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# WOMEN AND SCHOOL

Do unto others  
As ye would  
that they  
should  
do unto  
you.

ROBERT SMITH & CO. TORONTO.

Vol. IV.]

TORONTO, DECEMBER 18, 1886.

[No. 26.]

## At Bethlehem.

BY THE REV. DR. VINCENT.

In the spring of 1863 I visited Bethlehem. Our party rode over from Jerusalem — a distance of six miles. Leaving the Holy City (*El-Khuds*, as Jerusalem is now called) at two o'clock p.m., by the Jaffa gate (the western gate of the city opening toward Jaffa or Joppa), we crossed the valley of Hinnom, ascended the Hinnom ridge, to the south of the city, and soon found ourselves on the broad plain of Rephaim. We passed the old tomb of Rachel, and reaching a rounded hill-top, took a good look at *Beit-Lahm*, the Bethlehem of the Bible. I was not there on Christmas day, but on the 17th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1863, as I have already said.

Bethlehem stands on a long, narrow ridge, with a simple street — very narrow, of course, as are the streets of all Oriental cities. Its houses are of stone. Many of them are in ruins. On the northern and eastern sides of the ridge we saw a huge building like a fortress. This is the "Convent of the Nativity." It seems to be but one edifice, but really consists of three convents erected at different times. These are occupied by Latin, Greek, and Armenian Christians, and inclose the church built in commemoration of Christ's birth, and is said to cover the stable in which he was born.

Passing through a low door, we went within the huge walls of the convent. Through another door, and we stood in the ancient church, said to have been built in the third or fourth century after Christ. The church is in



BETHLEHEM.

the shape of a cross. We entered the nave, or main room. It is about one hundred feet long and about ninety wide. The ceiling is supported by forty-eight immense and elegant stone columns—twelve in a line—four rows of them. Between the two middle rows the ceiling is raised much higher than on the sides, and on the walls of the elevated section are fragments of rich paintings, much defaced by the rain which comes down through the insufficient and broken roof. The

walls and columns of the church were once decorated with pictures, and the floor overlaid with marble. Most of the pictures are ruined and the marble has been taken away. The main body of the church was not much cared for when I was there, and on rainy days it furnished a playground for the filthy children of the town, who resorted to it, much as our American children would to barn or garret, when the yard and street became too muddy for their games.

An old monk offered to show us the spot where Christ was born. While the old organ played in a dismal way we walked up the long aisle, turned into the Armenian transept, went down a long flight of steps until we reached what is called "the Grotto of the Nativity." This is a little room under the church about thirty-seven feet in length, and eleven or twelve wide. The walls and floor are lined with a greenish marble. Many elegant and costly lamps hang in the room. To the right we saw a small, semi-circular recess in the wall, in the floor of which is laid a star composed of precious stones and silver, and around it are these words in the Latin: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary."

Three elegant lamps are kept burning all the time over this star. Going down two steps farther to the right we entered a room about ten feet square, where the monk showed us "the manger in which the Babe was laid after his birth." This is a marble block hollowed out and looks but little like a "manger," even of an

Oriental sort. Here, too, hang gold and silver lamps.

All these details repelled me, because I had no faith in their reality. No one knows the precise spot of the nativity. Superstition is full of frauds, and out of the sacred shrines the monks make money. So I was glad to get out of the close, hot, and uncomfortable pit and pass into the fresh air again.

Once standing on the hill I could look down upon the beautiful plain of

Bethlehem, just below the convent hill, where once "shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night." And I could look up to the blue sky, once radiant with the glory of angelic presence and musical with the song of the advent. I was glad to turn from man's idolatry to the heaven of man's hope and destiny, and I thanked God for the gift of his Son to the race, as Teacher and King, as Saviour and Friend.

### The Holy Child.

My heart goes back in pity,  
O Mary, faint and worn,  
As thou dost take thy weary way,  
Ere yet the Babe is born,  
From Nazareth to Bethlehem,  
Slow toiling night and morn.

I see thee pale and weary,  
But ever full of cheer,  
For still I wis the angel's hail  
Sweet soundeth in thine ear,  
And up the rugged heights thy path  
Shines beautiful and clear.

Slow drops the purple twilight,  
Swift gathers midnight cold;  
The winds are wild and wailing,  
The lambs are in the fold.  
Hark! far away the gates of heaven  
To music are unrolled.

Oh, strange, mysterious moment!  
The Wonderful, the Strong,  
The Prince of Peace whose gleaming sword  
Shall smite the ancient wrong,  
In mother's arms a babe is laid;  
Break seraphs into song!

Lo! at his feet are bending,  
As dawn unfoldeth gray,  
Wise men who came from orient lands  
To greet the world's new day.  
Star-led, that star it riseth still  
To light earth's troubled way.

O Mighty One incarnate,  
Through all the lifted skies  
The choir ranks amazed behold  
The Babe that helpless lies,  
The little one who comes to be  
The atoning sacrifice.

Sweet Mary, in thy bosom  
The Holy Child shall sleep,  
And thou above his infant rest  
Thy tender watch wilt keep.  
No mother of us all so blest,  
None doomed to woe so deep!

The centuries have drifted  
In dark and light away  
Since broke upon Judaea's plains  
The first fair Christmas day.  
To Jesus nations lift their praise,  
And thousand thousands pray.

His love makes childhood sacred,  
His grace makes weakness strong;  
In his dear name to hallowed rites  
Rejoicing armies throng.  
The very thought of Christ, the Lord,  
Is music, mirth and song.

For him the glad ships whiten  
The waves of every sea;  
For him to alien shores we go  
To set the bondmen free;  
In him to live is life indeed,  
And light and liberty.

In him to live is triumph,  
But what in him to die!  
'Tis soaring swift through boundless space,  
'Tis straightway drawing nigh,  
And dwelling where his own dear face  
All want shall satisfy.

Chime on, glad Christmas chorals,  
Ye cannot half reveal

The mystic joy that surges through  
The souls his love who feel,  
As lowly to the Infant King  
To-day the nations kneel.

### The Christmas Angel.

It was Christmas eve. George and Frank and their little sisters were all assembled in the same bright sitting-room, to await the visit of the Christ Angel, which had been promised by Pelz-Nickel. Their papa and mamma and Cousin Herbert were in the drawing-room adjoining, the door of which had been mysteriously closed all the afternoon, and the children forbidden to approach it.

George and Frank were whispering and laughing in a corner, and George had something wrapped in a bundle, which he had refused to show to his little sisters, telling them that they must wait until their father and mother and Herbert came in.

Very soon one of the folding doors was opened a very little ways, and the three favoured ones made their appearance, closing the door carefully after them.

"Oh, oh! Master Herbert," said Frank; "George has found something, we know who old Pelz-Nickel was!"

"You do, eh! Master Frank? and how did George and you find it out?"

"Why," said Master George, "I more than half believed last night that you were Pelz-Nickel, and this afternoon mamma sent me up to your room to get something for her out of the bureau drawer, and I found this and all of Pelz-Nickel's other things in the drawer."

And he triumphantly brought forth the fur cap, which had so excited Frank's wonder.

"Well, little ones," said Herbert, "you have fairly found me out. And so, as Pelz-Nickel was a humbug, you wouldn't believe in Christkindchen now if you were to see him, and I suppose that I had better tell you a little German story about him instead of waiting for you to see him, after which we will see the wonders of the drawing-room."

"Oh, do; Cousin Herbert," exclaimed all together, and they prepared to listen.

