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PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XVIII.]

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1898.

[No. 52.]

THE LEGEND OF SANTA CLAUS.

FOR A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN TOLD THERE IS NO SANTA CLAUS.

Long ago in the country where the Christ-child was born, there lived a man whose name was Nicholas. Everyone loved him, and why do you suppose that this was so? I will tell you. It was because he loved everyone so dearly that no one could help loving him in return. He had no children of his own but he played father to all the children in the village where he lived, and they called him "Father Nicholas."

"Father Nicholas" must have heard of the Christ-child, I think. At any rate he wanted, more than anything else in the world, to make people happy. He used to walk down the street and stop to talk with the mothers at work in the doorways, and to lift the babies to his shoulders and dance them in the air. He carried candles and toys for the older children, and sometimes he slipped them quietly into the pockets of good little boys and girls when they were not looking. Then he would hurry away before they had time to thank him. You may be sure that the children liked to see Father Nicholas' brown cloak coming toward them, and loved to run up to him to hold fast to his kind hand. He lived in this same village, they say, for years and years; and the babies who crowded in Father Nicholas' arms grew old enough to toddle by his side, then to run to meet him, then to walk beside him and learn the lessons he taught. Finally, they were grown men and women who had other little children growing up about them; and Father Nicholas' hair grew grayer and grayer until it was as white as snow, and he walked more slowly, for he was growing very old. Still his heart was young, and he loved more than ever to make people happy—to surprise children with presents, to play with the babies, and to help everyone who needed help in the kindest way. After a time the people in the village called him St. Nicholas, because he was so good.

One Christmas night, when he was walking slowly down the street, he heard a sound like someone crying. This made him feel sad, and he stopped to listen.

The sound came through the window of a small wooden house, a little way back from the street. St. Nicholas gathered up his long brown cloak and waded through the snow to the window. He heard the same sound again and peeped through the shutter. Two children were sitting on the floor of a big empty room, crying. One said, "Father has no money to buy dinner, and he is very unhappy. What shall we do?" The other answered, "Let's pray to the dear Christ-child to help us." While they

were praying, St. Nicholas softly opened the shutter and threw a handful of money through the broken pane. When the children ran to the window, no one was there, but they nodded their heads and said, "We know the Christ-child has been telling good Nicholas to help us."

Years and years ago the dear old man died, but the village people remembered

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

This picture represents a quaint German conception of Christmas. The little Christ-child bearing a Christmas tree laden with gifts and surrounded by a multitude of the heavenly host, singing "Glory to God in the highest," and bearing in their hands good gifts for men."

influence Governmental action, not being sufficiently decisive, the day is coming, sure as God is God, when it will be overwhelming.

THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.

South of the equator, in Southern Africa, and in that wonderful country, Australia, the great Christmas holidays and happy days are spent far differently by the European colonists than the same pleasant period is passed in the Northern hemisphere. Here everyone knows what everyone else does about Santa Claus and his wonderful presents brought in a remarkable although drawn by superlatively fast reindeer. There Santa Claus has to take off his winter robes, for there Christmas comes in mid-summer, and he has, as it were, to go about on his errand in his shirt-sleeves. The weather in the countries mentioned, in December, is just as hot as it is in Canada in July and August, and Christmas Day is about the longest in the year. There the young folk go on picnic excursions, attired in the lightest of attire and partake of viands suited to the almost torrid heat of the mid-summer weather. But they do not forget to partake moderately of the inevitable plum-pudding and roast beef, for it reminds them of the habits and customs of the lands of their forefathers in England, Holland, and Germany. The fruits in season then are rare and luscious. Bananas, grapes, figs, watermelons, apricots, plums, strawberries, oranges, pomegranates, and other tasty products of the vegetable world, are there enjoyed in perfection. The children there never see, except perhaps on the very highest peaks of the loftiest mountains, any snow or frost. Ice—except that manufactured—is unknown, and the winter is only marked by heavy rains. As you can imagine, life is, on the whole, pleasanter, and it is easier for a man to make a living in the Southern than in the Northern half of this great world of ours. Now-a-days a trip around the globe is not considered anything of a feat, and persons are not considered to have travelled much unless they have gone around the world at least once.—Missionary Banner.



GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

him always, and told people of other countries of his goodness. They used to fancy that he was still with them on Christmas Day, and the German children called him "Santa Claus," which is a shorter name for St. Nicholas. Even now we remember him at Christmas time, and try to be like him by giving presents and making people happy, just as he did for the love of the Christ-child so long ago.

A very Merry Christmas to all.

It is a highly poetical fancy, though not, of course, intended to be taken for a literal or historical representation.

IT IS COMING.

It is estimated that it cost Canada \$300,000 to take her vote on the temperance question. Surely the temperance cause is progressing when a great nation is willing to spend so much in its interests! And although the majority in favour of prohibition will probably not

In each of the last seven decades the average yield of wheat per acre in France has shown an increase over that of any former years, and it is now probably higher than in any other country. Such a fact indicates the secret of France's enormous wealth and prosperity, despite all the losses she has sustained and all the burdens imposed upon her in recent

The Christmas Saint's Mistake.

BY ANNIE D. WALKER.

We hung our stockings in a row,
And labelled them with care,
That good St. Nicholas might know
To whom belonged each pair.
We did not mean to sleep a wink,
But keep wide-open eyes,
But sleep came on us soon, we think,
And took us by surprise;

For not the slightest thing we knew
Until the morning light,
Yet Santa came the chimney through,
And brought our gifts that night,
But, oh, confusion great he made,
He brought papa a doll,
Which he with hearty laughter said
He did not want at all.

A pair of slippers for my share,
Were laid my stockings by,
So large indeed they made me stare,
And then I had to cry.
There was a pretty tinkling cart,
For mamma plainly meant
But mamma said, "With all my heart,
I'll alter that intent."

She gave the cart to brother Ned,
Who in his stocking found
A dainty breakfast shawl of red,
With pretty border 'round.
"Then we shall make a fair exchange,"
Cried little Ned in glee,
"So Santa will not think it strange
You gave the cart to me."

Now papa said, "My little Bess,
I'll give the doll to you,
I hardly need it, and confess
There's nothing else to do."
"Papa," I cried, "if you could wear
These great, big, clumsy shoes,
With joy to you I'll give the pair—
I hope you won't refuse."

When all arrangements had been made,
We were a merry crew,
But such mistakes, dear papa said,
He scarcely ever knew.

—Temperance Banner.

the young folk to save their pennies instead of spending them all for candles or toys. It will cultivate self-denial, and love for the best of causes. It will help the missionary cause in a time of great need. The contents of these boxes will help to send the Gospel to some Japanese village, or Indian tribe, or backwoods settlement in Canada, and only the great day shall reveal the good that they may do.

CHRISTMAS STORIES.

BY JAMES LEARMOUNT.

There is a beautiful German story you ought to hear. It tells of the first Christmas tree. The story says that a long time ago a poor man lived in a great forest with his wife and two children. One Christmas Eve it was terribly cold and stormy, an awful night in which to be without shelter. The children, thinking they heard a knock, opened the door, and there, standing outside, was a little child, who begged that they would take him in. This the children gladly did, and were delighted to share their supper with the strange child. The two children offered to sleep on the floor in order that the little stranger might have a bed. Next morning little Gretel was the first to awake, and she was immediately charmed with beautiful music she heard. She called her brother Hans, and to the two children it seemed as though angels were singing. They peeped out of the window, only to be more astonished still. There, outside the window, were lovely beings, in shining clothes, with harps of gold in their hands—these were the singers. The children turned to wake the little wanderer of the night before; to their surprise they found him standing beside them, no longer pinched and starved, but clad in garments white as the snow, and with a beautiful halo of glory round his head.

Claus. So all the noble things of life come to you through Christ.

It is also a beautiful fancy that the green, sharp holly leaves with their red berries with which we decorate our homes recall the crown of thorns with its drops of precious blood.

The little robin redbreast picking scanty food amid the snow has its reminder, too, of Jesus in that red mark on its breast, which, according to an old story, was caused at the crucifixion by the Saviour's blood staining it as the bird sought to pluck out one of the nails. As you look at robin in future, think of Jesus, who was nailed to the cross for you, and be kind to the birds he has made.

