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THE SABBATH SCHOOL

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

ENLARGED SERIES—VOL. V.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 12 1885

No 25



CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY.—(See next page.)

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY.

IN the far off land of Norway,
Where the winter lingers late,
And long for the singing birds and flowers,
The little children wait.

When at last the summer ripens,
And the harvest is gathered in,
And lo! for the bleak, drear days to come
The toiling people win.

Through all the land the children
In the golden fields remain
Till their busy little hands have gleaned
A generous sheaf of grain;

All the stalks by the reapers forgotten
They glean to the very least,
To save till the cold December,
For the sparrows' Christmas feast.

And then through the frost-locked country
There happens a wonderful thing:
The sparrows flock north, south, east, west,
For the children's offering.

Of a sudden the day before Christmas,
The twittering crowds arrive,
And the bitter, wintry air at once
With their chirping is all alive.

They perch upon roof and gable,
On porch and fence and tree,
They flutter about the windows
And peer in curiously.

And meet the eyes of the children,
Who eagerly look out,
With cheeks 't' bloom like roses red,
And greet them with welcoming shout.

On the joyous Christmas morning,
In front of every door
A tall pole, crowned with clustering grain,
Is set the birds before.

And which are the happiest, truly
It would be hard to tell;
The sparrows who share in the Christmas
cheer
Or the children who love them well!

How sweet that they should remember,
With faith so full and sure,
That the Children's bounty awaited them
The whole wide country o'er!

When this pretty story was told me,
By one who had helped to rear
The rustling grain for the merry birds
In Norway, many a year,

I thought that our little children
Would like to know it too,
It seems to me so beautiful,
So blessed a thing to do.

To make God's innocent creatures see
In every child a friend,
And on our faithful kindness
So fearlessly depend.

—Celia Thaxter.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT.

"GRANDMA, I am just tired making
Christmas presents."

"I feared this would be the result,
Floy, if you sowed steadily so many
days. Come, put aside your work
now, and let us have a nice talk before
dinner. Those tiny leaves are beautiful,
darling, and I am sure that when
papa sees these slippers Christmas
morning you will feel repaid for all the
patience they have cost you."

"Grandma, I like to make presents.
I did not mean what I said, only I am
real tired."

"Dear child, people much older
than you very often say what they do
not mean in a fit of impatience that
may be caused by fatigue of body.
Perhaps papa would not enjoy his
present if he had heard his little girl
utter this remark. Come, bring your
chair beside me."

Floy placed a low chair before Mrs.
Niles and nestled her little golden
head in grandma's lap.

The dear old lady tenderly stroked
the wavy hair a moment and then
said:

"Floy, will you have finished all
your Christmas gifts when these slip-
pers are done?"

"Yes, grandma, why?"

"I ask because you have forgotten
one dear friend whom you should
especially remember at Christmas-time."

"Why, grandma!" said Floy, whose
eyes glistening now with excitement
and whose cheeks aglow, as the fire-
light fell on her face, were as beautiful
a picture as one could wish to see. "I
have presents for you and papa and
mamma, Cousin Alice, and Aunt Kate
and those little Griggs children, and
something even for cook's sister's little
girl."

"I am very glad, but you owe to
the dear friend of whom I am speak-
ing far more than to any of these, and
yet I fear you have not thought of
making a present to this friend. At
least I have never heard you say any-
thing about it."

"Grandma, please tell me who it is
right away," eagerly pleaded the child.

Mrs. Niles drew her closer, and
after a moment's pause sang softly in
a voice that was still sweet though
broken and feeble:

"I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou mightst ransom me,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave my life for thee,
What hast thou done for me?"

"My Father's house of light,
My glory-circled throne
I left, for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee,
Hast thou left aught for me?"

"And I have brought to thee,
Down from my home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and my love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
What hast thou brought to me?"

For a few moments Floy's heart was
too full to speak; then she said:

"Grandma, I know what you mean,
I have no Christmas present for
Jesus."

"Yes, my child, and do you not
think you ought to give him the best
gift you can on his own birthday?"

"Why, grandma, what could I do
for him? If I were a grown-up lady
I could do something. I could have a
Sabbath-school class and tell children
how much he loves them."

"Darling, how old are you?"

"Eleven next month, grandma."

"Three long years, at least, the
dear Saviour has been expecting a gift
from you, and yet you have forgotten
him."

Floy buried her face in her hands.
The gloom of night settled without and
seemed for a moment to cast a shadow
upon her little heart. Then she looked
at the cheery fire, and a thought came
to her and she said earnestly:

"Grandma, there is my five-dollar
gold piece that Uncle Henry gave me.
I can put that into the missionary
box. Would not that be giving a
present to Jesus?"

"Yes, dear, but I have been think-
ing of a more costly gift than this.
What is the value of all treasures of
the earth to him compared to a human
heart? Floy, he wants your own little
self. Can you not give him that?"

"Grandma, I don't understand what
I ought to do," said Floy, impulsively.
"I love Jesus. Is that all? That
isn't any Christmas gift, though. I
love you, but I want to do something
for you."

"Floy, that is just the point of the
whole matter; to show your love for
Christ by that which costs you some-
thing. If I should tell you that when
you were a baby some dear, good man
had saved your life from drowning,
would you not want to show your
gratitude to him in some practical way
every day of your life? That is what
is meant by Christian consecration; in
every act of our lives to question of
ourselves whether or not he would
approve it, and to do everything as if
we were doing it for Jesus. We 'are
not our own. We were bought with
a price.' All our time and all our
faculties belong to God. If you go to
the piano to practice, remember you
are spending time that belongs not to
yourself and that you must not idle it
away. You are serving the Master
when you practice faithfully. If you
are sewing or studying your lessons,
do it with all your might and not waste
the precious moments God has given
you to use for him. If you feel list-
less and not in humour for the work of
the hour, breathe a momentary, silent
prayer to him to help you and the
answer will come sure and soon. This
is the service that God requires of you,
and in doing it you may believe that
your work is as great in his eyes as
that of any grown person.

"Grandma, I wish I could live in
that way, but I think I cannot. I
am afraid if I give myself to Jesus, I
shall want to take myself back again."

Mrs. Niles waited a moment and then
continued: "I am glad you do not
promise hastily—that you are counting
the cost. Floy, do you remember the
day you came to me to know what you
could make for a Christmas present to
papa that would be very nice and that
he would like very much? When I
proposed that you make him a pair of
slippers and showed you this pattern
that I had once worked myself, you
said it was very difficult and that you
thought you could not do it. Finally,
you decided that no amount of work
was too great to undertake for papa
and that you would try to have
patience enough to do it well. Now,
are you not willing to do as much for
Jesus, who has done so much for you?"

"Dear Saviour," said grandma,
"here is a little girl that wants to give
herself to thy service. She is afraid
to trust herself to promise to do all
thy commands, but she is willing to
try to do thy will. She asks for thy
help, for she will need it every moment.
Take this little life and bless it for
thine own name sake."

The dinner-bell rang just then and
prevented any further conversation,
but Mrs. Niles put into Floy's hand a
little book entitled "Kept for the
Master's Use," saying, "read this and
think of and pray over this matter
until Christmas morning; then come
and tell me if you have decided to give
to the Master the gift of all others
most precious to him."