"It was on the holy Christmas eve that a poor woman sat with her two children in the narrow little room of a small house in the suburbs of a city in Germany.

"The father of the children died, after he had been sick a long time and had earned nothing. Therefore the family was in great want. But the mother could not work, for she was obliged to stay by the youngest child, and to care for and nurse it, because it was always sick. So the poor mother sat and cried secretly, for she had no wood to warm the chamber with, and on the day on which everything rejoices, and all parents light a Christmas tree for their little ones, she must sit in the dark, because the last oil in her lamp was burnt out.

"When now the elder boy heard his mother sobbing, he fell upon her neck and said:

"Ah, mother! if we only had a light! If I could only see you! I believe I would no longer be cold then, and you would not weep any more if you could see your children."

"Then the poor woman's heart almost broke with grief, and she put her hand in her pocket and said:

"Now! go, then, my child, and bring oil. Here you have my last groschen. I wished to buy bread with it to-morrow, but who knows whether the holy Christ will not bestow bread upon us in another way."

"The boy took the money and ran off with it, and looked on the right and on the left in hopes that he could see a Christmas tree burning behind a bright window. But in this street lived none but poor people, and most of the houses were dark, except here and there glimmered an oil lamp through small, dim panes of glass.

"Farther and farther ran the boy, and came into large, broad streets, where one store ranged itself after another, out of which bright lights beamed towards him. In the high houses lived only rich people, for everywhere gleamed through the large window panes glittering Christmas trees.

"Then he came to the market, where stall after stall stood, and he could not wonder enough at all the splendid things which were there offered for sale—the sweet dainties, the bright-coloured playthings, the burning Christmas trees. He ran to and fro, looked here and there, and was so happy he did not feel how his hands and feet were benumbed with cold.

"At length he came to a booth which was illuminated particularly brightly, and before which many men had collected. When he saw into it he was bewildered, for he beheld here exactly before him everything that his mother had so often told him, of the birth of the holy Christ-child, formed finely and skilfully out of wax. In a stall sat the Virgin Mary, who held the infant Jesus upon her lap; before her the shepherds knelt and prayed; round about lay cows and sheep, and over the child hovered waxen angels, with waxen wings. He had never before seen anything so beautiful, and he might have stood and wondered long but he was pushed away by men crowding near, and suddenly remembered that his mother sat at home in the dark with his little sister, and that he ought to carry the oil.

"But how terrified he was when he felt that the groschen had fallen out of his benumbed hand. He began to cry aloud, although the men pressed around and near him, and bought, and passed hurriedly along with the purchased splendours in their hands. Still no one asked what ailed him—he remained unnoticed in his distress.

"So he now went slowly back again through the illuminated streets, and

looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, for nothing made him joyful now, until he arrived at length again in the dark street where his mother lived.

"When he now reflected how sad his mother would be over the lost groschen, he could not resolve to go home, but seated himself upon a large stone, and wept bitterly.

"Ah!" thought he, 'the Christ-child brings joy to all men to-day; only my mother it leaves in sadness, and I grieve her now still more.'

"So he sat for a long while and lamented, until he at last heard the watchman call out the hour. He came with his lantern down the street, and sang:

'In the still and holy night,  
Christ from heaven came down to earth;  
Peace to all men hath he brought,  
Joy to every Christian hearth.'

"Then the boy saw by the light of the lantern something before him shining in the snow, and picked it up as a plaything. But the watchman walked up to him and asked, why he sat upon the street in the night and cold, and did not go home. Crying, the boy related how he had lost the last groschen, with which he should have bought oil; how his mother always wept so much since his father died, and that he could not bear to see how she would grieve for the lost groschen.

"Then come with me," said the friendly watchman, 'I will give you oil; but then run quickly home; your mother will distress herself about you.'

"When he took the child by the hand, he felt something hard in it, and asked what it was. The boy showed him the shining thing and said that he had just found it in the snow.

"Indeed!" cried the watchman; 'behold what Christkindchen has here given you! This is certainly a gold piece! For a gold piece you will receive a quantity of groschens, and your mother can buy bread and wood to-morrow.'

"Then the boy was very happy, and after he had received the oil from the watchman, he ran to his mother, who awaited him with anxiety, and related to her everything that he had seen, and how he had lost the groschen and found the gold piece.

"Then the mother wept, but for joy, and took her children upon her lap and taught them to thank the holy Christ-child, that he had not forgotten them in their need, and had made them so rich."

By the time Herbert had finished his story, for which all the children thanked him, their papa and mamma announced that it was time to open the drawing-room. Mrs. Elliot rang a little silver bell which was near her hand, and immediately the doors were thrown open. What a blaze of light there was, and what wonders met their eyes! There, in the centre of the room, was the most beautiful Christ-

mas-tree they had ever beheld. It was covered with beautiful flowers; birds of all the brightest colour, made of candy, were perched upon the boughs; the branches were literally loaded down with the loveliest boxes and bags filled with sweetmeats, and with oranges, apples and bananas. On the table, underneath the tree, were the presents which Herbert had brought them from Germany—wonderful wax dolls for Retta and Mary, a magnificent work-box for Nellie, a box containing a full set of carpenter's tools for Frank, and a complete set of Hans Christian Andersen's books for George, published in Germany, but translated into English, and full of the most elegant engravings.

The children were delighted, and we don't believe, if they live to be old men and women, that they will ever forget that Christmas-eve.

### The Approach of Christmas.

It was the calm and silent night!  
Seven hundred and fifty-three  
Had Rome been growing up to night,  
And now was queen of land and sea!  
No sound was heard of clashing wars,  
Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;  
Apollo, Pallas, Jove and Mars  
Held undisturbed their ancient reign,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!  
The Senator of haughty Rome  
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,  
From lordly revel rolling home!  
Triumphal arches, gleaming swell  
His breast with thoughts of boundless  
away;

What reeked the Roman what befell  
A paltry province far away,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago?

Within that province far away,  
Went plodding home a weary boor;  
A streak of light before him lay,  
Fallen through a half-shut stable door,  
Across his path. He paused for naught,  
Told what was going on within;  
How keen the stars! his only thought;  
The air how calm, and cold, and thin,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

Oh, strange indifference!—low and high  
Drowned over common joys and cares;  
The earth was still but knew not why;  
The world was listening—unaware!  
How calm a moment may precede  
One that shall thrill the world forever  
To that still moment none will heed,  
Man's doom was linked, no more to sever,  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago.

It is the calm and silent night!  
A thousand bells ring out  
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite  
The darkness—charmed and holy now!  
The night that erst no shame had worn,  
To it a happier name is given;  
For in the stable lay, new-born,  
The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven  
In the solemn midnight,  
Centuries ago!

FROM *Evangelical Messenger*: "Our pastor is not as good a preacher as I want. Indeed! Perhaps you are not as good a hearer as he would like to have, but he must make the best of you. If he can stand it, you can."

### A Lost Christmas.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

"BLANCHE," said Mrs. Ridgeway to a young girl who sat in an indolent attitude, drumming with her fingers on the table that stood near by, "ought you not to get to work on those bureau-covers and doilies you are going to embroider for your Aunt Marcia? Christmas will soon be here, you know, and time flies."

"Time flies!" exclaimed Blanche, with a shrug of her shoulders. "It may with you, mother, but not with me. The days drag themselves along if there is any pleasure ahead, and somehow I don't feel a bit like doing fancy-work."