Do not the carol-singers remind us of the angels' song and message, "Peace on earth, good will towards men"?

The family gatherings of Christmas recall what Christ has done for us, and as we gather together and hold our little family lovefeasts and reunions, let us think of the reunion in heaven which Christ made possible. Christmas teaches what we should not forget through the year—that all our good things come from Christ. And the spirit of Christmas, when we are making presents and giving gifts to the poor, tells us that Christ is still in the world living in men's hearts.

You can do what the wise men did; you can bring your gifts to Christ. He is still very poor. You wonder at that. But go and find those poorer than yourself, the wretched and sad, and help them, do them a kindness, and you will find Christ. You will hear him say, "Ye have done it unto me."

A beautiful story has come down to us from the Middle Ages. It is about a girl called Madelon. She went with the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the babe Christ. But she was so poor that she had nothing to give; and how she did cry! God was very sorry for her, and sent his good angel Gabriel to her. "If

tence, that he be shot dead. The Queen looked upon the paper, and then looked upon the wondrous beauties that nature had spread to her view.

"What has this man done?" she asked. The Duke looked at the paper and replied:

"Ah, my royal mistress, that man, I fear, is incorrigible; he has deserted three times."

"And can you not say anything in his behalf, my lord?"

Wellington shook his head.

"Oh, think again, I pray you!" Seeing that her Majesty was so deeply moved, and feeling sure she would not have the man shot in any event, he finally confessed that the man was brave and gallant, and really a good soldier.

"But," he added, "think of the influence."

"Influence!" the Queen cried, her eyes flashing and her bosom heaving with emotion. "Let it be ours to wield influence. I will try mercy in this man's case; and I charge you, your Grace, to let me know the result. A good soldier, you said. Oh, I thank you for that. And you may tell him that your good word saved him."

Then she took the paper and wrote, with a bold, firm hand, across the dark page, the bright, saving word, "Pardoned!"

The Duke was fond of telling the story, and he was willing, also, to confess that the giving of that paper to the pardoned soldier gave him far more joy than he could have experienced from the taking of a city.

Christmas in the Hospital.

BY FIDELIS.

And it is Christmas mornin'? I've lost my count of time,
But I thought it must be Christmas, by the bells' sweet, solemn chime;
And I had a dream of the home-folks, just as the mornin' broke—
Maybe 'twas the bells that brought it, ringin' before I woke!

An' is it Christmas mornin'? An' while I'm lyin' here,
The folks to church are goin'—the bells do ring so clear!
Fathers an' mothers an' children, merrily o'er the snow,
Just as we used to go, on Christmas long ago!

Oh, yes! I know you're good, nurse, an' I do try not to fret,
But at Christmas time, no wonder if my eyes with tears are wet;
For I saw so plain, in my dream, the brown house by the mill,
An' my father an' my mother—ah, me—are they there still?

And, as they go to church to-day—do they think an' speak of me,
An' wonder where poor Katie is across the great blue sea?
An' well it is they cannot tell! an' may they never know;
For sure 'twould only break their hearts to hear my tale of woe!

My mother must be gettin' old; an' she was never strong;
But then her spirit was so bright, an' sweet her daily song;
She sings no more about the house, but I know she prays for me,
An' wipes away the dropping tears, for the child she ne'er may see!

My father's bent with honest toil an' trouble bravely borne,
But never has he had to bear a word or look of scorn;
An' never shall it come through me! for all I have been wild,
I'd rather die a thousand deaths than shame him for his child!

Ah, yes! I have been sinful, but some were more to blame,
Who never think because of that to hang their heads for shame!
Ah, well! I mustn't think of them, but of myself, and pray,
That He will take away the sin—who came on Christmas Day!

An' thank you for the letter, nurse, you say the ladies brought,
'Twas kind of them to think of me—I thank them for the thought;
The print is easy read, but, oh! what would I give to see
Just one small scrap of writin' from the old home-folks, to me!

But, nurse, those bells seem tellin' of the better home above,
Where sin an' sorrow cannot come—but all is peace an' love,
Where broken hearts are healed at last, an' darkness passed away—
An' he shall bid us welcome home, who came on Christmas Day!

