

make a brighter corner in some dark room and kindle a still warmer glow in some saddened heart.

Or you may know an old woman whose one occupation is making quilts and rag carpets, or some dainty fingered one who larks for bits of silk and ribbon for her pretty devices. Then through the fall days save every scrap that you can find and send to the big roll of them on Christmas morning. If you find in the middle of the bundle a tiny gift lies hidden, so much more beautiful the thought.

That there is the little dressmaker have you ever noticed how longingly she eyes your magazines when she comes to help you with the spring sewing? You may not be able to subscribe to one for her, but why not send her the last number on Christmas Day, with a note saying that you will pass yours on to her through the year? It may cost you a little trouble once a month, but think of the joy that it will give to a hungry soul the whole year through!

And if you have time at your disposal you are rich, indeed, though your pocket cannot boast of it. Have you ever realized the long monotony of an invalid's days? If you have, you will understand what a wonderful gift a visit once a week, or even once a month would be. Or, there may be some blind neighbour to whom you could promise the reading of a longed-for book, or some girl shut away among country hills to visit the bright letter of your merry, busy times would be the event of the month. Only, if you make the promise, let nothing except absolute necessity cause you to postpone the keeping of it. Place the note or the letter first among your duties for the week, that no sad heart may turn away heavy with disappointment after a day of weary watching for one who did not come.

There are so many ways—as many ways as there are souls! For one of the gladdest of all glad things is this—that no one is so poor that he has not something to give. To the Christ-child, whom we would make our guest, love and sympathy and eager thought are worthiest offerings. Do you remember Sir Launfal?

"Not what we give, but what we share— For the gift without the giver is bare; Who gives himself with his aims feeds Himself, his suffering neighbour, and me."

Santa Claus' Sister.

We stood at a crowded counter, Little Geraldine and I; There was only a day before Christmas, And hundreds were waiting to buy.

The shelves and the cases were covered, And the counters were piled up high With the loveliest and best presents Ever seen by a mortal eye.

There were books with most beautiful pictures, And the strangest, most wonderful toys, That were brought from over the ocean On purpose for girls and boys.

There were dolls that could walk and play tennis, In dresses of satin and silk, And horses to wind and set trotting, And cows that you really could milk.

There were dogs that could bark like the live ones, And birds of most brilliant wing, With springs hid away 'neath their feathers That would make them fly upward and sing.

But the eyes of the child who stood by me Had wandered away from all these, And the sparkling Christmas angels, And the miniature Christmas trees, And were scanning the faces about us; The faces that huddled and pressed, And looked weary 'cross with the effort Of getting in front of the rest—

When, grasping my hand, she whispered, With eager, childish grace, "Oh! that that must be Santa Claus' sister, She's got such a Christmas face!"

I looked where her eyes had lighted, And lo! in a threadbare gown, 'Tood a queer, little, bent old woman, With a face that was wrinkled and brown.

But the eyes that beamed out from it Were radiant with love and joy, As, from among all the beautiful objects, She selected one poor, cheap toy.

And the worn, brown face was illumined With a smile of good-will toward me, That told, more plainly than words might, She was keeping Christmas then.

I gazed at the forms about me, There were women in rich attire, Whose unearned gold enabled The purchase of each desire.

There were those of delicate feature, Of gentle breeding and race, But the queer, little, bent old woman Was the only "Christmas face."

In shame, from my own I hastened To smooth the impatience and frown, As I looked at Santa Claus' sister."

In her faced, threadbare gown, And I blessed both the child and the woman, For their Christmas sermon sweet, As I pressed through the throng of shoppers, And on in the crowded street.

OUR PERIODICALS:

Table listing various periodicals such as The Best, the Cheapest, the Most Entertaining, the Most Popular, with prices and subscription details.

WILLIAM BRIGGS, Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto. C. W. COATS, 110 St. P. St. Montreal, Quebec, P. Q. Montreal, N.S.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK. Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor. TORONTO, DECEMBER 23, 1893.

HELP A LITTLE. A TRUE CHRISTMAS STORY.

"Oh, mamma! It's only a week till Christmas, did you know it?" cried little Earl Cameron, as he stood in the doorway, his face as red as a cherry, and his eyes as bright as stars.

"Yes, my son, I know it," she answered, looking tenderly at the little face all eyes were turned to.

"Mamma, I've thought of something just grand for Christmas. You can't guess it," he cried joyously.

"I suppose not," so it would be useless to try; but you will tell me?" she questioned, lifting the bright face close to her own, while she kissed it lovingly.

Suddenly the merry eyes became grave and earnest, as he answered in a low voice: "Mamma, there are so many who have no happy Christmas, and you know that little song we sing, 'Help a Little, and I just thought I would like to do it. May I?" he asked eagerly.

"Tell me your plan first," she answered, "and then we will see what we can do."

Before Earl could reply, a little girl passed the window carrying a basket on her arm, and she was poorly dressed, and looked cold and sad.

"There she is now, mamma," cried the little boy, "that was little Elsie, I don't know her last name. She had no mother, and she was sick, but they may have enough to keep them from hunger. Could you call on her and find out what she needs most, and then we'll surprise them on Christmas morning?"

A few moments of silent thought, then she answered: "Yes, I will go this afternoon, if you will show me the way. If they are in need, it will indeed be a pleasure to help them."

The next moment two little arms clasped her neck, and many kisses were her reward. "Oh, thank you, my own mamma," she said, "I'll be with you in happy tones, then skipped away to his play, as care-free as ever.

