

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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THE LEGEND OF SANTA CLAUS.

FOR A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN TOLD THERE IS NO SANTA CLAUS.

Long ago in the country where the Christ-child was born, there lived a man whose name was Nicholas. Everyone loved him, and why do you suppose that this was so? I will tell you. It was because he loved everyone so dearly that no one could help loving him in return. He had no children of his own but he played father to all the children in the village where he lived, and they called him "Father Nicholas."

"Father Nicholas" must have heard of the Christ-child, I think. At any rate he wanted, more than anything else in the world, to make people happy. He used to walk down the street and stop to talk with the mothers at work in the doorways, and to lift the babies to his shoulders and dance them in the air. He carried candles and toys for the older children, and sometimes he slipped them quietly into the pockets of good little boys and girls when they were not looking. Then he would hurry away before they had time to thank him. You may be sure that the children liked to see Father Nicholas' brown cloak coming toward them, and loved to run up to him to hold fast to his kind hand. He lived in this same village, they say, for years and years; and the babies who crowded in Father Nicholas' arms grew old enough to toddle by his side, then to run to meet him, then to walk beside him and learn the lessons he taught. Finally, they were grown men and women who had other little children growing up about them; and Father Nicholas' hair grew grayer and grayer until it was as white as snow, and he walked more slowly, for he was growing very old. Still his heart was young, and he loved more than ever to make people happy—to surprise children with presents, to play with the babies, and to help everyone who needed help in the kindest way. After a time the people in the village called him St. Nicholas, because he was so good.

One Christmas night, when he was walking slowly down the street, he heard a sound like someone crying. This made him feel sad, and he stopped to listen.

The sound came through the window of a small wooden house, a little way back from the street. St. Nicholas gathered up his long brown cloak and waded through the snow to the window. He heard the same sound again and peeped through the shutter. Two children were sitting on the floor of a big empty room, crying. One said, "Father has no money to buy dinner, and he is very unhappy. What shall we do?" The other answered, "Let's pray to the dear Christ-child to help us." While they

were praying, St. Nicholas softly opened the shutter and threw a handful of money through the broken pane. When the children ran to the window, no one was there, but they nodded their heads and said, "We know the Christ-child has been telling good Nicholas to help us."

Years and years ago the dear old man died, but the village people remembered

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

This picture represents a quaint German conception of Christmas. The little Christ-child bearing a Christmas tree laden with gifts and surrounded by a multitude of the heavenly host, singing "Glory to God in the highest," and bearing in their hands good gifts for men."

influence Governmental action, not being sufficiently decisive, the day is coming, sure as God is God, when it will be overwhelming.

THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.

South of the equator, in Southern Africa, and in that wonderful country, Australia, the great Christmas holidays and happy days are spent far differently by the European colonists than the same pleasant period is passed in the Northern hemisphere. Here everyone knows what everyone else does about Santa Claus and his wonderful presents brought in a remarkable although drawn by superlatively fast reindeer. There Santa Claus has to take off his winter robes, for there Christmas comes in mid-summer, and he has, as it were, to go about on his errand in his shirt-sleeves. The weather in the countries mentioned, in December, is just as hot as it is in Canada in July and August, and Christmas Day is about the longest in the year. There the young folk go on picnic excursions, attired in the lightest of attire and partake of viands suited to the almost torrid heat of the mid-summer weather. But they do not forget to partake moderately of the inevitable plum-pudding and roast beef, for it reminds them of the habits and customs of the lands of their forefathers in England, Holland, and Germany. The fruits in season then are rare and luscious. Bananas, grapes, figs, watermelons, apricots, plums, strawberries, oranges, pomegranates, and other tasty products of the vegetable world, are there enjoyed in perfection. The children there never see, except perhaps on the very highest peaks of the loftiest mountains, any snow or frost. Ice—except that manufactured—is unknown, and the winter is only marked by heavy rains. As you can imagine, life is, on the whole, pleasanter, and it is easier for a man to make a living in the Southern than in the Northern half of this great world of ours. Now-a-days a trip around the globe is not considered anything of a feat, and persons are not considered to have travelled much unless they have gone around the world at least once.—Missionary Banner.



GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

him always, and told people of other countries of his goodness. They used to fancy that he was still with them on Christmas Day, and the German children called him "Santa Claus," which is a shorter name for St. Nicholas. Even now we remember him at Christmas time, and try to be like him by giving presents and making people happy, just as he did for the love of the Christ-child so long ago.

A very Merry Christmas to all.

It is a highly poetical fancy, though not, of course, intended to be taken for a literal or historical representation.

IT IS COMING.

It is estimated that it cost Canada \$300,000 to take her vote on the temperance question. Surely the temperance cause is progressing when a great nation is willing to spend so much in its interests! And although the majority in favour of prohibition will probably not

In each of the last seven decades the average yield of wheat per acre in France has shown an increase over that of any former years, and it is now probably higher than in any other country. Such a fact indicates the secret of France's enormous wealth and prosperity, despite all the losses she has sustained and all the burdens imposed upon her in recent