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1893.

THE MISSIONARY BOX.

There is a story told of a little boy, who in his zeal for the cause of missions, not being able to procure anything better, made a collection box of an ox's horn, and carved upon it the lines:

"Once I was the horn of an ox,
Now I am a missionary box."

We hope it proved for the cause of missions a real horn of plenty. We hope, too, that our young friends will very largely adopt that excellent plan of collecting funds for missions. The Rev. Dr. Sutherland, Missionary Secretary at Toronto, will be happy to supply nice boxes, such as that shown in the picture, to juvenile collectors. The best plan will be for the superintendent of the school to see how many are wanted, and then have them all sent together. These can be placed on the parlour table or mantelpiece, or be used in the school—in each class and it is marvellous what an amount of money can in this way be raised. Besides, this method will teach

The children got such a fright, and, seeing that, he said: "Be not afraid; I am the Christ-child. You gave me shelter and food last night, though I was a stranger; now I must reward you, and one thing I will do for you is to see that cold and weariness never come to you again." Then he went out, broke a branch off a fir tree, planted it in the ground, and said: "This branch will grow quickly into a tree, and every year on this day it will bear all manner of fruits and good things." Then he and the singers disappeared. But the German children always know from that story who planted the first Christmas tree. One thing is certain, dear children: if Jesus had never come as a little child into the world, you would never have had a Christmas tree, and many other good things beside. Think of Jesus, then, as you look at your Christmas trees, and enjoy all the pleasures of this glad season. No other time in the year speaks to little children so loudly as Christmas.

I dare say some of you do not know the proper story of Santa Claus. Santa Claus has lost its real meaning for most children. The story says that on the night that Christ was born all the powers of darkness were powerless, and could do nothing to molest the believing soul—that kind spirits, always kind, had then more strength allowed them to do kind deeds, so that little children might lie down in sleep feeling sure that on waking in the morning they would find beside them some pleasant gift brought by God's good angels. Christ is Santa

I had only a flower to give Jesus, I should be happy," sobbed the girl; "but it is winter, and the frost is on the ground." Then the angel led her out into the dark night, and wherever they went it was light. The angel then touched the earth frequently with his staff, and wherever the angel touched, crimson Noel roses sprang up. Madelon gathered them, and took them to Jesus, and she took her love too. Yes, and Jesus would sooner have that than aught else. Give him your love, your trust, your obedience. Then you will be like the star the wise men followed—you will shine and reveal Christ. You will become God's star pointing out the Christ, by living his life. Take Christ with you, and you will always have the kindly spirit of Christmas in your hearts.

THE QUEEN'S MERCY.

Queen Victoria was not twenty years of age when she ascended the throne. Coming into possession of power with a heart fresh, tender, and pure, and with all her instincts inclined to mercy, we may be sure that she found many things that tried her strength of resolution to the utmost.

On a bright, beautiful morning the young Queen was waited upon at her palace at Windsor by the Duke of Wellington, who had brought from London various papers requiring her signature to render them operative. One of them was a sentence of courtmartial pronounced against a soldier of the line—that sen-

A Telephone Message.

Ah! Here's the little round thing my papa talks into,
To tell the folks down-town what he wants to have them do.
I'm going to try myself—now let me get a chair,
And then I'll stand on tiptoe so I can reach up there.

Halloo! (that's what they all say)—you dear old Santa Claus,
I'm going to have a little bit of a talk with you, because
I want to tell you all about a little girl I know
Who never had a Christmas in her life—she told me so!

I hardly could believe it, but she says 'tis really true,
I'm sure you're always very kind, but I'm surprised at you,
That you should have forgotten such a little one; but still,
You have, perhaps, already all the stockings you can fill.

But, could you go to her house instead of coming here?
For mamma says that Christmas is the time of all the year
For children to remember poor little girls and boys
Who never hang their stockings up for picture-books and toys.

I want you, please, to carry her a doll with shiny curls,
And eyes that shut and open—that's the kind for little girls—
And a muff to warm her fingers, and a cunning little ring,
And a book with pretty verses—how she'll laugh, the little thing!