"It is a temptation to be out-of-doors in this lovely autumn weather," said Mrs. Ridgeway. "But if you had your work begun, you could take many a stitch on it during the day, or when it chanced to be stormy."

"O, there's plenty of time!" said Blanche, who had a habit of putting off from day to day. "And, besides, I may see something else I'd rather give Aunt Marcia. O mother!" exclaimed the young girl, starting up with a show of animation that added very much to her personal charms; "I know she wants a screen—she really needs one—I heard her say so last summer; and I think it will be lovely for me to give her one. I could paint it with—let me see—hollyhocks on one leaf, wild-flowers—O no, wild-flowers are so common. I guess I'll have a couple of mullein stalks on the other."

"Well," said her mother, with a smile, "you couldn't have any thing much more common than mullein stalks. Why not have golden-rod and poppies on the second leaf. I admire them so much, and so does your Aunt Marcia."

"That'll be grand!" said Blanche. "And on the other leaf—now what ought I to have on the other leaf? What would you suggest mother? You have so much taste about those things."

Mrs. Ridgeway looked pleased. It was seldom her daughter complimented her (it is a failing with most daughters), and it gave her an increased interest in the subject under discussion. She was fond of art herself, and had made every effort to encourage a taste for it in her only daughter.

"I think a cluster of field-corn, wind-blown, with rich russet tints, would be effective. I saw a screen at the Decorative Art Rooms with such a design on it, and it struck my fancy at once. But there seemed to be a great deal of work upon it, and it may be beyond your skill."

"Why, mother, what nonsense!" said Blanche, in a tone that betrayed her confidence in her own ability. "It's just as easy to paint one thing as another if you only know how to paint."

"Yes," said her mother, "but you know you have never undertaken any thing so elaborate."

"N-o-o," said Blanche, resuming her indolent attitude and her drumming.

"But if I find any difficulties, as I don't think I will, I can easily go to the art school and take a lesson."

Mrs. Ridgeway was really hopeful that her daughter would arouse herself from her indifference and apathy where work was concerned, and for a day or two Blanche was quite busy talking about the screen, and the other things she meant to do before Christmas.

One evening, about the middle of October, Mr. Ridgeway brought home a letter he had received from an old college friend whose home was among the mountains of Pennsylvania. The writer told of the beauty of the foliage in that section of country, and the charming scenery, and urged Mr. Ridgeway to bring his wife and daughter and make him a visit.

It was a temptation indeed. Blanche spoke eloquently in favour of accepting the invitation. Going was more important to her than doing; and her mother looked the desire that was in her heart. She had always had a great desire to see the Alleghenies clothed in their rich autumnal robes, and here was a golden opportunity.

"But, Blanche," said her mother, "I'd almost rather give up the trip than have you fail in sending the Christmas gifts, especially what you have planned for Aunt Marcia."

"O, don't put any thing in the way of our going!" said Blanche, with the tears ready to spring from her eyes. "I shall work all the better when we get back; and that style of painting is always done with a slap-dash."

"But then it must be begun sometime, and you have the material yet to buy."

"O, that's nothing. You can buy sateen anywhere. And this trip will be like an inspiration."

It was an inspiration that yielded a host of glowing fancies, unsubstantial dreams, and sweet suggestions, momentary impressions that took no firm hold on Blanche Ridgeway. When she returned to the city, fresh pleasures demanded her attention, and it was almost the first of December when she awoke to a sense of unfulfilled duties.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed. "I thought surely I should have time, but it's too late now to begin the screen. Suppose I do the bureau covers."

"Well," said Mrs. Ridgeway, with a sigh, "perhaps you had better. I could help you on those."

The next day Blanche was taken ill, and for ten days required constant care and attention. No time to make Christmas presents now. Not a single gift of her own handiwork would she be able to send as a token of love to the friends who had remembered her so bountifully from year to year.

Christmas came and went. It seemed like a lost Christmas to Blanche, for she had missed the joy of giving, and knew that she had disappointed her mother more than she had herself. Her good-will had been in words and not in deeds. The Christmas-bells seemed to mock her with their chimes.

"Next year," said she, "I'll take time by the forelock."

If she does she will have to change her disposition entirely, and impress upon her mind the truth of the old adage, "Well begun is half done."

Those who are swift to promise are slow to perform

### Christmas Time.

THE anniversary of our Saviour's advent to earth will soon be observed with joyous festivities, devout prayers, and with discourses delivered in the name of him upon whose shoulder rests the burden of all government. Our homes will resound with Christmas carols, and tokens of affection will gladden many a child-heart.

We would not check one up-rising of joy. Our religion is given, we believe, to brighten life, not to becloud it with dismal forebodings, not to depress the heart with serious contemplation; but reflection is a duty, and often stimulates, rather than detracts from joy.

Are we mindful of the destitute poor during this holiday season? Think of one year ago. Have any little hearts in homes of poverty sighed for some Christmas token—some gift that our own hand might then have bestowed? Go! rescue that lost opportunity by kind offerings before the New Year is ushered upon us. How little it will cost to fill the home with sunshine. Especially let the widow and the orphan share our plenty.

Once the wife leaned upon the husband, the child upon the father. He reared the Christmas-tree in the parlour, loaded it with gifts, and tied upon each little limb the burning taper. But now, the Christmas has come, and he has gone. The welcome footstep is no more heard—the affectionate embrace and the evening song are only in the memories of bygone days. Where are these dear ones? Let us search for them. We may not fill that terrible void, but we may suppress a few burning tears by our kind words, uttered in Christian love and faith. If possible, he would in spirit enter our own dwelling, and repay us ten thousand-fold. But it is reward enough to hear the Master say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

At this period we are reminded of the rapid march of time, and the momentous concerns of eternity. Our life is brief. We shall enjoy on earth but few more such festive seasons. Let us begin the year 1887, not only with acts of charity, but with self-consecration to God. It may be our last year. In view of such a possibility let us refrain from countenancing those vices which destroy our youth. Especially give not the wine-cup a place in the home. Let us exhibit that moral courage which is so befitting moral intelligences. Let us not be disloyal to our religious convictions, under all possible circumstances, however severe the test may be.

**"Under the Mistletoe."**

THE rooms are gay with holly red,  
And green with fir and ivy vines,  
And over wall and window seat  
The Christmas laurel twines,  
But fairer still the mystic branch  
That from the ceiling's arch hangs low.  
Ah! me, if I should catch my love  
Under the mistletoe!

The yule log's light shines over all,  
The rooms resound with voices gay,  
As merrily, with mirth and cheer,  
The old-time games we play.  
I watch my love with eager eyes  
As through the simple rounds we go.  
Alas! she never ventures quite  
Under the mistletoe!

The hour grows late—we say good-night,  
But I slip back for one last smile  
And find her standing where I'd hoped  
To find her all the while.  
The last departing guest had gone,  
The yule-log's friendly light burns low;  
Ah! who can tell what happened then  
Under the mistletoe!

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**Home and School**

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

TORONTO, DECEMBER 18, 1886.

We are sure our readers will be pleased with the handsome new head piece of HOME AND SCHOOL and with the more clear and open appearance of the pages. These are only specimens of the improvements we propose making from time to time. We intend to use, as our increased circulation will warrant the expense, better cuts and more of them, and cuts referring specially of Canadian subjects. This being the jubilee year of the reign of Her gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, we propose having a number of illustrated articles that will cultivate the loyalty and patriotism of all our young readers.

