

A Christmas Hymn.

"What means this glory round our feet,"
The Magi mus'd, "more bright than
morn'."

"What means this star," the shepherds said,
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,

"Six eighteen hundred years and more
Since these sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for him like them of yore;

But it was said in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to him.

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet life which is the law.

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, kindly clasping hand in hand,
Sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

All babyhood he holdeth,
All motherhood enfoldeth,—
Yet who hath seen his face?"

"Oh, the nearness of the Christ-child,
When for a sacred space,
He nests in our very homes,
Light of the human race,
We know him and we love him,
No man to us need prove him,—
Yet who hath seen his face?"

ROB'S CHRISTMAS.

BY KATE SUMNER GATES.

"I AM just as sorry as I can be," said
mamma, as she tucked Nell and Sue up for
the night. "But we cannot have any Christ-
mas this year. Papa has been sick so long
that our money is almost gone, and mamma
will have to do all she can to get enough to
pay the rent and buy food. But we will
not complain at anything, will we, if we
can only have papa well again?"

Nell and Sue put up their tear-stained
faces for kisses, and tried to say good-night
cheerfully, but to have no Christmas was—
dreadful, wasn't it? Mamma knew it was,
and a tear dropped on Rob's face as she
bent to kiss him.

"You deserve the merriest Christmas,
Ladde," she said tenderly, "and mother
would give it to you if she only could.
Still, we will be happy because papa is
spared to us, and my brave little man will
help me make it as pleasant as we can for
the children, won't he?"

Sturdy little Rob choked back a sob, and
put his arms around his mother's neck.

"Course I will," he whispered, as he
gave the good-night kiss.

"Won't it be dreadful, Robbie," said
Nell, when they were alone—"no tree, no
presents, and no nice dinner! I'm hungry
all the time now, it seems to me.

"So am I," piped Sue, mournfully. "I
don't get full'd up at all now."

"Neither do I," said Rob, but I guess
mamma is the omptiest, 'cause she don't eat
hardly anything; she saves it for papa and
us, and she cries lots."

"Papa looked as if he had been crying,
too, this afternoon," said Nell.

"P'raps he's sorry 'cause we can't have
any Christmas," sighed Sue.

Rob lay awake a long time after his
sisters went to sleep.

"It's dreadful to all feel so bad," he
thought. "I wish I could do something,
and a'm just going to see if I can't. I'm
'most a big boy, and I'm mamma's little
man—she says I am. I'm going—to help
her—somehow."

And that was the last Rob knew until
daylight.

After breakfast he took the pail and
went up to Mr. Green's for the milk.

"Is Mr. Green at home?" he asked. "I
should like to see him, please, on business."

Mrs. Green laughed.

"Business, you little midget, you don't
know what the word means, but you will
find him out in the barn."

Rob trudged out there valiantly, though
his heart was thumping furiously.

"Well, my little man, what is it?" asked
Mr. Green, kindly.

"I—should like, I want to know"—
stammered Rob, forgetting every word of
the speech he had so carefully planned.

"I'm mother's little man, you know, and
I must help her all I can now papa's sick,
and the children feel so bad 'cause we can't
have any Christmas. Don't you believe I
could earn something? I could do lots of
things, and p'raps papa and mamma would
feel better if they could have enough to
eat once. We're hungry, and I guess they
are."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Green, blowing
his nose vigorously. "I shouldn't wonder
a bit, and I should really like a boy about
your size to help me a few days. So you
just come on, and I'll pay you with fixings
for the best Christmas dinner you ever
had."

Well, truly, it seemed to Rob that he
was a foot taller going home.

"We're going to have Christmas," he
cried, rushing in. "I'm going to work
this very day."

Mamma sat down and cried, then she
went in and told papa, and the tears rolled
down his thin, white cheeks.

"The dear little man!" he said tenderly;
and he seemed to grow better from that
very minute.

It was surprising how many errands Mr.
Green had to be done, and when he hadn't
any, Mrs. Green had.