And give her lots of goodies, too, because she's poor, you see,
And ought to have more sugar plums than you could bring to me,
Now tell it on your fingers, and remember, as you go—
Just pack her little stocking to the very, very toe.

That's all—only, Santa Claus, I just would like to say,
If you should have more presents than you need on Christmas Day,
And could leave me just a few as you pass the chimney, why,
Of course—I would be very glad indeed Good-bye! Good-bye!

THE GREEDY BOTTLE.

A poor, undersized boy, named Tim, sitting by a bottle and looking in, said, "I wonder if there can be a pair of shoes in it?" His mother had mended his clothes, but said his shoes were so bad that he must go barefoot. Then he took a brick and broke the bottle, but there were no shoes in it, and he was frightened, for it was his father's bottle. Tim sat down and sobbed so loud that he did not hear a step behind him, until a voice said:

"Well! what's all this?" He sprang up in great alarm; it was his father. "Who broke my bottle?" he said. "I did," said Tim, catching his breath, half in terror and half between his sobs. "Why did you?" Tim looked up. The voice did not sound as he had expected. The truth was, his father had been touched at the sight of the forlorn figure, so very small and so sorrowful, which had bent over the broken bottle. "Why," he said, "I was looking for a pair of new shoes; I want a pair of new shoes awful bad—all the other chaps wear shoes."

How came you to think you'd find shoes in the bottle?" the father asked. "My mother said so; I asked her for some new shoes, and she said they had gone in the black bottle, and that lots of other things had gone into it too—coats and hats, and bread and meat and things; and I thought if I broke it I'd find 'em all, and there ain't a thing in it! I'm real sorry I broke your bottle, father. I'll never do it again." "No, I guess you won't," he said, laying a hand on the rough little head as he went away, leaving Tim overcome with astonishment that his father had not been angry with him. Two days after he handed Tim a parcel, telling him to open it. "New shoes! New shoes!" he shouted. "O' father, did you get a new bottle, and were they in it?" "No, my boy, there ain't going to be a new bottle. Your mother was right—the things all went into the bottle, but you see getting them out is no easy matter; so, God helping me, I am going to keep them out after this."

THE BIBLE.

In the Treasure Chamber in Windsor Castle there are two small caskets, each of solid crystal. One day Queen Victoria asked for the richer of the two, and placed within it a copy of the Bible. It was the copy used by General Gordon, worn and marked by daily study. It showed the secret of his strength.

While he lived it was the pillar of fire and cloud, always going before and leading him. Whether he was giving his hours to the care of his class of boys or risking his life for the country he loved, that book was the man of his counsel, the inspiration of his waking and the guardian angel of his sleeping hours.

Douglas took the heart of Bruce in a silver case to bury it in the Holy Land. On his way he was attacked by the Turks. As the struggle went against him, he threw the case into the ranks of the enemy, saying, "Oh, brave heart of Bruce, go forward as you have ever done, and I will follow." Then fighting his way to the case, he would pick it up, cast it forward again and fight towards it.

In that Bible, England has the real heart of Gordon. May she follow where it leads, fight as it bids, and conquer as it promises.

Let us put the Bible into the forefront of this young people's movement, find in it our inspiration to action, our laws of life, our standard of judgment, our guide in the march, our guard from evil. May that book be to us all, and more than, it was to General Gordon.—Young People at Work.

Fluttering their wings beneath the straw,
Because the heavenly Child has come.

"There I shall hear, poured high and clear,
At dead of dark, a matin song,
Farm echoing farm from land to land,
While the loud cock sings all night long.

"For none of these that Child was born,
For none of these he died! But they
Feel the great influence of the night,
And answer in their powerless way.

"Soulless and dumb, they answer him!
But you, for whom he suffered shame,
But you, for whom he agonized,
Have no remembrance of his name.

"Back to my brethren will I go,
Where holy chants his name repeat,
Where incense swatches the rising prayer,
Where music mounts to kiss his feet.

"The dust I shake from off my shoes;
Not here, not here, I cast my lot!"
"Nay," said the Master's voice, "my son,
Do you my work! This is the spot!"
—Companion.

HOW CHARLEY EARNED HIS MISSIONARY MONEY.

