

## Christmas.

BY MARGARET SIDNEY.

How shall I tell of the ages  
When Christmas was never kept;  
When the earth, in dark evolution,  
Bided her time - and slept?  
How speak of the tardy unfolding  
Of morn in the crimson East -  
When lo! for the heavenly infant  
There waited the solemn feast?  
The shepherds sang  
In slow accord,  
"Is born our King,  
The blessed Lord."

A quiver - as if down the ages  
Mortality's cry echoed still;  
So long had it voiced every heart-beat,  
It lingered the daybreak to fill;  
Each bitter discordant, low earth-wail  
Shocked heavenly air as it rang;  
The Babe breathed; Divinity woke,  
And the angels in rapture sang,  
The shepherds say,  
"We seek him, all,  
Look at the star  
O'er Bethlehem's stall."

The babe enwrapped in the manger,  
His tiny hand folded soft;  
That hand, to be put forth for others  
In loving strength so oft;  
To be even in willing submission  
Extended from Calvary,  
Now rests on the mother's bosom  
In beautiful infaney.

The shepherds whisper,  
On each knee,  
"We bring our gifts,  
O Lord, to thee."

That Lamb on its pillow so tender,  
Must wear a thorny crown,  
Before, the earth life ended,  
Its sacrifice lays down;  
But now, oh! gracious promise  
Of kingly power and might,  
It sends out from the little brow  
Rays of divinest light.  
The shepherds vail  
Their faces now;  
"To thee, O Lord,  
We humbly bow."

Oh! now the peans rolling,  
The anthems meet and blend;  
"Give praises, oh! give praises,  
Forever without end,"  
"The Christ-child ne'er shall leave us,"  
The angels soft do sing;  
"But always folded in our hearts,  
The Christmas joy shall bring."  
The shepherds then  
Stole soft away,  
"The night has flown,  
Look! break of day."

What does it mean, this Christmas,  
Down from the ages sent?  
Out of the lips of a little child,  
What is the message meant?  
Into one word it is parcelled,  
Struck into life and light:  
Love is the Christmas-tide message  
Of heavenly power and might.  
The shepherds far  
Upon the plain,  
Adore the Lord  
Of love again.

Sing it in heavenly chorus,  
Sing it in earthly strain,  
Wake the dark places with music,  
To call down the Lord again:  
Sing it 'mid Christmas jangle  
Of bell and childish voice,  
And sweet confusion, sing it:  
"Our Lord is come! Rejoice!"  
The Christmas bells,  
O'er hill and plain,  
Take up the shepherds'  
Sweet refrain:  
"The child is born  
To bring us love  
And light and peace  
From God above."

## The Wonderful Gift.

BY GEO. KLINGLE.

CLARICE took both grandma's hands, and looked up in her face.

It was such a sweet face - If I should tell you about grandma's character, you would know she had a sweet face, because the face is written upon and marked by the character, and through all the years of grandma's life her character had been writing such tender, beautiful lines on her face.

"Grandma, this is a very happy Christmas," exclaimed Clarice: "I have so many beautiful gifts."

"And which is the dearest gift of all?" inquired grandma, with one of her own bright smiles.

Clarice was a scrap disconcerted and looked down at the pretty Persian rug and up at grandma's soft, white cap; and then, a little bashfully, into grandma's eyes, for she did, in her heart, believe that grandma was inquiring because she wanted to hear that, of all the beautiful gifts of Christmas, grandma's own beautiful gift was the best, while, in truth, that given by papa pleased Clarice better than any other.

"I like them all very much," she replied.

"Certainly you do, dearest; but surely there is one better than all the rest."

"Oh, grandma, I am happy and pleased with them all. I wonder how everybody knew what I wished for."

"Love is a good guesser," said grandma. "But, dear child, tell me the dearest gift of this and of every Christmas-tide."

"Oh, grandma! I remember now; but that was given so long ago. I did not think at first what you could mean."

"In one sense it was long ago, but in another sense it is the gift of to-day, for the dear Father gives the pardon for sin, by Christ, as fully to-day as in the long ago."

