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PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 23, 1899.

No. 51.

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 hand 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

make a brighter corner in some dark room and kindle a still warmer glow in some saddened heart.

Or you may know an old woman whose one occupation is making quilts and rag carpets, or some dainty fingered one who licks for bits of silk and ribbon for her pretty dresses. Then through the fall days save every scrap that you can find and send to the big roll of them on Christmas morning. If you find in the middle of the bundle a tiny gift lies hidden, so much more beautiful the thought.

That there is the little dressmaker have you ever noticed how longingly she eyes your magazines when she comes to help you with the spring sewing? You may not be able to subscribe to one for her, but why not send her the last number on Christmas Day, with a note saying that you will pass yours on to her through the year? It may cost you a little trouble once a month, but think of the joy that it will give to a hungry soul the whole year through!

And if you have time at your disposal you are rich, indeed, though your pocket cannot boast of it. Have you ever realized the long monotony of an invalid's days? If you have, you will understand what a wonderful gift a visit once a week, or even once a month would be. Or, there may be some blind neighbour to whom you could promise the reading of a longed-for book, or some girl shut away among country hills to visit the bright letter of your merry, busy times would be the event of the month. Only, if you make the promise, let nothing except absolute necessity cause you to postpone the keeping of it. Place the note or the letter first among your duties for the week, that no sad heart may turn away heavy with disappointment after a day of weary watching for one who did not come.

There are so many ways—as many ways as there are souls! For one of the gladdest of all glad things is this—that no one is so poor that he has not something to give. To the Christ-child, whom we would make our guest, love and sympathy and eager thought are worthiest offerings. Do you remember Sir Launfal?

"Not what we give, but what we share— For the gift without the giver is bare; Who gives himself with his aims feeds Himself, his suffering neighbour, and me."

Santa Claus' Sister.

We stood at a crowded counter, Little Geraldine and I; There was only a day before Christmas, And hundreds were waiting to buy.

The shelves and the cases were covered, And the counters were piled up high With the loveliest and prettiest Ever seen by a mortal eye.

There were books with most beautiful pictures, And the strangest, most wonderful toys, That were brought from over the ocean On purpose for girls and boys.

There were dolls that could walk and play tennis, In dresses of satin and silk, And horses to wind and set trotting, And cows that you really could milk.

There were dogs that could bark like the live ones, And birds of most brilliant wing, With springs hid away 'neath their feathers That would make them fly upward and sing.

But the eyes of the child who stood by me Had wandered away from all these, And the sparkling Christmas angels, And the miniature Christmas trees, And were scanning the faces about us; The faces that huddled and pressed, And looked weary 'cross with the effort Of getting in front of the rest—

When, grasping my hand, she whispered, With eager, childish grace, "Oh! that that must be Santa Claus' sister, She's got such a Christmas face!"

I looked where her eyes had lighted, And lo! in a threadbare gown, 'Tood a queer, little, bent old woman, With a face that was wrinkled and brown.

But the eyes that beamed out from it Were radiant with love and joy, As, from among all the beautiful objects, She selected one poor, cheap toy.

And the worn, brown face was illumined With a smile of good-will toward me, That told, more plainly than words might, She was keeping Christmas then.

I gazed at the forms about me, There were women in rich attire, Whose unearned gold enabled The purchase of each desire.

There were those of delicate feature, Of gentle breeding and race, But the queer, little, bent old woman Was the only "Christmas face."

In shame, from my own I hastened To smooth the impatience and frown, As I looked at Santa Claus' sister." In her faded, threadbare gown.

And I blessed both the child and the woman, For their Christmas sermon sweet, As I pressed through the throng of shoppers, And on in the crowded street.

OUR PERIODICALS:

Table listing various periodicals such as 'The Best, the Cheapest, the most entertaining, the most popular.' with prices for different editions like 'Yearly \$1.00', 'Christian Guardian, weekly \$1.00', etc.