The *Methodist Magazine* also comes out in a handsome new cover, and presents for the year 1887 an announcement of unsurpassed interest. By condensing somewhat the printed matter, and adding a considerable number of pages, the amount of reading it will give will be increased by about 100 pages. It will have several articles of special interest to Sunday-schools—one admirable one in the January number

by the Rev. Dr. Carman, one of the General Superintendents, on the "Sunday-school as a Centre of Influence;" one by the Rev. J. Philp, M.A., on "Methodism and Sunday-schools;" valuable illustrated series on Bible Lands, and on mission work; numerous illustrated articles on Canadian life and scenery, by the Marquis of Lorne, the Editor, and others; and many other attractions too numerous to mention. (See announcement on last page.) Several schools have for some years circulated from two to ten copies of the *Magazines* instead of Sunday-school libraries, as being fresher, more interesting, and more attractive. For this purpose the *Magazines* is given to schools at special rates, made known on application.

CHRISTMAS is near at hand, and some are thinking of it as a holy day, and some are looking forward to it as a holiday. Many will keep it joyfully yet reverently, recalling its blessed memories, its precious hopes, its immortal significance. Many others will spend it thoughtlessly, with no deeper care than that, the wheels of labour being silent for a time, there will be unwonted opportunity for sleeping and eating, perhaps even for drinking and being drunken. There will be wise men who will bring to Christ's poor gifts from their bounty, as the wise men of old brought gifts to the infant Christ himself; and there will also be foolish men and women who will shut Christ out of their hearts, even as he was crowded out of the inn at Bethlehem. Loving gifts will be exchanged in token of him who so freely gave and was given; and the hearts of many of the children of men will grow more child-like and more Christ-like, as by thought and deed they recall the coming of the Christ-child, born so many centuries ago in Bethlehem of Judea. But the season will also be observed by those who have no love for the Saviour. There will be no Christ in their Christmas, no Christianity in their giving, and the little sacrifices they may make for others' happiness will be unhallowed by a thought of the One who gave up all for them. Many watch hopefully for signs of the Master's second coming, while others care for the commemoration of his first coming only because it brings a few hours' release from toil; some hope and work for a near millennium of righteousness, and others remain indifferent while the second Christian millennium is rounding to its close. Can anything be sadder than a Christmas without a Christ? Could anything more plainly call Christian workers to renewed activity, than the fact that in this year of our Lord, the eighteen hundred and eighty-sixth anniversary, Christmas will find some who think of it merely as a holiday, and many who deliberately shut Christ out of their dwellings, and even some who are still going about seeking the young Child's life!—*S. S. Times*.

**Christmas Greetings.**

INSTEAD of the old method of giving presents to scholars in the Sunday-school at the holiday season, the practice is now common of distributing attractive chromo cards, with a greeting from the school. Sometimes these cards contain a reminder of the hour of the school sessions and the church services, with a request for punctual attendance. Sometimes they contain a text of Scripture or a verse of a hymn.

A Virginia school issues this year a circular slip, with an illustrated heading in pleasing tints. On one side is a Christmas story in verse. On the other is an invitation to the Christmas services in the following form:

MY DEAR SCHOLAR: Under the blessing of divine Providence our school has been sustained and prospered through another year, and we take great pleasure in wishing you "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Upon next Sunday morning, we expect to have a Christmas Concert Exercise, and other interesting services, and would like you to enjoy them with us. Come, let us spend the last Sabbath morning of the old year together in our school. With gratitude for the past, and hope for the future, let us enter upon the new year with new purpose of heart to make it one of the brightest and best in our history.

With kindest regards and best wishes,  
JOHN SMITH, Teacher.

**Old Traditions.**

THERE is an old tradition that Christ was born about midnight. From this, bells are rung at midnight in England and on the continent. In Roman Catholic countries it has long been customary to inaugurate Christmas with the celebration of a midnight mass, which is followed by one at dawn, and another in the morning. It was an old English superstition that on Christmas eve the oxen were always to be found on their knees at midnight; that the cocks crew; that the cabbage seeded, etc. The devotion of the oxen was derived from an old story that an ox and ass, which were in the stable at the birth of Christ, fell on their knees in a suppliant position and that a cock crew. The custom of singing carols at Christmas, which has passed into oblivion, is said to have sprung from the songs of the shepherds and others at the birth of Christ. The common custom of decorating houses and churches with evergreens at Christmas is derived from the common belief that sylvan spirits would flock to those evergreens and remain there until the coming in of a milder season. Holly and ivy are the evergreens chiefly used in England; these are also worn about the head, and the phrases, "to kiss under the rose" and "to whisper under the mistletoe," have reference to this practice.—*Selected*.

JESUS is the bread of life.



**The Little Christmas-Tree.**

BY SUSAN COOLIDGE.

THE Christmas-day was coming, the Christmas-eve drew near;  
The fir-trees they were talking low, at midnight cold and clear.  
And this was what the fir-trees said, all in the pale moonlight:  
"Now, which of us shall chosen be to grace the Holy Night?"

The tall trees and the goodly trees raised each a lofty head,  
In glad and secret confidence, though not a word they said.

But one, the baby of the band, could not restrain a sigh:  
"You all will be approved," he said, "but oh, what chance have I?"

"I am so small, so very small, no one will mark or know  
How thick and green my needles are, how true my branches grow;  
Few toys or candles could I hold, but heart and will are free,  
And in my heart of hearts I know I am a Christmas-tree."

The Christmas angel hovered near; he caught the grieving word,  
And laughing low he hurried forth, with love and pity stirred.  
He sought and found St. Nicholas, the dear old Christmas Saint,  
And in his fatherly kind ear rehearsed the fir-tree's plaint.

Saints are all-powerful we know, so it befell that day  
That axe on shoulder, to the grove a woodman took his way.  
One baby-girl he had at home, and he went forth to find  
A little tree as small as she, just suited to his mind.

Oh, glad and proud the baby-fir, amid its brethren tall,  
To be thus chosen and singled out, the first among them all!

He stretched his fragrant branches, his little heart beat fast.  
He was a real Christmas-tree; he had his wish at last.

Some large and shining apples with cheeks of ruddy gold,  
Six tapers, and some tiny toys were all that he could hold.

The baby laughed, the baby crowed to see the tapers bright;  
The forest baby felt the joy, and shared in the delight.

And when at last the tapers died, and when the baby slept,  
The little fir in silent night a patient vigil kept.

Though scorched and brown its needles were, it had no heart to grieve.  
"I have not lived in vain," he said. "Thank God for Christmas-eye!"



THE SNOW-BIRDS.

### A Winter Song.

O, SUMMER has the roses  
And the laughing light south wind,  
And the merry meadows lined  
With dowy, dancing posies;  
But Winter has the sprites  
And the witching frosty nights.

O, Summer has the splendor  
Of corn-fields wide and deep,  
Where scarlet poppies sleep  
And wary shadows wander;  
But winter fields are rare  
With diamonds everywhere.

O, Summer has the wild bees,  
And the ringing, singing note  
In the robin's tuneful throat,  
And the leaf-talk in the trees;  
But Winter has the chime  
Of the merry Christmas time.

O, Summer has the lustre  
Of the sunbeams warm and bright,  
And rains that fall at night  
Where reeds and lilies cluster;  
But deep in Winter's snow  
The fires of Christmas glow.

—Susan Hartley, in *St. Nicholas*.

### Christmas in the Sunday-School.

BY J. L. HURLBUT, D.D.