"I don't see how we could have managed
to get along without this youngster, do
you, mother?" said Mr. Green every little
while. "We shall have to load his basket
pretty heavy to pay for all the steps he has
taken."

"I think," said Rob to his mother,
"that we can have a little bit of a tree.
Mrs. Green is going to give me some pop-
corn and oranges. We can give those to
papa and the children, and I've got some-
thing for you. I guess I'm 'most too big a
boy for presents."

You should have seen the children
trudging home in the snow the night before
Christmas. Rob's basket was so heavy he
could hardly carry it.

"Are you sure I've earned all that?" he
asked.

"Oh, certainly," said Mrs. Green; "it's
worth a great deal to old folks to have some
one take steps."

Then Sue had a bundle, and Nell the
cutest tree; "Just right for us," Rob said.

But, brave as Rob was, we could not
keep back the tears after he was in bed that
night.

"I'm gladder than anything that I could
—truly—be mamma's little man," he
sobbed, "but I just can't help wishing that
I was a little boy, too, and—could have a
sled like Harry Grey's."

But what do you think! When Rob,
Nell and Sue went into the sitting-room to
see the tree Christmas morning, there was
just such a sled there! Wasn't that splen-
did? Rob thought so, and it was such a
nice Christmas! Papa said he gained ten
pounds at least, and mamma declared it
was the happiest day of her life.

"I'm so happy it seems as if I couldn't
stand it," said Rob, "but I do b'love I'm
happiest 'cause I helped."

TEMPERANCE AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

With profound thankfulness I make the
statement, that very nearly all the Ameri-
can missionaries are total abstainers. I
believe every Congregationalist missionary,
every Methodist Episcopal, every Northern
Baptist, every Northern Presbyterian, and
every missionary of many smaller bodies of
Christians is a total abstainer; but not all
American Episcopalian missionaries, not all
Southern Presbyterians, not all Southern
Baptists. Not more than half the British
missionaries are total abstainers. It is a
cheering sign, however, that nearly all
young missionaries from the British Isle
have adopted this principle and practice.
There is more than one British mission
station in India where all gray-haired mis-
sionaries, male and female, are regular,
daily drinkers, and every young one is an
ardent abstainer. In all my journey I
have met with but one total abstaining
missionary from the continent of Europe,
and I have heard of only two others.
Most, if not all, of the continental boards
send out wine and beer to their mis-
sionaries as openly as they do other supplies.

The practice of total abstinence has been
made a prerequisite to church membership
in many missions and stations, as, for ex-
ample, the American board mission in Ja-
pan, the Baptist mission in Burnah, the
Methodist Episcopal missions in Asia and
Africa, but not in Italy. But this good
principle and practice has not been re-
quired by all total abstaining missionaries.
In some instances, missionaries have been
governed by the usage of the Church at
home to which they belong.

In many lands nearly every person from
Christian countries the natives ever see is a
drinker, frequently a heavy drinker. Am-
bassadors, consuls, lower officials in con-
nection with legations, and consulates,
merchants, soldiers, sailors, nearly all
drink, and many are frequently intoxica-
ted. It is not strange, then, that the
idea that to drink is a Christian habit
should become fixed in the native mind.
In India it has become so to such an extent
that drunkard and Christian are inter-
changeable terms. It is often said when a
Hindoo joins a church, "He has become a
drunkard."

Mission churches have lost some of their
most useful members through drunken-
ness, and even gifted pastors have been
deposed for the same cause.

STANLEY'S DARKEST AFRICA.

