

mas-tree they had ever beheld. It was covered with beautiful flowers; birds of all the brightest colour, made of candy, were perched upon the boughs; the branches were literally loaded down with the loveliest boxes and bags filled with sweetmeats, and with oranges, apples and bananas. On the table, underneath the tree, were the presents which Herbert had brought them from Germany—wonderful wax dolls for Retta and Mary, a magnificent work-box for Nellie, a box containing a full set of carpenter's tools for Frank, and a complete set of Hans Christian Andersen's books for George, published in Germany, but translated into English, and full of the most elegant engravings.

The children were delighted, and we don't believe, if they live to be old men and women, that they will ever forget that Christmas-eve.

### The Approach of Christmas.

It was the calm and silent night!  
Seven hundred and fifty-three  
Had Rome been growing up to night,  
And now was queen of land and sea!  
No sound was heard of clashing wars,  
Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;  
Apollo, Pallas, Jove and Mars  
Held undisturbed their ancient reign,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!  
The Senator of haughty Rome  
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,  
From lordly revel rolling home!  
Triumphal arches, gleaming well  
His breast with thoughts of boundless  
away;  
What reeked the Roman what befell  
A paltry province far away,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago?

Within that province far away,  
Went plodding home a weary boor;  
A streak of light before him lay,  
Fallen through a half-shut stable door,  
Across his path. He paused for naught,  
Told what was going on within;  
How keen the stars! his only thought;  
The air how calm, and cold, and thin,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

Oh, strange indifference!—low and high  
Drowned over common joys and cares;  
The earth was still but knew not why;  
The world was listening—unawares!  
How calm a moment may precede  
One that shall thrill the world forever  
To that still moment none will heed,  
Man's doom was linked, no more to sever,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

It is the calm and silent night!  
A thousand bells ring out  
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite  
The darkness—charmed and holy now!  
The night that erst no shame had worn,  
To it a happier name is given;  
For in the stable lay, new-born,  
The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago!

FROM *Evangelical Messenger*: "Our pastor is not as good a preacher as I want." Indeed! Perhaps you are not as good a hearer as he would like to have, but he must make the best of you. If he can stand it, you can."

### A Lost Christmas.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

"BLANCHE," said Mrs. Ridgeway to a young girl who sat in an indolent attitude, drumming with her fingers on the table that stood near by, "ought you not to get to work on those bureau-covers and doilies you are going to embroider for your Aunt Marcia? Christmas will soon be here, you know, and time flies."

"Time flies!" exclaimed Blanche, with a shrug of her shoulders. "It may with you, mother, but not with me. The days drag themselves along if there is any pleasure ahead, and somehow I don't feel a bit like doing fancy-work."

"It is a temptation to be out-of-doors in this lovely autumn weather," said Mrs. Ridgeway. "But if you had your work begun, you could take many a stitch on it during the day, or when it chanced to be stormy."

"O, there's plenty of time!" said Blanche, who had a habit of putting off from day to day. "And, besides, I may see something else I'd rather give Aunt Marcia. O mother!" exclaimed the young girl, starting up with a show of animation that added very much to her personal charms; "I know she wants a screen—she really needs one—I heard her say so last summer; and I think it will be lovely for me to give her one. I could paint it with—let me see—hollyhocks on one leaf, wild-flowers—O no, wild-flowers are so common. I guess I'll have a couple of mullein stalks on the other."

"Well," said her mother, with a smile, "you couldn't have any thing much more common than mullein stalks. Why not have golden-rod and poppies on the second leaf. I admire them so much, and so does your Aunt Marcia."

"That'll be grand!" said Blanche. "And on the other leaf—now what ought I to have on the other leaf? What would you suggest mother? You have so much taste about those things."

Mrs. Ridgeway looked pleased. It was seldom her daughter complimented her (it is a failing with most daughters), and it gave her an increased interest in the subject under discussion. She was fond of art herself, and had made every effort to encourage a taste for it in her only daughter.

"I think a cluster of field-corn, wind-blown, with rich russet tints, would be effective. I saw a screen at the Decorative Art Rooms with such a design on it, and it struck my fancy at once. But there seemed to be a great deal of work upon it, and it may be beyond your skill."

"Why, mother, what nonsense!" said Blanche, in a tone that betrayed her confidence in her own ability. "It's just as easy to paint one thing as another if you only know how to paint."

"Yes," said her mother, "but you know you have never undertaken any thing so elaborate."

