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PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 16, 1899.

No. 70.

Christmas at Bethlehem.

By H. W. K.

O Bethlehem, keep the Christmas tide,
For the glad that one was thine,
Though thou didst not see, that quiet
night,

Heaven's glory through thee shine!
In thy sleep thou wert uplifted,
And givest thy diadems;
A light to lighten the ages,
Blessed Star of Bethlehem!

All the world in darkness lay shadowed,
In sin and sorrow, and blight,
And the longing eyes of the wisest
Could not pierce the heavy night.
Hearts ached, but there was no
healing;

Voices cried, but no answer fell,
The grave and the cradle were
hopeless,
And no hand could the gloom
dispel.

Then suddenly out of the blackness
Flash'd a glory of heavenly light,
Until every b and valley
Was bath'd in its radiance
bright.

Sweet music filled all the heavens,
And thus the glad anthem ran:
"Oh! glory to God in the highest,
On earth, good will to man."

"The king of all worlds is your
Father,

And from his fair home above
His greatest treasure has sent you
In proof of his endless love."
Adoring eyes were uplifted,
While the angels downward
smiled;

They sought the gift of the Father,
And they found—a little child!

That was the Christmas blessing
That gladdened all the earth,
That banished the clouds and sad-
ness,
And gave to our life its worth.
And since that day all childhood
Is a sacred and holy thing,
Because of the Light of Bethlehem,
Because of Christ the King.

A LOG FOR THE YULE FIRE.

The ancient name for Christmas is Yule. It is said in Old England the most jubilant feature of Christmas Eve was the burning of the yule log. A great log was hauled from the woods and laid on the hearth of the wide-mouthed chimney, and what jolly flames went racing and roaring up toward the stars!

It is said that those passing the flame-lighted windows would raise their hats, for they knew the yule log meant the burning up of unkindness and dissension.

Can you not imagine a big yule fire, the flashes from its brightness coming and going across the window panes? A cheerful thing to see in the cold, dark night! Who would not make and also add a ragot to a yule fire if they could?

Red coals on the hearth and gold firelight in the chimney, proclaiming Christmas—who will add strength to these?

Can't you bring a bough, a fagot, a twig, an armful of dead leaves? If any chilled wanderer were out in the road and you saw him, wouldn't you bring him and warm him up with the fire you had replenished?
"No wood," do you cry? "And nobody to warm?" Let us see. There are some things that make excellent fuel for a yule fire, and maybe we can furnish them.

Tough old rods are good for a Christmas fire, and one such is an Old Spite. Away back, we won't say how many or few years, there was some unpleasantness of feeling between you and some friend or neighbour. You felt rived, and have never been willing to give it up. It is an ancient spite, and the old-time friend knows you cherish it, and is un-

happy in the thought of its continuance. Why not dig that old root up, bring it to the yule fire, and burn it up? Let it go to ashes. The fire from it will warm up the heart of an old acquaintance, and we dare say it will warm you up. We never make another feel better by any such forgiveness but that we make a very genial warmth in our own souls.

In this work of grubbing round for an old root we may find something else. A lot of curiosities may turn up at the end of our grubbing hoe, and not so very old may they be either. How we may envy some one who is more fortunate in life's possessions or life's honours! The

What a warming we shall get ourselves!

CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

There is no need to study the almanac in order to be made aware of the fact that Christmas is coming. Everybody knows it instinctively, for when a friend approaches there is something in his proximity which communicates itself to us, and if Father Christmas is not our friend, who is? Besides, there are hosts of visible signs. Is there not a keen coldness in the air? Is not the ground covered with snow? Has not everybody

plans for the successful production of a charade, or the happy performance of blind man's buff? Is not everybody concerned about the satisfactory disposal of holly and decorations? And are not all the little ones eager to prove that their feet have grown, and that they must have larger stockings, both on that account and also in caso Santa Claus should visit them?

