

## A Child's Question.

SHE was sitting in the twilight,  
With her darling on her knee;  
And the little one was telling,  
In her happy childish glee,

How she thought, "'cause it was snowing,  
That the Christmas-time was near,  
And of all the lovely presents  
That 'twould bring to her this year."

And the loving mother noticed  
All her baby's winning ways,  
As she talked of joys expected  
In the coming holidays.

Suddenly the child was silent,  
And the room was still again;  
Well she knew some puzzling question  
Vexed the baby's busy brain.

All at once the wee one's query  
Seemed to pierce the twilight gray:  
"Mamma, why do we have Christmas?  
What is Christmas, anyway?"

And the mother's look was tender,  
And her voice was soft and low.  
As she answered: "'Tis the birthday  
Of the Christ-child, dear. You know

"The old story—how the shepherds  
Found the baby where he lay,  
In a cave upon the hill-side,  
Resting on a bed of hay;

"And the three wise kings, to find him,  
Travelled long, and travelled far  
From their homes in distant countries,  
Guided by a moving star;

"And the star by night did lead them  
Over desert, field, and hill,  
Till at last, above the hill-side,  
O'er the cave it stood quite still;

"And the three wise kings there found him,  
Baby King, a few days old;  
And they gave him precious presents,  
Frankincense and myrrh and gold.

"And now, e'er since that birthday,  
Many hundred years ago,  
We've remembered Christ and kept it,  
Called it Christmas, as you know."

For a moment there was silence  
As the mother ceased to speak;  
Then she felt the softest kisses  
Pressed in love upon her cheek,

And two baby arms caressed her,  
And she heard a sweet voice say:  
"Mamma, you all give me presents  
Ev'ry year on my birthday,

"And each year you give such lovely  
Things to ev'ry one; don't you?  
Why, is this Jesus' birthday,  
Don't you give him presents too?"

Startled by the baby's question,  
Through the mother's mind there flew  
Visions of the coming Christmas,  
All she'd thought and planned to do:

Of the many costly presents  
For her loved ones she had bought,  
And there was not one for Jesus,  
With the vision came the thought

That "a little child shall lead them."  
Was her baby leading her?  
Did the kings in far-off ages  
Bring him perfumes, gold, and myrrh?

And should she on his birthday  
For him nothing give or do?  
Still the baby's voice repeated,  
"Can't we give him presents too?"

And the mother, in her sorrow,  
Felt her heart with gladness fill,  
And she kissed the little pleader,  
Murm'ring softly, "Yes, we will."

WHY are jokes like nuts? Why, because the  
drier they are the better they crack.

## How a Christmas Card Saved a Life.

BY M. L. DEMAREST.

MERRY Christmas time was drawing near, and I  
wanted some pretty illuminations to give away, so  
I went one morning to 150 Nassau Street, where  
I knew I should find a beautiful variety.

While I was looking over a multitude of mot-  
toes, and making my choice, I noticed a lady near  
me, apparently bent on the same errand. After a  
few minutes, as she seemed unable to find what she  
was seeking, I asked her if there were any among  
those I had chosen which she particularly liked.

She thanked me pleasantly, and said she had  
selected all she wished except one, and she felt  
pretty sure of finding it among the unsorted  
cards, for it had been published, she thought, by  
the Tract Society only the year before.

"It is one with purple pansies—heart's ease, you  
know—and the verse,

'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth  
for you.'

I want it for a special use," she said; and then  
added, impulsively, "Those words saved a life—a  
soul—last Christmas. You don't wonder they are  
precious!"

Then, in a few words, she gave the outline of  
the story of one who had, through terrible trials,  
lost faith in human love, truth, and honour; and,  
worst of all, in his misery, had made shipwreck of  
his faith in God.

"It was Christmas-day. He started to leave the  
house with the full purpose of committing suicide.  
The children were just coming home from a  
Sunday-school Christmas-tree, eager and happy  
with their pretty presents. He stole out through  
a room from which they had passed, so that no one  
might see him leave the house. Lying on the  
floor, just where he must step to cross the thresh-  
old, was a card, with purple pansies, and the  
words, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he  
careth for you.'