OF all the days in the "Christian year," Christmas is the one most widely recognized and most heartily celebrated in the Sunday-school. Every Sunday-school upon the continent, whether held under Gothic arches, or in a log-cabin, or a sod-house, will pay some attention to Christmas. There is an appropriateness in this general recognition, for the joyfulness of the Christmas-tide is the trait which should characterize the Sunday-school at all seasons, and the thought of the Christ-child appeals to the heart of childhood everywhere. No appeal is needed, therefore, for our Sunday-schools to observe the Christmas festivities; but a few suggestions may be offered as to the manner of its celebration.

First of all, it should be remembered that Christmas is a religious festival, and not a secular anniversary. Let there be in its observance all the joy that can be compassed in a single day; let its atmosphere be fragrant with gladness to young and old; let the Christmas-tree be reared with all its wondrous fruitage; let Santa Claus come down the chimney if he chooses; but in all our pleasures let us keep in

mind that Christmas represents God's unspeakable gift to the world, his own and only Son. You will see multitudes of Christmas cards without a Christmas thought in either the picture or its accompanying motto; you will find Christmas exhibitions without a Gospel idea in their performance. Two years ago, a lady teaching a primary class in a mission-school, asked her little pupils if they could tell her what Christmas meant, and why it was kept. The hundred and fifty faces were blank, until at last one little hand went up and a child answered, "It means to hang up greens!" Christmas may be made a mighty opportunity for fixing some of the great truths of redemption ineffaceably in the minds of the children. See that no card is given in your school and no celebration held without having somewhere stamped into it the central thought of the Christmas story, the coming of God to earth in the form of a little child.

The programme for the Christmas celebration should not be so elaborate as to require extensive rehearsing. We have known of schools where the lesson was neglected for weeks in order to teach carols which were to be used but once and then be laid aside, and to drill the scholars in the parts of a semi-theatrical exhibition. The Sunday-school exists for the purpose of instruction, but not merely for instruction in music, however classical, nor for instruction in dramatic performances, however æsthetic. Its training should be in Bible lore and in Christian character, toward which all its exercises should tend; and its entertainments should never be permitted to encroach upon its legitimate work. Nor is this surrender of the school to Christmas for a month at all necessary. Good entertainments can be devised which will please as well and profit far more than those which exhaust the power of the school in a single performance.

Nor is it necessary that the gifts of the Sunday-school to its scholars should be expensive. In a church school most of the children will receive presents at home which will be far more valuable than the very best which the school

can bestow; and even in a mission-school a simple gift will be appreciated as well as one more costly. It is not well to lure scholars by the bait of a fine present at Christmas. Let them come to the school for its teachings and its enjoyments, but not from any mercenary motive. Notice the day with gifts which will be appropriate and will commemorate the offerings of the wise men to their infant Lord; but

avoid all idea of prizes in their distribution.

Let us keep before our scholars the thought, that Christmas is a time for giving rather than getting; that they gain the most of its pleasure and enter the deepest into its thought who open their hands to present Christmas gifts to others; and, above all, let us teach our scholars that the season which reminds the world of God's choicest gift, and of the gifts which men of old offered on bended knees before the manger of the Christ, is the best time of all the year for the offering of themselves, the living sacrifice, to the service of the Lord.

THE full reports given by the *Globe* and *Mail* of the sermons of the Georgia evangelists, are a marked sign of the times. We venture to think that these reports, made at considerable expense, are a sign that the times are greatly improving. Had not the conductors of these journals believed that a majority of their readers felt a certain degree of interest in such matters it is only fair to assume that so much space would not have been given to the reports. The publication from day to day of so many solid columns, taken *verbatim* by the best shorthand writers in the country, shows that the leading journals are favourable to morality and religion, and that a large majority of their readers are interested in religious movements. These are two good things. There never was a time when the secular press of Ontario gave as much attention to Church matters as it does at present. Take up almost any exchange, and you often find more items on local church matters than on matters of any other kind. There are, we venture to say, few journals in Ontario that are not willing to help every congregation in the locality in which they are published. Taken as a whole, the tone of the press of Ontario is decidedly friendly to morality and religion. An honest recognition of this fact will tend to secure, even to a still greater extent, the co-operation of the press in every good work.—*Canada Presbyterian*.

### Christmas.

WHEREVER the English language is spoken, the simple words of old Thomas Tusser, written nearly three centuries and a half ago, will be repeated Christmas morning, expressive of the cheer and joy of the great festival occasion:

"At Christmas play and make good cheer,  
For Christmas comes but once a year."

Dickens had like thought in mind when he wrote: "For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself." The poet Chaucer, "Well of English undefyled," as Edmund Spenser called him, defined in two lines the man to whom Christmas came as a season of unspeakable hope and inspiration:

"But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve  
He taught, but first he folwed it himselfe."

The day is one not only for exalted faith, but also for tender and outspoken sympathy; for sweet charity and thoughtfulness for the woe there is in the world; and for remembrance of him whose mission was the alleviation of sorrow and suffering. It is Dickens' thought again in Tiny Tim's remark: "And it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see." There can be no true exemplification of the spirit and purpose of Christmas without kindness and tenderness and love for the destitute and ignorant and poor. This is the meaning of the angelic proclamation: "On earth peace; good-will toward men." "Christ is born," is the true Christmas greeting, and it must show itself, in the language of a gifted modern writer, "in gifts that feed the body and touch the heart; in sweet and chastening memories; in secret regret for a thousand weaknesses; in secret vows for nobler living." The day will recall many a face that has passed from human sight for the last time. At every Christmas feast there will be an invisible guest. It is the thought in Thackeray's Christmas hymn:

"Evenings we knew happy as this;  
Faces we miss, pleasant to see.  
Kind hearts and true, gentle and just,  
Peace to your dust: we sing round the tree."

And when the day is through with, —its graceful courtesies and recognitions concluded, and the gentle guests unseen around every board have gone, perhaps some will be able to say in one of Bunyan's most exquisite passages: "Now, just as the Gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the City shone as the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. And after that they shut up the gates. Which when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

## The Babe in Bethlehem.

BY E. M. COMSTOCK.

Into a world of sin and pain  
The Saviour comes to-day;  
We'll seek the manger where he lies,  
And grateful homage pay.

A new star blazes in the East,  
Celestial anthems ring,  
The magi haste with gold and myrrh  
To greet the new-born King.

O wondrous babe! one with our race  
In frail mortality,  
Yet one with him whose countless years  
Aro from eternity.

These lips shall speak with mighty power,  
Bidding the waves be calm;  
And into earth's sore, bleeding heart  
Drop a soft, healing balm.

These eyes shall weep their pitying tears  
With those who mourn their dead,  
And look with sorrow on the lost,  
And all uncomforted.

These hands shall touch the moving bier,  
And life from death shall spring;  
These arms shall lift "the little ones,"  
And clasp the wandering.

These feet shall press sad Calvary's hill  
Mid crowds who jeer and frown;  
This head be bowed in agony  
Beneath a mocking crown.

This heart must bear the world's great sin,  
Itself without a stain,  
That so a Father's hand of love  
May reach us all again.

O thou who "bringest gifts to men,"  
Give us, this blessed day,  
A glimpse of heaven, thy glorious home,  
And light our shadowed way,

Till we behold thee—not as now,  
But our unclouded eyes  
Shall see "the beauty of the King"  
In his own Paradise!