WILLIAM BRIGGS, Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto. C. W. COATS, 110 St. P. St. Montreal, Quebec, Canada. H. H. HARRIS, 110 St. P. St. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK. Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor. TORONTO, DECEMBER 23, 1893.

HELP A LITTLE. A TRUE CHRISTMAS STORY.

"Oh, mamma! It's only a week till Christmas, did you know it?" cried little Earl Cameron, as he stood in the doorway, his face as red as a rose, and his eyes as bright as stars.

"Yes, my son, I know it," she answered, looking tenderly at the little face all eyes turned to. "Mamma, I've thought of something just grand for Christmas. You can't guess it," he cried joyously.

"I suppose not," so it would be useless to try; but you will tell me?" she questioned, lifting the bright face close to her own, while she kissed it lovingly. Suddenly the merry eyes became grave again.

"Mamma, there are so many who have no happy Christmas, and you know that little song we sing, 'Help a little, and I just thought I would like to do it. May I?' he answered eagerly.

"Tell me your plan first," she answered, "and then we will see what we can do."

Before Earl could reply, a little girl passed the window carrying a basket on her arm. Her face was poorly dressed, and looked cold and sad. "There she is now, mamma," cried the little boy, "that was little Elsie, I don't know her last name. She had no mother."

"Oh, thank you, my own mamma," she said, "I'll be sure to be in happy tones, then skipped away to his play, as care-free as ever."

"Elsie," repeated Mrs. Cameron tenderly, "that was my only sister's name."

Oh, my own, dear Elsie! If I only knew where you were! I can only pray God a guidance and blessing for you, and rest, and work for him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It was late in the afternoon before Mrs. Cameron found an opportunity to fulfil her promise. Then with little Earl she set out for the lady she had been told to look about for.

On their way Mrs. Cameron was struck by the perfect neatness of everything. Though there were but few pieces of furniture, still everything was in order and clean. Her eyes were attracted to Elsie, the little girl spoken of, who was ironing. Then, with a feeling of relief and the conviction that here indeed there was real need of help, and that they would prove worthy of her assistance, she turned to the bedside where Elsie's mamma, Mrs. Maynard, sat rapt up with a chair and pillows at her back, dozing over her book.

The woman was thin and careworn, showing also that death had set its seal upon her brow. Mrs. Maynard was dying of consumption. Only one glance was needed to chill Mrs. Cameron's heart to the core, for she saw in the face of the supposed stranger the features of her own loved sister.

With a cry in which both pain and joy were mingled, she clasped the wasted form in her loving arms: "Elsie! Elsie! my own Elsie!" What need of further words to describe the scene? Every loving household can understand. Everything was done that love could do, to make Mrs. Maynard comfortable, and prolong her life; but it was vain. Little Elsie would not survive the week. Only two days, and the sisters so lately reunited knew they must separate.

"I leave you my darling child as my legacy, dear Elsie," she said, as she lay now. God has been better to me than I have deserved. My trust is in him." With a few more parting words she went to her rest. God had called his weary one home.

After the remains were laid away, little Elsie was taken home by Mrs. Cameron, and made as her own little one. With a heart overflowing with gratitude she praised God for his goodness in allowing her to care for her sister in her last moments, and also for the little one he had sent into her life.

Christmas Eve there were great preparations in the Cameron household. While Elsie and Earl were sleeping soundly a large Christmas tree was being prepared in the parlour, its branches laden with gifts. Its goodies in all things Elsie's eyes open in the morning were than usual? She had never seen anything-half so lovely as this.

Christmas morning dawned bright and beautiful. Elsie awoke with her first waking moments came the memory of her great loss. The dear mother who never returned to her again. After the first wild burst of sorrow, she gradually grew calm, and her heart grew beside she told it all to Jesus, and arose strengthened. It was thus Mrs. Cameron found her. She kissed her tenderly, and wished her a merry Christmas, and then her heart was glad to see her so well.