Boys and girls usually like money because of the good things it will buy, but one boy wanted it to send the Gospel of Christ to the heathen. It is a good sign when a boy earns and saves the money



CHRISTMAS EVE IN GERMANY.

The Field of Need.

A GERMAN LEGEND.

At Christmastide, when elder time
With reek of evil deeds was murk,
One eve a friar sought the spot
Where he should do his Master's work.

Footsore and faint, but light of heart,
Because of Christ, he found his way
To hall and hamlet, where the Lord
Had not been preached for many a day.

Clear rode the night through soaring
heavens,
Of lurid dark, star over star;
But no chr'ch 'll rang out its peal,
To scare the imps of gloom afar.

Nor boughs o'er doorways offered homes
To sylvan spirits in their leaves,
Nor quick feet hurried to and fro,
With the glad haste of Christmas Eves.

And from the great hall came no glow
Of festal light or yule-log fire,
No carol sweetened all the air,
With children in a warbling choir;

Nor yew-tree branches sparkled there,
With gifts and tapers,—far or near,
None knew, it seemed, what child was
born
That night, long since, in old Judea!

No song on any lip, or smile
Of holy joy! And full of ire,
"I will betake me," cried the monk,
"Unto the barnyard and the byre.

"There, in the darkness, I shall see
The white-horned oxen in the stall,
As once they did in Bethlehem
Upon their knees adoring fall.

"There I shall bend me o'er the hives,
And mark the bees begin to hum,

he wants to give to Christ instead of asking some one to give it to him.

One day Pastor Smith was very busy in his study, when suddenly he heard a rap at the kitchen door. He did not leave his work, for he thought the servant would answer it, but rap, rap, rap it came again and again, so that at last he rose and opened the door.

A bright-faced eight-year-old boy stood waiting, a queer knobby bag under his arm. "Good morning, Mr. Smith," he said, in a businesslike tone; "can I have your bones?"

"My bones, Charley? Why, no, I expect to use my bones a little while yet myself, if the Lord permits."

Charley was considerably confused at first, but soon saw his mistake and said, "Oh, I mean the bones you have left from the table."

"Yes, certainly you may have them. But what will you do with them?" Pastor Smith said, looking down into the eager little face.

"Sell them and get missionary money for the heathen," Charley answered promptly. "You said Jesus wanted us to gather up the crumbs, and bones are just as good, and I sell them and have more money than any one else in the Band."

Boys and girls, heed the call coming from our Home and Foreign Boards; earn, and let Christ have his share of the money you make to carry on his work.

The life of blessedness, the life of love, the life of sacrifice, the life of God are identical. All love is sacrifice—the giving of life and self for others. God's life is sacrifice, for the Father loves the Son as the Son loves the sheep, for whom he gave his life.—Robertson.

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL BY JOHN.

LESSON I.—JANUARY 1.

CHRIST THE TRUE LIGHT.

John 1. 1-14. Memory verses, 9-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.—John 1. 4.

OUTLINE.

1. The Word of God, v. 1-5.
2. The Man Sent from God, v. 6-8.
3. The Light of the World, v. 9-11.
4. The Sons of God, v. 12-14.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Christ the true light.—John 1. 1-14
- Tu. John's witness.—John 1. 15-24.
- W. The Son of God.—John 1. 25-34.
- Th. Life and light.—1 John 1.
- F. Life by Christ.—1 John 5. 9-13.
- S. Light of the world.—John 8. 12-19
- Su. Receive the light!—John 12. 35-46

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

1. The Word of God, v. 1-5.
What does John say was "in the beginning"?
With whom was the Word?
What was the Word?
Of what was he the maker?
Of what is he the fountain?
Where does the Light of life shine?
Do men receive it gladly?
2. The Man Sent from God, v. 6-8.
What was the name of the man whom God sent to bear witness of the Light?
Was he believed to be the true Light?
Acts 19. 1-6.
3. The Light of the World, v. 9-11.
Who was the true Light?
Is any man out of reach of salvation?
How did the world regard the Son of God when he came?
Who were "his own"?
How did they regard him?
4. The Sons of God, v. 12-14.
What did he give to those that received him?
What is it to receive Jesus?
How are these men said to have been born?
Was Jesus really God?

TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON

- Where does this lesson teach us that
1. Moral darkness cannot comprehend the light of God?
 2. Men are responsible for their rejection of divine life?
 3. Our natures must be changed by the Spirit of God?
 4. We cannot be saved without Christ's intercession?

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ITALIAN HERD BOY PLAYING CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

Christmas Hymn.

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

"What means this glory round our feet,
The Magi mused, "more bright than
morn?"
And voices chanted strong and sweet,
To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

What means this star," the shepherds
said,
"That brightens through the rocky
glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to
men!"

Tis eighteen hundred years and more
Since these sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for him like them of yore;
Alas, he seems so long to come!

But it was said in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold,
In perfect trust to come to him

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the Law

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, kindly clasping hand in hand
Sing, "Peace on earth, good will to
men!"

CHRISTMAS ALL THE YEAR.

Dickens says: "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." And perhaps this, which he said at another time, is the reason why he wants to keep it all the year: "I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time, a kind of forgiving, charitable, pleasant time."

The true Christmas is all this and more. It is a time when we not only remember our friends—and enemies, if we have them—lovingly and forgivingly, but we do it for the sake of One who loved us when we were far from him.

Any Christmas joy that does not find its spring and source in Jesus, the Holy Babe of Bethlehem, is not the true joy.

Let us look to him, dear young friends, as one who carries all the world's hope and joy in himself, and be sure that he wants to fill our hearts out of his own great heart. Our hearts are little cups, which can only hold a few drops at best, but he loves to have us hold them up to be filled, and he loves to fill them! Shall we believe it, and in this way have a merry Christmas all the year?

JOHNNY'S LETTER.

BY EMMA W. BUCKNELL.

"Oh, how cold I be, Johnny! Ain't you?"

"You better believe I am; but I ain't half as cold as you be, 'cause my coat's thicker'n your dress. Mebbe we can keep warmer if we sit close."

The poor little waifs huddled closer together on a cold Christmas Eve, in a corner of the bare attic they had called their home ever since they could remember, but which was never before so bare, so cold, and so cheerless.

Their father had died when Mollie was a mere baby, and their mother had worked hard ever since to keep her two little ones clothed, fed and warm. So hard had she worked, that although her darlings had known neither cold nor hunger while her hands could labour, now, with hands folded in unwonted rest, eyes closed to her chill drear needs, and ears deaf to their pitiful cries, she lay under the winding sheet of snow out in God's acre.

"It's two weeks since mammy was took away, an' there ain't no monee left, nor anythin' more I kin sell; and we've got to git out'n here ter morn."

I don't know where to, nuther, Mollie. We ain't going to stan goin' 'thout nuthin' to eat long. I guess we're goin' to die, like mammy."

"Let's ask Jesus to give us suthin' to eat, Johnny. Mammy said as how he'd take care on us, if we'd ask him."

The two children knelt and prayed. Who says God did not hear them? Will he who notes the sparrow's fall be deaf to the prayers of his suffering children?

As they arose from their knees, Mollie happened to go to the window, and saw the letter-carrier hurrying by.

"Say, Johnny, what makes folks give that man so many letters? He gits a bag full twice a day."

HOW TO GET AN EDUCATION.

Boys say to me: "We want an education, but we can't get it; so we are going to learn a trade, or go into a store, or do something else." Now let me say that every boy who wants an education, if he will bend his force to it, can get just as good a one as he wants. The way is open. Education doesn't come through academies, colleges, seminaries, though these are helps, but it comes by study and reading and comparing, and all the schools, and colleges, and seminaries in the world will not make a scholar of a man without these; and with them a man will be one, if he never sees a college. And what is true of boys, is of girls, and what is true of this pursuit, is of any other. The force must be in yourself, and you must develop it.

THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL.

The Christmas festival seems to have first been devoted to the children in Germany and the north of Europe. Here St. Nicholas, a real personage, lived a bishop in the time of Constantine, and died December 8, 343. For a time Christmas was here celebrated on the 6th of December, but later transferred to December 25th to correspond with the practice in other countries.