"I did not think at first, grandma. Christmas is such a gay day, it almost makes us forget about sins."

"But not forget about the gift of the dear Christ."

"No, grandma; and yet I did not remember as I should have done. I wonder if I shall ever be quite good like you," exclaimed Clarice, with a troubled face.

"Every grandma in the world was once young, and thought more, sometimes, at Christmas-tide of the beautiful gifts from friends than of the wonderful gift of our Father. The coming of many Christmas-tides makes the grandmas remember better."

"Grandma, were you ever giddy and foolish at all?" sighed Clarice.

Grandma kissed her, but, for a moment, forgot to answer, as she looked back toward the vanished years.

"God is very patient, sweet one," she replied, at length. "He bears having us foolish and forgetful many times, and your grandma was once only a young girl trying to remember him and be grateful but often being dazzled and turned from him by the world's bright, pleasant things."

"Are my Christmas gifts 'the world's bright, pleasant things,' grandma?"

"Not unless you make them so, dear, by thinking entirely of them and forgetting this happy birthday, why we celebrate the day, and of the One who was born."

"Tell me about it all again, grandma; it all seems so strange."

"About the gift of the dear Christ?" inquired grandma. "You know that by sin of our first parents the world was estranged from God?"

"Yes, grandma."

"And you know, too, that however you may wish to be perfectly good-tempered, holy, and Christ-like, you are always finding your self imperfect?"

"Yes, grandma; I know that very well."

"Then, dear, a great debt is due God, the debt due him from the beginning of your life, and your own debt for personal shortcomings. God requires perfection. Nothing but perfection can enter heaven. You and I are not perfect, and never can be perfect in this world. God requires payment, or atonement, for the debt due from the beginning of our lives, and for the sins of each individual soul. Who could pay this debt? Man could not, for all men were themselves sinners, and all they own has been given by God. There is nothing to give to God to make atonement, and we would all have been forever exiled from God had he not devised a way. He gave his own Son, who was willing to come into this world to suffer and die, to pay our debt - to pay what we could not pay for our lives."

Grandma stopped speaking a moment - she was thinking glad, grateful thoughts; then she added: "Our Father gave Jesus; Jesus gave his life."

Grandma was speaking so earnestly, with so much of her heart in her words, that Clarice listened breathlessly, as though she had never heard the glad story before.

"This was wonderful giving," resumed grandma: "the costliest kind of giving. Well may we be unselfish at Christmas-tide, and forget about ourselves, while we try to grow more Christ-like, by giving unselfishly the best gifts we can for the pleasure of everybody."

"To give unselfishly at Christmas-tide is really and for sure doing something for his sake, is it not, grandma dear?"

"It certainly is, and it is the best way of remembering God's wonderful gift. To forget to give something away at Christmas-tide, simply for Jesus' sake, is forgetting or neglecting a happy privilege. It makes Christmas the more holy and beautiful, and so the more joyous, as we give all our gifts, remembering the great Gift of God; and as we look at the beautiful things, each given by the unselfish thought of some dear one, what added pleasure comes with the remembrance that each bears, in itself, a reminder of the dear Christ, and humbly points us back to the wonderful birthday, and the holy, wonderful gift."

## Prove it by Mother.

WHILE driving along the street one day last winter, in my sleigh, says a friend, a little boy, six or seven years old, asked me the usual question, "Please, may I ride?"

I answered him, "Yes, if you are a good boy." He climbed into the sleigh. And when I again asked, "Are you a good boy?" he looked up pleasantly, and said, "Yes, sir."

"Can you prove it?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"Why, by ma," said he, promptly.

I thought to myself, here is a lesson for boys and girls. When a child feels and knows that mother not only loves but has confidence in him or her, can prove their obedience, truthfulness and honesty by mother, they are pretty safe. That boy will be a joy to his mother while she lives. She can trust him out of her sight, feeling that he will not run into evil. I do not think that he will go to the saloon, the theatre, or the gambling-house. Children who have praying mothers, and mothers who have children they can trust, are blessed indeed. Boys and girls, can you "prove by mother" that you are good? Try to deserve the confidence of your parents and of every one else.