Yes, it is quite evident that Christmas is coming, and we are all making ready. The adults are preparing little surprises for the children, and the children have been hoarding their pennies that they may prepare surprises for their elders. And we are all going to be together as far as possible, and vexing differences are to be forgiven and forgotten, and care is going to be put to sleep, and we are drawing so close to one another that lusts shall grow warmer and faith stronger while we sing in harmony the young shrill voices and the quavering old ones glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!

THE CHRISTMAS FLOWER.

Blow) and said as the night though it was Christmas Eve the snow was falling fast, as Herman, the charcoal-burner, drew his cloak tighter around him, and the wind whistled fiercely through the trees of the Black Forest. He had been to carry a load to the castle nearby, and was hurrying home to his little hut. Although he worked very hard, he was poor, gaining barely enough for the wants of his wife and four little children. He was thinking of them when he heard a great wailing. Guided by the sound, he groped about and found a little child, scantily clothed, shivering and sobbing by itself in the storm.

"Why, little one, have they left thee here all alone to face the cruel blast?"

The child answered nothing, but looked up piteously into the face of the charcoal-burner.

"Well, I cannot leave thee here. Thou wouldst be dead before to-morrow."

So saying, Herman raised the child in his arms, wrapped it in his cloak, and warmed the cold hands in his bosom. When he reached his hut, he put the child down and tapped at the door, which was immediately thrown open, and the children rushed to meet him.

"Here, wife, is a guest for our Christmas Eve supper," said he, leading in the little one.

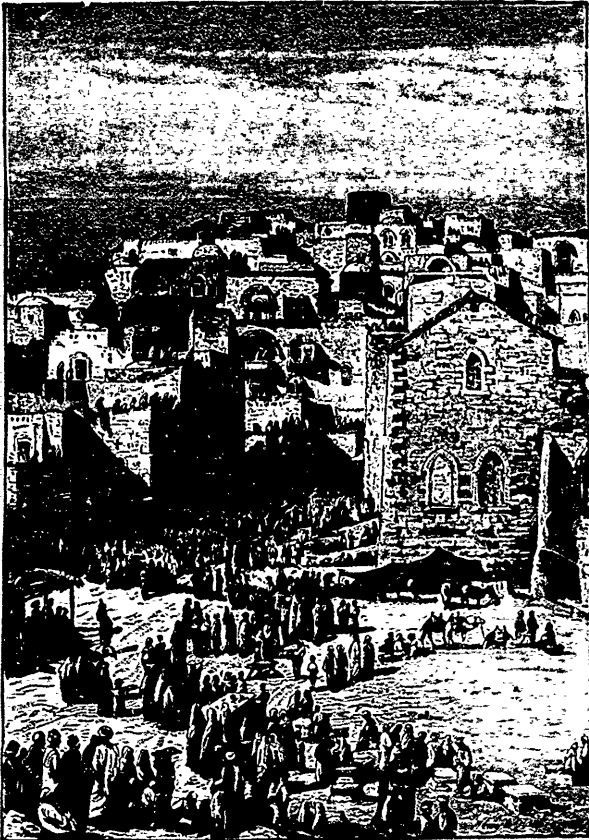
And welcome he is, said the wife. Now let him come and warm himself by the fire.

The children all pressed round to welcome and gaze at the little new comer.

Their father had cut them one of the prettiest little firns in the forest, although, at the best, it was a poor thing, for they had a beautiful Christmas tree, which the child showed his little guests being a ball of bright coloured paper, gilded acorns, and red berries, which they had gathered from

under the snow. Then they sat down to supper each child contributing of its portion for the guest, looking with admiration at his clear blue eyes and golden hair, and, as they gazed the child's face grew more radiant, a halo of light surrounded his head, his eyes beamed with a new lustre, and before their weary eyes he seemed to grow larger and larger, and then the beautiful vision vanished, spreading his hands as in benediction over them.

