

Christmas.

HANG up the vine and the holly,
Sign the crosses over the door,
That joy coming in with the Christmas,
May go from the place novermore.

Gather love gifts for the children,
Guard well the mystical way,
That the Christ-child comes at the midnight
To bless with bright favours the day.

Bring in good cheer and be merry,
Rejoice and ring out glad song
The stars of a Bethlehem desert
Look down on a Christ happy throng.

Go ye in hovel and highway,
Guests to bring in to the feast;
Angels shall unawares greet ye
In those the world counteth as least.

Sound the sweet Christ loving anthem—
Echoes will bring it on high—
To the angels made joyous forever
By Christmas of love in the sky.

Bow down and worship the Spirit
Of the feast, the invisible King;
Lo! he cometh in scarlet and purple
To gather a world's offering.

The Growth of the Christmas Tree.

SOME one has said, "The Christmas-tree, like liberty, loves lands where the snow 'lies," and it would seem so to-day; but there is little doubt that, although Germany may rightfully claim to be the Christmas birth-place of this enchanting shrub, the custom is far older than is generally supposed, and its cradle was in a warm and sunny clime, even in the land of the obelisk, and on the banks of the sluggish, yellow Nile. In Egypt, however, the palm—that calendar tree, that puts forth a fresh shoot every month—was the gift-tree, and the ceremony was at full force at heathen festivities many hundred years before the birth of Christ.

From Egypt the pretty custom passed into Italy, where the fir-tree took the place of the palm, and every December was illuminated with burning candles in honour of the sun-god Saturn; while during the *Sigillaria*, a feast closely following the *Saturnalia*, Italian mothers hung the green boughs with small waxen figures, such as we use to deck our Christmas-trees, but representing mythological characters. These were afterwards distributed among the happy, dark-eyed little Roman children, who received their *Sigillara*, as these tiny images were called, with the same joy you do your glittering balls and sugar toys.

A sun in honour of Apollo crowned the Roman tree where we place the Star of Bethlehem; and our figures of Santa Claus, flying angels, and the fair little Christ-child, are but Christian substitutes for the heathen Phœbus and his flocks. Poetical Germany was very quick to adopt the lovely practice, to add beauty to its *Juel Fesi*, or mid-winter Whul-feast; which in time was merged into yule-tide, or the Church, and pagan gods and goddesses gave way to more holy devices.

That the Germans sometimes substitute pyramids for trees, and that the

evergreens used are of pyramidal shape, have been considered strong proofs of their Egyptian origin.

The Christmas seed thus planted grew and flourished, and has been wafted over the seas to England and America, until now, in New York, as well as in the "Fatherland," whenever

"The merry bells, chiming from Trinity,
Charm the ear with their musical din,
Telling all throughout the vicinity
Holiday gambols are now to begin,"

thousands of Christmas-trees burst forth in all their glory, and, like Jack's bean-stalk, spring up, bud, blossom, and shake down their wondrous fruit all in a single night, while to the thoughtful they are curiously symbolical.

First, the evergreen itself, typical of the "Tree of Life;" the gleaming tapers proclaim the "Feast of Lights;" the overflowing horns and cornucopias represent plenty and good cheer; banners, balls, and bells are remnants of the gay holiday pageants of the olden time; the presents are moments of the "great gift to mankind;" while the waxen angels and the band of children carolling round the sparkling bush, recall the heavenly choir that sang the first Christmas carol upon the first Christmas-eve.—*Harpur's Young People.*

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.

Then and Now.

FIFTY years ago the tinder-box was as indispensable as was, and is, the tea-kettle that still sings on the hob in the kitchen. As an old acquaintance it is worth describing. It was more or less coarsely ornamented, and of various forms. Ordinarily, it was an oblong wooden box, some six or eight inches long, and three or four in width, and was divided into two parts by a partition. In one of these was fitted a loose lid with a central knob, to drop in as a "dampor" on the tinder; and in the other were kept the flint, steel, and bunches of brimstone matches. The "tinder" was scorched or half-burned linen rag. The flint and steel being struck together emitted sparks, and

then, as soon as a spark had fallen upon and ignited the tinder, the brimstone end of the "match" was applied to it and lit. The matches were thin slips of deal five or six inches long, and perhaps a quarter of an inch wide, cut to a point at each end, and dipped in melted brimstone; they were hawked about the country by itinerant vendors. The fumes of the sulphur emitted a scent by no means pleasant to the olfactory nerves; in fact, the stench was strong enough to find its way from the kitchen to the attic of a lofty mansion. From the match thus ignited a candle was lit, of mutton fat usually, of "moulds" where greater cost could be afforded. There were never candles on the table without the snuffer-tray and snuffers. It is almost as necessary to describe the snuffers as the tinder box, for they are nearly as much of the past, when match-girls were members of a large profession instead of subjects for artists who would picture the olden time.

