

Youths' Department.

CHRISTMAS GLADNESS.

Children, as you hang your stockings
By the fire on Christmas Eve,
And rejoice at the bright prospect
Of the gifts you will receive.

Think, I pray you, of the children,
Near at hand and far away.
Who have not such cause for gladness
On your happy Christmas day.

Some there are, yes right around us,
Who are faint and sad and ill,
Who have neither home nor parents,
And whose hearts are lone and chill.

Can you not, then, share your gladness,
Spread abroad a ray of light,
And to some poor, lonely child-~~heathen~~
Make the Christmas day dawn bright?

Give him of your books and playthings,
Give him clothes and give him food,
Tell him of the love of Jesus,
Teach him to be kind and good.

Then you'll have a happy Christmas,
Then the true joy you will see—
Giving is a greater blessing
Than receiving e'er can be.

—*Missionary Messenger.*

A HINDU SACRIFICE AT MIRAJ TO DISPEL THE PLAGUE.

Last year, plague broke out among the Kookoo Wali Lok, a tribe of roving people who come to Miraj every year and take up their abode for about four months in small portable huts pitched quite close to the hospital compound. They appear to belong to some of the more southern aborigines, since they speak a language not generally known in Western India. They also know the language of the district. They earn their living by gathering sandalwood, manufacturing combs, and trading in animals.

When one of their number was stricken with plague they said, "This disease is sent by our six goddesses, and we will sacrifice to them and the plague will go from us." They went out to an open field near by the mission hospital, and, having cleared away the grass from a quadrangle about eight feet square, they "cleansed" it with the cow excreta mixture. Then they brought out the articles of sacri-

fice consisting, first, of six sets of brass vessels, which they placed on one side of the quadrangle. There were three vessels in each set, a large one at the bottom and a small one on the top, each set forming a little pyramid. Into each vessel they poured water from the Krishna River, filthy, muddy water but, to them, sacred. Before each set of vessels they placed coconuts, boiled rice, garlic, incense and six women's garments as gifts to each of the goddesses which each set of vessels represented.

When these preparations were completed, they brought out the plague patient from the town, and, though he was weak and delirious, sustained on one side by a man and on the other by a woman, he was made to walk repeatedly around the quadrangle until in sheer exhaustion he sank down beside a tree. Then they brought six goats, which meanwhile had been tied to the trees. These were placed in the quadrangle, their heads towards the brass vessels, and as they were held in position by small boys sitting on them, two uncouth-looking priests armed with huge, crude knives sawed off the head of each goat, placing a decapitated head before each set of vessels. It was the most uncanny sight I think I ever saw when, the heads of the goats being so placed, the mouths rhythmically opened and closed, for a few seconds, towards the sacrifice, the blood which spurted from the necks of the animals meanwhile flooding the whole quadrangle.

Then several women, who had been rushing up and down the roadway, tearing their hair and beating their breasts in a frenzy, came and thrust themselves upon the bodies of the goats and, by that awful tangle of goats, blood and women, they tried to propitiate the goddesses which had sent the plague. But this was not the end. They went to their huts, dressed the goats offered in sacrifice, ate the flesh and drank liquor till they were drunk. Six women dressed themselves in the garments offered to the goddesses, and thus they spent the night in revelry, dancing, making the night hideous with their noises and crying.

Towards morning the plague patient died; it was no wonder. His body was scarcely cold before they gathered it up and began their procession to the river bank to bury it. As they passed the mission house, the women still stupid or mad with the delirium of superstitious fanaticism, threw themselves at full length on the road, pounded their heads upon the hard earth, tore their hair and beat their breasts and faces, filling the air with their shrieks.

Is there any cure for this apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ? I know of none.—W. J. Wanless, M.D., in Woman's Work.