## Hannah's Christmas.

"HOPE ye'll hev a merry Christmas to-morrer, Hanner," said David Wray, proprietor of the little store at the settlement on Haddock Mountain.

"Thank ye kindly, David, an' now give me six sticks of candy, three on 'em peppermint, an' three birch," said the woman, taking her bundles from the rude counter.

"I'll 'low these is fer Reub's Christmas," he said, taking down the candy-jar from the window.

Old man Crapple, who had been a mildly interested observer, now came forward as Hannah was going out. "Goin', be ye, Hanner?" he said. "This is capital weather fer Christmas, now, aint it? We haint hed no heavy snow ter block up the roads. Be ye wantin' anythin' done to yer place? Ef so, jes' say th' word!"

Being assured she was in no immediate need of friendly offices, he wished her "a merry Christmas, ter-morrer," and withdrew to the fire-place.

Before the door stood her primitive sled, on the seat of which was an overgrown boy who held the reins over a sleek gray mare. Seeing her come out, he chuckled gleefully, pointing to the candy-jar now restored to its place.

"Now, aint it? aint it jes'—?"

As he was given to uttering broken sentences, she gently nodded as she placed her bundles under the bear-skin

robe, and climbed in beside him. The mare started off briskly, and they speedily left behind the few log houses, the store and blacksmith's shop. The wooden runner sank softly into the snow. The crows went heavily flapping overhead, and a flock of birds twittered as they perched upon some dead mullein.

But as the narrow road crawled upwards into the heart of the hills, all sounds of life died away and nothing was heard save the occasional soft thud of the falling snow that had been massed upon the trees. The perspective of the woods stretched away a silent land of magical dreams; the very cascades were mute—frozen into silver ribbons upon the bare rock faces.

But Hannah and Reuben—mountain-born and bred—were not oppressed by silences that were part of their existence. As they jogged along, they knew well where, after a level space, they would come upon the clearing with its thirty acres of land, and the log cabin that was their home.

The mare knew it, too, for breaking her trot, she started into a ridiculous canter, and did not stop until she reached the barn and greeted her foal within it with a loud whinny.

A team of dun oxen stretched their necks over the fence-rail, a white-faced cow and a brindled heifer were pulling down wisps of hay on the sunny side of a barraok. In the pen close by grunted four fat pigs, while under a shed, black, red-combed hens and a cock were scratching the loose gravel. These were Hannah Byles's "critturs." This was the home where she had lived all her days.

In her youth Hannah had been the mountain belle; a pretty, amiable girl, so docile that Luther Byles, her father, averred "thet thet Hanner of his'n couldn't be made to find downright fault with th' old bad un hisself; she wer thet soft-hearted thet th' critturs even hed no fear of her."

He himself idolently relied on this soft-heartedness. He knew the team would be watered without his help when they came from the field; that the cow would lose in the barn-yard that ugly gear that kept her from breaking fence while in pasture; and that the lame sheep would have its wants supplied.

He "lowed there wa'n't his gal's equal in th' hull world," his known world being bounded by the valley on one side, and Pottsville, where the county court was held, on the other. Perhaps if he had been more a man of the world, he would never have taken so entirely on trust the winning young stranger who, when Hannah was eighteen, found his way into the solitudes of Haddock Mountain and was entertained at Luther's cabin.

The mountaineers were one and all pleased with him, but were considerably disturbed in their slow minds when it became known "thet he an' Luther's Hanner hed ben jined together by the elder to Pottsville."

Discovering, however, that her parents were agreed to the match, and that her husband left her with them in his frequent jaunts to the world beyond, they mildly accepted matters "ez somethin' that hed ter be."

A year after, one cheery Christmas morning, a boy-baby was born to Hannah. But by this time her husband had grown tired of this episode in his life—his simple, ignorant wife and her rustic congeners—and being a man devoid of moral principle, deliberately left her, and she never saw him again. For weary months she refused to believe in his perfidy, then, when hope was dead, she made no outcry.

"She hed allers bin a gal of few words," Luther said pityingly.

Her child was the apple of her eye. He was a beautiful, healthy little fellow, but the neighbours really felt it to be their duty to expostulate against the Byleses setting too much store by him. Idols were a snare of the Evil One. But, poor baby! his sad fate embalmed him forever in their sympathies, and many a mountain mother told the story over and over to her sad-eyed little ones. We will tell it in Luther's own words, as he told it with despairing iteration to his last days.

"We wer gone ter th' settlemint fer some notions, Melindy an' me, that mornin', an' Hanner an' Bobby were to hum alone. 'Twer a purty day an' she wer out of doors with him, pickin' posies down thar by the turn in the road, when she jes' heered that colt Burney makin' a racket in the lane.

"Ye know thier's planks thar fer the critturs ter git over the brook; an' thar wer a bad hole into't thet I'd bin meanin' fer ter tinker up a long spell, but it hed kinder passed along an' no harm come till thet thar mornin', when it hed ter be thet Burney must git his foot into't.

"Ye know Hanner's thet soft-hearted she can't 'bide nothin' ter be in trouble, so she jes' leaves Bobby settin' on the edge of the woods, an' tellin' him not ter stir, she goes down ter see ter the colt. Waal, Burney was a restless young crittur, an' was mighty scared, an' she hed trouble ter keep him from breakin' his leg; but she managed ter git him free, an' then she hurried back ter Bobby.

"But, bless you, man, Bobby weren't thar! Jes' his leetle shoe lay by a stun wi' th' posies into't.

"Queer, wa'n't it, thet the minute we come along the road an' I heered Hanner callin' him, I knew somethin' wer wrong! Th' hull settlemint ter a man turned out ter hunt up that leetle creetur, but he wa'n't ter be found, jest ez ef a wild varmint hed cotched him, or the earth swallowed him up.

"But ther' come a time when we jes' hed to give it up an' set down quiet. When it come frost an' cold an' we uns hed ter shet the door of evenin's, 'twere jest ez ef we war shettin' thet baby out, an' it war ez ef we could hear his leetle voice off in th' cold an' dark, wailin', 'Mammy mammy!' Seemed ez ef his

leetle sperrit must be walkin'! An' Hanner! Why, man, 'twere enough ter break a heart of stun ter hear her go on, an' her allors a creetur of sech few words!

"What hev I did thet I should lose my baby this cruel way?" she cried. "Ef I could hev held him in my arms an' kissed his breath away; ef he could a' gone straight from lookin' inter my eyes ter th' angels, I could hev borne it; but oh, ter hev my lammie wanderin', starvin', dyin', an' wonderin' why mammy war so cruel ez not ter come fer his callin'. Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it!"

"Pore child! it did seem ez of she war questionin' the Almighty, but arter a while she quieted down, fer yer know thet is ez hes ter be!"

Only a few more years, however, and Luther repeated the pitiful story no longer, for death claimed him; but his last words were to Hannah, "When I get yonder, daughter, an' find leetle Bobby, I'll tell him how ye grieved 'bout his dyin' thet lonesome way."

After Luther's death his wife speedily followed him, as if she could not exist without his rugged companionship; and Hannah was left alone. Gentle and childlike, she was not incapable. Luther's manner of educating his girl had been to bring her up in a full knowledge of his agricultural operations, so that she was not at a loss to till her farm advantageously.

Physically she was strong and well, and in all probability length of days lay before her. The mountaineers regarded her with pitying favour, and in a manner regarded her as a legacy left in their trust, and were always ready to help her in neighbourly fashion. And she recompensed them as she was able in simple, kindly ways.

