

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

A very beautiful legend, says The Household, makes Martin Luther the originator of the first Christmas tree. The story runs that he was travelling alone through a forest on Christmas Eve. The sky glittered with innumerable stars, so cheering and inspiring to the great Reformer that he cut a small fir-tree, and when he reached home fastened to it many wax tapers and set it up as an object-lesson to his children to remind them of that evening in Bethlehem when Christ was born the light of the world.

Be this as it may, we find the Christmas tree in common use among the Germans before the latter half of the seventeenth century, which makes it somewhat surprising that Goethe should never have seen one until 1765, which he describes as being adorned with sweets and having under it a sugar Christ-child.

When the Reformers separated themselves from the Catholic Church they discarded the manger with the Christ-child, seen in all Catholic countries on Christmas Eve, along with many other rites and ceremonies, and substituted in its stead the decorated tree. It is only during this century that it had been introduced into Catholic countries, but now it is almost as popular in Spain, France, Italy, and Russia as it is in England and America.

In France it was introduced by the Princess of Orleans, and firmly established later by Eugene. It was in 1840, too, when Albert became Prince Consort, that a tree was added to the royal festivities.

It was brought into America by the Dutch settlers of New York and the Germans of Pennsylvania, but its growth was slow among the Puritans, where it

was looked upon as a sinful custom of popery. It was not until about 1830 that it became popular among all classes; but the tree of that time, with its paper flowers, apples, gilded nuts, and awful confections in the shapes of hearts, doves, etc., made of sugar, water, and flour, bore little resemblance to the richly decorated tree of to day, which sometimes not only revolves by electricity, but is lighted by the same agency.



Jesus, Saviour, teach thou me
Holy lessons from thy word;
Make me more and more like thee,
Since my heart thy voice hath heard.

Pundita Ramabai has returned to India and intends to give herself more directly to religious work. Henceforth she will be a missionary, devoting herself more and more to the work of evangelization. Full of enthusiasm, gifted intellectually and spiritually for such work, she will be able to make as great a success of Gospel work as she has of preaching and organizing. Moreover, she will kindle widespread enthusiasm among India's converted daughters for the salvation of their fell w-countrymen and countrywomen.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.

It came upon the midnight clear
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King;"
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way,
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

For, lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.



Christmas Hymn.

Lo! the merry bells are ringing
Their sweet welcome to the morn,
And the white-robed choirs are singing
"Unto us a child is born!"

And there's many a kindly greeting
On this happy Christmas Day!
Yes, there's many a joyous meeting
With old friends from far away!

Every kind and generous feeling
Gladsome Christmastide imparts;
"Peace on earth" to man revealing,
Hailed with joy by many hearts.

Would we realize its gladness
Would we share its holy calm,
Let us look on others' sadness,
Let us bring a soothing balm.

For the seed of love we're sowing,
In a blessing shall appear;
From the heavenly source o'ershowing,
It shall crown the coming year.

LESSON NOTES.

FOURTH QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

FOURTH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

DECEMBER 31.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.—Psalm 103. 2.

HOME READINGS.

Mo. (Christmas) Joyful news.—Luke 2. 1-11.

Tu. Haman's plot against the Jews.—Esth. 3. 1-11.

W. Esther pleading for her people.—Esth. 8. 3-8, 15-17.

Th. Ezra's journey to Jerusalem.—Ezra 8. 21-32.

F. Nehemiah's prayer.—Neh. 1. 1-11.

S. Rebuilding the walls.—Neh. 4. 7-18.

Su. Public reading of the Scriptures.—Neh. 8. 1-12.

I. Study carefully the Titles and Golden Texts of each lesson.

II. State picturesque facts of the lessons as suggested by the following hints:

1. A beautiful woman prostrate before a king.

2. A crowd of worshippers gathering in the temple.

3. A great bonfire of battle-axes, spears, and sheaths.

4. A large congregation listening to the reading of the word of God.

5. A party of soldiers attacking a party of labourers.

6. They that feared the Lord talking together about him.

7. A drunken man.

8. Priests offering sick and infirm animals as sacrifices.

9. A crowd of merchants and hucksters outside the city wall.

10. A Persian noble alone in prayer.

11. Returning captives laughing and singing with delight.

12. A man dressed in blue and white with a crown of gold on his head.

13. A man weighing and counting out gold and silver to twelve priests.

14. A king giving his signet ring to a man.

III. State what we are taught in the lessons:

1. About peace and harmony in the church.

2. About the reign of Christ.

3. About God's providence.

4. About a man reaping what he sows.

5. About the feast of Purim.

6. About liberal giving in the church of God.

7. About the Sabbath day.

8. About trusting in the Lord.

9. About the return of the Jews to Jerusalem.

10. About abstaining from intoxicants.

11. About studying the Scriptures.

12. About sowing in tears and reaping in joy.

13. About rebuilding Jerusalem.



BETHLEHEM-TOWN.

BY EUGENE FIELD.

As I was going to Bethlehem-town,
Upon the earth I cast me down
All underneath a little tree
That whispered in this wise to me:
"Oh, I shall stand on Calvary,
And bear what burthen saveth thee."

As up I fared to Bethlehem-town
I met a shepherd coming down,
And thus he quoth: "A wondrous sight
Hath spread before mine eyes this
night—

An angel host most fair to see
That sung full sweetly of a tree
That shall uplift on Calvary,
What burthen saveth you and me.

And as I got to Bethlehem-town,
Lo! wise men came that bore a crown—
"Is there," cried I, "in Bethlehem
A King shall wear this diadem?"
"Good sooth," they quoth, "and it is he

That shall be lifted on the tree
And freely shed on Calvary
What blood redeemeth us and thee."

Unto a Child in Bethlehem-town,
The wise men came and brought the
crown,

And while the infant smiling slept
Upon their knees they fell and wept;
But, with her babe upon her knee,
Naught recked that mother of the tree
That should uplift on Calvary
What burthen saveth all and me.

As I walk in Bethlehem-town,
And think on him that wears the
crown—

I may not kiss his feet again
Nor worship him as did I then;
My King hath died upon the tree,
And hath outpoured on Calvary
What blood redeemeth you and me!

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