The time passed slowly until the
25th of December. Some days all
went well. It was easy for Floy to
do all her duties faithfully and with
enthusiasm, and then came days when
it cost a real struggle not to pass over
her lessons with indifferent prepara-
tion in her haste to read an interest-
ing book; and to practise the required
time on the scales when there was a
bright, pretty exercise she liked to
play for her own amusement. Then
she was discouraged.

She rose early Christmas morning.

The church bells were pealing their
"Merry Greeting" to all Christendom,
and seemed to say to Floy: "Come to
Jesus, Come to Jesus just now."

She hastened to Mrs. Niles' room.
The dear old lady was awake and
evidently expecting her.

"Grandma, I'm going to do it. I
know Jesus will help me. Hear the
bells saying 'I will, I will.' Grandma,
this is going to be the happiest Christ-
mas I ever had."

"I knew you would make this
decision, Floy," said grandma, kissing
the little face so full of love. Then
she bade her leave her until the bell
rang to call them to the breakfast-
room.

When all the family were assembled
and the gifts from each member to the
other presented, all were surprised at
Floy's beautiful work, and the younger
Mrs. Niles said: "Mother, this is all
due to your kind teaching. How bless-
ed she is in having such a grandma!"

"My children, there is yet another
gift that Floy has made this morning
that is more valuable than any of these
things that will perish some day. It
is a gift that will grow more beautiful
with the using. My pet, can you not
tell mamma and papa about it?"

"I have given myself to Jesus for
a Christmas present, and I am going
to try every moment not to take it
back again," answered the little girl
courageously.

"Thank God for those words, my
child," said her mother as she tenderly
embraced her.

When young Mrs. Niles looked up
her husband had left the room. She
knew why he had gone. Although
the best husband and kindest, most
affectionate father, he was not a pro-
fessing Christian.

His wife was sure his heart was
right, but why was he so reticent
about confessing Christ before men?
This was the burden she and his
mother had so often taken to the
throne of grace. She went to his room
to seek him, and he said: "Bring my
little Floy to me."

The child came quickly. Her father
clasped her in his arms, saying:

"My precious, precious child. You
have taught me my duty. I, too, will
give myself to the Saviour as a birth-
day gift. May he forgive me that I
have delayed it so many years."

There was rejoicing in that home
that day, and there was rejoicing in
heaven. All felt it to be the happiest
Christmas of their lives.

A PRECIOUS LITTLE HERB.

Two little German girls, Brigitte
and Walburg, were on their way to
the town, and each carried a heavy
basket of fruit on her head.

Brigitte murmured and sighed con-
stantly. Walburg only laughed and
joked.

Brigitte said: "What makes you
laugh so? Your basket is quite as
heavy as mine, and you are no stronger
than I am."

Walburg answered: "I have a pre-
cious little herb on my load which
makes me hardly feel it at all. Put
some of it in your load as well."

"Oh," cried Brigitte; "it must in-
deed be a precious little herb! I should
like to lighten my load with it; so tell
me at once what it is called."

Walburg replied: "The precious lit-
tle herb that makes all burdens light
is called patience."

WHAT SHALL WE BRING!

WHAT shall we bring the stranger,
Born upon Christmas day?
A star the heavens lend Him,
Angels with song attend Him,
Turn not, O earth, away.

The souls of men are weary,
On blinding paths they go;
The nights hang murky and dreary,
All sounds are full of woe.
Yet high the herald splendour breaks,
The choral melody awakes,
For in the Christmas morn
Is the Deliverer born.

Draw near, ye sin defiled,
Look on the sinless Child!
He comes to such as ye—
Captive, to set you free;
Wounded, to heal your pain;
Lost to reclaim again.

What shall we bring? our gold is dust,
His own always, ours but in trust?
Our honour, to enrich His fame,
Who bears o'er all the highest name.
What can these poor hands bring
Unto creation's King!

Love He will own and take,
For his most holy sake;
He in whose boundless heart
Love's purest current starts,
Asks of each soul again its store;
Asks the one guardian meet
Poured at his blessed feet,
Rich for love's sake Himself made poor.
—Charlotte M. Packard.

CHRISTMAS LONG AGO.

WHEN I was a wee maiden I lived in the town of F—, in the State of Maryland. It had been settled by Germans, chiefly, and German customs were in a great degree adopted by all classes, particularly those connected with the coming of the Christ child. Christmas trees were not so plenty in the year of our Lord, 1837, as they are now; nor were the shops then filled to overflowing with "French dolls" and lovely furniture for the complete little doll houses that now delight the eyes of so many little girls, nor did the boys of that day know anything about the "express waggons," steam cars and wonderful guns that Santa Claus brings them now!

Christmas eve in 1837 was not so very pleasant to the young folks as it is now. Shall I tell you why? There were two persons who went to every house that evening, one with a huge bag hanging around his neck and a bundle of switches in his hand; in his other hand he held a bell, and he rang the bell loudly and called out that he wanted to see all the naughty boys and girls. And oh, when that bell was heard what a scampering took place! All made for the beds or closets to hide from the much dreaded "Bell snicker," for they could remember how often during the year they had deserved this visit. The other man carried a book and wrote down the name of the good children, and he was called "Kris Kringle." My father would not let them come to our house, fearing they would frighten my little brother and me. But Christmas morning. How can I tell you of the rapturous delight with which we greeted its early dawn! At the first appearance of light in the East, our coloured nurse came in to make the wood fire in the great old-fashioned fire-place with its bright brass andirons and fender, and then with what haste we dressed ourselves, and hastened to the dining-room to see our Christmas tree. It bore no likeness whatever to the gorgeous trees of this day, yet the little hearts were perhaps even happier, as they danced around their German tree,

than are those children whose gifts are so costly. On the top was fastened a doll dressed as an angel is supposed to look, all in gauzy white, with wings; below hung numbers of tiny cakes that had been dipped in "icing;" on these were figures made of coloured sugar; apples of gayest coats; almonds covered with gold and silver paper; nuts of other kinds, ornamented with bright ribbons; "pretzels" hung from many branches, and funny little men and women made out of ginger-bread graced the tree. Sometimes a few oranges would peep out of the green depths of the tree. Beneath, arranged with great care, was a yard with moss for grass, and in it was a tiny stable, and manager so arranged as to allow the little wooden doll, dressed as German babies are still dressed, to be seen. This was the *Christ child*. We joined hands and danced around the tree, singing a German Christmas hymn, and then enjoyed the goodies that had been hung there for us.

After we had fully enjoyed these, and I often wonder we did not spend the following weeks in bed owing to such unwonted indulgence, we were dressed in our holiday clothes and sent around to visit all our friends, and the friends of our parents. Every one kept open house, and thus exchanged Christmas salutations and gifts. The little town was as merry and bright as the ringing of bells, the singers in the streets, and the gay throngs going from house to house could make it; and at night the homes of the people were lighted, the trees were ablaze with candles, and the glad songs and cheering music could be heard from every house.

A CHRISTMAS MISSIONARY OFFERING.

THIS is our criticism upon current Christmas festivities—that they are largely foreign to the thought and spirit of him, without whom such a day could never have been, nor the materials out of which to coin such a day as this is, in most Christian lands. Let us put Christ into Christmas, and what a grand day, what a joyful day, it will be.

Then, there is this to be said—the area of Christmas festivity widens year by year. Take a sweep of fifty years, and how the radius of it has lengthened. Into how many new tongues, new to the message of salvation, has the name of Christ gone in this brief period! This is matter for hearty congratulation, but not this alone. Great responsibility comes with it, and a call to us to let our example suggest that Christmas is a holy festival, not a pagan carnival.