A poor woman dying and leaving her boy—a natural, as they called him—homeless, Hannah took him to her home and gave him of her best; and the folks "lowed it wer good fer both of 'em, fer now Hanner could hev companion an' help with th' cheres, an' poor Reub could hev vittles an' house-room."

So the years came and went, bringing seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, until at last there dawned upon Hannah that Christmas morning that old man Crapple and Store-keeper Wray had wished to be a merry one.

In these remote solitudes, Christmas festivities were simple. Although greens were plentiful, the country people never used them to bedeck their dwellings, and Christmas-trees were an innovation that had not yet gladdened the juveniles. But they suspended stockings beside the cavernous fire-places, to which, at gray dawn, stole breathless children, eager to rifle their rude and scanty contents.

Thus it was that Reuben, almost before the day had fairly broken, taking down his blue stocking, chuckled ecstatically over the six sticks of solid sweetness and the peculiarly shaped doughnut-mau found therein.

It was a clear, cold morning. Ice had formed in the water-trough and hung in crystals from the eaves, and every rude post and rail and branch and tiny twig was furred with a delicate frost that was the very witchery of beauty, while the sun-rays, striking down through the encircling mist, kissed the bleak, frowning rocks to a rosy redness.

Here, far remote from the world's tumults, this Christmas morning had an inexpressible calm; the earth seemed waiting for that glorious song to break the silence: "On earth peace, good-will towards men."

When Hannah and the boy went without to tend to the wants of the stock, they were welcomed with evidences of joy. Old Gray whinnied, the pigs squealed lustily, the cattle lowed, and the chickens uttered faint cackles as they disconsolately huddled together. Not until the comfort of these dumb creatures was fully seen to did they return to the house. There Reuben, with his face aglow from the frosty air, had built up in the deep fireplace a breast-work of dry hickory upon the back log and smouldering forestick, from which presently the flame leaped upward in ruddy jets. The breakfast sent forth its savory smell. The malted cat slept on the hearth-stone. An air of homely comfort pervaded all.

After breakfast Hannah tidied the never disorderly kitchen, and because it was Christmas Day, sat down in a sort of Sabbath-day quiet.

"I want ter tell ye why it air Christmas, Reuben," she said.

He sat beside her silently, although he could comprehend little that was not in tangible shape before him; but he sorted his candy and smacked his lips over its sweetness. She was unlettered, but her simple, vivid word-pictures caught his fancy. She told him of the child in the manger. He could see the little red barn, with old Gray in her stall, the rack piled with succulent hay, and the dun oxen looking with mild, astonished eyes at a baby crying there.

"It war a pore place fer a baby," he said. "The mother shouldn't"—

Then his restless eyes wandering, he saw something through the window.

"A man out thar! A big horse!" he cried, and ran joyfully to the door.

Hannah followed him, glad to see a neighbour, but she did not know whose was the animal that was being blanketed and tied to the fence-rail, and the young man who made his way towards the house was a stranger.

"Does Hannah Crawdon live here?" he asked, doffing his cap.

It was the first time in years she had been called by her husband's name.

"Yes, thet air me, tho' it's by my maiden name, Byles, I'm usually called. Come in, come in; tho' I 'low ye're a stranger ter me, ye're welcome all the same, sir! Ye must be cold, ef ye've rid fur. Set by the fire and warm!"

She bustled about with shy, simple hospitality, but the stranger stood silent,

his eyes noting everything; the sanded floor, the spinning wheel in the corner, the strings of dried apples on the walls, the queer delft plates on the dresser shelves, then his gaze came back to the pretty, faded woman with her appealing eyes. His breath came short and hard—he grew pale.

"Mother," he said.

For a few seconds, not a word was said. The clock ticked loudly, the cat purred in the sunlight, a foolish fly lured from its sleeping place buzzed on the window panes. Hannah's eyes dilated. She bent forward.

"Man, ye said mother! Who in God's name air ye?"

"Your son Robert. Heavens! she is dying!"

He caught her and laid her on the settle. She heard his words as through a mist.

Yes, this was death. A spirit had come to her from the next world! Bobby had been sent to fetch her. She was ready, — but she heard faintly Reuben's pitiful whimper, and her gentle heart reached back to the poor, helpless lad, and the dumb creatures she was leaving—if she could just have seen the neighbours, to give them into their charge!

But as the moments went by, and the faintness passed, she grew conscious of a strange reality about this man who was chafing her hands. She heard the fire crackling, the tame robin chirping in his cage, and the words that were spoken by the warm breathing lips.

"Father took me away from here when I was a baby. I always thought you died when I was born. I came to find you as soon as I knew the truth."

The story stopped here. He could not tell her now that his father had never told him his history until the truth came out as that father lay on his death-bed.

"My aunt brought me up. She has been a mother to me."

She listened, hardly comprehending at first, then she started up with the pitiful cry,—

"Then, ye never war lost, ye war took from me? An' ye hev growed up without me! Never knowin' how I've hungered for ye! Why, it war twenty-five year ago ye wer born in this very room, Bobby. It war a Christmas day!"

He kissed her pitifully.

"And I have come back to you on Christmas day, mother. I'am your Christmas present." He tried to laugh, but a sob choked him.

"Thank th' Lord, oh, thank th' Lord!" She held him off, greedily devouring with her eyes his every feature. There was the very dimple in his chin that she had kissed so often in his babyhood; his dark eyes had the look of those soft child-eyes that she had so loved. She was quiet in infinite content. She was like a battered hulk that had drifted into still waters.

"How long ken ye stay with me,

Bobby?" She asked the question as the thought that some time he would leave her disturbed her new found peace.

"Till you have made ready to go with me, mother."

"Would ye take me with ye, Bobby? Oh, praise th' Lord, he hes give ye ter me again! I can't ask no more. I ken die happy thet I've seen ye. But ye've bin brought up different from me, Bobby. It war my pore ways ez ye'r father didn't like, an' they might shame ye too, Bobby. Ye hed best leave me here!"

He turned to her in the beauty of his noble young manhood. To cherish this hurt, injured life was his chief desire.

"Mother, now that I have found you, nothing but death shall part us."

And then she slipped down upon her knees to pour out her soul in devout thanksgiving.

Old man Crapple, who happened in that day, as was his usual custom, to wish Hannah "merry Christmas," astonished his old horse when he came out, after what must have seemed to that unblanketed animal an interminable time, by urging him at full speed toward the settlement. He was like new wine that must find vent. He had the most amazing, astonishing story to tell "how thet leetle, lost Bobby of Hanner Byles' had jes' come back ter her, a growed-up man, this 'ere blessed Christmas day!" and so fast flew the good news that before night-fall many of the mountaineers had actually seen this incredible statement verified in the flesh.

Two weeks later old man Crapple and his better half, who were jogging along the road that led past Hannah's cabin, had to stop to take in the desolate significance of the smokeless chimney and boarded-up doors and windows.

"I tell ye Adam," said Mrs Crapple, "it war powerful good of Bobby ter let her take thet poor Reub along; but, lawsy! it did seem jest ez ef thar war nothin' in th' world he wouldn't do ter please Hanner."

"Waal, waal, Mariar," he said slowly, "Hanner's gone, sure enough, but I don't expect ez how I'll ever git over the astonishingness of that leetle dead Bobby of hern, comin' in on her a man growed thet Christmas day!"—*Margaret Hammond Eckerson.*

### A Christmas Song.

SHALL we sing you a song of the Christmas time,  
When the angels came down with their glory,  
And sang through the night in the shepherd's sight  
The song that is so famous in story—  
How the Father above in pity and love,  
Had come softly through the star-sprinkled blue  
And laid in a manger a far brighter Star?  
Yes, we will sing it, and sing it to You.

