

Greeting to You.

Greeting to you all, and may you all be merry and full of joy in this Christmas season, and may the new year be full of good things for you.

As we were sure of your sympathy when we were burned out of house and home, we are sure of your sympathy now that we are able to use our own great new presses.

We did our best under difficulties, and your letters of cheer and affectionate good wishes helped much. Now we want you to rejoice with us over our new possibilities and spread the news of our colored pictures among the children and the grown ups, who even more than the children enjoy color.

The color work is new to us and to our printers, but we are sure of one thing about it, which is that we will improve it with every new issue of the 'Messenger.'

We expect to have colored pictures in every issue of the 'Messenger' in the coming year, and to make it more and more attractive to young and old. Write and tell us how you like the new departure and remember we publish the paper for you all, and are always glad to hear what you like best and want to have us put in it. May the new year bring joy and peace and prosperity to you all and to the 'Northern Messenger,' and so as Tiny Tim observed, 'God bless us every one!'

His Birthday.

(Henderson Daingerfield Norman.)

They brought Him their birthday presents—

The incense and gold and myrrh;
The sumptuous Christmas roses,

The cedar and box and fir;

They made all His temple splendid

With tapers of purest ray,
And they said 'Tis a heavy burden—
This keeping of Christmas Day.'

The Child's sweet eyes looked gravely
At glitter of wax and gold.

The gifts that were hard to bring Him
Were hard for His hands to hold.

Gleaming and hard and splendid
They all on the altar lay.

But the Child's dear hands were
empty

As sadly He went his way.

He went where a single candle

Burned clear on a window sill.

A cake at the door was ready

That the Christ Child might have
His fill.

Outside was the sheaf for Christmas,

The barley and wheat and rye—

That the birds might enjoy the Birth-
day

Though snowdrifts were white and
high.

Within sat a girl-child, singing,

A doll held against her breast.

With queer little crooked stitches

The cherished gift was dressed.

For a child had prepared the present,

Her heart with delight aglow

That a poorer than she should have
it—

The thing she had treasured so.

The Lord Christ stood on the thresh-
hold,

And, watching, His dark eyes smiled
On the light, the cake, the Christmas
sheaf

And the child's gift to a child.

The weary feet were rested,

The heart from its sadness freed,

With gifts were the pierced hands
laden,

His Birthday was kept indeed—

—Selected.

In the manger at Bethlehem was cradled the hope of the world. That is why Christmas is the universal festival. That is why the world rejoices. But the manger must be interpreted largely. In the babe is the promise of the man and the Saviour. It is not the birth alone that makes the gospel; it is also the life, the passion, the death, the resurrection, the ascension. Christmas carries all this in its happy content.

'Jesus was born,' and in his birth the whole world put off its old and helpless self to begin with new energy and new hope. He came to give every man the morning star—new ideas, new impulses, new ambitions, a new star and a new sky. By this sign we know that the Son of Man has come into the world and into our hearts: all is new, dewy, young, immortal! We cannot tire, we cannot die. In Christ we are young forever, for he has given unto us 'the morning star.'—Joseph Parker.

No sermon on prayer could be more comforting and convincing than the precious little story told of the late Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. A young friend of hers, studying in Germany, had lost himself in a fog of speculations, and had given up his faith in revealed religion. Mrs. Stowe set herself to bring him back to the light of truth, and for months, week by week, wrote him long letters of arguments and evidence. We know what brilliant force that strong mind could bring to bear upon such a theme; what tender eloquence, what irresistible pleadings; but it was all in vain. The fog did not lift.

As the Christmas season drew near, the old Christian shut herself into her own chamber, and asked to be undisturbed, that she might give herself wholly to pleading for a gift from the Father, even the salvation of that young soul. Of those days spent in secret prayer, none may know the history, but the first mail that could bear a Christmas greeting from Berlin said: 'During the Christmas season my doubts vanished, and I now see Jesus to be the salvation of sinful men.'