In those days, lighting by gas was a novelty that was making its way into public favour slowly, and against furious storm of opposition, although in the unsafe, miserably lit streets of London tottered at night feeble old creatures with staves and lanterns, who were by a fiction styled "watchman," but whom the public knew best as "Charlies." They came mostly from the workhouse, and their shelter between sunset and sunrise was a narrow rickety sentry box, to overturn which, with its aged and decrepit occupant, was a favourite sport of all the "bloods" in town. Lamplighting was a profession; but the streets were so "dark with light," that on the opposite side, if the street were at all broad, you could not tell whether it were a man or a woman who was passing. Familiar to me in my youth were the old oil lamps, those makers of darkness visible in our thoroughfares which the now sovereign king, gas, has displaced. It is strange, but true, that one of the most bitter opponents to the introduction of gas was Sir Walter Scott, who denounced the "pestilential innovation" in a public speech. But the northern wizard speedily recognized the magic of the new light-giver, and changing with the times, took a prominent part in the formation of a gas company, causing Abbotsford to be lit with the "dangerous and deleterious air."—*S. C. Hall.*

Out of every night God is making a path by his hand for the morning, and for you; and out of every day God is making a bed of darkness for the night, and for you.

Fix your heart upon Jesus, your burden-bearer. Resolve that whatever burden comes during the year, you will immediately take it to him. See that you meet every trial with sincerity of heart, asking not so much that it may be removed as that you may have grace to bear it.

FOURTH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

Dec. 25.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

REVIEW SCHEME.

LESSON I. *The Centurion's Faith.* Matt. 8. 5-13.—What request did the centurion make? Of what honour did he think himself unworthy? What did Jesus say about his faith? (GOLDEN TEXT.) What blessing did his faith bring to his servant?

LESSON II. *The Tempest Stilled.* Matt. 8. 18-27.—What Teacher was more homeless than foxes or birds? In what peril were the disciples on the sea? What rebuke did Jesus give them? (GOLDEN TEXT.) What quieted the storm? What amazed the disciples?

LESSON III. *Power to Forgive Sin.* Matt. 9. 1-8.—What sick man was brought to Christ? What words of cheer did Jesus speak to him? What did the scribes charge Jesus with doing? What was proven by his healing the paralytic? (GOLDEN TEXT.) How were the people affected?

LESSON IV. *Three Miracles.* Matt. 9. 18-31.—What miracle of healing was wrought by touching a garment? Who was the first person raised from the dead by Jesus? What prayer did two blind men utter? What answer did Jesus give? (GOLDEN TEXT.) What result followed? To whom did they tell the story of their cure?

LESSON V. *The Harvest and the Labourers.* Matt. 9. 35-38; 10. 1-8.—What did Jesus say about the harvest and the labourers? What prayer did he command? How many did he choose as apostles? What two things did he send them to do? What command did he give them about their work? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

LESSON VI. *Confessing Christ.* Matt. 10. 32-42.—Whom does Jesus promise to confess in heaven? (GOLDEN TEXT.) What divisions did Jesus come to set up in families? Who is not worthy of him? What guest was honoured when the apostles were entertained? What promise does he utter about a cup of water?

LESSON VII. *Christ's Witness to John.* Matt. 11. 2-15.—What question of doubt did John ask? What answer did Jesus give? What witness did Jesus bear to John's rank among men? What did he say of him on another occasion? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

LESSON VIII. *Judgment and Mercy.* Matt. 11. 20-30.—What cities did Jesus upbraid for their unbelief? What thanksgivings did he offer? What invitation did he utter? (GOLDEN TEXT.) Of whom does he ask the world to learn?

LESSON IX. *Jesus and the Sabbath.* Matt. 12. 1-14.—What charge of law-breaking did the Pharisees make against the disciples? What royal example did Jesus cite in defence? Who is Lord of the Sabbath? In answer to what question did Jesus work a miracle? What did he settle by his work and words? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

LESSON X. *Parable of the Sower.* Matt. 13. 1-9.—From what pulpit did Jesus preach to the people? What was the form of his teaching? In what place did seed fail to bear fruit? What came from the good ground sowing? What is the seed that is meant? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

LESSON XI. *Parable of the Tares.* Matt. 13. 24-30.—To what is the kingdom of heaven likened? Who sowed tares in the field? How long were they permitted to grow? What, then, would the reapers do? When is the harvest, and who are the reapers? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

LESSON XII. *Other Parables.* Matt. 13. 31-33, 41-52.—What two parables of growth did Jesus utter? What two parables of treasure? What parable of judgment? When is the judgment, and what will it effect? (GOLDEN TEXT.) Whom will every wise teacher be like?

FIRST QUARTER, 1888.

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A.D. 29] LESSON I. [JAN. 1.

HEROD AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Matt. 14. 1-12. Memory verses, 10-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.—Matt. 14. 12.