

pictured. There is no reason why you should perish—except the reason of your own impenitence! You may be saved if you choose! The way is open; the gates are not closed; the arms of mercy are still outstretched! If your repentance is sincere, your confession good, your future life consistent, you cannot avoid, but you may yet safely pass through, the ordeal of Judgment to come.—*The Church Kalendar for 1886, Egerton & Co., N.Y.*

ONLY A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.

FOR CHRISTMAS.

I was walking one day in Paris in the long road, or avenue rather, which is called the "Champs Elysees." It is very wide indeed, and bordered on both sides by beautiful trees, among which in the summer are to be seen quantities of well-dressed people walking about or seated, and enjoying the lively scene around them. Children by the score are there too—richly dressed and playing all sorts of games, attended by their governesses or nurses, and all this, joined to the constantly passing brilliant carriages, makes eyes unaccustomed to the sparkle and glare soon get weary. Even I, used to Paris and its ways as I was, felt tired of the whirl and rush, and I thought to myself I would turn out of the wide thoroughfare and make my way home by some quieter side street.

I was standing at the edge of the pavement with this intention, waiting to cross, till there should come a safe moment, when I caught sight of a little group not far from me, and I could not help watching what was going on, with interest. A flower cart was drawn up at the side of the road. Though it was scarcely yet full summer, there was a good display of flowers, and many of those passing stopped to buy. Among these were an old gentleman and a little boy. One could see without being told that they were grandfather and grandson. The child said a word or two to the gentleman, who let go his hand and walked on slowly. The little boy waited patiently for a minute or two, till those before him round the cart had been served, and then he came forward and made some inquiry of the flower woman. I could not hear what he said, but he was no doubt asking what he could have for his money, for once or twice a shade of disappointment crossed his bright face, and he looked doubtfully at something he held in his hand, which I afterwards saw must have been his few coins. I felt so sorry for him that if I had not been afraid of giving offence, I would have offered him the little sum he was evidently short of, but after half starting forward to do so, I drew back again. The boy, although simply, almost poorly clad, had too much the air of a gentleman, and so had the grandfather, whose stooping figure I still perceived slowly walking on in front. At last the boy, after peering all over the flower cart, caught sight of a little nest of violets—sweet-scented violets—in one corner, which had been almost hidden by the larger and more brilliant plants. His face lighted up joyfully, as he pointed them out to the flower woman, and she in turn smiled and nodded pleasantly. Poor thing, she could not afford to lower her prices, but the working classes of France have great sympathy with small means and the economy they oblige, and I could see that she was glad for her little customer not to be altogether disappointed of his purchase.

She chose carefully the prettiest and freshest of the violet bunches, wrapped an extra leaf or two round the stalks to keep them cool, and handing the little bouquet to the boy, smilingly received from him the coppers till now held tightly clasped in his hand.

And with all the brightness back in his face again, the little fellow bounded forward to rejoin his grandfather, as light-hearted and light-footed as a young chamois.

I crossed the road and walked on. The little incident had interested and pleased me. I could not help wondering for whom the flowers were intended—a sick mother or grandmother perhaps. The child was not improbably an orphan, seeing that he was in care of a grand-parent. And I

went on picturing to myself the simple, thrifty home to which the pair were by this time wending their way, little thinking that I should ever see either of them again.

I was by now in one of the handsome side streets, running parallel with the great avenue. It was quieter here; there were fewer carriages or foot passengers, so that on the wide road even a small group was plainly seen, and happening to glance backwards, I saw a sad little procession making its way slowly along. Two men, dressed in black were carrying a little coffin—no heavy burden it was plain—yet heavy was the sorrow of the two mourners following close behind. It was but the funeral of a tiny child, a baby or scarce more than a baby, to judge by the size of the coffin, the "only one" of the poor father and mother alone in their grief, who walked behind. They were of the very poor class of Paris working people, though decently clad, as is almost always the case in France, but too poor to have got mourning for themselves, even for the funeral of their child. The woman, it is true had a black skirt, but over it she wore, perhaps to conceal its shabbiness, a clean checked cotton apron, and the poor father had no attempt at mourning, except a little band of rusty black fastened round the left sleeve of the blue working blouse. They were both weeping, the mother openly, her poor eyes swollen and red as if with many hours of tears, the husband trying to keep calm, as he from time to time wiped his weather beaten cheeks with his sleeve. Their poverty was shown in another way; there was not a single flower, much less a wreath or cross, on the little black draped coffin—so sad, so piteously desolate a funeral it has seldom been my lot to see in Paris. Yet poor as it was, it met with the outward marks of respect and sympathy which I often wish we could see in this country, for every head was uncovered as it passed on its sorrowful way. I stood still for an instant to watch it; suddenly a small figure, rushing across the road, darting nimbly in front of a quickly advancing carriage, as if afraid of being too late, caught my eyes. It was my little friend of the violets. There was no mistaking him and the grandfather's, it seemed to me, almost familiar figure, waiting and looking after the child from the other side of the road. What is the boy in such a hurry for? Ah—I see now, and my own eyes are not free from tears.