"Startled, thrilled to his soul, he could not pass  
by that message from heaven facing him, as if to  
drive him back from his wicked, cowardly purpose.  
Faith in God and his love came back, and with it  
came courage and strength to take up the heavy  
burden of a bruised and shattered life. God did  
care for him, and was a very present help in  
trouble."

The story touched me deeply, and has often re-  
curred to me since, though I have never seen the  
lady again, and know nothing further of the cir-  
cumstances. It always comes back with special  
force whenever I have to choose Scripture verses to  
give away. Since we have the promise, "My  
word shall not return unto me void," may we not  
rightly ask God's peculiar blessing on these little  
messengers, which go to so many homes we may  
never enter?

I could not help thinking that, perhaps, some  
one had been praying "in secret" for God's bless-  
ing on that very message.

The hand of God was so clearly in it all, guiding  
the choice of the text, providing that this one and  
no other should be given to the little child; that  
her chilled fingers should carry it safely through  
the streets, and then drop it at the very moment,  
and in the only place, where it would save a life,  
that it seemed to me that it would be to His honour  
to repeat the story of His loving care, which came  
to me so strangely.

May it be a Father's message to some other  
poor, troubled heart, assuring him of the faithful-  
ness of Him who "will not suffer us to be tempted  
above that we are able, but will with the tempta-  
tion make a way of escape, that we may be able to  
bear it."

May it remind him of One who was "wounded for  
our transgressions," and on whose tender, human  
heart, we may to-day cast all our sins and our  
sorrows and our cares, and be sure that he will care  
for us.

The Transferred Sheaves.—A Christmas  
Legend.

BY JAMES BUCKHAM.

Two neighbours, blessed with a sufficient store  
For winter's pressing need, and somewhat more,  
Determined (each suspecting not his brother)  
They'd make a gift of sheaves unto each other.

The first one said: "My neighbour John is poor -  
No prattling children play about his door:  
I'll take, then, these twelve sheaves for Christmas cheer,  
And add them to his harvest of the year."

The second likewise said: "There's my poor neighbour,  
With ten small mouths dependent on his labour,  
I'll take these twelve full bundles, sheaf by sheaf,  
And hide them with his own on Christmas Eve."

And so, when o'er the earth with radiance mild  
The stars that shone upon the Saviour child  
Shone once again, while angels sang above,  
Each neighbour paid his debt of Christmas love.

The morning broke; and each, as oft before,  
Went forth for that day's portion of his store.  
When lo! each saw the sheaves which he had given  
Unto his brother, full restored by heaven!

## Christmas.

PERHAPS there is no season in all the weary  
march of years so fraught with happiness for all  
classes as this mid-winter holiday. The hearts of  
the aged seem to grow young again, and the young  
gain higher and brighter heights of pleasure and  
enjoyment.

Clouds and sadness flee away at the coming of  
summer glory in the midst of winter's gloom. The  
voices of sorrow are hushed, as the joybells ring  
out in their silvery sweetness. The dark powers  
of anguish and despair are for once held in check  
by the invisible chain of silver and gold. Glad  
songs and floating melody come over the tranquil  
waters, where moaning tempests have lingered so  
long. Sweetness, beauty, and sunshine, all mingle  
lovingly together, to make up the crowning glory  
of the day.

Who can tell the secret of this glad day?

Who can point out the invisible power that  
makes it so beautiful? Is it the "ivy green" and  
winter flowers twined gracefully together in fantas-  
tic forms? Is it the many offerings of friendship  
and love? Is it the Christmas carol and grand  
anthem that float out in beautiful melody? Is it  
because this glad day comes in the midst of the  
gloom and desolation of winter? Is it because all  
are joining in this scene of rejoicing? Perhaps  
these things help to render the scene beautiful, yet  
they do not constitute the central glory of it.

The sweet love of Christ is the hallowed power  
that beautifies the day. The festive hours are  
ashed in, in memory of his coming to redeem the  
world, and the joy and gladness of that great day  
still floats down the tide of ages.

There was joy when he came, and there will  
ever be glad joy as the Redeemer's birthday comes  
with years. We can well afford to be joyous as  
Christmas breaks upon us with its hallowed joys.  
We can well afford to bestow our "love-offerings"  
upon others, when we have received by the coming  
of Christ a gift of untold worth.

"Oh, royal day! full of brightness and precious  
memories, we will keep thee sacred for ever!"

—Selected.