"Elsie," repeated Mrs. Cameron tenderly, "that was my only sister's name."

Oh, my own, dear Elsie! If I only knew where you were! I can only pray God a guidance and blessing for you, and rest, and work for him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It was late in the afternoon before Mrs. Cameron found an opportunity to fulfil her promise. Then with little Earl she set out on the errand she had been talking so long about.

On their way Mrs. Cameron was struck by the perfect neatness of everything. Though there were but few pieces of furniture, still everything was in order and clean.

Her eyes were attracted to Elsie, the little girl spoken of, who was ironing. Then, with a feeling of relief and the conviction that here indeed there was real need of help, and that they would prove worthy of her assistance, she turned to the bedside where Elsie's mamma, Mrs. Maynard, sat rapt up with a chair and pillows at her back, dozing over her book.

The woman was thin and careworn, showing also that death had set its seal upon her brow. Mrs. Maynard was dying of consumption. Only one glance was needed to chill Mrs. Cameron's heart to the core, for she saw in the face of the supposed stranger the features of her own loved sister.

With a cry in which both pain and joy were mingled, she clasped the wasted form in her loving arms: "Elsie! Elsie! my own Elsie!"

What need of further words to describe the scene? Every loving household can understand. Everything was done that love could do, to make Mrs. Maynard comfortable, and prolong her life; but it was vain. Little Elsie would not survive the week.

Only two days, and the sisters so lately reunited knew they must separate.

"I leave you my darling child as my legacy, dear Elsie, for I can do no more now. God has been better to me than I have deserved. My trust is in him."

With a few more parting words she went to her rest. God had called his weary one home.

After the remains were laid away, little Elsie was taken home by Mrs. Cameron, and made as her own little one. With a heart overflowing with gratitude she praised God for his goodness in allowing her to care for her sister in her last moments, and also for the little one he had sent into her life.

Christmas Eve there were great preparations in the Cameron household. While Elsie and Earl were sleeping soundly a large Christmas tree was being prepared in the parlour, its branches laden with gifts.

When the time came for lighting Elsie's eyes open in the morning were than usual? She had never seen anything-half so lovely as this.

Christmas morning dawned bright and beautiful. Elsie awoke with her first waking moments came the memory of her great loss. The dear mother who never returned to her again.

After the first wild burst of sorrow, she gradually grew calm, and her heart was beside she told it all to Jesus, and arose strengthened. It was thus Mrs. Cameron found her. She kissed her tenderly, and wished her a merry Christmas, and then her heart was broken.

Immediately after breakfast they all followed Mrs. Cameron into the parlour.

"Oh, a Christmas tree! a Christmas tree!" cried Elsie joyously. "Oh, isn't it too lovely?"

And then the fun of unloading the tree and getting pelted with the numerous flying bundles. Elsie felt her cup was running over, as many of the lovely gifts were hers.

And her lap became more and more burdened with its weight of good things. There never was a happier little girl than Elsie Maynard that Christmas morning.

"Oh, I am happy, God has been so good to me. I know mamma is glad too, and I shall love him all my life."

Mrs. Cameron's heart was too full for words. What if she had not heeded the call to go to the assistance of the supposed stranger? What if she had not seen that book which she longed to read, was very tempting, and she was weary. What if she had thought more of her own selfish ease than another's pain that afternoon? God was indeed good to her.

Willie had swallowed a penny, and his mother was in a state of much alarm. "Helen," she called to her sister in the next room, "send for a doctor; Willie has swallowed a penny!"

The terrified and frightened boy looked up imploringly. "No, mamma," he interposed, "send for the minister!"

"The minister?" asked his mother. "Incurable disease," said the minister. "Yes; because," says our minister can get money out of anybody."

The Three Kings.

BY M. W. LANGFELLOW.

Three Kings came riding from far away, Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar, Three-Wise Men out of the East-went they.

And they travelled by night and they slept by day. For their guide was the beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear, That all the other stars of the sky Decked with white mist in the atmosphere, And by this they knew that the coming was near.

Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy, Three caquets they bore on their saddle-bow, Three caquets of gold with golden keys, Their robes were of crimson silk with rows of bells and pomegranates and furbelows, Their turbans like blossoming almonds.

And so the Three-Kings rode into the West, Through the dusk of night, over hill and dell, And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast, And sometimes talked, as they passed to and fro.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar, "God and people, I pray you, tell us the news: For we in the East have seen his star, And have ridden fast, and have ridden far, And will worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain; We know of no king but Herod the Great." They thought the Wise Men were men, insane, As they spurred their horses across the plain, Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem, Herod the Great, who had heard this thing, Sent the Wise Men and questioned them; And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem, And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still. The only one in the grey of morn; Yes, it stopped, its steady still of its own free-will, Right over Bethlehem on the hill, The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard, Through the silent street, till their horses staid, And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard; But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred, And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay, In the air made sweet by the breath of a kind, The child in the manger lay, The child, that would be king one day, Of a kingdom not human but divine.

His mother, Mary of Nazareth, Sat watching beside his place of rest, Watching the dawn flow of his breath, For the joy of life and the terror of death Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet; The gold was their tribute to a King, The frankincense a flow of his death, Was for the Priest, the Paraclete, The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head, And sat as still as a statue of stone; Her heart was troubled yet comforted; Remembering what the angel had said: Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the kings rode out of the city gate, With a clatter of roofs in proud array; But they went not back to Herod the Great, For they knew his malice and feared his spite.

And returned to their homes by another way.