Breathless and eager he runs up to the poor little procession, with blushing face and gentle hands he lays on the tiny coffin his treasured violets—beautiful in themselves, doubly beautiful as the gift of a sweet and pitiful heart—and without waiting for the thanks ready to burst forth from the overlaid hearts of the parents, hastens back again to his old grandfather, whose face I can distinguish lit up with a smile of tender approval.

"God bless him," the poor father murmurs. I am near enough to hear it; "God bless him," the weeping mother repeats.

"God bless him," I whisper to myself.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—*Mrs. Molesworth.*

A CHRISTMAS GREETING.

"Unto us a child is born." The Son of Mary is the Son of Man. In the womb of mankind the Redeemer of the world is become incarnate by the Holy Ghost. Throbbing nature is attuned to the Hymnody of the Highest.

In Bethlehem of Judea was He born, the foretold of Ages, Heavenly scion of David's royal line. Half-a-dozen miles south of Jerusalem, situated on the crest of a long limestone hill, was the little straggling city dear to Israel as the birthplace of King David, dearer to the true Israel as the birthplace of a Greater than David.

How simple and natural the record! A middle-aged man and his young reputed wife seek refuge in a caravanserai, and are accommodated with a Manger, or outhouse, and here during the night is the Child Jesus born "unto us." Augustus, per-

haps, was supping with Mæcenas and Horace in Rome; Herod in his palace-fortress of Machærus, only a few miles off across the Judean hills. The world sobbed around, in its fallen state, as the Sun rose above the Eastern Hills. But hark!

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er the expanse of Heaven,
In waves of light it thrills along,
The angelic signal given,
"Glory to God!" from yonder central fire
Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry choir.

Next day the name of the Child is inscribed in the census-role, among the children of the house of David.

"Unto us" "is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The cardinal requirement of our flimsy, self-sufficient age is a more profound recognition of the fact of Incarnation. It is not an historical, but an ever-present fact; not an incident of our redemption, but its source.

To all a merry, joyous Christmas of sweet communion and fellowship with mankind in Christ Jesus; to all, the season's blessings in ever-flowing abundance. A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

It was the calm and silent night!
Seven hundred years and fifty-three
Had Rome been growing up to might,
And now was queen of land and sea.
No sound was heard of clashing wars—
Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars
Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!
The senator of haughty Rome
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
From lordly revel rolling home;
Triumphal arches gleaming, swell
His breast with thoughts of boundless sway;
What wrecked the Roman what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago?

Within that province far away
Went plodding home a weary boor;
A streak of light before him lay,
Fallen through a half-shut stable-door
Across his path. He passed—for naught
Told what was going on within;
How keen the stars, his only thought—
The air how calm, and cold, and thin,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

Oh, strange indifference! low and high
Drowsed over common joys and cares;
The earth was still—but knew not why?
The world was listening—unawares.
How calm a moment may precede
One that shall thrill the world forever!
To that still moment none would heed
Man's doom was linked no more to sever,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

It is the calm and silent night!
A thousand bells ring out, and throw
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
The darkness—charmed and holy now!
The night that erst no name had worn,
To it a happy name is given;
For in that stable lay, new-born,
The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

—*Alfred Domets.*

—SEVERAL DISTINGUISHED SOLDIERS, of the Civil War, including Gen. Horace Porter, Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, Col. J. S. Mosby, and Col. T. W. Higginson, will contribute a series of articles to the *Youth's Companion* during the coming year, on "Boys in the Army." The articles will be full of incidents, and designed to illustrate the valor and the peculiarities of young soldiers.