The patron saint of the children, known as St. Nicholas in Germany, is called Santa Claus in Holland, and Samiklaus in Switzerland. In Austria he is known as Niklo, or Niglo, and is

scene often follows the Christmas tree when the mother takes occasion to tell her daughters, while the father tells the sons, what has been the most praiseworthy in their conduct, and also those things of the opposite nature.

A CHILD'S BETTER WAY OF KEEPING CHRISTMAS.

I wish to tell you a little incident which happened to me on Christmas Eve, two years ago, and of which I have never spoken since.

While stopping to glance almost unconsciously at the display in the windows of an Eighth Street confectionery store, my attention was attracted by two children, a boy apparently about eight years old, and a girl about ten. They were joyously pointing out all the dainties in the windows, to each other, and speculating upon the amounts of the many good things which could be purchased for a quarter. They appeared to be warmly dressed, but their clothes were of the plainest and cheapest material, and they were evidently the children of a poor workman, who was able to support his family, but to supply them with none of the luxuries of life. From their conversation, I learned that their father had given each of them twenty-five cents to spend for Christmas, and the great question was what to buy with the money.

While the matter was still undecided, a poor, haggard-looking woman came along, leading a little girl, and they both looked as if they had not eaten anything for some time. The woman stepped up to another woman richly dressed in furs, and timidly asked for help; but her appeal was unheeded, and she was haughtily told to stand aside. As the poor creature slunk away in the greatest dejection, I noticed a few hurried whispers between the two children, and they quickly followed the woman and child, and when they came up with them, pressed something into the woman's hand, who was left speechless by the sudden good fortune.

As the children passed me when they returned, I heard the girl say: "They'll enjoy it more than we would. We'll be at home to-morrow, with mom and pop, and have a good dinner, and they'll have nothing."

When I recovered my senses, both parties were gone; but I am certain of one thing, that those children, who gave their all, had a happier Christmas than I, who was the possessor of many thousands, but gave nothing toward making others happy.



CHRISTMAS IN RURAL ENGLAND.

"I dunno, mammy give her a letter oncet, an' she got a lot o' coa."

"Then he'll be good to we-uns. G'in and git a bit o' paper and I'll write him a letter."

So little Mollie hurried to a corner of the dismal attic, and brought back to her brother a half-sheet of paper, and a short stub of a pencil.

After a great deal of thinking and talking, a letter was composed. It began, "Mr. Letter Carrier," and asked for coal and food, and referred to the dead father and mother, to the happier Christmas they had known, and was written in such a quaint and pitiful manner that it must have touched the heart of any man who possessed any at all.

No envelope was procurable, so, buttoning up their scanty clothing and putting on their hats, they creased the road in the snow, and Johnny dropped the precious letter in the box. The carrier was on his second round, and saw them.

"Poor little waifs," he muttered; "I wonder who they've got to write to?"

The terrible storm had kept every one at home who could remain under shelter, and Johnny's letter was the only one in the box. The carrier was a warm-hearted Christian, and Johnny's letter brought tears to his eyes. He had just lost his two children, a boy and a girl, very much like Mollie and Johnny in size and appearance.

Before night Mollie and Johnny had found a home with the carrier and his gentle wife, and spent a happier Christmas than ever they had known, and so God answered their prayers.

Other sheep there are which have not been won from the world fold to the true Shepherd's flock. The same voice offering sacrifice and truth in all ages will bring them in. The Master himself will go to bring them. This is what he is doing now. His servants were to go also in the search. "Feed my sheep!" "Feed my lambs!"—Campbell.

followed by a masked servant called Krampus; while in the Tyrol he goes by the name of Holy Man, and is accompanied by St. Lucy, who is the girls' saint, and also sometimes by a little girl representing the Christ-child. At times St. Nicholas is accompanied by a masked bugbear who carries rods for the naughty children instead of



presents. The Christmas tree in its present relation to this festival originated with the Germans, but a similar ceremony was much earlier connected with pagan rites of a different kind. In the Protestant districts of Germany, Christmas is celebrated with Christmas trees very much as with us, by the giving of presents between parents and children, and brothers and sisters; and a more sober

JOHNNY'S LETTER.