Immediately after breakfast they all followed Mr. Cameron into the parlour. "Oh, a Christmas tree! a Christmas tree!" cried Elsie joyously. "Oh, isn't it too lovely?"

And then the fun of unloading the tree and getting pelted with the numerous flying bundles. Elsie felt her cup was running over, as many of the lovely gifts were sent to her. She was so glad, and her lap became more and more burdened with its weight of good things. There never was a happier little girl than Elsie Maynard that Christmas morning.

"Oh, mamma," she said, "I thought only this morning I never could be happy again; but I am. Oh, I am happy. God has been so good to me. I know mamma is glad too, and I shall love him all my life."

Mrs. Cameron's heart was too full for words. What if she had not heeded the call to go to the assistance of the supposed stranger? What if she had not seen that book which she longed to read, was very tempting, and she was weary. What if she had thought more of her own selfish ease than another's pain that afternoon? God was indeed good to her.

Willie had swallowed a penny, and his mother was in a state of much alarm. "Helen," she called to her sister in the next room, "send for a doctor; Willie has swallowed a penny!" The terrified sister, frightened boy looked up imploringly. "No, mamma," he interposed, "send for the minister." The minister? "I'll send you," he said. "Incurable disease," said the minister. "Yes; because," said the minister, can get money out of anybody."

The Three Kings.

BY M. W. LANGFELLOW.

Three Kings came riding from far away, Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar, Three-Wise Men out of the East-went they.

And they travelled by night and they slept by day. For their guide was the beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear, That all the other stars of the sky Decked a white mist in the atmosphere, And by this they knew that the coming was near.

Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy, Three caquets they bore on their saddle-bows, Three caquets of gold with golden keys, Their robes were of crimson silk with rows

Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows, Their turbans like blossoming almonds-trees.

And so the Three-Kings rode into the West, Through the dusk of night, over hill and dell,

And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast, And sometimes talked, as they passed to and fro.

With the people they met at the way-side well.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar, "God and people, I pray you, tell us the news;

For we in the East have seen his star, And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,

And will worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain; We know of no king but Herod the king."

They thought the Wise Men were men, insane, As they spurred their horses across the plain,

Like riders in haste, who cannot wait, And when they came to Jerusalem,

Herod the Great, who had heard this thing, Sent the Wise Men and questioned them;

And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem, And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still.

The only one in the grey of morn; Yes, it stopped, its steady still of its own free-will,

Right over Bethlehem on the hill, The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,

Through the silent street, till their horses staid.

And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;

But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,

And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay, In the air made sweet by the breath of a king,

The child in the manger lay, The child, that would be king one day, Of a kingdom not human but divine.

His mother, Mary of Nazareth, Sat watching beside his place of rest, Watching the dawn flow of his breath, For the joy of life and the terror of death

Were mingled together in her breast. They laid their offerings at his feet;

The gold was their tribute to a King, The frankincense a flow of his breath, Was for the Priest, the Paraclete, The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head, And sat as still as a statue of stone; Her heart was troubled yet comforted; Remembering what the angel had said.

Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the kings rode out of the city gate, With a cluster of roofs in proud array; But they went not back to Herod the Great,

For they knew his malice and feared his anger. And returned to their homes by another way.

An Up to date Santa Claus.

BY H. J. PAINE.

When Santa Claus came to town last year.
His deer,
"His said,
Struck a live wire and fell down dead.

Poor Santa felt sad to lose them so,
I know;
But he
Was not of the kind to give up, you see.

So he rigged up his sleigh ilko a trolley
car,
And far
That night,
Via telegraph wires, he took his flight.

To each little child in bed
He sped,
Nor missed
A single one of all the list.

But this year he's going to take in hand
A brand-
New way,
And deliver his goods in a horseless
sleigh.

—Harper's Round Table.

THE PULLMAN STOCKING.

BY SIDNEY DAYRE.