Herman and his wife fell on their knees, exclaiming in awe-struck admiration: "The holy Christ himself!" and then embraced their children in joy and thankfulness that they had entertained the heavenly guest.



CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM.

lucky in this world are sure to arouse the envy of some of us unucky, and unkind things may be said. Here is something for the yule fire. Give it to the flames quick.

Then unhappiness may be occasioned by a greed for honours and an unwillingness to honour somebody else. It is a source of discomfort to some people, this disposition to grab for position, for an empty chair, rather than let another have it. More wood here for the yule fire!

Come, good friends, we want this Christmas the biggest, jolliest fire of yule logs ever kindled! Ha! ha! ho! ho! they flame and crack and laugh and roar: What a warming we will give somebody!

bought a new pair of skates, or dusted the old ones? and is not the frozen surface of every pond as gay as a fair?

And then only to pass through the streets is to see the preparations for Christmas. Are not the shops like pictures? Is there not plenty of good fare for the person or the mind, for the house or the household? Tabic luxuries and books, dolls and dresses, embroidery and embellishments, furs and fancies, scree and goodies, hams and hampers, illuminations and illuminations, and nobody knows what beside, all proclaim in unmistakable terms the good news that Christmas is coming. Besides, are not the children none from school and the grandchildren coming? And are not grey heads and black alike busy in laying

Babe Jesus.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD.

Babe Jesus lay in Mary's lap;
The sun shone on his hair;
And this was how she saw,
The crown already there

For she sang Sleep, on, my little king,
Had Herod dared not come,
Before the sleeping, holy thing
The wild winds would be dumb

I kiss thy hands, I kiss thy feet,
My child so long desired
Thy hands shall never be soiled, my
sweet,
Thy feet shall never be tired.

For thou art the king of men, my son,
Thy crown I see it plain;
And men shall worship thee, every one,
And cry, Glory! Amen.

Babe Jesus opened his eyes so wide!
And Mary looked on her Lord,
And Mary stilled her song and sighed,
Babe Jesus said never a word.

LESSON NOTES.

FOURTH QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LESSON XIII.—DECEMBER 24.
CHRIST'S COMING FORETOLD.

Isa. 9. 2-7. Memory verses, 6, 7.
GOLDEN TEXT.

Unto you is born this day in the city
of David a Saviour, which is Christ the
Lord.—Luke 2. 11.

OUTLINE.

1. The Light of the World, v. 2-5.
2. The Son of God, v. 6.
3. The Kingdom of Peace, v. 7.

Time.—Probably between B.C. 760 and
700.
Place.—Jerusalem.

LESSON HELPS.

The prophecy of Isaiah is sometimes
called a fifth gospel, because of its re-
markable predictions concerning the com-
ing of the Messiah. The four gospels
are the best exposition of some of his
prophecies. His style is forceful and
poetic and rises into great sublimity.
The book is twofold in its matter, (1)
prophetic and (2) historical.

2. "The people that walked in dark-
ness"—Darkness is a figurative word for
affliction, as we now say, "My sorrow
was dark and heavy." The land suffered
much under the first Assyrian invasion,
especially the country around the Sea of
Galilee (verse 1), and it was this part of
the land which enjoyed the first preach-
ing of Christ, and where he wrought
many of his mighty miracles. Have
seen a great light—Prophetic of Christ,
who testified of himself, "I am the Light
of the world." The latter half of the
verse repeats the thought of the first half
in different words; a case of what is
called parallelism, which is frequent in
Hebrew poetry.

3. "Not increased the joy"—Some
manuscripts omit the word "not," and
make the thought just the opposite.
With the presence of the "great light"
comes added population. "Joy in har-
vest"—There is toil to gain a harvest,
there is uncertainty from drought
whether the harvest will follow the toil.
"When they divide the spoil"—After the
struggle of battle which ends in victory.

4. "The yoke of his burden"—Which
he bore, as the patient animal bears the
yoke. "The rod of his oppressor"—A
rod is the symbol of authority and also
an instrument to punish. "As in the
day of Midian"—Judges 7. 22.

