

**The Christmas Saint's Mistake.**

BY ANNIE D. WALKER.

We hung our stockings in a row,  
And labelled them with care,  
That good St. Nicholas might know  
To whom belonged each pair.  
We did not mean to sleep a wink,  
But keep wide-open eyes,  
But sleep came on us soon, we think,  
And took us by surprise;

For not the slightest thing we knew  
Until the morning light,  
Yet Santa came the chimney through,  
And brought our gifts that night,  
But, oh, confusion great he made,  
He brought papa a doll,  
Which he with hearty laughter said  
He did not want at all.

A pair of slippers for my share,  
Were laid my stockings by,  
So large indeed they made me stare,  
And then I had to cry.  
There was a pretty tinkling cart,  
For mamma plainly meant  
But mamma said, "With all my heart,  
I'll alter that intent."

She gave the cart to brother Ned,  
Who in his stocking found  
A dainty breakfast shawl of red,  
With pretty border 'round.  
"Then we shall make a fair exchange,"  
Cried little Ned in glee,  
"So Santa will not think it strange  
You gave the cart to me."

Now papa said, "My little Bess,  
I'll give the doll to you,  
I hardly need it, and confess  
There's nothing else to do."  
"Papa," I cried, "if you could wear  
These great, big, clumsy shoes,  
With joy to you I'll give the pair—  
I hope you won't refuse."

When all arrangements had been made,  
We were a merry crew,  
But such mistakes, dear papa said,  
He scarcely ever knew.  
—Temperance Banner.

the young folk to save their pennies instead of spending them all for candles or toys. It will cultivate self-denial, and love for the best of causes. It will help the missionary cause in a time of great need. The contents of these boxes will help to send the Gospel to some Japanese village, or Indian tribe, or backwoods settlement in Canada, and only the great day shall reveal the good that they may do.

**CHRISTMAS STORIES.**

BY JAMES LEARMOUNT.

There is a beautiful German story you ought to hear. It tells of the first Christmas tree. The story says that a long time ago a poor man lived in a great forest with his wife and two children. One Christmas Eve it was terribly cold and stormy, an awful night in which to be without shelter. The children, thinking they heard a knock, opened the door, and there, standing outside, was a little child, who begged that they would take him in. This the children gladly did, and were delighted to share their supper with the strange child. The two children offered to sleep on the floor in order that the little stranger might have a bed. Next morning little Gretel was the first to awake, and she was immediately charmed with beautiful music she heard. She called her brother Hans, and to the two children it seemed as though angels were singing. They peeped out of the window, only to be more astonished still. There, outside the window, were lovely beings, in shining clothes, with harps of gold in their hands—these were the singers. The children turned to wake the little wanderer of the night before; to their surprise they found him standing beside them, no longer pinched and starved, but clad in garments white as the snow, and with a beautiful halo of glory round his head.

Claus. So all the noble things of life come to you through Christ.

It is also a beautiful fancy that the green, sharp holly leaves with their red berries with which we decorate our homes recall the crown of thorns with its drops of precious blood.

The little robin redbreast picking scanty food amid the snow has its reminder, too, of Jesus in that red mark on its breast, which, according to an old story, was caused at the crucifixion by the Saviour's blood staining it as the bird sought to pluck out one of the nails. As you look at robin in future, think of Jesus, who was nailed to the cross for you, and be kind to the birds he has made.

Do not the carol-singers remind us of the angels' song and message, "Peace on earth, good will towards men"?

The family gatherings of Christmas recall what Christ has done for us, and as we gather together and hold our little family lovefeasts and reunions, let us think of the reunion in heaven which Christ made possible. Christmas teaches what we should not forget through the year—that all our good things come from Christ. And the spirit of Christmas, when we are making presents and giving gifts to the poor, tells us that Christ is still in the world living in men's hearts.

You can do what the wise men did; you can bring your gifts to Christ. He is still very poor. You wonder at that. But go and find those poorer than yourself, the wretched and sad, and help them, do them a kindness, and you will find Christ. You will hear him say, "Ye have done it unto me."

A beautiful story has come down to us from the Middle Ages. It is about a girl called Madelon. She went with the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the babe Christ. But she was so poor that she had nothing to give; and how she did cry! God was very sorry for her, and sent his good angel Gabriel to her. "If

tence, that he be shot dead. The Queen looked upon the paper, and then looked upon the wondrous beauties that nature had spread to her view.

"What has this man done?" she asked. The Duke looked at the paper and replied:

"Ah, my royal mistress, that man, I fear, is incorrigible; he has deserted three times."

"And can you not say anything in his behalf, my lord?"

Wellington shook his head.

"Oh, think again, I pray you!" Seeing that her Majesty was so deeply moved, and feeling sure she would not have the man shot in any event, he finally confessed that the man was brave and gallant, and really a good soldier.

"But," he added, "think of the influence."

"Influence!" the Queen cried, her eyes flashing and her bosom heaving with emotion. "Let it be ours to wield influence. I will try mercy in this man's case; and I charge you, your Grace, to let me know the result. A good soldier, you said. Oh, I thank you for that. And you may tell him that your good word saved him."

Then she took the paper and wrote, with a bold, firm hand, across the dark page, the bright, saving word, "Pardoned!"

The Duke was fond of telling the story, and he was willing, also, to confess that the giving of that paper to the pardoned soldier gave him far more joy than he could have experienced from the taking of a city.

