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PLEASANT HOURS

PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 22, 1894.

[No. 51.]

Vol. XIV.]

HANGING THE HOLLY.

THE little Miss in our picture is just carrying out the old practice of hanging holly, not in the church but in the home. With this in England is associated the custom of hanging the mistletoe bough with its pure snow-white berries. This custom is derived from very ancient times going back to the days of the Druids. If you do not know what to be caught under the mistletoe means, ask your elder brothers or sisters, or cousins and aunts, and they will tell you.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY SOPHIE BRONSON TITERTON.

It was a Christmas Eve in a large city. The Christmas spirit was in the air, bringing joy to most of the hearts in the busy town. Even the poor felt its brightness and warmth, and although gifts and comforts might be scarce, yet the joy of the birthday of the Christ-child was such that it reached most of these souls. If the true spirit of Christ was in actual possession of all those he has favoured with plenty, the joy would go quite around, until sin and sorrow, want and hunger, should flee for at least one glad day in the year.

On this particular Christmas Eve, a drizzling rain was falling. In happy homes this was unheeded, as the inmates gathered around the bright fires to share the Christmas cheer. But alas for the poor, whom stern necessity drove forth into the pitiless storm!

Among these was Mrs. Lane. She had been to take home some sewing, and as she had no one with whom to leave her child, she wrapped her in a shawl, and carried her all the weary way.

On her return she bought a little food, and a candy toy for the baby, the only Christmas gift she could afford.

Hastening homeward, an exclamation from Baby Bess caused her to pause. Bessie's arms were stretched toward a window from whence the bright light illumined the street. Within was a beautiful Christmas tree, covered with all the lovely things that delight the hearts of children.

In former days Mrs. Lane had lived in such a home; but a sorrowful fate had left her adrift, among the struggling poor, a widow, with little Bess clinging to her for support. She held the child up to the window to see the pretty sight, the memory of the past almost breaking her heart.

Within was joy, plenty, and peace; without was storm, cold, hunger, and weariness.

The wistful child's face at the window was seen by the happy children; and soon mother and Bess had been taken in to share the Christmas festivities. Best of all the two found a home within, sheltering kindness and care; and were no longer without in the cold and hunger of the past.



HANGING THE HOLLY

A pleasant humble home was found for Mrs. Lane, with plenty of work for which she was well paid. Bessie grew up with a tender heart for those still without, in the sad poverty of her own early life.

THE PULLMAN STOCKING.

"SAY, mister, Santa Claus doesn't 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 of 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," someone 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 he'll find me!"

The porter now came to make up the berths, and mamma led the boy to another seat. The next man behind, coming to his berth a short time later, stopped with a stare of surprise, and then met with a smile the smile of the lady across the aisle as she nodded towards the curtains which closed outside the boy who had missed a

visit from Santa Claus. Up to the bottom of the drapery hung a small stocking.

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

But the gifts did not stop, for the spirit of the season was fully awakened. Small coins were passed from one hand to another, and shaken well down into the toe by the hand 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 large silk handkerchief, and when she laid her gifts inside tied 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. 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.

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

FATHER Christmas is coming again. What is he bringing the boys and girls, and what is his message to all little hearts? Such toys he brings, such picture books, such pretty cards and tempting cakes! He makes the shops bright and beautiful. When his steps draw near, the shops are full of yellow oranges, rosy apples, "sugar and spice, and all things nice." And at home there is so much to do. We must make or buy a present for our loved ones, and the pudding and the mince-meat must be made. "Christmas is coming!" the children cry. "Oh, welcome, Father Christmas, happy, joyous Christmas! you bring us holid-

ays, and, oh, so many lovely things." Children, what will you bring to Jesus at this joyful time? Give him your young hearts, brimful of love. Be gentle and kind at home, and try to bring some joy to boys and girls who may be ill, or poor, or sad. Then your Christmas will be happy indeed.

THE proudest man we know of is always pluming himself on his humility.

WHEN God is satisfied with us we shall be satisfied with God.

WHAT a man knows is worth more to him than what all other men may know.

Christmas.

BY G. BALLAM STEARNS.