We like the idea which we find embodied in Dr. Ellenwood's call upon the Sunday schools of the Presbyterian Church to make a Christmas offering to the cause that aims to make him more widely known and extend his sway in the earth. He says—and please mark what he says, whether you are a Presbyterian or not. If you are a Christian at all, or, not being a Christian, feel the throbbing of any pulse of gratitude for what has come to you, and your home, and land, listen. He says:

"It is sad that the joyous Christmas is a monopoly. It has been kept a secret by the Christian Church now nearly two thousand years, while most of the millions for whom Christ died

are still ignorant of the fact that a Saviour has ever appeared on the earth.

"The rich gifts of affection and cheer which are given so lavishly in all our homes, at an aggregate cost of hundreds of thousands, are but a small part of what we enjoy in the Christmas. The great thing is the Christ, the glad tidings, the infinite grace, the eternal salvation, for us, our children, and our children's children. Shall we publish it, shall not the children proclaim it to other children on other sides of the globe. It is proposed that the six hundred and sixty-three thousand children in the Presbyterian Church shall unite in a special dime offering. The few pastors who have been consulted all approve. One says, 'Our school will make eight hundred offerings.'

"This special gift should be extra, and not displace any regular contribution for Foreign Missions. It is hoped that schools and churches will make up ten cents for each child, even for the poor who cannot give.

"Let us try to secure a general Christmas movement. It will prove a substantial help in the present financial embarrassment of the Board. It will also help to train the young for the future of this work."

Reader, here is a hint for you, whatever your name or place, in Sunday-school or out of it. What if such a movement could become general throughout our land. In the Presbyterian Church alone, 663,000 children responding with a dime offering to Christ, means \$66,300 laid at his feet, for the express purpose of helping Christmas cheer to girdle the world. Surely, this ought to be done, and may be so easily done. God grant to the suggestion and the call a response worthy of the Master, and of thousands upon thousands to whom Christmas means so much.—*Gospel in all Lands.*

A REMARKABLE PROVIDENCE.

A POOR woman who has been washing for us said: "Seems as if the Lord took very direct ways to reach people's feelings sometimes. Now, I was astonished once in my life. I lived away out West, on the prairie, I and my four children, and I could not get much work to do, and our little stock of provisions kept getting lower and lower. One night we sat hovering over our fire, and I was gloomy enough. There was about a pint of corn-meal in the house, and that was all. I said, 'Well, children, maybe the Lord will provide something.' 'I hope it will be a good mess of potatoes,' said cheery little Nell; 'seems to me I never was so hungry for 'taters before.' After they were asleep, I lay there tossing over my hard bed, and wondering what I should do next. All at once the sweetest peace and rest came over me, and I sank into such a good sleep. Next morning I was planning that I would make the tinfal of meal into mush and fry it in the greasy frying-pan in which our last meat had been fried. As I opened the door to go down to the brook to wash I saw something new. There, on the bench, beside the door, stood two wooden pails and a sack. One pail was full of meat, the other full of potatoes, and the sack was filled with flour. I brought my hands together in my joy, and just hurrahed for the children to come. Little dears! They didn't think of trowsers and

socks then, but came out all of a flutter, like a flock of quails. Their joy was supreme. They knew the Lord had sent some of His angels with the sack and pails. Oh, it was such a precious gift! I washed the empty pails, put the sack into one of them, and at night I stood them on the bench where I found them. The next morning they were gone. I tried and tried to find out who had befriended us, but I never could. The Lord never seemed so far off as that," said the poor woman, looking down with tearful eyes.—*Arthur's Home Magazine.*

GETTING LETTERS IN THE OLDEN TIME IN THE NORTH-WEST.

BY THE REV. EDGAR A. STAFFORD, M.A., LL.D.

FROM an interesting article in the *Methodist Magazine* we make the following extract: "The agents of the Hudson's Bay Company traced out the great trails that cross the whole country, and which, before the building of the railroad, were the through routes of travel. It is well on to a hundred years since this company began to extend its operation into the interior of the vast territory, and during all this time it has done all the freighting needed by this western world, marking new trails as they were required. There was a time when a letter, mailed to some one at one of the posts of the eastern slopes of the mountains, would require four years to receive an answer. The first summer it would leave England by one of the Company's ships, and would reach Fort York or Fort Churchill sometime in the late autumn. It could go no further that year. When the spring came it would start westward by boat and trail, and in the autumn would be delivered to him to whom it was addressed. He could take the whole winter for his reply, for there would be no movement east that season. In the spring the reply would start east, and take up the best part of two years to get back to England. Truly,

'Man's life was spacious in that early world. Time was but leisure to their lingering thought. There was no need for haste to finish aught.'

The railway has not suppressed all these old methods of freighting, though it has doubtless altered the routes that are still used. The Saskatchewan river is only navigable for a few weeks in the spring and fall. Consequently Prince Albert, situated on that river, is yet largely dependent upon the long trains of waggons which set out regularly from Qu'Appelle, and traverse the two hundred and fifty miles that stretch away toward this northern town. These long trains are an object of interest to an eastern eye, and they discover to an observer the one great felt want in all this wide area. You may see six or more waggons fastened together after the manner of a train of cars, then as many spans of horses or mules hitched before, one after the other. Great John takes his place astride the near wheel horse, and with his long whip in hand, the train is ready to proceed. Thinking of the loss of power by this arrangement, you ask its cause. The answer is, economy of drivers. One man may direct six or more waggons, and the teams that draw them."

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

BY MARY D. BRIMM.

Ring out, ring out, ye Christmas bells!
Ring out from tower and steeple,
And tell your story far and near
To all earth's joyous people.
Ring out for peace throughout the land;
Ring for good-will to nations,
Ring for the glory of our Lord
And all his grand creations!

Bring heart to heart, and hand to hand,
On this bright day of gladness,
Let smiles forever dry the tears
In eyes which weep for sadness.
O merry bells of Christmas-tide,
How many hearts are singing
The happy songs of that dear love
Which you are gayly ringing!

Then ring, ring, ring! nor weary grow
Of jubilate telling;
For hearts are keeping time with you
Where peace, good-will are dwelling.
Far may your message spread, and may
The world take up the story,
And every human soul give praise
To Him who dwells in glory.

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A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK:

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.O., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 12, 1885.

TESTIMONY OF MINISTERS CONCERNING OUR S. S. PAPERS.

WE reprint the following testimonials of leading ministers of our Church—and they could be supplemented by many others—in the confidence that they may demonstrate, if there be need in any case for that, that the authorized S. S. periodicals of our own Church are better adapted for our own schools than any foreign ones can possibly be. *Home and School* and *Happy Days* are not mentioned in these testimonials from the fact that they were not in existence at the time these opinions were written. Since that time all our periodicals have been greatly improved.

The Rev. Dr. Sanderson, to whom is due the honour of issuing the first Sunday-school papers in Canada—a quarter of a century ago—being himself both their editor and publisher, writes:

“From that time to this I have been deeply interested in our S. S. issues, and though progress has been evinced, yet never till now have our S. S. papers, in every respect, given unqualified satisfaction. Now they

do. There is nothing left to be desired, save their introduction into all our schools. They have no superior—not one. Very few S. S. papers, either in England or America, are all equal to them. In illustration, matter, and price, they are in the front rank; and they should be in every Methodist S. S. in the Dominion. The papers are an honour to us, and will prove a great blessing to the Church.”