I know a path by angels trod  
Before the world was old;  
But o'er it came in later days  
A multitude untold—

A shining host, a praising host—  
Let God be praised for them,  
Who sang his praise in lofty lays  
O'er hallowed Bethlehem!

No tongue can tell the sacred pomp  
That swept from heaven that day,  
And trailed its glory past the spheres,  
To where the Infant lay—  
Lift up your eyes in vast surprise,  
Ye shepherds, on the scene,  
And see the beaming forms that hang  
And the heavens and earth between!

Upon their heads are golden crowns,  
Their robes are white as snow,  
Sweet lightnings from their faces flash  
Upon the vale below;  
Before the glory of the Lord  
The stars turn pale and flee—  
Oh, what a sight that blessed night  
For shepherd swains to see!

Through all the still and scented air  
There comes a deeper calm,  
As it from fear lest it should hear  
Naught of the coming psalm—  
And now the air grows sweeter still,  
Slow beat the balmy wings,  
Clear o'er the hushed and raptured earth  
The choir of angels sings.

And far across Judean hills  
Swell forth the floods of praise—  
I would that music such as this  
Might sweeten all my days;  
For lo, 'tis Paradise to hear  
The glory of that sound,  
That mounts so grandly to the skies,  
So sweetly seeks the ground.

Full many an age has passed  
Since that great song was given  
Which sweetened all our acrid air,  
And wedded earth to heaven;  
But still each year we seem to hear  
The angels sing again,  
The dear old song, the grand old song,  
In sweet and lofty strain.

And ever as we give our gifts,  
And homes with garlands weave,  
Our hearts will turn their backward gaze  
On that first Christmas eve;  
And sing his praise in joyful lays  
By whom the Child was given,  
Whose advent here such mighty cheer  
Gave all the choirs of heaven.

### "Unto Me."

BY SARA J. DUNCAN.

WHEN the branches crack and glisten,  
And the bells ring out andasten,  
Wheeling out of Christmas snow—  
Out of skies of long ago—  
Many thought-birds come and sing  
Sweeter than their friends of spring.  
You can find them if you search,  
And they're apt to fly in church,  
Once I caught one as it flew  
Hopping round from pew to pew,  
And it sang, at my desire,  
Rather better than the choir.

Oh, the song was clearer, higher,  
Than the most expensive choir!  
And the sense did chime far sweeter  
Than all rhyme in any metre;  
But the burden of its singing  
While the Christmas bells were ringing  
Was just this: that Christ on earth,  
On the night of his glad birth,  
Lies in many a little cot  
That the stars have quite forgot,  
Stretches out a quivering hand  
Where the city outcasts stand,

Knowing hunger, knowing cold,  
Naked, sick, and poor and old;—  
Still is with us in such guise  
As we'll know in Paradise.  
"Ye have done it unto me."  
That white snow-flake charity  
Crystallized tear that love sets free,  
Dropped on rays of beggary  
Falls upon Divinity.



### The Bells Across the Snow.

O CHRISTMAS, merry Christmas!  
Is it really come again,  
With its memories and greetings,  
With its joy and with its pain?  
There's a minor in the carol,  
And a shadow in the light,  
And a spray of *oress twi*ing  
With the holly wreath to-night,  
And the hush is never broken  
By laughter light and low,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the bells across the snow.

O Christmas, merry Christmas!  
'Tis not so very long  
Since other voices blended  
In the carol and the song!  
If we could but hear them singing  
As they are singing now,  
If we could but see the shining  
Of the crown on each dear brow,  
There would be no sigh to smother,  
No hidden tear to flow,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the bells across the snow.

O Christmas, merry Christmas,—  
This it never more can be;  
We cannot bring again the days  
Of our unshadowed glee.  
But Christmas, happy Christmas,  
Sweet herald of good-will,  
With holy songs of glory  
Brings holy gladness still.  
For peace and hope may brighten,  
And patient love may glow,  
As we listen in the starlight  
To the bells across the snow.  
—Frances Ridley Havergal.

### A Christmas Coronation.

IN the ancient cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, France, there is a tomb of wonderful historic interest. The traveller thinks of it as he enters the solemn edifice, and beholds in the dim distance the chancel oriel burning with mysterious splendours.

"Carlo-Magno," reads the inscription. It is the tomb of an emperor, one of the greatest who ever wore the crown of the Caesars—Charlemagne!

He was king of the Franks, of the peoples of middle Europe and the nations of the north; he conquered the Saxons, and in tremendous struggles defeated all foes, until at last the Alps and the Baltic, the Rhine and the Rhone, were alike parts of his splendid empire. He conquered the Saracens of the south; he added crown to crown, kingdom to kingdom, until Europe lay at his feet.

At the Easter festival in 774, he visited Rome in splendour. A great procession came out to meet him, headed by the Pope. The people hailed him with hallelujahs, the children waved green branches, the clergy in princely vestments sang, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

In the year 800, he was summoned to Rome. The cardinals said: "Let us honour this most powerful Defender of the Faith with a grand Christmas gift—the crown of the Roman world."

The Pope and clergy prepared for Christmas ceremonies of the most joyous and imposing character. It was arranged that though Charlemagne should reach Rome before Christmas, he should have no knowledge of the coronation that awaited him. The

clergy, nobles, and people were to assemble. When he should come into the church to attend mass, and should bow his head to receive the wafer—then he should be suddenly crowned and hailed Emperor of the World.

It was one of the most poetic events of history. The Christmas day came, a beautiful day out of the skies of Italy. The Emperor entered the church in humility, and bowed before the altar. Suddenly, Pope Leo uplifted the crown of the Roman world, and set it upon his head. There arose then a great shout of joy. Clergy and nobles exclaimed in unison: "Long live Charles Augustus, Crowned of God, Emperor of the Romans!"

Christianity possessed Europe now. The Bethlehem Star, shining its eight centuries, lighted all the lands.

### Christmas Legends.

THERE is in the home life of the Canadian, especially farmer, at Christmas time, much that brings close to the mind the picture of birth in the lowly manger. Many traditions still live about mysterious occurrences during the Christmas night, and these linger still with all their mellowness of primeval devotion among the homesteads on the verge of the forest or the cottage upon the bleak prairie. The infant's birth took place in a rude manger, among the stalled cattle, when, according to the general belief, cold night-winds blew, and the Divine Babe and his mother were but feebly protected in a chilly manger. One old tradition in particular, tells us at the moment of the child's birth the cattle in the manger fell upon their knees. How often by the lantern's light through the cold night have little ones crept out to the barn where the cattle were in their stalls as the hands of the clock neared the hour of midnight, to see if the cattle were kneeling; for the tradition relates that at the precise moment in each year since the babe was born all dumb animals, in reverence, fall upon their knees. There was another tradition, too, which Shakespeare puts in the mouth of *Marcellus* in "Hamlet," that during the night of the nativity the cock crow from dark to dawn:

"Some says that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.  
And then they say no spirit dares stir abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
Nor fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

Poor company may be a little better than none. Bad company is certainly a great deal worse. One scabby sheep spoils the flock. One rotten apple will often ruin a dozen which may lie around it; while all the sound ones in the world will not restore one that is decayed. Just so a man who is corrupt will infect many others.

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