HAVE you heard the wonderful story, dear,
Which they tell on Christmas morn,
How into the weary world of sin,
God's glorious Son was born.

How he left the beautiful home above,
And his kingly diadem,
To be born on a humble manger-bed
In the town of Bethlehem.

All the sorrowful, tender story, dear,
How he suffered, wept, and died
That our souls might be washed as white as
snow
In the blood from his wounded side

Then loud and glad let the church-bells ring
Upon every Christmas morn,
To carry the wonderful tidings far
How the Saviour Christ was born.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, DECEMBER 22, 1894.

NO ROOM IN THE INN.

"There's a song in the air, there's a star in
the sky,
There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's
low cry.
And the star rains its fire, while the
beautiful sing,
And the manger at Bethlehem cradles a
King."

ONLY a manger, for there was no room
for Him in the inn, and our hearts now
swell with indignation and sorrow at the
thought, and we think, "Oh, if only we
had been there how differently we should
have acted. We surely would have recog-
nized the infant King to whom all the
prophecies pointed, and in whom they all
centred."

But stop a moment! What are we doing
with him now? The manger after all may
not have been such a poor bed as we
imagine. The average farmer in Palestine,
to-day as then, shelters his animals under
the same roof and often in the same room
with himself. The "mangers" or "cribs,"
built of stone and mortar in the shape of a
box or kneading trough, are arranged along
the two sides of the room which are de-
voted to the cattle; while the other sides,
the floor of which is raised about two feet,
are devoted to the use of the family. In
the summer time when these mangers are
cleaned out and whitewashed, as they often
are, Dr. Thompson assures that they make
not at all a bad place for a baby to sleep
in, and that his own children have slept in
them very often.

Jesus is with us now just as surely as he
was with the people of Bethlehem then.
He chooses now to have his dwelling-place
in our hearts. How is it then? Are we
really giving him the first place? Think a
moment. Which is really first with us in

our every-day lives? Is it his wish or our
own pleasure? Do we always consult his
interests before our own? Always? When
we are in doubt as to which of two things
to do, do we take the one we like best, or
do we stop and ask him which he would
have us do? When we are tempted to a
hasty word, do we pause and say a kind
word instead? Do we make his wishes our
rule in every thought and word and deed?
If we have not, shall we not begin anew at
this blessed Christmas time, and consecrate
ourselves wholly to him? Shall we not
from this time forth give not only the best
place in our hearts, but our whole selves to
him to be used wholly in his service? Let
us do it and see if by next Christmas time
we shall not have realized more fully than
ever before the fulfilment of the angels'
song, in its alternate rendering, "Peace on
earth to men of good will."

A STRINGENT LAW.

THE Newbury law, the most radical
anti-saloon measure ever enacted in Mis-
souri, went into effect lately. In substance
it prohibits dice, cards, chairs, or tables in
saloons. Pianos, banjos, and musical in-
struments of all kinds are also disallowed.
Singing in a saloon will be a misdemeanour.



CHURNING IN THE EAST.

Pool-tables, billiard-tables, and bowling
alleys must go, and all games of chance for
drinks or fun conducted in a saloon will be
misdemeanours. Sparring and wrestling
are prohibited, and a license are re-
voked upon conviction for any violation.

CHURNING IN THE EAST.

WE have repeatedly witnessed a scene
like this in Palestine. The constant
shaking to and fro of the skin containing
the cream, at length brings the butter—a
somewhat tedious process. This explains
the allusion in the 30th chapter of Proverbs
and the 33rd verse, "Surely the churning
of milk bringeth forth butter, and the
wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood."

This is only one of countless Bible cus-
toms which will be explained and illus-
trated in the articles on "Everyday Life in
Bible Lands," in the *Methodist Magazine*
for 1895. This should circulate in every
school, and for this purpose is offered in
numbers of two or more copies, at \$1.60
instead of \$2.00, the regular price.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

THE joyful festival again draws near.
Multitudes of young people and old
people are looking forward to it with delight-
ful anticipations. What cheer the day
always brings! This year's Christmas
will be no exception to the rule: How
eagerly the people are preparing for the

celebration. Store windows are gay with
toys and dolls and confections and other
gifts of greater worth. The baker and the
butcher and the grocer are vying with
each other to see which can arrange the
most tempting exhibit. See that eager
thrill skipping merrily up the street and
entering the open church door! Listen
now to the cheery voices as they ring out
in rehearsal of song and speech, almost
ready for the glad jubilee. The anticipa-
tions of millions will soon be changed into
happy participation.