STANLEY'S great book is throughout of
extraordinary vigour, and it frequently
rises into a passionate eloquence which
deserves to be called literature. The
descriptions of scenery all have a pictur-
esqueness and vividness which it would be
difficult to surpass; the moral fervour of
many parts of the story is Carlylean in its
intensity. Here, for instance, is a passage
which surely has qualities of great writing
about it which should make it worthy of
attention. He is describing those desolate
nights of semi-starvation, when dying
forms haunted him in the darkness, and he
says: "Out of that pall-black darkness
came the coric shapes that haunt the fever-
land, that gibe and mock the lonely man,
and weave figures of flame and draw fiery
forms in the mantle of the night; and
whispers breathed through the heavy air of
graves, and worms, and forgetfulness, and
a demon lurked in the dazed brain that
'twere better to rest than to think with a
sickening heart; and the sough of the wind
through the crowns of the thick, black bush
seemed to sigh and moan, 'Lost, lost, lost!
Thy labour and grief are in vain!' Com-
fortless days upon days; brave lives are
sobbing their last; man after man rolls
down to the death, to mildew and rot, and
thou wilt be left alone! 'Allah Ho Akbar!'
was the cry that rang through the gloom
from a man with a breaking heart. The
worlds went pealing along through the dark,
and they raised the echoes of 'God is great!'
within me. Why should a Moslem recall
a Christian to thoughts of his God? 'Ye
fools, when will ye be wise? He that
planted the ear, shall he not hear? He
that formed the eye, shall he not see?'
And, lo! worthier thoughts possess the
mind, the straining of the eyes through the
darkness is relaxed, and the sight is in-
verted to see dumb witnesses of past
mercies on this or that forgotten occasion;
one memory begets another, until the
stubborn heart is melted, and our needs are
laid, as upon a tablet, before the Great
Deliverer?" There is pathos, piety, and
power here, and even a touch of Chris-
tianity.

BACKBONE.

ONE thing which Christians, as well as
others, need at the present day is backbone.
Not a backbone like a ramrod, that cannot
yield or bend, but a well articulated spinal
column which is strong enough to hold a
man upright and keep him from being
crushed beneath the burdens that press
upon him. These are the days of easy-
going piety, and men are too often ruled
by compromise rather than by conscience.

Says Mr. Spurgeon: "Oak has given
place to willow. Everybody has grown
limp. Out of the generality of limppness
has come an admiration for it. A man
cannot speak a plain word without being
accused of bitterness, and if he denounces
error he is narrow-minded: for all must
join the universal admiration society or be
placed under ban and be howled down."

Now, in such a condition of things as
this there is special call, not for stubborn-
ness and crustiness, but for a gentle,
patient, unyielding conscientiousness and
firmness, which anchors the soul to the
overlasting rock, and causes the heart to
rest on him who is the way, the truth, and
the life, and who will never leave nor for-
sake us.

SANTA CLAUS.

SANTA CLAUS was one of the oldest ideas
of the Celtic west in pagan times, as he was
of the pagan east before. In Christian
times he was still regarded with religious
reverence, sitting—as he had sat for ages
in Egypt and elsewhere—in the arms of his
mother. Santa Claus was, in fact, the
child Jesus in the middle ages; and
throughout that period the festive creed of
Germany, and all Celtic Europe, was that
he visited all family dwellings of good
Christians on the eve of his anniversary,
and brought with him gifts and presents
for the children. The truth of this original
belief is plainly enough indicated by the
word "claus," which, in the gothic or
ancient German, means "child" and "son."
Santa Claus formerly meant the "Holy
Child."

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A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1892.

CHRISTMAS.

THE blessed Christmas time knows no
difference in nation or people or kindred or
tongue. Wherever the wonderful story of
that first Christmas in Bethlehem is told
there prevails the same spirit of peace on
earth to men of good will. For did he not
make of one blood all the nations of the
earth? Well may the poet say:

"God rest ye little children, let nothing you
affright;
For Jesus Christ your Saviour was born this
happy night

Wherever the story of Jesus has gone
there childhood has grown dearer and
motherhood more sacred. Oh tell this best
of all stories to the little ones this Christ-
mas time. Tell it to them so that it will be
dearer than any fairy tale ever heard. We
would not agree with some to abolish the
sweet myth of Santa Claus, or St. Nicholas,
or Kris Kingle. But we would have the
little ones early know the sweet truth that
underlies the myth. Children love myth
in its place, but they love truth more,
and the boy or girl who is not early told all
the story of the Christ child is robbed of
the best part of its inheritance.

"Oh, the beauty of the Christ-child,
The gentleness, the grace,
The smiling, loving tenderness,
The infantile embrace.