They came into the Pullman sleeper just as Christmas Eve was closing in, a woman and one small boy. The woman was dressed in widow's clothes freshly made, but of rather cheap material, such as the lady in the opposite section decided, after one glance of her practised eye, as would very soon hang limp, turn brown, and look "sleazy." The boy's suit was a trifle outgrown and not in the latest style.

But no lack in the matter of clothes could extinguish the beam in the bright eyes which gazed about in childish delight on the fineness of the surroundings, and which met with frank friendliness the gaze of fellow-travellers as he stood up to pass his hand over a panel above his head.

A man in the seat close behind leaned over and spoke to him. It took but a few words, joined with a glance at the kindly face, to loosen the flood-gates of childish talk.

"Yes, we've come, oh! over 'n' over so far. We was on a train that something happened to it, on another road, and so we didn't get here to get on this road this morning; we thought we would. So we have to keep on to-night, and that's how it is we come into this nice car. We was just in a seat all last night; but mamma said we'd have to have a place to sleep to-night. Handsome here, ain't it?" patting the velvet cushion. "And they make up cunning little beds, just like you has at home, mamma says; only it costs a lot."

The clear treble rang out for the full benefit of the half-dozen nearest neighbours, and just here mamma whispered a few words which checked the flow of information. The round face grew sober with grave speculation, and presently a hand touched the shoulder of the man in the seat behind.

"Say, mister, doesn't Santa Claus travel on this train?"

"Oh, I really don't know," was the reply. "Well, I suppose not."

"That's what mamma said she s'posed," with a little sigh. "But 'course he couldn't," with a half-laugh. "Santa Claus has too much to do Christmas Eve to be takin' trips."

"And he doesn't travel by rail," some one suggested.

"Course he doesn't," with enthusiasm. "He goes kitin' along with his reindeer, scootin' over the roofs and down the chimneys—my! But," with another sigh, "I don't know how'll he find me!"

"Where did you expect him?"

"Oh, to grandpa's; we're going there. And I 'spected to hang up my stockin' there, and I wonder what Santa'll think when he goes down the chimney and doesn't find my stockin'. Do you s'pose," with a little anxiety, "he'd go back to our old house where we lived 'fore papa died, 'spectin' to find us there?"

"No, I think not. Santa Claus keeps track of his children, you know."

"I guess so," brightening up; "and he knows me. He's brought me things, oh! dozens of Christmases."

"Then I guess he'll be likely to find you somewhere."

A delighted expression grew on the small face as a keen investigation of the face of the person offering such comforting opinion seemed to result satisfactorily.

"If you're sure he wouldn't forget, though he's got such millions and millions of places to go to. He'll think it strange I ain't there at grandpa's with my stockin'." Well, with another sigh,

I hope he'll get to understand some way, and I hope he'll know I was good, and didn't bother mamma when she said we couldn't get there, for all I wanted to, awful bad." There was a choke in the high-pitched voice.

The porter now came to make up the berths, and mamma led the boy to another seat. For a while the clear eyes watched with a pleased admiration all the arrangement of the cunning little beds. Then mamma drew him into her arms, and, as the quiet of the approaching sleep fell on him, talked softly of the Christmas Eve eighteen hundred years ago, when quiet shepherds watched their flocks, with the clear heavens above, and the star leading to the cradle of the Child, for whose sake we love to make Christmas a time of rejoicing for children. Inside the curtains of the berth the pillows for mother and child were laid at opposite ends, in order to give more room, so that the expression of pleasure in the "pretty curtains," "nice little pillows," "warm blankets," with the mixture of delighted giggles, was still easily audible.

The next man behind, coming to his

silver dollar in the toe of the stocking, drew out a box of candy, which followed the dollar.

"Look there!" Four school-girls, on their way home for the holidays, caught sight of what was going on.

