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# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Vol. XII.]

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1892.

F

[No. 52.]

## "A Merrie Christmas."

BY F. R. HAVERGAL.

A MERRIE CHRISTMAS to you!  
For we serve the Lord with mirth,  
And we carol forth glad tidings  
Of our holy Saviour's birth.  
So we keep the olden greeting  
With its meaning deep and true,  
And wish a Merrie Christmas  
And a Happy New Year to you.

Oh, yes! a Merrie Christmas,  
With blithest song and smile,  
Bright with the thought of him who dwelt  
On earth a little while,  
That we might dwell for ever  
Where never falls a tear;  
So a Merrie Christmas to you,  
And a happy, happy year!

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

BY DORA HARRISON.

CHRISTMAS Eve! The bells were ringing and glad hearts singing as Willie and Mamie Gordon, warmly clad, walked down the street with their papa and mamma to buy Christmas presents for the little cousins who were coming to spend Christmas with them, and with whom they expected to have such a merry time.

Soon they entered one of the large stores, and Mamie's and Willie's pleasure grew as one after another of the pretty toys were snugly stowed away in papa's basket.

It was full at last: so full that the cover had to stand away up, and papa had to carry a parcel in his arm.

"The only thing we need now," said Willie, as they were almost home, "is a Christmas tree, I do wish we could have one."

Before papa could reply, they came upon a huge snow man, and in their delight at seeing that, the children forgot the Christmas tree until, as they turned away, they came face to face with a little boy dragging along a real green Christmas tree.

"O mamma, mamma, a Christmas tree!" cried Mamie. Mrs. Gordon stopped at the sight of the little boy carrying a tree so much taller than himself, and asked him what he was going to do with it.

"I want to sell it, please madame," he said, "and won't you buy it please?" he added wistfully.

"O mamma, do," whispered Willie; and Mamie gave her dress a pull which meant volumes, while her childish heart went out in pity for him as she saw how thin his coat was, and noticed the big patch on his shoulder, and she could not help but glance down at her own rich warm coat and muff.

So Mrs. Gordon bought the tree and oh! the joy in Jamie's heart just then as he stretched out his hand for the shining silver.

"Where shall I take it, please?" he asked.

"Just in here my little man," said Mrs. Gordon. So through the large gate and up the long walk Jamie carried the tree—not heavy now, oh, no, nor could it be with the money in his pocket.

We will leave Willie and Mamie with

light and happy hearts dancing round the tree in their large parlour, and follow Jamie who, with feet as light as theirs, quickly sped over the ground, stopping now here and now there, to add something choice to his store of luxuries for his sick mother.

off the tree, and it was hard to make it fit in the board, so that it would stand up, but the dollar was worth much more trouble than all that, and then the toys he had spent so much time over, were they not all sold, and mother can have to and smug



THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

At last they too were all bought, and around corners, through alleys and down snow-clad steps, he hurries home, his heart keeping time to the merry jingle of the bells.

How glad he was he went for the tree. The snow was cold as it fell in his face and down his neck and sleeves as he shook it

and bread and medicine and broths for ever so long now, and the mother smiled upon her noble boy, as one after another proof of his love was laid upon the bed, and thanked God that they were not forgotten, and that he who remembered even the sparrows had remembered them, too, this Christmas Eve.

## GENEROUS TO AN ENEMY.

BY FANNIE ROOPER FRUDON.

ONE of the great horrors of war is that the remains of the dead are often little cared for, if they fall into the hands of their enemies; and their friends perhaps never know what has been the fate of their loved ones, beyond the bare announcement of their names among the "killed."

Of course, the soul is of the first importance, and if that immortal part is safe with Jesus, it does not matter so much what becomes of the perishing body. For the Bible tells us, that "them that sleep (that is, die) shall the Lord bring with him" when he comes again. He will raise from their graves, or wherever their poor bodies may be sleeping, all that died in him, and they shall come forth new, fresh, glorious, like unto the resurrected body our risen Saviour has taken to himself.

And yet, after all, we naturally wish to have the bodies of those we love properly cared for after death. A letter or paper was found on the body of the dead man. Probably it contained some request, that he wished to be complied with, in the case of his death; or possibly some particulars about himself. In either case, we may hope that he will have the remains decently buried, and the dead man's fate informed of his fate.