**Christmas in the Hospital.**

BY FIDELIS.

And it is Christmas mornin'? I've lost my count of time,  
But I thought it must be Christmas, by the bells' sweet, solemn chime;  
And I had a dream of the home-folks, just as the mornin' broke—  
Maybe 'twas the bells that brought it, ringin' before I woke!

An' is it Christmas mornin'? An' while I'm lyin' here,  
The folks to church are goin'—the bells do ring so clear!  
Fathers an' mothers an' children, merrily o'er the snow,  
Just as we used to go, on Christmas long ago!

Oh, yes! I know you're good, nurse, an' I do try not to fret,  
But at Christmas time, no wonder if my eyes with tears are wet;  
For I saw so plain, in my dream, the brown house by the mill,  
An' my father an' my mother—ah, me—are they there still?

And, as they go to church to-day—do they think an' speak of me,  
An' wonder where poor Katie is across the great blue sea?  
An' well it is they cannot tell! an' may they never know;  
For sure 'twould only break their hearts to hear my tale of woe!

My mother must be gettin' old; an' she was never strong;  
But then her spirit was so bright, an' sweet her daily song;  
She sings no more about the house, but I know she prays for me,  
An' wipes away the dropping tears, for the child she ne'er may see!

My father's bent with honest toil an' trouble bravely borne,  
But never has he had to bear a word or look of scorn;  
An' never shall it come through me! for all I have been wild,  
I'd rather die a thousand deaths than shame him for his child!

Ah, yes! I have been sinful, but some were more to blame,  
Who never think because of that to hang their heads for shame!  
Ah, well! I mustn't think of them, but of myself, and pray,  
That He will take away the sin—who came on Christmas Day!

An' thank you for the letter, nurse, you say the ladies brought,  
'Twas kind of them to think of me—I thank them for the thought;  
The print is easy read, but, oh! what would I give to see  
Just one small scrap of writin' from the old home-folks, to me!

But, nurse, those bells seem tellin' of the better home above,  
Where sin an' sorrow cannot come—but all is peace an' love,  
Where broken hearts are healed at last, an' darkness passed away—  
An' he shall bid us welcome home, who came on Christmas Day!

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**Pleasant Hours:**

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1893.

**THE MISSIONARY BOX.**

There is a story told of a little boy, who in his zeal for the cause of missions, not being able to procure anything better, made a collection box of an ox's horn, and carved upon it the lines:

"Once I was the horn of an ox,  
Now I am a missionary box."

We hope it proved for the cause of missions a real horn of plenty. We hope, too, that our young friends will very largely adopt that excellent plan of collecting funds for missions. The Rev. Dr. Sutherland, Missionary Secretary at Toronto, will be happy to supply nice boxes, such as that shown in the picture, to juvenile collectors. The best plan will be for the superintendent of the school to see how many are wanted, and then have them all sent together. These can be placed on the parlour table or mantelpiece, or be used in the school—in each class and it is marvellous what an amount of money can in this way be raised. Besides, this method will teach

The children got such a fright, and, seeing that, he said: "Be not afraid; I am the Christ-child. You gave me shelter and food last night, though I was a stranger; now I must reward you, and one thing I will do for you is to see that cold and weariness never come to you again." Then he went out, broke a branch off a fir tree, planted it in the ground, and said: "This branch will grow quickly into a tree, and every year on this day it will bear all manner of fruits and good things." Then he and the singers disappeared. But the German children always know from that story who planted the first Christmas tree. One thing is certain, dear children: if Jesus had never come as a little child into the world, you would never have had a Christmas tree, and many other good things beside. Think of Jesus, then, as you look at your Christmas trees, and enjoy all the pleasures of this glad season. No other time in the year speaks to little children so loudly as Christmas.

I dare say some of you do not know the proper story of Santa Claus. Santa Claus has lost its real meaning for most children. The story says that on the night that Christ was born all the powers of darkness were powerless, and could do nothing to molest the believing soul—that kind spirits, always kind, had then more strength allowed them to do kind deeds, so that little children might lie down in sleep feeling sure that on waking in the morning they would find beside them some pleasant gift brought by God's good angels. Christ is Santa

I had only a flower to give Jesus, I should be happy," sobbed the girl; "but it is winter, and the frost is on the ground." Then the angel led her out into the dark night, and wherever they went it was light. The angel then touched the earth frequently with his staff, and wherever the angel touched, crimson Noel roses sprang up. Madelon gathered them, and took them to Jesus, and she took her love too. Yes, and Jesus would sooner have that than aught else. Give him your love, your trust, your obedience. Then you will be like the star the wise men followed—you will shine and reveal Christ. You will become God's star pointing out the Christ, by living his life. Take Christ with you, and you will always have the kindly spirit of Christmas in your hearts.

**THE QUEEN'S MERCY.**

Queen Victoria was not twenty years of age when she ascended the throne. Coming into possession of power with a heart fresh, tender, and pure, and with all her instincts inclined to mercy, we may be sure that she found many things that tried her strength of resolution to the utmost.

On a bright, beautiful morning the young Queen was waited upon at her palace at Windsor by the Duke of Wellington, who had brought from London various papers requiring her signature to render them operative. One of them was a sentence of courtmartial pronounced against a soldier of the line—that sen-