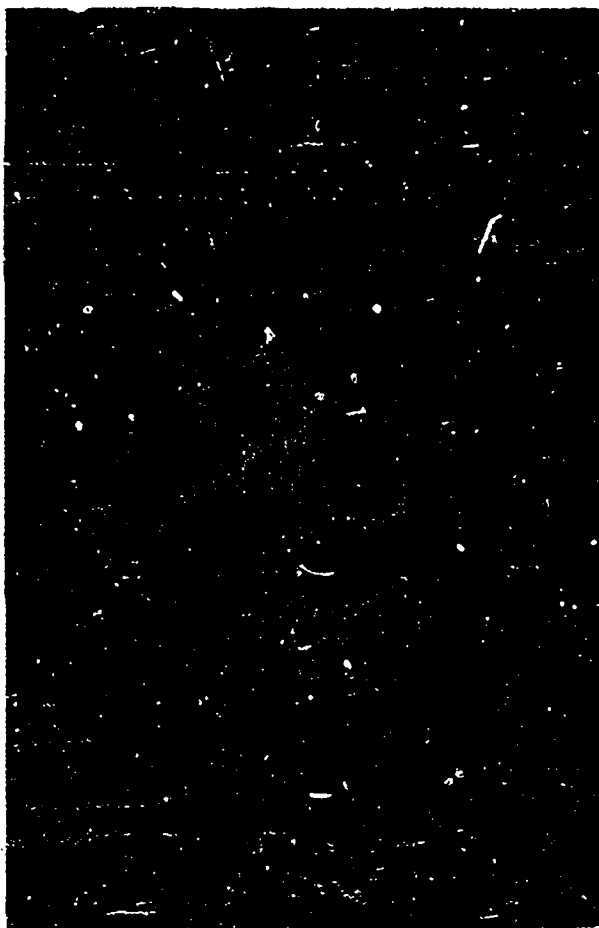
"Well, it isn't often you see a Christmas stocking on its travels. We must scrape up something for it."

A doll was hastily made up of two or three silk handkerchiefs, and crowded in, accompanied by nuts and candies from lunch baskets. A boy farther down made some lemons into pigs, which nearly filled the stocking.

But the gifts did not stop for the spirit of the season was fully awakened. Small coins were passed along from one hand to another, and shaken well down into the toe by the man next behind. A woman, with a bag of Christmas gifts for a family of expectant small friends, made a selection from them, and brought her offering.

"Why, the stocking's full," said the man next behind. "But here—this'll do!"

He pulled out a lavender silk handkerchief, and when she laid gifts inside, tied



The Baby Christ.

BY JULIA WARD HOWE.

The Baby Christ, so fair and dear,
Shines out upon the closing year;
The skies are dark, the days are short,
In which he holds his childish court,
While angel heralds call again,—
"Good will on earth, from heaven to men."

For loving gifts this is the time,
In frigid zone or torrid clime,
Each ranking spite we cast away
Before the kindly Christmas play,
And only genial faces show;
The little Christ will have it so.

We kiss the precious Baby's hand,
And hail him, loved of every land,
While still our earnest thoughts pursue
The way the Babe to manhood grew,
The valliant service that repaid
The gifts beside his cradle laid.

Oh, not for dimpled cheek and smile,
For gesture sweet and tender wile,
Do we his radiant presence prize,
And shout his promise to the skies!
We follow him with willing mind,
Anointed champion of mankind.

berth a short time later, stopped with a stare of surprise, and then met with a smile the smile of a lady across the aisle as she nodded towards the curtains which closed outside the boy who had missed a visit from Santa Claus. Upon the button of the drapery hung a small stocking.

Others paused in passing, and others came on hearing of it, so that before long every one in that sleeper had seen the little Christmas stocking. In the subdued light there may have been tears mingled with the smiles with which 't was regarded by those who by force of circumstances were not gathering by some stocking-decked fireside, from those whose life had lost the music made by little feet; perhaps sadder by those who had wandered far from home joys and home purity.

"A poor place for that sort of thing, I'm afraid," said the next behind to the lady across.