The Rev. Dr. Potts, of Toronto, writes:

“I have examined the Sunday-school papers submitted to me, and beg to say that I think they are well adapted to our Methodist schools. They evince good taste in the pictorial department; they are patriotic; they are instructive in matter; they are interesting in literary style, and they are true to the teachings of our Church. Their intrinsic worth and loyalty to the Church should place them in every Methodist school in the Dominion.”

Rev. Professor Shaw, of the Wesleyan Theological College, Montreal, writes:

“The *PLEASANT HOURS* and the *Sunbeam* appear not only to be unmarred by any objectionable matter, but also to have much positive merit in the combination of spirituality and patriotism with raciness of style and an instructive method of description. I regard them as most excellently adapted to the Sabbath-schools of Canadian Methodism. I have heard them commended by several Sunday-school superintendents, and disparaged by none. Even if they were independent publications, and not published with the authorization given them by our Church, still it would be very advantageous to any school to have them introduced.”

The Rev. W. Galbraith, D.C.L., writes:

“During the past few years I have seen dozens of Sunday-school papers, but I have met with none which I regard equal for our schools to the *PLEASANT HOURS* and the *Sunbeam*. They abound with charming, interesting, and profitable reading matter for the young. They are free from the extravagant and trashy tales so common in Sunday-school papers. They benefit head and heart, and breathe a spirit of true loyalty to Church and State. All our schools should have them.”

The Rev. LeRoy Hooker, of Ottawa, writes:

“With no degree of reserve, I commend to all our people the Sunday-school periodicals published by our Church. If we wish our children, when they shall have become men and women, to be devoted to Canada—to the Methodist Church, nothing can be plainer than that Canadian and Methodist literature should enter largely into the composition of their mental and spiritual food.”

The Rev. J. G. Laird, ex-President of the Toronto Conference, writes:

“My children are delighted with them. They will also cultivate a spirit of attachment to our Church,



A GERMAN CHRISTMAS TREE.

and awaken an interest in all our Christian and evangelistic enterprises. They ought to be in all our Sabbath-schools.”

See full announcement of our Sunday-school periodicals in *Home and School* for Dec. 19.

Orders for periodicals should be sent to

REV. WILLIAM BRIGGS,
Publisher,
78 & 80 King St. East, Toronto.
O. W. COATES, Montreal.
REV. S. F. HUESTIS, Halifax.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

THE Editor of *PLEASANT HOURS* wishes the hundred thousand boys and girls who read its pages—for such is his estimate of their number—all the best wishes of the season. God intended us to be happy, even merry. “A merry heart doeth good like medicine,” says Solomon. “Is any merry, let him sing psalms,” says St. James. And if ever we should be glad and make melody in our hearts, it is at the season which reminds us of God’s great Christmas gift to man—the unspeakable gift of his dear Son. Bring, therefore, dear boys and girls, like the Magi of old, your best Christmas gifts to the feet of Jesus—not “gold and frankincense and myrrh,” but the offering of your hearts and of your lives.

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gold would his favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart’s adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

In addition to all the other Christmas carols we give in this number, we add the following, which we hope many a boy and girl will learn by heart:—

No war nor battle’s sound
Was heard the world around;
No hostile chiefs to furious combat ran;
But peaceful was the night,
In which the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Before the point of dawn,
In social circle sat; while all around,
The gentle, fleecy brood,
Or cropped the flowery food,
Or slept, or sported on the verdant ground,

They saw a glorious light
Burst on their wondering sight;
Harping in solemn choir, in robes arrayed,
The helmeted cherubim,
And sworded seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks, with wings displayed.

Sounds of so sweet a tone
Before were never known,
But when of old the songs of morning sung,
While God disposed in air,
Each constellation fair,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung.

“Hail, hail, auspicious morn!
The Saviour Christ is born!”
Such was the immortal seraph’s song sublime;
“Glory to God in heaven!
To man sweet peace be given,
Sweet peace and friendship to the end of time.”

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

GERMANY is the land of the Christmas tree. Nowhere else does it grow so vigorously, or bring forth such copious fruit. But it has been transplanted into nearly all lands, and throughout Canada, at this snowy wintry season, in many happy homes this wonderful tree will bring forth its wonderful fruit. In our picture we note several specially German features—the house-father as they call him, pulling away at his big porcelain pipe, like an overgrown baby at a sucking-bottle; the bust of Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, on the wall; the youngster with the spiked helmet and drum, exhibiting even in babyhood the warlike German spirit; the odd-shaped waggons and toys, and above all, the tree, with its tapers, and trinkets, and love-gifts for every one, and the Angel of the Annunciation at the top. Is it not a pretty family group? Thank God for Christmas which brings us joyful tidings of peace on earth, and good-will to men, to both lofty and lowly, and especially to love-gifts to children everywhere.



CHRISTMAS SPORTS.

CHRISTMAS EVE!

HEAVILY hung is our Christmas-tree.
Its boughs they glitter for you and for me.
The hemlock branches, piled with snow,
In evergreen wood, but not so low.
God giveth all. The ravens call,
He hears them. So let us begin.
He hears always when children pray;
For he himself a child has been.

Dear Lord, we would not selfish be.
All hearts are not as glad as we.
Remember then thy poor to-night,
And flood their darkness with thy light;
The hungry feed, the wanderers lead,
The sorrowing soothe, the captive free;
And pity, we pray, on the children's day,
All those who have no Christmas tree.

CHRISTMAS SPORTS.

Our picture shows the merry Christmas sports, both out of doors and in the house, which will require no explanation from us. Coasting and bob-sleighting seem the favourites. It makes your editor wish he were a boy again to share this exhilarating sport. But his life is too full of duties and cares; and the world's work must be done by the older heads and hands. Yet we try to keep a young heart, and to enjoy these pleasures by proxy, that is, by seeing others enjoy them. It is a great pleasure to prepare these Christmas papers, and indeed all the year; in the hope that they may add to the happiness and mutual and moral welfare of the many thousands of happy, hearty Canadian boys and girls who read them, and above all, to

lead the dear boys and girls to the Saviour. Thank God for the happy Christmas-tide, when even the busiest of us can share the holiday fun of the boys and girls, like the big-bearded man who is playing blind man's bluff with the young folk.

CHRISTMAS NUMBERS.

THE beautiful Christmas and New Year's numbers of PLEASANT HOURS and *Home and School*, full of Christmas pictures and poems and stories, will be sent post free to any address at \$1 per 100.

The Christmas and New Year's *Happy Days* and *Sunbeam* will be sent post free for 50 cents a 100. Let every child in every school have one of these papers to make Christmas a brighter and happier time.

We have on several occasions sent large quantities of back numbers of our Sunday-school papers to lumber camps, hospitals, prisons etc. We have a considerable quantity of these papers on hand, and will send, post free, to any address, back numbers in assorted parcels, for 25 cents per 100—just one-fourth the regular price; or if any money is sent us for the purpose, we will send these back numbers, at 25 cents per 100, to our own ministers for distribution in lumber camps, and to hospitals and prisons. Address:

Rev. W. H. WITHROW; or,
Rev. W. M. BRIGGS, Toronto.

CHRISTMAS IN CROATIA.