When two nations are at war, each thinks itself entitled to do all possible harm to the other. They send armies into each other's country to fight and to plunder, and they fit out vessels to go to sea and destroy all the vessels belonging to the opposite party that can be found. While the majority have their worst passions thus excited, he is indeed a generous and kindly man, who acts either justly or fairly toward the enemy.

In the year 1746, when England was at war with Spain, and each was destroying many vessels belonging to the other, a merchant ship, with a valuable cargo belonging to London, sprung a leak while on her voyage between Jamaica and Cuba. The men, in order to save their lives, ran the vessel into the port of Havana, a Spanish town, and they felt almost sure they should be held as prisoners of war, and their vessel seized as a prize. The captain went ashore to deliver her up to the Spanish governor, and to entreat that he and his men might not be severely dealt with as prisoners. To his great surprise, the governor declined to seize either the men or the vessel, saying, "If you had come with hostile intentions, you would have been a fair prize, but since you come as distressed seamen, common humanity requires that I should aid, instead of oppressing you. You have full liberty to repair your vessel in our port, and to trade so far as may be necessary to pay charges; and when it is again sea-worthy you may depart in peace."

The leaky ship was accordingly repaired in the Spanish port, and, when ready to sail, the noble governor gave the captain a pass to protect him from the war vessels of Spain till he was beyond Bermuda. So she reached England with her valuable cargo all safe, and her officers had learned a lesson of generous kindness toward all who are in any wise troubled or afflicted.

A Christmas Hymn.

"What means this glory round our feet,  
The Magi mus'd, more bright than  
morn'?"  
And, con-stant strong and sweet  
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

"What means this star," the shepherd said,  
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"  
And angels, answering overhead,  
Sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

"Tis eighteen hundred years and more  
Since these sweet oracles were dumb;  
We wait for him like them of yore;  
Alas, he seems so long to come!"

But it was said in words of gold  
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,  
That little children might be bold  
In perfect trust to come to him.

All round about our feet shall shine  
A light like that the wise men saw,  
If we our loving wills incline  
To that sweet life which is the law.

So shall we learn to understand  
The simple faith of shepherds then,  
And, kindly clasping hand in hand,  
Sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

All babyhood he holdeth,  
All motherhood enfoldeth,—  
Yet who hath seen his face?"

"Oh, the nearness of the Christ-child,  
When for a sacred space,  
He nests in our very homes,  
Light of the human race,  
We know him and we love him,  
No man to us need prove him,—  
Yet who hath seen his face?"

ROB'S CHRISTMAS.

BY KATE SUMNER GATES.

"I AM just as sorry as I can be," said mamma, as she tucked Nell and Sue up for the night. "But we cannot have any Christmas this year. Papa has been sick so long that our money is almost gone, and mamma will have to do all she can to get enough to pay the rent and buy food. But we will not complain at anything, will we, if we can only have papa well again?"

Nell and Sue put up their tear-stained faces for kisses, and tried to say good-night cheerfully, but to have no Christmas was—dreadful, wasn't it? Mamma knew it was, and a tear dropped on Rob's face as she bent to kiss him.

"You deserve the merriest Christmas, Laddie," she said tenderly, "and mother would give it to you if she only could. Still, we will be happy because papa is spared to us, and my brave little man will help me make it as pleasant as we can for the children, won't he?"

Sturdy little Rob choked back a sob, and put his arms around his mother's neck.

"Course I will," he whispered, as he gave the good-night kiss.

"Won't it be dreadful, Robbie," said Nell, when they were alone—"no tree, no presents, and no nice dinner! I'm hungry all the time now, it seems to me."

"So am I," piped Sue, mournfully. "I don't get full'd up at all now."

"Neither do I," said Rob, but I guess mamma is the happiest, 'cause she don't eat hardly anything; she saves it for papa and us, and she cries lots."

"Papa looked as if he had been crying, too, this afternoon," said Nell.

"P'raps he's sorry 'cause we can't have any Christmas," sighed Sue.

Rob lay awake a long time after his sisters went to sleep.