"Perhaps not so bad as one might think," was her answer. She had opened a lunch basket, and, just as the man, after fumbling in his pocket, dropped a

it by the four corners and pinned it to the stocking.

The word had passed along, and travellers in the next car came through to take a peep at the travelling stocking. Small trinkets were edged in beside the doll. Scarfs were tied around the stocking, and handkerchiefs filled out with nobody knew what fastened on. In short, if Santa Claus was not travelling on that train some of his near relatives must have been. The child and his mother were hurried out of the car early in the morning.

"Hush—sh-sh-sh-h-h-h—!" The mother was fairly out of breath with her efforts to keep that boy from arousing the whole car. But the car was ready to arouse, and shouts of laughter mingled with the squeals and giggles and exclamations of delight and amazement.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" Heartfelt greetings followed the two as at length they hurried out.

"He shouldn't have done it—I didn't know," said the mother, looking about in a shy gratitude.

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THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

A very beautiful legend, says The Household, makes Martin Luther the originator of the first Christmas tree. The story runs that he was travelling alone through a forest on Christmas Eve. The sky glittered with innumerable stars, so cheering and inspiring to the great Reformer that he cut a small fir-tree, and when he reached home fastened to it many wax tapers and set it up as an object-lesson to his children to remind them of that evening in Bethlehem when Christ was born the light of the world.

Be this as it may, we find the Christmas tree in common use among the Germans before the latter half of the seventeenth century, which makes it somewhat surprising that Goethe should never have seen one until 1765, which he describes as being adorned with sweets and having under it a sugar Christ-child.

When the Reformers separated themselves from the Catholic Church they discarded the manger with the Christ-child, seen in all Catholic countries on Christmas Eve, along with many other rites and ceremonies, and substituted in its stead the decorated tree. It is only during this century that it had been introduced into Catholic countries, but now it is almost as popular in Spain, France, Italy, and Russia as it is in England and America.

In France it was introduced by the Princess of Orleans, and firmly established later by Eugene. It was in 1840, too, when Albert became Prince Consort, that a tree was added to the royal festivities.

It was brought into America by the Dutch settlers of New York and the Germans of Pennsylvania, but its growth was slow among the Puritans, where it

was looked upon as a sinful custom of popery. It was not until about 1830 that it became popular among all classes; but the tree of that time, with its paper flowers, apples, gilded nuts, and awful confections in the shapes of hearts, doves, etc., made of sugar, water, and flour, bore little resemblance to the richly decorated tree of to day, which sometimes not only revolves by electricity, but is lighted by the same agency.



Jesus, Saviour, teach thou me
Holy lessons from thy word;
Make me more and more like thee,
Since my heart thy voice hath heard.

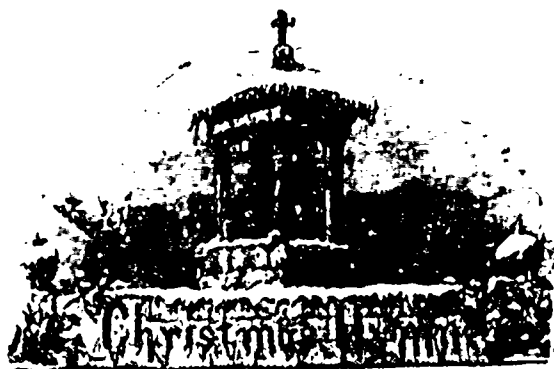
Pundita Ramabai has returned to India and intends to give herself more directly to religious work. Henceforth she will be a missionary, devoting herself more and more to the work of evangelization. Full of enthusiasm, gifted intellectually and spiritually for such work, she will be able to make as great a success of Gospel work as she has of preaching and organizing. Moreover, she will kindle widespread enthusiasm among India's converted daughters for the salvation of their fell w-countrymen and countrywomen.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.
It came upon the midnight clear
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King;"
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way,
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

For, lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.



Christmas Hymn.

Lo! the merry bells are ringing
Their sweet welcome to the morn,
And the white-robed choirs are singing
"Unto us a child is born!"