Among many pretty and singular customs peculiar to different seasons of the year, those relating to Christmas are perhaps the most interesting. For the Christmas feast, the finest wheat flour, the sweetest honey, the richest fruit, and the best wine are stored up. The grandmother dips the three wax lights that must stand on the Christmas table. The boys are sent to the woods to find the immense log of wood, which, after being sprinkled with wine, is put in the stove on Christmas Eve. Two great loaves are baked, which are to signify the Old and New Testament. When the church-bell rings on Christmas Eve, the whole family assemble in the dwelling-room, the first of the tapers is lighted, and a hymn sung. The table is spread with eatables, and near the two Christmas loaves which are placed on it is a small cup or vessel filled with wheat, barley, oats, etc. Before the feast begins, the father goes to the table, takes the burning taper in his hand, and says, "Christ is born." The children and others present repeat, "Is born, really born." Then the taper is placed in turn in the hand of each child who has to stand on the bench by the stove and say three times, "Praised be the Lord! Christ is born!" whereupon the other members of the family answer, "Praise the name of the Lord forever, and may he grant thee life and health!"

On Christmas day, the second taper is lighted, the father says a short prayer, and then blowing the taper out, pushes it down among the grains contained in the little vessel we have already mentioned. Then he examines it. That kind stuck to the candle—wheat, barley, or oats—will, he believes, yield the best crop in the coming year.

The last of the three tapers is always burned on New Year's day, and closes the Christmas festivities.—*Selected.*

A GOOD MISSIONARY BOOK.

Mission Stories from Many Lands. A book for young people, with 340 illustrations, large 8vo., 392 pages. Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; Toronto: William Briggs. Price, post free, \$1.50.

There is no more heroic or stirring story than that of Christian missions. In no way can the young be so brought into sympathy with this noblest of causes as by reading that story. It was a happy idea to prepare this large and elegantly printed book for the young folk. It will furnish many days of fascinating reading, and the numerous illustrations will give much information about the strange tribes, and races, and customs, and houses, and natural history of mission lands—much more wholesome than the impossible adventures of many Christmas books. Above all, it will touch the heart and kindle the zeal of the young, and will, doubtless, lead some to give themselves to a missionary life. But though only "some can go, most can give, and all can pray." The book treats of missions in Africa, Turkey, India, China, Japan, Micronesia, and many other lands, and has no less than 340 engravings, many of them full page, and is well bound in

cloth. It is very cheap, and all the profits are devoted to the benefit of missions.

A GOOD SUNDAY BOOK.

Sunday Reading for Old and Young for 1886. 8vo., 112 pages and 250 engravings. New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co., Toronto: William Briggs. Price \$1.25.

This is a charming book for old or young, especially for the young. It is full of short sketches, stories and poems, and has several longer tales. The two longest of these are a story of boy life on shipboard "in Nelson's days" and a tale of child life in India. The latter especially is splendidly illustrated. Only a very large sale can warrant the expense of such fine engravings. Other subjects are "The Child of the Bible," "The Animals of the Bible," "Happy Sunday Afternoons," etc., etc. These pictures are not old, worn out ones, but new and by leading artists.

The Boy Hero, by the same publishers, is a touching story, told in verse, by the Bishop of Bedford, and beautifully illustrated. It will be a favourite with little ones, who will want to read it over and over.

A HANDY HOUSEWIFE.

HOW SHE PROVIDES ORNAMENTS FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE—CANDLES, POP-CORN AND CANDY.

A CHRISTMAS tree may be prettily trimmed at very little expense. Of course it is best to get a good tree. Not necessarily large, but with branches close together, and of as comical a shape as possible. A box of candles, more than sufficient to allow one for each branch, can be bought for ten cents, and nice little tin holders, ready to pin on the tree, for five cents a dozen. About three or four dozen will be needed. The next thing to think of is the pop-corn. A five-cent cob will make a large quantity. To pop it have a very hot fire, put the corn in a good large pan, if you have not a popper, and shake over the fire until popped, taking great care not to burn. Have ready a cup of water, in which a little maple syrup or molasses and sugar have been mixed. Sprinkle a little of this over the corn, and pour it on a large dish. Then take strong thread and a very long needle and string yards of the pop-corn. This is very effective, and should be draped fantastically over the tree in every direction. Some people, however, prefer to use raw cotton, as it more closely resembles snow.

After trimming your tree with the pop-corn and candles the next thing will be candy. Bright coloured sticks and canes, baskets, and chocolate rats put on by the tail are the best and cheapest to get. Put them on with odds and ends of bright-coloured ribbons and bits of silk, which will heighten the effect. Of course a few wax balls of green and crimson make the tree look prettier, and as many may be put on as desired, although there is such a thing as having too much on a tree. The green should predominate. The children's stockings should be hung up in the same room in which the tree is to be placed, and their presents grouped about the foot of the tree. For \$1 or \$1.50 a very handsome tree all decorated can be had.

MAKING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

HERE'S a subtle air of mystery about the house to-day: There are whisperings and hidings, but not in merry play; There's a sound of shutting boxes; there's a noise of scampering feet, Then the children come with sober steps, with faces grave and sweet.

There are breakings-up of savings-banks, odd pennies from papa; There are earnest consultations with aunty and mamma; There are calls for scraps of satin, skeins of zephyr, shreds of floss, There are searchings in thick folios for autumn leaves and moss.

The artists, too, are busy painting horse-shoes, tiles and shells; I hear half-whispered comments, "Those lovely lily-bells," "What colour is a jessamine?" "I want a lighter blue," "I think I'd put a darker shade in that if I were you."

What quiet all the busy tongues? they hardly dare reply To the simplest of questions, but hesitate and try To be strictly non-committal. "Hush-sh-sh! be careful now, don't tell." There are smiles and words half spoken, but they keep their secrets well.

Lo! the mystery's unravelled, for upon the Christmas tree, By the light of coloured tapers, fair and beautiful to see, Books and statues, toys and vases, but the dearest gifts of all Are the work of tiny fingers, planned and made by children small.

See! cushions, book-marks, pen-wipers, of every size and sort, And what if grandma's footstool has a leg a trifle short? It is covered with a patch-work of a very crazy kind, And the rick-rack's very crooked—well! they tell me love is blind.

Here are lovely glowing pictures; can it be the leaves and fern That we gathered in the Autumn to such gems of art could turn? Those "coloured outlines" might not do for the French Academy, But they hold the place of honour upon our Christmas tree.

No diamonds ever shone as bright as mother's eyes to-night, And no gifts with money purchased could give such rare delight? Though the stitches were uneven and the blunders not a few, We only see the perfect work our darlings tried to do.

—Kate Lawrence.

A LITTLE SANTA CLAUS.

HE was like a "jumping-jack," only he had a bright face, full of thought, such as no jumping-jack could possibly have.

His bare hands were tucked away in the pockets of his patched and almost worn-out trousers. Although the cold wind made his little nose quite red, he did not seem to mind it; for he kept dancing back and forth, jumping first on one foot then on the other, before the shop window, and repeating over and over—"Ten cents for Polly, and ten cents for Johnny, and twenty cents for mother!"

The crowds of people, all in a hurry, and full of the Christmas joy, passed by, sometimes pushing against him, and sometimes hiding him away from the window and the pretty toys inside. Merry boys went along in little groups, dressed in warm overcoats and mittens, whistling and laughing, but none could show a happier face than his. And sometimes they half stopped to wonder at him, as he hopped up and down on the side-walk, and kept up an eager

search with his eyes among the tempting Christmas toys. But he did not notice it. He only repeated—"Ten cents for Polly, ten cents for Johnny, and twenty cents for mother!" and thought his own happy little thoughts.

