of purest, fairest worth, That came of old from heaven above To sinful men on earth

The night the King was born, the stars Shone down on Bethlehem, As jewels flash through golden bars From out a diadem, But suddenly their radiant fire Grew pale and dull and dim, When came from heaven an angel-hoer, To sing a Christmas hymn.

Such music never yet had rung On mortal ears till then, As rung when holy angels sung "Goodwill and peace to men." Such winsome glory never came Before on mortal eyes, As came when they, with feet of flame, Came trooping down the skies.

And if on that first Christmas-time, This lost world back to call To hope and God, in sweetest chime The bells of heaven rang all, Would it be strange, if echo sweet Of that transcendent strain Should run o'er earth with footsteps fleet, And answer back again?

Sing, angels, never cease to sing, Ye first-born of the sky: Cry, every herald of the King, His glorious advent cry; But angel from the heaven above, Or herald of the morn, Could never sing the song of love As men:—that Christ is born

THE BABE IN THE MANGER.

THE roughly-hewed trough of stone under the shelving rocks in the hills about Bethlehem once contained the world's hope. Here lay a little helpless infant, the mighty Redeemer. "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger," said the angel messenger to the shepherds.

Such is the wonderful wisdom and order of God. The greatest things are brought out of the smallest. The great leader and lawgiver of Israel was found a weeping babe in the flags of the Nile. David, the renowned king, whose sling slew Goliath, and who led his armies to frequent victory, was a little prattling babe, and a merry song-inventing, but devout shepherd-boy. His son Solomon, the wisest of kings, learned to lip the first syllables of language. All the wise and great, the mighty in battle or in wisdom, once were delicate, tiny babes on their mothers' bosoms. The generation that shall carry on the business of the world is rocked in the crib to-day. The good and the wise, who shall think for and bless the race, and the criminals great and small, who shall curse the world, are the smiling cherubs that coo in cradles to-day.

About the time that Jesus lay in the manger at Bethlehem, another child was a mother's pride in a city over in Asia Minor, and another the joy of a household in Galilee. The fond mother of one called her son Saul, after the first king of Israel. The other called her babe by a name then held in honour, Judas. The one became the renowned

apostle of Jesus, Paul, the other became his betrayer.

The future greatness and glory of the world is in the germs of to-day. The forests that now cover large portions of the earth were bound up in the acorns, and nuts, and seeds of a time gone by. The flowers and fruits of next year are to-day hidden in the folds of little buds, and the great harvests that are to provide food for the millions of men, for the beasts that labour for them, and the other countless armies of living creatures, are looked up in diminutive seed-germs or in tender blades that a child might crush with its tiny hand. The ministers, the statesmen, the inventors, the scientists, the teachers, the rulers, the armies of both workers in every walk of life, are to-day brothers and sisters to the Babe in the Manger.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

RING out, ye merry bell! Welcome, bright icicles Welcome, old holly-crown'd Christmas again! Blithe as a child at play, Keeping his holiday. Welcome him in from the snow-peak and plain.

Up with the holly bough, Green from the winter's brow, Lock up your books; leave your cares for a day.

Out to the forest go, Gather the mistletoe, Old and young, rich and poor, up, and away!

Up with the holly bough! Aye, and the laurel, now; In with the yule log and brighter the hearth! Quick, he is here again, Come with the joyous train, Laughter and music and friendship and mirth.

Up with your holly bough, High in each manor-house, Garnish the antlers that hang in the hall; Yea, and the neck of corn With a gay wreath adorn, Rich as the bloom on the cottager's wall.

Wealth has its duties now, Christian, you will allow; Think, then, ye rich, while your tables are spread, Think of the needy ones, Poverty's stricken sons, Weeping, while children are crying for bread.

Ring, then, ye merry bells! Ring, till your music swells Out o'er the mountain and far o'er the main! Ring, till those cheerless ones Catch up your merry tones, Singing, "Come, Christmas, again and again!" *Wide Awake*

THE ANGELS' SONG.

WHERE! Turn your ears earthward and not skyward. Angels sing now on the ground, not above it. A girl is injured by another, and says words of forgiveness. That is the angels singing. A boy finds his home in a snarl of contention, and says sunny, kind words. The angels sing again. Don't, Christmas night, spend your time listening at the window for a seraphic singer up in the azure, but down here say loving words, and you will make angel-music yourself. Better than sentimental star-gazing is attendance to practical duty.

ANY persons having copies of PLEASANT HOURS for Sept. 24, 1881, January 14, 1882, May 27th, 1882, or of SUNBEAM for December 19, 1881, will oblige by sending them to this office to complete file copy.

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of \$1.30 from the Maple Grove Sunday-school for sending religious reading to hospitals, etc.