How can we wait so long! But gifts of
skates and dolls and leaves and sleighs
and horns and drums and guns and books
and gloves and hats and cloaks and candies
and fruits are worth waiting for. Besides,
there will be happy smiles and cheery
words, and no end of good wishes and
deeds which always come with Christmas!
Be patient. Drive bitterness from heart,
and envy from eye, and harshness from
speech, and let your life reflect the true
Christmas spirit. Christmas is coming!
Christmas is coming!—*Epworth Herald*.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL.

A MERRY Christmas to our jolly boys.
A Merry Christmas to our radiant
girls. A Merry Christmas to the
young folks so full of hopes and
ambitions and far-reaching plans. A
Merry Christmas to father and
mother struggling under many a
burden and care of which the wide
world has no knowledge. A Merry
Christmas to grandfather and grand-
mother sitting in sweet expectancy
hard by the gate of heaven. A
Merry Christmas to thirteen thou-
sand devoted, eager pastors who
are praying and toiling for the com-
ing of the Kingdom. A Merry
Christmas to a host of bright-faced,
sweet-voiced parsonage queens. A
Merry Christmas to our devoted
chief shepherds at home and
abroad. A Merry Christmas to
battalions of Sunday-school workers,
cultivating an ample field lying
just beside the Epworth farm. A
Merry Christmas to our mis-
sionaries in all lands, with earnest
prayers for benedictions upon their
labours. A Merry Christmas to
every member of our Epworth army,
marching now one million strong.
A Merry Christmas to our state and
conference and district and local
officers; may their plans for exten-
sion and usefulness be more than
realized. A Merry Christmas to our
department chiefs, with good wishes
and blessings too many to write. A
Merry Christmas to all kindred young peo-
ple's organizations; may their numbers in-
crease and their influence spread. A Merry
Christmas to our brethren who push edi-
torial quills; may readers be generous,
subscription lists mount to the stars, and
poets go out of business. A Merry Chris-
mas to people who are having a hard, with
the hope that the sun may soon burst
through the clouds. A Merry Christmas
to the shut-in saints; let restfulness come
with the thoughts which cluster around the
manger and the cross. A Merry Chris-
mas to those who are sore and cold; may
sweetness and warmth have sway at least
for one day. A Merry Christmas to all.—
Epworth Herald.

THE ORIGIN OF XMAS.

HAVE you ever wondered about the
origin of the word Xmas? It has been
thus explained:

Many people suppose that the X in the
Xmas represents the cross, and wonder
that it is not written tmas. The X, how-
ever, has nothing to do with the cross. It
is the Greek letter Chi, corresponding to
ch in our language, and is the initial letter
in the Greek name of Christ. The words
Christ mas were written X mas long
before Christmas became one word.

DILLY (in horrified whisper): "Mama,
Willie is an infidel!" Mamma: "An
infidel!" Dilly: "Yes! he says he don't
believe there's any Santa Claus."

OLD CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS.

THOUGH almost everyone is well ac-
quainted with the Christmas customs of the
olden times, it is pleasant to recall them
frequently, and they may suggest ideas for
Christmas entertainments in our modern
homes. On Christmas Eve our ancestors
had a custom that is well worth perpetuat-
ing. They were in the habit of forming
companies which went around from house
to house singing Christmas carols in the
streets. Sometimes this was done Christ-
mas morning, but usually on Christmas Eve.
Many of these old carols are extremely
beautiful. For example, this:

"And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

"And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

"And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

"Then let us all rejoice again,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Then let us all rejoice again,
On Christmas Day in the morning."

A custom that should not be allowed to
fall into disuse is the cheery cry on Christ-
mas morning, "I wish you a merry Christ-
mas!" In old English times, even in the
churches, at the end of the service on
Christmas Day, it was customary for the
clerk, in loud and emphatic tones, to wish
all the congregation a merry Christmas and
a happy New Year. There is little sense,
though a good deal of merriment, in the
common strife to see which shall be the
first to give this salutation, but at any rate
let it always be given, and given with
heartiness.