For a great many weeks he had been saving up his pennies; they were very scarce, and he worked hard to earn them. And it was cold weather; and it took a good many of the pennies to keep the one fire at home to make them all warm—"Polly, and Johnny, and mother," and little Nicholas himself. Yet he had managed to save a few—one here, and another there, until his pocket jingled pleasantly that afternoon as he put his hand in it and jumped up and down before the gay window.

Was't it funny that his name should be *Nicholas*? He thought so. Some one in the mission school had told him the story of "St. Nicholas," the friend of all boys and girls: the wonderful Saint Nicholas, who did so many kind deeds for those who were poor or in trouble.

"And now I shall be a St. Nicholas myself," he said, laughing softly, as he jingled his pennies; "a real Santa Claus! and give them all a nice surprise—ten cents for Polly, and ten cents for Johnny, and twenty cents for mother."

He could not decide what to buy, and that was why he stood in front of the window so long. A few doors back, at the baker's, he thought he had seen something for mother; but here, among the toys, he was quite puzzled.

You all know how pleasant it is to puzzle and think over such things; and so you may understand that Nicholas did not mind.

But it was getting nearly dark now, and the lamps were being lighted, so he must hurry.

All the streets were bright and busy, Everybody was joyful at the Christmas time. Several girls came along, singing softly, as they never would have thought of doing at any other time:—

"Christ was born on Christmas Day,
Wreath the holly, twine the bay."

They had been practising their carols with the Sunday-school children; and how glad they looked, thinking of all the pleasant things that come with this dear Christmas-time! The church, so bright and sweet with its evergreen decorations; the kind faces of teachers and friends, who kept wonderful secrets; and the beautiful tree, with its lights and gifts; and the happy music, all about "peace and good-will," like the song the angels sang so long ago.

"Annie, do see that little fellow! Isn't he funny!"

They had come up to where Nicholas stood, repeating his little calculation.

"What is he saying? Isn't that a pretty doll!"

One of them went nearer, trying to hear what this little fellow with the bright face was saying.

"Oh, come, Kitty! You'll get something prettier than that to-morrow, I expect."

Then they all turned to cross the street. And for a moment the small St. Nicholas forgot his own affairs as he watched them, and even followed, unconsciously, to the curb-store.

Only for a moment. It was such a moment as never came in any of their lives again!

The smallest of the girls, looking carelessly back, and humming a carol to herself, did not see the two great

horses and the heavy truck close upon her.

Perhaps the driver did not see her, either; she was so small, and the street was so crowded. But Nicholas did, and quick as a thought he had sprung toward her with a shout and caught the horses' heads. Such a little fellow to think he could stop those great horses! He only put himself there in front of her; and in that instant's check she had stepped beyond the danger. But he was thrown down, and one heavy wheel passed over him.

That was all; but it was the end of the Christmas calculations "for Polly and Johnny and mother."

There was a great crowd, and strong arms carried the brave St. Nicholas away from the street to see what could be done for him.

And in the crowd appeared the little girl's father, and he took her up, and there were tears on his cheeks; and she cried too, and hid her face in his arms, and said:—

"Oh, papa, he saved me! that little boy!"

They sent for a doctor; but when he came he shook his head and said that nothing could be done.

The "Christ-Child," was at the door, and Nicholas was going away with him. There could not be a better Christmas for him than that, could there?

The girls gathered around him, and just once he opened his eyes, and, looking at Kitty, said:—

"It's in my pocket. Will you buy them for Polly and"—Then his voice failed.

"Oh, yes, I will! I will buy something for them all!"

And so they did—she and her grateful father. Never had there been such generous Christmas gifts in that poor home before. Never had "Polly and Johnny and mother" had such comfort and such kind attention. But nothing could give them back little Nicholas again, and their hearts were very, very sad that Christmas eve.

The next night, when the lights had burned out on the tree, and the carols were all sung, and Kitty was going home, safe and well, with her father, she said:—

"Papa, I know I love Jesus now. I'm sure of it, ever since last night. It was all that brave little boy. And I want to see him again some day, and tell him. I hope I shall. I know I shall!"

And so, you see, he was really a little St. Nicholas, after all, helping to bring the very best gift—the true Christmas gift—to Kitty's heart, to make her whole life glad and good.

HELPING POOR SCHOOLS.

WE have received the following letter from a little lad of nine:—"Dear Dr. Withrow,—Some time ago I was very ill with a fever, and when I was getting better my ma read me a story out of one of your Sunday-school papers, about a little girl that had collected among her friends a lot of books for poor Sunday-schools. After I got well I thought I would see if I could collect some also, so when I went to school again, I had our teacher ask the scholars to bring all the books they could spare to our house on the next Saturday. A few of the scholars came and brought quite a number of books, and my pa procured for me the old library from the Sunday-school

here, so I have boxed them all up and pa has sent them by express to your address to-day. Please distribute them to poor schools that are not able to buy books for themselves.

"We have a good Sunday-school here and take all the papers published at the Book-rooms. We read them all every week, and like them very much. We have a good day-school here also, and a splendid teacher, whom we all like very much; he teaches in the Sunday-school too."

[God bless the dear boy. We hope he will live long to be a worker in the Church of God. We would give his name and address but that we have not received permission.—Ed.]

BETTER BE SURE THAN SORRY.

"BETTER be sure than sorry!" said a garden-worker, when his employer expressed a doubt whether it was necessary to cover a certain vegetation to protect it from the frost. "Better be sure than sorry!"

A man who is not sure is very likely to be sorry. He who takes things on trust will be quite likely to be cheated and disappointed at last. The business man who treads in uncertain paths, who is not sure of his course, is very likely to be sorry he has taken it.

Keep on the safe side. Be sure rather than sorry. Do not give yourself the benefit of every doubt. Be lenient to others' faults, but strict regarding your own. If there be an act which in your own mind is doubtful or questionable in its character, take the course of wisdom and prudence. It would be a terrible thing to be mistaken in the final day; it is better to be sure here than to be sorry at the judgment seat of Christ.

THE COW TREE.

NATURE has few more remarkable sights for the traveller than that of a tree yielding an ample supply of milk superior to that drawn from the cow. It is in Venezuela that this remarkable tree may be found. There amid the forest it grows to a height of from forty five to sixty feet. Every morning the Indians go out with vessels, make deep cuts in the bark, and collect the white, creamy fluid, which runs from the wound. Men and women, fed largely upon this vegetable milk, grow fat, and children drink it eagerly.

DR. T. L. FLOOD in *The Chautauquan*, for December, discusses the methods of the Four Champions of Temperance now at work in America, and adds: "We believe them to represent the temperance principles and methods which must win in the second century of this great reform,—John B. Gough, Francis Murphy, Neal Dow, and Frances E. Willard."

ONE of the special attractions of our Sunday-school papers, for 1886, will be missionary articles, with numerous pictures, on Japan, by the Rev. Dr. Meacham, late missionary in that country, and missionary letters by Rev. T. Crosby, British Columbia, and other missionary heroes who are fighting the battle of the cross on the high places of the field.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

WHAT'S this hurry, what's this flurry
All through the house to-day!
Everywhere a merry scurry,
Everywhere a sound of play.
Something too, 's the matter, matter,
Out-of-doors as well as in,
For the bell goes clatter, clatter,
Every minute—such a din.

