



A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

CAROL, children, carol,
For Christ is born to-day.
To all the earth, oh! sing his birth,
Rejoice on Christmas Day!

If we had never heard before
The story old and sweet,
Of the shepherds and the sages
Low at the Baby's feet,
It might the less have moved us
Who thrill with joy to-day
As once again to Bethlehem
We take our happy way.

'Tis such a tender story
We like to tell it o'er,
And every time we hear it
We love him all the more.
'Tis such a hallowed picture
That all the world may see
The little Child from heaven
On the Madonna's knee.

Carol, children, carol,
For Christ is born to-day!
The angels sing, and we must bring
Our praise on Christmas Day.

We lift our eyes adoring
To yonder fields of blue,
Where the midnight clouds were broken
To let the glory through.
O'er mount and plain we follow
The wondrous Morning Star,
Which silvered every rugged hill
And swept the shadows far.

With shepherds and with sages,
Low at the Baby's feet,
We bring our clustered gifts to-day,
The costly and the sweet.
Our best we'll haste to offer,
For naught too dear can be
To lay before the Holy Child
On the Madonna's knee.

Carol, children, carol;
The Christ is born to-day!
Glad tidings sound the world around;
Rejoice on Christmas Day.

To hear the angel music
Our ears too deaf have grown,
Yet may we swell the chorus
That surges round the throne,
And "Glory in the highest"
Our lips shall sing to-day,
Unto the blest Redeemer
Who hears us when we pray.

And we with sage and shepherd
Will worship at his feet.
How can we help but love him,
The Baby is so sweet!

With countless thousand thousands,
Our praise and thanks shall be
Outpoured before the Child of Heaven
On the Madonna's knee.

Carol, children, carol,
For Christ is born to-day!
To all the earth proclaim his birth;
Rejoice on Christmas Day!

THE PLEASANT SIGHT.

NOTHING looks so nice to children as a Christmas tree hanging full of beautiful presents, candies, nuts and flowers. The first view children get of a tree is generally surprising. They hardly know how to act. They shout, they cry, they laugh. They hardly know what it means. Yet after the first impression they soon become composed and take it all in as a pleasant thing to look upon. But the gift which God gave us on this day is more pleasant to look upon than all earthly gifts put together. It is said of Jesus, "He is the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely." He is the "pearl of great price," and the jewels of kings cannot compare with him.

FATHER CHRISTMAS' YOUNG DAYS.

No one who has read of the Christmas festivities of Old England can overlook the yule log, whose cheery blaze has enlivened so many English hearths. A heathen custom gave rise to this practice also. About the same time that we keep our great festival, the pagans used to celebrate "Yule-tide," or Welcome to the new year. The word "yule," means festival of the sun. Those who helped to carry the yule-log were considered safe from the power of spells, and those who sat round the merry fire made up quarrels and were at peace. Twigs from the log, kept during the year, were believed to be safeguards against charms.

In early times Christmas was marked by much rejoicing and revelry. A man, who was styled "Lord of Misrule," was chosen to superintend the festivities. He would take up his abode in the house of a great lord, where he was followed by a numerous train, whom he ruled as king. He was allowed to do whatever he chose; and no one, whether king or earl, was to take offence at his jokes. Perhaps these revelries reached their highest pitch in the reign of Edward the Sixth.

We must not forget the feasts of this season. A boar's head is still seen on the Queen's table at Christmas. In olden days this dish, crowned with rosemary, was received by the guests with great respect, all standing when it was brought in.

The custom of carol-singing is thought to date back as far as the second century. The word "carol" means a song of joy. In Holland we find in addition to carol-singing, the pretty custom of carrying round from door to door a star representing that which once guided the Magi. Those who gaze on the star give the young men who bear it alms for the poor.

As we thus glance at the various ways in which men in all circumstances have celebrated the birthday of the Son of God, do we not see that there is a blessed bond of sympathy amongst them all, a bond between the child rejoicing over its Christmas tree and the unknown believers who sang the first carol long, long ago; the bond of a common belief that the Babe of Bethlehem holds the sceptre of the world. Our thoughts fly to the lowly manger where, drawn by Divine love, all nations, peoples, tongues meet to exclaim, in words whose complete fulfilment we see not as yet: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

TREASURES of wickedness profit nothing.