"It's dreadful to all feel so bad," he thought. "I wish I could do something, and a'm just going to see if I can't. I'm 'most a big boy, and I'm mamma's little man—she says I am. I'm going—to help her—somehow."

And that was the last Rob knew until daylight.

After breakfast he took the pail and went up to Mr. Green's for the milk.

"Is Mr. Green at home?" he asked. "I should like to see him, please, on business."

Mrs. Green laughed.

"Business, you little midget, you don't know what the word means, but you will find him out in the barn."

Rob trudged out there valiantly, though his heart was thumping furiously.

"Well, my little man, what is it?" asked Mr. Green, kindly.

"I—should like, I want to know"—stammered Rob, forgetting every word of the speech he had so carefully planned.

"I'm mother's little man, you know, and I must help her all I can now papa's sick, and the children feel so bad 'cause we can't have any Christmas. Don't you believe I could earn something? I could do lots of things, and p'raps papa and mamma would feel better if they could have enough to eat once. We're hungry, and I guess they are."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Green, blowing his nose vigorously. "I shouldn't wonder a bit, and I should really like a boy about your size to help me a few days. So you just come on, and I'll pay you with fixings for the best Christmas dinner you ever had."

Well, truly, it seemed to Rob that he was a foot taller going home.

"We're going to have Christmas," he cried, rushing in. "I'm going to work this very day."

Mamma sat down and cried, then she went in and told papa, and the tears rolled down his thin, white cheeks.

"The dear little man!" he said tenderly; and he seemed to grow better from that very minute.

It was surprising how many errands Mr. Green had to be done, and when he hadn't any, Mrs. Green had.

"I don't see how we could have managed to get along without this youngster, do you, mother?" said Mr. Green every little while. "We shall have to load his basket pretty heavy to pay for all the steps he has taken."

"I think," said Rob to his mother, "that we can have a little bit of a tree. Mrs. Green is going to give me some popcorn and oranges. We can give those to papa and the children, and I've got something for you. I guess I'm 'most too big a boy for presents."

You should have seen the children trudging home in the snow the night before Christmas. Rob's basket was so heavy he could hardly carry it.

"Are you sure I've earned all that?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly," said Mrs. Green; "it's worth a great deal to old folks to have some one take steps."

Then Sue had a bundle, and Nell the cutest tree; "Just right for us," Rob said.

But, brave as Rob was, we could not keep back the tears after he was in bed that night.

"I'm gladder than anything that I could—truly—be mamma's little man," he sobbed, "but I just can't help wishing that I was a little boy, too, and—could have a sled like Harry Grey's."

But what do you think! When Rob, Nell and Sue went into the sitting-room to see the tree Christmas morning, there was just such a sled there! Wasn't that splendid? Rob thought so, and it was such a nice Christmas! Papa said he gained ten pounds at least, and mamma declared it was the happiest day of her life.

"I'm so happy it seems as if I couldn't stand it," said Rob, "but I do b'love I'm happiest 'cause I helped."

TEMPERANCE AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

WITH profound thankfulness I make the statement that very nearly all the American missionaries are total abstainers. I believe every Congregationalist missionary, every Methodist Episcopal, every Northern Baptist, every Northern Presbyterian, and every missionary of many smaller bodies of Christians is a total abstainer; but not all American Episcopalian missionaries, not all Southern Presbyterians, not all Southern Baptists. Not more than half the British missionaries are total abstainers. It is a cheering sign, however, that nearly all young missionaries from the British Isle have adopted this principle and practice. There is more than one British mission station in India where all gray-haired missionaries, male and female, are regular, daily drinkers, and every young one is an ardent abstainer. In all my journey I have met with but one total abstaining missionary from the continent of Europe, and I have heard of only two others. Most, if not all, of the continental boards send out wine and beer to their missionaries as openly as they do other supplies.

The practice of total abstinence has been made a prerequisite to church membership in many missions and stations, as, for example, the American board mission in Japan, the Baptist mission in Burnah, the Methodist Episcopal missions in Asia and Africa, but not in Italy. But this good principle and practice has not been required by all total abstaining missionaries. In some instances, missionaries have been governed by the usage of the Church at home to which they belong.