Everybody winking, blinking,
In a queer, mysterious way;
What on earth can they be thinking,
What on earth can be to pay!
Bobby peeping o'er the stairway,
Bursts into a little shout;
Kitty, too, is in a fair way,
Where she hides, to giggle out.

As the bell goes cling-a-ling-ing
Every minute more and more,
And swift feet go springing, springing,
Through the hallway to the door,
Where a glimpse of box and packet,
And a little rattle, rattle,
Makes such sight and sound and racket—
Such a jolly bustle, bustle—
That the youngsters in their places,
Hiding slyly out of sight,
All at once show shining faces,
All at once scream with delight.

Go and ask them what's the matter,
What the fun outside and in—
What the meaning of the chatter,
What the bustle and the din,
Hear them, hear them laugh and shout, then
Altogether hear them say,
"Why, what have you been about, then
Not to know it's Christmas Day!"

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

It is from the Scandinavian Yuletide, or Twelve Nights, that our modern Christmas derives the larger share of its emblematical usages. This was at once the most holy and most important festival among the northern nations. It extended from the 25th of December to the 5th of January, and was religiously observed by feasting and festivity. The custom has an antiquity as great as the Runic stones, and its facts throw considerable light upon the early mythology of our forefathers. In common with all other Pagan nations they freely personified the active forces of nature, and thus they symbolised the conflicts of natural forces by the battle of the gods and giants. Strongest of all the giants was Winter, the Ice King, who is represented as most fierce and inexorable, the enemy of all life, and the relentless foe of gods and men. His war-steed was the all-stiffening north wind, Swadilfari, by whose aid he builds a formidable ice castle, from which the merciless giant threatens to inaugurate the reign of darkness and eternal death. The gods resist this usurpation, and the giant endeavours to sustain it. A fierce conflict follows, the battle of the gods and giants. Spring fights with the ice giant, and the south wind the north wind, but there is no victory for either side until Thor, god of the thunder-storm, demolishes with his huge hammer the walls of the ice castle. Freija, the smiling goddess of Spring, then resumes her former sway, while life and light and prosperity return to gladden the earth.

But the restless giants have only yielded for a time, and they are ever plotting to regain their lost supremacy. By a stratagem the giant Thrym at last secures the mighty sledge-hammer of Thor and buries it eight leagues under the ground. For eight months again the Ice King has the mastery, and darkness and Winter are triumphant. At the end of that time iron-handed Thor recaptures his hammer, and accompanied by Loki, the spring

wind, demolishes the giant's castle, and the defeated enemy of man is once more forced to retire. So the eternal conflict continues, the opposing forces of Spring and Winter never ceasing to push forward their claims at the proper season. The old mythologies of the Northland are full of the story of these struggles, and the old German poetry has taken from them some of its most striking features. Beautiful and significant legends are all of them; and they should be more familiar to every English reader who traces his ancestry back to those old races.—*Repository.*

A CHRISTMAS CLUB.

A NUMBER of notes were written, asking two or more girls and boys from every Sunday-school in the city of Portland, Me., to meet at a certain house at 5 o'clock, on the following Thursday afternoon. Did they come? Come? They did not know what the call was for, save for a whisper about Christmas work; but they came: came in pairs, in trios, in quartets and quintets—a whole squad from the Butler school: big boys with big hearts, wee tots only four years old from the kindergarten—one hundred children ready for anything. Oh, I wish you could have been there at the forming of that club! A lady came forward to speak to them, and their voices were hushed in expectation. I can't tell you just what she said, but her words were beautiful. She spoke of their Christmas festivities every year, of their parents and their friends; then of unfortunate children who had fewer, some none, of these joys. When she asked: "Does anyone here want to do anything for these others?" she thought that they could do anything was new to almost all—to many even the wish was new: but like one great heart-throb came their answer.

"Yes! I! I! I! I want to do something!" "Children what can you do?" A pause, and then one little voice cried: "Give 'em a cent!" That was the first offer, but it was followed by many another: "Give 'em candy!" "Give 'em a turkey!" "Give 'em a coat!" each beginning with that grand word, "Give." The result of that meeting was this: To form a club which should last "forever;" to call it "The Children's Christmas club;" to have for its motto: "Freely ye have received, freely give;" to place the membership fee at ten cents, so that no child should be prevented from joining because he was not "rich;" to make no distinction in regard to sect or nationality; to permit to join the club any boy or girl under eighteen years of age who accepted its principles, which were: To be ready at all times with kind words to assist children less fortunate than themselves; to make every year, in Christmas week, a festival of some kind for them; to save through the year toys, books, and games, instead of carelessly destroying them; to save, and wherever practicable put in good repair, all out-grown clothing; to beg nothing from any source, but to keep as the keystone of the club the word "Give;" to pay every year a tax of ten cents; and to make their first festival in the City Hall on Thursday, Dec. 28, 1882. At that festival a Christmas tree and dinner was given to six hundred poor children.

ONCE TOO OFTEN.

It is not many months since a boy in one of the cities in the State of New York jumped on a passing freight train as it was slowly going through the street, and after riding for a few squares swung himself off. He had often done this again; the remonstrances of friends and the orders of the railroad officials. On this occasion a flagman of the road shouted to him, "My boy, you'll do that once too often and get hurt." "No danger," he replied, "I can take care of myself."

The next morning the foolish boy tried it again, and this time "once too often," for he lost his hold, and slipped and fell on the track, and the heavy cars ran over him and mangled his body almost beyond recognition.

Yes, it was once too often. So was it in the case of a milkman, who was in the habit of crossing the railroad track in a large city in New Jersey every morning at about the time when a train was due. He had several narrow escapes, and was repeatedly warned; but he thought he knew his own business, and was sure he could get his horse over every time before the train came. But one morning his horse stumbled just as his fore-feet struck the track. He did not fall, and was up again and moving in a few seconds; but those few seconds which had not stumbled, would have been enough to carry him and his driver safety over, were just enough now to bring the swift train right down on the waggon, and there was a wreck!

The writer was one of the passengers, and got out as soon as the train stopped. It was indeed a sad and shocking sight to see the young man lying on the ground mangled and bleeding and dying. He was taken to a hospital, where he died in a few hours, a victim of his own recklessness.

Never take any risks of the sort taken by these two persons, or you may risk once too often. The fact is, that in all such cases the first time is once too often.

It is just so with bad habits of thought, of speech, of action. Beware of taking risks, or you may bring sorrow on yourself and on your friends. Beware of bad company. Any one who asks another to do wrong in any way is bad company, and we ought not to permit ourselves to be moved by such, though persuasion, threats, or ridicule be used.

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST.

"HAVE you a guest-chamber, a place of rest for those who may come?"

"For my friends."

"Has it comforts for those who are worn, some nook of rest for those who have been wearied by the way?"

"All that love can furnish."

"Is there an open door?"

"Night and day."

"And you keep it for these alone?"

"For these alone."

"Then let me tell you. A King, your King, is coming to be your guest. In the stillness of the early Christmas morning, he will come, your King, your Saviour. Will there be an open door and some one waiting there to welcome him?"

"Alas! I have no room."

"No room! But you said you had a guest-chamber."

"It is my heart. It is not good enough for him."

"He will come into it just as it is. You need not hang richer curtains at the windows, nor lay a thicker carpet, nor make softer beds."

"But it is occupied."

"Are there guests in it?"

"Yes, it has other guests. The King cannot stay with them."

"You hang your head. What are they?"

"Pride."

"And that alone?"

"Anger."