And there's many a kindly greeting
On this happy Christmas Day!
Yes, there's many a joyous meeting
With old friends from far away!

Every kind and generous feeling
Gladsome Christmastide imparts;
"Peace on earth" to man revealing,
Hailed with joy by many hearts.

Would we realize its gladness
Would we share its holy calm,
Let us look on others' sadness,
Let us bring a soothing balm.

For the seed of love we're sowing,
In a blessing shall appear;
From the heavenly source o'erflowing,
It shall crown the coming year.

LESSON NOTES.

FOURTH QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

FOURTH QUARTERLY REVIEW.
DECEMBER 31.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget
not all his benefits.—Psalm 103. 2.

HOME READINGS.

- Mo. (Christmas) Joyful news.—Luke 2. 1-11.
Tu. Haman's plot against the Jews.—Esth. 3. 1-11.
W. Esther pleading for her people.—Esth. 8. 3-8, 15-17.
Th. Ezra's journey to Jerusalem.—Ezra 8. 21-32.
F. Nehemiah's prayer.—Neh. 1. 1-11.
S. Rebuilding the walls.—Neh. 4. 7-18.
Su. Public reading of the Scriptures.—Neh. 8. 1-12.

I. Study carefully the Titles and Golden Texts of each lesson.

II. State picturesque facts of the lessons as suggested by the following hints:

1. A beautiful woman prostrate before a king.
2. A crowd of worshippers gathering in the temple.
3. A great bonfire of battle-axes, spears, and sheaths.
4. A large congregation listening to the reading of the word of God.
5. A party of soldiers attacking a party of labourers.
6. They that feared the Lord talking together about him.
7. A drunken man.
8. Priests offering sick and infirm animals as sacrifices.
9. A crowd of merchants and hucksters outside the city wall.
10. A Persian noble alone in prayer.
11. Returning captives laughing and singing with delight.
12. A man dressed in blue and white with a crown of gold on his head.
13. A man weighing and counting out gold and silver to twelve priests.
14. A king giving his signet ring to a man.

III. State what we are taught in the lessons:

1. About peace and harmony in the church.
2. About the reign of Christ.
3. About God's providence.
4. About a man reaping what he sows.
5. About the feast of Purim.
6. About liberal giving in the church of God.
7. About the Sabbath day.
8. About trusting in the Lord.
9. About the return of the Jews to Jerusalem.
10. About abstaining from intoxicants.
11. About studying the Scriptures.
12. About sowing in tears and reaping in joy.
13. About rebuilding Jerusalem.



BETHLEHEM-TOWN.

BY EUGENE FIELD.

As I was going to Bethlehem-town,
Upon the earth I cast me down
All underneath a little tree
That whispered in this wise to me:
"Oh, I shall stand on Calvary,
And bear what burthen saveth thee."

As up I fared to Bethlehem-town
I met a shepherd coming down,
And thus he quoth: "A wondrous sight
Hath spread before mine eyes this
night—

An angel host most fair to see
That sung full sweetly of a tree
That shall uplift on Calvary,
What burthen saveth you and me.

And as I got to Bethlehem-town,
Lo! wise men came that bore a crown—
"Is there," cried I, "in Bethlehem
A King shall wear this diadem?"
"Good sooth," they quoth, "and it is he

That shall be lifted on the tree
And freely shed on Calvary
What blood redeemeth us and thee."

Unto a Child in Bethlehem-town,
The wise men came and brought the
crown,

And while the infant smiling slept
Upon their knees they fell and wept;
But, with her babe upon her knee,
Naught recked that mother of the tree
That should uplift on Calvary
What burthen saveth all and me.

As ain I walk in Bethlehem-town,
And think on him that wears the
crown—

I may not kiss his feet again
Nor worship him as did I then;
My King hath died upon the tree,
And hath outpoured on Calvary
What blood redeemeth you and me!

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