5. "This shall be with burning"—Ancient
nations were wont when victorious
to gather the armour of the slain and
of the captives and offer it in flames to
the god who was thought to be the giver
of victory. But this passage is also a
prophecy of peace, weapons of war shall
be destroyed.

6. A remarkable prophecy given cen-
turies before Christ came among men
"A child is born"—Christ was the Babe
of Bethlehem. "Unto us a Son is given"
—The Son of God, the Son of man.
"Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am
well pleased." "The government shall
be upon his shoulder"—The shoulder
bears the burden. It may mean that
which shows authority, the sceptre which
was carried on the shoulder; the sword
which hung suspended from it. Each of
the titles in this verse deserves study,
expressive of a marvellous nature, of wis-
dom, of power, of eternal duration, and
of prosperity, because "Prince of Peace."
The verse points to Jesus the Messiah.

7. "Of the increase of his government"



CHRISTMAS EVE.

—Christ's kingdom is (1) spiritual, (2)
growing, (3) enduring, and (4) just.
Jesus is the Son of David, and the suc-
cessor to a throne greater than that of
the warrior poet. May we be his willing
subjects.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Christ's coming foretold.—Isa. 9. 1-7.
Tu. Prince of Peace.—Isa. 11. 1-10.
W. The Lord our righteousness.—Jer.
23. 1-6.
Th. Good tidings.—Isa. 40. 1-11.
F. A blessed reign.—Psalm 72. 1-17.
S. A prophet.—Acts 3. 18-26.
Su. Testified beforehand.—1 Peter 1. 1-12.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

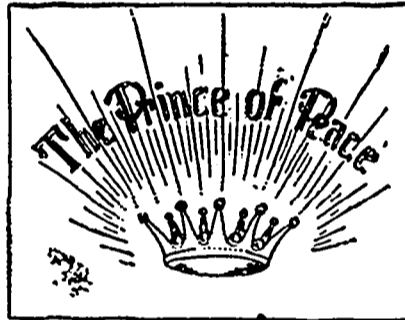
1. The Light of the World, v. 2-5.
What people saw a great light?
Upon whom had the light shined?
Who is the Light of the world? John
8. 12.
How far has this light shined? John
1. 9.
Of what increase without gain are we
told?
What was the measure of joy?
What was the occasion of joy?
What features usually mark a battle?
How would this battle be won?
What is John's description of the
leader? Rev. 19. 11-16.
2. The Son of God, v. 6.
Who first told of the birth of this Son?
Luke 2. 10, 11.
In what city was he born? Luke 2. 4.
What does the prophet say of this Son
as ruler?
By what names should he be known?

3. The Kingdom of Peace, v. 7.
Whose rule would this continue?
In what spirit would the kingdom be
ruled?
Who would bring about this result?

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

- Where in this lesson are we taught—
1. That Jesus is the Light of the world?
2. That Jesus is the Son of God?
3. That Jesus is the Prince of Peace?

Since the Prince of Peace is God's dear
gift to us, what shall we give to him?
This crown in the picture is to remind
us that Jesus is our Prince. At the



happy Christmas time does any one go
about to beat you and make you give
presents to people? Oh, no. Gifts are
for love's sake. We give because we
love to do it. When you go home please
go by yourself a few minutes and think
out what you really mean to give Jesus.



CHRISTMAS BELLS.

BY ANNA PIERVONT SIVITER.

Long, long ago in Bethlehem,
The children waked at morn,
And little dreamed that in the night
The dear Christ-child was born.

They did not know an angel choir
Above their heads had sung;
They did not hear the words of joy,
That through the skies had rung.

But all the little children
Who hear the church bells ring
To-night o'er all the land, shall know
The message that they bring.

And as the angels sang it,
So the children sing again;
Great glad be to God on high,
On earth good-will to men.

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