"N-o-o," said Blanche, resuming her indolent attitude and her drumming.

"But if I find any difficulties, as I don't think I will, I can easily go to the art school and take a lesson."

Mrs. Ridgeway was really hopeful that her daughter would arouse herself from her indifference and apathy where work was concerned, and for a day or two Blanche was quite busy talking about the screen, and the other things she meant to do before Christmas.

One evening, about the middle of October, Mr. Ridgeway brought home a letter he had received from an old college friend whose home was among the mountains of Pennsylvania. The writer told of the beauty of the foliage in that section of country, and the charming scenery, and urged Mr. Ridgeway to bring his wife and daughter and make him a visit.

It was a temptation indeed. Blanche spoke eloquently in favour of accepting the invitation. Going was more important to her than doing; and her mother looked the desire that was in her heart. She had always had a great desire to see the Alleghanies clothed in their rich autumnal robes, and here was a golden opportunity.

"But, Blanche," said her mother, "I'd almost rather give up the trip than have you fail in sending the Christmas gifts, especially what you have planned for Aunt Marcia."

"O, don't put any thing in the way of our going!" said Blanche, with the tears ready to spring from her eyes. "I shall work all the better when we get back; and that style of painting is always done with a slap-dash."

"But then it must be begun sometime, and you have the material yet to buy."

"O, that's nothing. You can buy sateen anywhere. And this trip will be like an inspiration."

It was an inspiration that yielded a host of glowing fancies, unsubstantial dreams, and sweet suggestions, momentary impressions that took no firm hold on Blanche Ridgeway. When she returned to the city, fresh pleasures demanded her attention, and it was almost the first of December when she awoke to a sense of unfulfilled duties.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed. "I thought surely I should have time, but it's too late now to begin the screen. Suppose I do the bureau covers."

"Well," said Mrs. Ridgeway, with a sigh, "perhaps you had better. I could help you on those."

The next day Blanche was taken ill, and for ten days required constant care and attention. No time to make Christmas presents now. Not a single gift of her own handiwork would she be able to send as a token of love to the friends who had remembered her so bountifully from year to year.

Christmas came and went. It seemed like a lost Christmas to Blanche, for she had missed the joy of giving, and knew that she had disappointed her mother more than she had herself. Her good-will had been in words and not in deeds. The Christmas-bells seemed to mock her with their chimes.

"Next year," said she, "I'll take time by the forelock."

If she does she will have to change her disposition entirely, and impress upon her mind the truth of the old adage, "Well begun is half done."

Those who are swift to promise are slow to perform

### Christmas Time.

THE anniversary of our Saviour's advent to earth will soon be observed with joyous festivities, devout prayers, and with discourses delivered in the name of him upon whose shoulder rests the burden of all government. Our homes will resound with Christmas carols, and tokens of affection will gladden many a child-heart.

We would not check one up-rising of joy. Our religion is given, we believe, to brighten life, not to becloud it with dismal forebodings, not to depress the heart with serious contemplation; but reflection is a duty, and often stimulates, rather than detracts from joy.

Are we mindful of the destitute poor during this holiday season? Think of one year ago. Have any little hearts in homes of poverty sighed for some Christmas token—some gift that our own hand might then have bestowed? Go! rescue that lost opportunity by kind offerings before the New Year is ushered upon us. How little it will cost to fill the home with sunshine. Especially let the widow and the orphan share our plenty.

Once the wife leaned upon the husband, the child upon the father. He reared the Christmas-tree in the parlour, loaded it with gifts, and tied upon each little limb the burning taper. But now, the Christmas has come, and he has gone. The welcome footstep is no more heard—the affectionate embrace and the evening song are only in the memories of bygone days. Where are these dear ones? Let us search for them. We may not fill that terrible void, but we may suppress a few burning tears by our kind words, uttered in Christian love and faith. If possible, he would in spirit enter our own dwelling, and repay us ten thousand-fold. But it is reward enough to hear the Master say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

At this period we are reminded of the rapid march of time, and the momentous concerns of eternity. Our life is brief. We shall enjoy on earth but few more such festive seasons. Let us begin the year 1887, not only with acts of charity, but with self-consecration to God. It may be our last year. In view of such a possibility let us refrain from countenancing those vices which destroy our youth. Especially give not the wine-cup a place in the home. Let us exhibit that moral courage which is so befitting moral intelligences. Let us not be disloyal to our religious convictions, under all possible circumstances, however severe the test may be.