It was not that the Christian pleader had 'overcome God's reluctance'; oh! no. She had laid hold of his highest willingness.—'Forward.'

One Way to Keep Christmas Sacred in the Home.

(By Mary Newell Youtz.)

There are three lively, wide-awake children in our home—Charles, eleven; Josie, eight, and Eleanor, four. They are fairly bursting with excitement over Christmas secrets and Christmas jollity. How can we keep the spirit and meaning of Christmas before them without curtailing any of the merriment?

The idea of celebrating Christ's birthday looks toward the solution. His birthday will be happier if we are trying to please Him; so the day before Christmas a box is made ready for the 'poor children.' This is packed by the children themselves, and it is understood that all their little offerings must be in good repair. No broken things are allowed to go in; so there is much putting to rights and glueing and mending. There are little sacrifices, too, and some not so little from the child's point of view. There is much wondering and exclamation as to whether the 'little poor children' will like this or that toy, and it would do your heart good to see with what zest the three go into it all. And when at last the lad carries off the box, with it go many loving thoughts for the little unknown friends less fortunate than the senders.

A more important event still, and one quite as much anticipated as the Christmas Day itself, is the trimming of their beloved tree. It is only a tiny tree, selected by the children days beforehand, but it is made beautiful by many candles and glittering ornaments. This tree is in honor of Christ's birthday, and the little people try in every way to make it come up to their ideal of beauty. The decorations are saved from year to year, the children usually adding some much-admired ornament, purchased with their own money. There is much discussion and experimenting and suggesting and rushing about before all is ready.

No gifts are put on the tree—all that is left for Christmas Day. Tonight is the 'Jesus baby's birthday,' as Eleanor says, and the tree is decorated for Him, and with as much enthusiasm as are their own birthday cakes. As a last touch, a tiny figure, with outstretched arm as though in blessing, is placed on the topmost bough to represent the Christ Child. Then the trio, their faces shining with delight, proudly escort us in to admire their work. The tree is, indeed, lovely with its glittering candles and ornaments, with soft sprinklings of cotton to simulate snow. Isn't this better than the conventional Christmas tree in which the children have had no part?

In the early evening comes the programme, which is arranged with a few suggestions from Mother. This does not require special preparation, for the songs are familiar, the recitations from 'memory work' at school, and the Scripture also from school work. Here is last year's programme:

Hark the Herald Angels Sing—All together.
Luke ii., 8-20—Recitation by Charles.
Luther's Childs' Christmas Hymn—'Away in a Manger.' Sung by Josie and Eleanor.
There Came a Little Child to Earth—Recitation by Josie.
'Oh Little Town of Bethlehem.' Sung by Mother in Royal David's City once.
—By the three children.
Matthew ii., 1-12—Recitation by Mother.
'As With Gladness Men of Old—Sung by all.

This last we sing, joining hands, around the tree, in good German fashion, with no lights but those from the candles on the tree. Not a heart, young or old, but is full of the Christmas spirit and of love for the Christ Child. This part of our Christmas closes by father leading us all in a prayer. Then there is a mad scamper to hang up stockings before jumping into bed.

You ask, 'Do the children care for all this?' Last year, by way of experiment, I proposed that we do away with the tree and the little programme. 'Why, mother, it wouldn't be Christmas without the tree!' said one. 'I don't believe Jesus would like us not to notice his birthday,' said another. 'O, it's so lovely to sit up late and have the 'entertainment' and all,' said the third.

So we shall keep Christ's birthday as usual, thankfully and lovingly; we parents knowing that a day will come when these little joys will be for our children most precious memories, and hoping that these memories will carry the Christ spirit into other homes.

The next morning all is hilarity and fun, but we feel that Christ's coming has meant more to these children than a mere exchange of gifts. It has meant thought for the unfortunate; doing honor to Christ with their own hands and voices; and, we believe, a kindling in their hearts of more love for him, for he has been in our midst.—'Congregationalist and Christian World.'