

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.

Hark! the herald angels sing.
"Glory to the new-born King.
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Mild, he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hail, the heaven-born
Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of
Righteousness!
Light and life to all he
brings,
Risen with healing in his
wings.

TOM'S OFFERING.

There was a loud knock heard upon the door; and it was the very door, too, upon which a piece of black crape fluttered.

The ladies within the house were a little startled, for it was an unusual occurrence for any one to knock upon the front door. There was a bell in plain sight, and it was customary for people to ring it very softly when the sign of death was placed so very near it. Indeed, it seemed almost irreverent for any one to knock in that way upon the door, while little Annie, the household idol, was lying still and cold in the room close to the door.

"Some tramp, I guess," one of the ladies said. "I will tell him to go to the back door," she added, going toward the place where the knock was heard. To her surprise she found a little, ragged boy standing there, with a few wild flowers in his hand.

"Are you Annie's mother?" he asked, in an eager voice.

"No," the lady answered; and then she asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Tom Brady, and I want to see her," he answered quickly.

The lady hesitated, and was about to say to him that Annie's mother was in deep affliction, and could not see him, when the lady in question came to the door herself.

"What do you want, little boy?" she asked, kindly.

"Are you her?" asked the little fellow, with tears in his eyes. "I mean, be you Annie's mother?" he explained.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Well, I heard that she died, and I brought these flowers to put upon her coffin," he said, while the tears came larger and brighter into his eyes.

"What made you bring them, little boy?" the mother asked, while the tears came into her own eyes.

"'Cause she always said 'Good mornin'' to me when she passed our house upon her way to school, and she never called me 'Ragged Tom,' like other girls. She gave me this cap and coat, and they were good and whole when she gave them to me; and then, when our little Jean died, she brought us a bunch of flowers to put on his coffin, and some to hold in his hands. It was winter then, and I don't know where she got the

flowers. They looked very pretty in Jean's hand, and he did not look dead after that. He was dead, though, and we buried him down among the apple-trees. I could not get such pretty flowers as she brought to us, but I went all over the big mountain yonder, and only found these few. You see it is too early for them, but I found two or three upon a high rock, where it was warm and sunny. Will you put them upon her coffin?"

And the little fellow reached out the half-blown wild flowers that had cost him such a long, weary tramp.

trembling hand had left it. The others were placed in the little white band and upon the coffin. Surely the ragged Irish boy could not have expressed his gratitude to his little friend in any better way.—Zion's Herald.

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST.

BY MABEL N. THURSTON.

Susan Coolidge, in one of her poems, tells a pretty story of an incident in an orphan school. It was Christmas Eve;

snow was melting on his tangled hair, and his thin face was pinched with cold, he stood in startled amazement at the scene that his touch had revealed, his eyes, dark with hunger, rested on the long table.

For a moment there was astonished silence in the hall—then the youngest pupil lifted his happy little voice: "Oh, I know now," he cried; "the dear Christ could not come himself, so he sent this boy instead!"

The generous boyish hearts caught the interpretation eagerly. They drew the wandering stranger in and gave him the place of honour among them; one pushed across his plate and spoon, another his bowl. All that they had to give they set forth for the honouring of the dear Christ in the person of his needy one.

In there not much truth in the little legend? How we long for the presence of the Christ-child at Christmas time! How we welcome him in song and carol! And yet does it not oftentimes sadly happen that he comes to our very door and our hurrying thoughts pass him by unnoticed? There are always so many last things to do, and our purses are small, and there are the children we cannot disappoint them! There are even many homes where the Christmas giving must all be of necessary things, made rare and precious only by the loving thoughts and merry jokes that make them different from the necessities of other days. How can these have anything to spare for a Christmas guest?

You cannot, if you leave all planning for it till the last crowded days, when brain and nerves—the pity of it—are often quivering with weariness so that it needs all our self-control to answer patiently the endless questioning of childish voices. Begin in the fall, when long evenings are creeping over the land and there is a quiet time "between daylight and dark." In those dim, sweet moments many a beautiful thought will come to you—many a glad plan for giving, though you have no cent to spare, and into your Christmastide will come a depth of joy that only Christ can bring.

You may find that you can make a corner for a real Christmas guest—some lonely one by whom the memory of the big, happy tabular, and the games and songs and stories that followed,

will be rehearsed again and again in empty days through the year to come. Perhaps you dread the thought of an alien face in the dear home circle this day of all days of the year, but—would you shut the door to Christ? Or, if you really have no corner for a guest, you may yet be able to make an extra loaf or cake or box of candies—something to contrive a tiny feast in a poor place, only be sure that with the gift goes the word of sympathy and love that will feed the hungry soul.

Perhaps you love flowers, and through the winter the sweet growing things make summer in your south window. Then surely there is among them a sturdy geranium or cheery primrose that will



HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.

"Yes, and we will place some of them in her hand, too," the mother answered, in a broken voice.

"Could I see Annie, just a moment?" the boy asked, almost pleadingly.

"Yes, come in, little boy," the mother again answered, as she led the way to the little dead girl.

The boy looked at the sweet face very earnestly, and then he took from his torn coat pocket another half-blown flower, and placed it in the shiny golden hair of little Annie.

"Will you let it be there?" he asked, in a sobbing voice.

"Yes," was the only answer. He went out softly, and the sweet, spring violet remained just where his

the long hall was rich with holly and the beautiful spirit of Christmastide filled the air. The boys, with their master, gathered about the table for their evening meal, hushing their merry voices for a moment while they repeated the quaint old grace:

"Lord Jesus Christ, be thou our Guest.
And share the bread which thou hast blessed"

Then the happy din broke out again. But one boy (the youngest there) wondered wistfully why the dear Christ never came—they had asked him so many times.

Suddenly the door was opened, and here on the threshold stood a child. The