"Another?"

"Envy."

"Another?"

"Wilfulness."

"Another?"

"O so many! Selfishness in all its forms. Their faces are evil, and the face of the King is holy. Theirs are dark and his is the light itself."

"But will you not turn them out? Will you not make room for the King? He will come in if you will have it so. Will you let him, your King, go past your door, he who has so much to bestow on you who need so much? Turn out those guests that would drive him away robbed of sceptre and crown. Did you not say the door was open?"

"It is open, and those guests have gone!"

"Gone because the King, that Christmas guest, has entered, his forgiving, loving presence filling the chamber of your heart."—*S. S. Classmate.*

AN OLD CHRISTMAS CAROL.

AS Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing,
"This midnight shall be the birth-night
Of Christ the Heavenly King;
His birth-bed shall be neither
In housing nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in the oxen's stall."

As Joseph was a-walking,
Thus did the angel sing,
And Mary's Son at midnight
Was born to be our King!

"He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in the wooden manger
That lieth on the mould;
He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen tawles all.

"He neither shall be washen
With white wine nor with red,
But with the fair spring water
That on you shall be shed.

"Then, be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year,
And light you up your candles,
For his star shineth near."

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, 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 when we do it, for the sake of One who loved us when we were far from him. Any Christian joy that does not find its spring and source in Jesus, the Holy Babe of Bethlehem, is not the true joy.

WHAT THE STARS SAW.

WHEN the sexton came to the town stair,
Where the coil of bell-rope lay,
He cheerily called, "Old bell up there,
Ring out! It is Christmas Day!"

He seized the rope in each wrinkled hand,
He pulled with a youthful might
Till the glad sound pealed o'er the sleeping
land,
And soared to the stars so bright.

"Ho, ho" laughed the stars o'er earth and
main,
"What know you of Christmas-tide?
We shone on that far-off Eastern plain
Where a star was the wise Man's guide.

"We saw the Child in his manger bed,
And the gifts that the magi gave,
We shall shine when your voice has fled,
We shall shine on the sexton's grave."

Said the sexton: "Stars I to you 'twas given
To herald the Christmas birth;
Though the praise and the glory belong to
heaven
'Tis the joy belongs to earth."

TO TEACHERS.

LEARN the lesson so well that you can adapt your teaching to your class no matter what the grade of your class may be. But it is always best to have some prearranged and definite plan, according to which you will teach each lesson. Write that plan out briefly; go over it in your mind carefully; arrange your different topics methodically; and have all your illustrations ready beforehand. In this way your teaching will be successful, and you will benefit your scholars and do good.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Two and two make four—that is mathematics. Hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions make water—that is science. Christ, and him crucified, is the power and wisdom of God for salvation—that is revelation. But how do you know? Put two and two together, and you have four—count and see. Put hydrogen and oxygen together, and you have water—taste and prove. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt know.

LESSON NOTES.

B.O. 700] LESSON VII. [Dec. 20.

THE GRACIOUS INVITATION.

Isa. 55. 1-11. Commit to mem. vs. 6-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Isa. 55 1.

OUTLINE.

1. The Call, v. 1-7.
2. The Promise, v. 8-11.

TIME.—B.C. 700.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

EXPLANATIONS.—That thirsteth—That hath desire. The waters—Representing the widely different blessings of Christ's kingdom. No money—The poorest might enjoy them. Buy and eat—Not in the sense of purchase, but of ownership. Buy wine and milk without money—indicating still richer blessings. Sure mercies—The covenant promises of God. Given him—That is, Christ as the son of David. A witness—Christ was the assurance of God's favour, one to confirm the promises God had made to the fathers. Nations that knew not—Referring to the ingathering of the Gentiles. While he may be found—Showing a limit to probation. Void—Empty, showing that as rain and snow do not fall from heaven uselessly, but only return thither after having accomplished a beneficent purpose, so God's word has a fruitful mission.

TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.

Where in this lesson are we taught—
1. That all men are called to seek God!

2. That now is the time to secure salvation!
3. That God is found only by the penitent heart

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

1. When should we seek the Lord? "While he may be found." 2. What should the wicked do? "Let the wicked forsake his way." 3. If he returns unto the Lord, how will he receive him? "He will have mercy on him." 4. What does God do? "Abundantly pardons." 5. What does the Lord say concerning his word? "It shall not return unto me void."

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The universality of salvation.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

44. What is the teaching of the New Testament concerning children as members of the Church? It is implied that their baptism places them in the same relation to the New Covenant in which infants were placed to the Old by the rite of circumcision. Hence they are spoken of, addressed, and exhorted, as heirs of gospel privilege. [Matt. xix. 14; Isa. x. 14; Isa. xl. 11.]

FOURTH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

Dec. 27.

REVIEW SCHEME.

Lesson I. *Elisha at Dothan.*—By whose advice were the Syrian king's plans defeated? Whom did he send to seize the prophet? What did the prophet's servant see? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT. What did Elisha do to the Syrian army? What treatment of an enemy did he propose?

Lesson II. *The Famine in Syria.*—What prophecy of plenty did Elisha make? What did he predict for a doubter? Who caused the Syrian army's defeat? Who discovered their flight? How was plenty secured to the Israelites? What became of the doubter? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.

Lesson III. *Jehu's False Zeal.*—Whom did Jehu call for a witness? What did he invite him to see? What priests did he destroy? What idolatry did he still permit? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.

Lesson IV. *The Temple Repaired.*—What was the character of Jehoiash? What did he order set aside for the repair of the Lord's house? How long was his order disobeyed? How was the money at last collected? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.

Lesson V. *Death of Elisha.*—To whose sick bed did a royal mourner come? What was the king ordered to do? What penalty did his failure bring upon him? What miracle was wrought by the bones of the prophet? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.

Lesson VI. *The Story of Jonah.*—What command was given to Jonah? [GOLDEN TEXT.] What did he do to avoid obedience? How was his escape prevented? What did the sailors do to the disobedient prophet? How was he preserved?

Lesson VII. *Effect of Jonah's Preaching.*—To whom was Jonah sent a second time? What was his threatening message? What effect did it have upon the people? What testimony did Jesus bear to this part? [GOLDEN TEXT.]

Lesson VIII. *Hezekiah's Good Reign.*—Who was Hezekiah? What was his character? [GOLDEN TEXT.] What did he do to destroy idolatry? How did the Lord reward his faithfulness? What Samaritan city was destroyed by the Syrians? Why did the Lord forsake Israel?

Lesson IX. *Hezekiah's Prayer Answered.*—What message did Isaiah bring to King Hezekiah? What did the king do in his distress? What is the psalmist's benediction to the afflicted? [GOLDEN TEXT.] What promise did the Lord give the king in answer to prayer? What sign was given to Hezekiah?

Lesson X. *The Sinful Nation.*—How does the Lord describe his rebellious people? With what does he say he is not satisfied? What does he ask them to put away? [GOLDEN TEXT.] What invitation is given to the sinful? What promise to the penitent?

Lesson XI. *The Suffering Saviour.*—How is the promised Saviour described by the prophet? For whom were these sufferings borne? What burden was laid upon Jesus? [GOLDEN TEXT.] How were these sufferings borne?

Lesson XII. *The Gracious Invitation.*—What gracious invitation is given? [GOLDEN TEXT.] What remonstrance is given to the worldly? What are the steps necessary to pardon? What is the extent of the pardon? By what has God assured his pardon to men?

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