The bear's heads were cordly affairs,
borne to the table with great pomp and
ceremony, the tusks piercing bright red
applas, while between them an orange was
laid.

The Christmas peacocks also were gor-
geous, the bird being flayed, roasted, and
then sewed up again in all the splendour of
its brilliant feathers, its beak gilded, a
piece of cotton saturated with spirits being
placed therein, to burn while the carver
was at work. Still more curious was the
ancient peacock pie, the bird being covered
by the crust, save that on one side appeared
his plumed crest, while from the other
side protruded the gorgeous spreading tail.

Among Christmas customs there are
many that deserve continuance, especially
the hale and jovial yule log, that used to
be cut by our Scandinavian ancestors, drag-
ged to the hall with high rejoicings, the
spectators doffing their hats, and then
kindled with a fragment of last year's log.

"Come, bring with a noise,
My merry, merry boys,
The Christmas log to the firing."

Another old-time fashion we may copy if
we wish is the great yule candle, made
large enough to burn through the entire
twelve nights of the Christmas festivities.

There is hardly need of mentioning the
mystic mistletoe, that strange reminiscence
of Druidism so jovially perverted from its
ancient office.

It seems a pity that the old German
Knecht Ruprecht should pass out of modern
child life. This personage, in white robe
and mask, and great flax wig, went around
on Christmas Eve to every house, saying
that Christ, his Master, had sent him. He
was received with great pomp and rever-
ence, the little children being terribly
frightened. As the parents told him that
the children had been good or bad, he gave
the children the presents intended for them,
or else gave the parents a rod, and bade
them use it on the children. The younger
children had absolute faith in the reality of
all this, and when, grown older, they were
initiated into the secret, preserved it faith-
fully in their turn from the younger ones.

"HARK! the glad sound! the Saviour comes!
The Saviour promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song."



DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS.

DECORATING THE CHURCH.

It is a beautiful Christmas custom in England to decorate the churches and houses with holly whose bright crimson berries show in beautiful contrast with the dark green glossy holly leaf. Our beautiful picture on this subject shows a couple of girls thus decorating the pulpit of the old parish church. The holly needs to be very daintily handled, for its sharp prickles will pierce the skin, but the young folk generally have plenty of help and consider it fine fun.

A TIME FOR MERCY AND HELP.

You have doubtless read the articles in this paper telling how Christmas is observed around the world. You have noted that the people of whom our correspondents write have caught the true Christmas spirit that of giving. Christmas originated in a great gift. It was one which made heaven very poor. God gave his only Son. But if the gift of Christ made heaven poor, it made earth rich. Through him we have redemption and everlasting life. Blessings upon blessings have already come to humanity, and will come world without end. God so loved the world that he gave his Son. And the Son so loved the world that he gladly gave himself. We are his followers. Hence we his spirit of compassion and self-surrender!

Christmas is a giving time. Naturally so. The custom is good, and should be encouraged. But society has ordained a kind of giving which is not real giving. In

it are the germs of self-interest. Gifts are bestowed upon those whom we expect to bestow gifts in return. That is not the Christ spirit. It is small. It is mean. It is of the earth earthy. The ideal Christmas giving is bestowing blessings upon those who sorely need, and who are unable to bless us in return. What a time for mercy and help! Everybody should join that department just now. There are many needy people in your village or city this year. Poverty pinches. Half-fed bodies shiver in the biting cold. How many are standing on the verge of despair! Oh, let us pity them, and carry them help! —*Epworth Herald.*

The Pearls, Pure and Fair.

EVERY year is a pearl, dear,
Perfect, and pure, and fair,
That God lets grow within your life,
Trusting it to your care.

And death is the golden clasp, dear,
That fastens the pearly chain,
And it shines with a clearer lustre
If the pearls are white through pain.

Some of the chains are short, dear,
And some are of many strands,
But every one returns at last
To the Master Workman's hands.

So watch your precious pearls, dear,
And keep them ever bright,
That with the crown-jewels they may glow
At last to the infinite light.

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