In many lands nearly every person from Christian countries the natives ever see is a drinker, frequently a heavy drinker. Ambassadors, consuls, lower officials in connection with legations, and consulates, merchants, soldiers, sailors, nearly all drink, and many are frequently intoxicated. It is not strange, then, that the idea that to drink is a Christian habit should become fixed in the native mind. In India it has become so to such an extent that drunkard and Christian are interchangeable terms. It is often said when a Hindoo joins a church, "He has become a drunkard."

Mission churches have lost some of their most useful members through drunkenness, and even gifted pastors have been deposed for the same cause.

STANLEY'S DARKEST AFRICA.

STANLEY'S great book is throughout of extraordinary vigour, and it frequently rises into a passionate eloquence which deserves to be called literature. The descriptions of scenery all have a picturesqueness and vividness which it would be difficult to surpass; the moral fervour of many parts of the story is Carlylean in its intensity. Here, for instance, is a passage which surely has qualities of great writing about it which should make it worthy of attention. He is describing those desolate nights of semi-starvation, when dying forms haunted him in the darkness, and he says: "Out of that pall-black darkness came the eerie shapes that haunt the fever-land, that gibe and mock the lonely man, and weave figures of flame and draw fiery forms in the mantle of the night; and whispers breathed through the heavy air of graves, and worms, and forgetfulness, and a demon lurked in the dazed brain that 'twere better to rest than to think with a sickening heart; and the sough of the wind through the crowns of the thick, black bush seemed to sigh and moan, 'Lost, lost, lost! Thy labour and grief are in vain!' Comfortless days upon days; brave lives are sobbing their last; man after man rolls down to the death, to mildew and rot, and thou wilt be left alone! 'Allah Ho Akbar!' was the cry that rang through the gloom from a man with a breaking heart. The words went pealing along through the dark, and they raised the echoes of 'God is great!' within me. Why should a Moslem recall a Christian to thoughts of his God? 'Ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?' And, lo! worthier thoughts possess the mind, the straining of the eyes through the darkness is relaxed, and the sight is inverted to see dumb witnesses of past mercies on this or that forgotten occasion; one memory begets another, until the stubborn heart is melted, and our needs are laid, as upon a tablet, before the Great Deliverer?" There is pathos, piety, and power here, and even a touch of Christianity.

BACKBONE.

ONE thing which Christians, as well as others, need at the present day is backbone. Not a backbone like a ramrod, that cannot yield or bend, but a well articulated spinal column which is strong enough to hold a man upright and keep him from being crushed beneath the burdens that press upon him. These are the days of easy-going piety, and men are too often ruled by compromise rather than by conscience.

Says Mr. Spurgeon: "Oak has given place to willow. Everybody has grown limp. Out of the generality of limppness has come an admiration for it. A man cannot speak a plain word without being accused of bitterness, and if he denounces error he is narrow-minded: for all must join the universal admiration society or be placed under ban and be howled down."

Now, in such a condition of things as this there is special call, not for stubbornness and crustiness, but for a gentle, patient, unyielding conscientiousness and firmness, which anchors the soul to the everlasting rock, and causes the heart to rest on him who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who will never leave nor forsake us.

SANTA CLAUS.

SANTA CLAUS was one of the oldest ideas of the Celtic west in pagan times, as he was of the pagan east before. In Christian times he was still regarded with religious reverence, sitting—as he had sat for ages in Egypt and elsewhere—in the arms of his mother. Santa Claus was, in fact, the child Jesus in the middle ages; and throughout that period the festive creed of Germany, and all Celtic Europe, was that he visited all family dwellings of good Christians on the eve of his anniversary, and brought with him gifts and presents for the children. The truth of this original belief is plainly enough indicated by the word "claus," which, in the gothic or ancient German, means "child" and "son." Santa Claus formerly meant the "Holy Child."

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, DECEMBER 24, 1892.

CHRISTMAS.

THE blessed Christmas time knows no difference in nation or people or kindred or tongue. Wherever the wonderful story of that first Christmas in Bethlehem is told there prevails the same spirit of peace on earth to men of good will. For did he not make of one blood all the nations of the earth? Well may the poet say:

"God rest ye little children, let nothing you affright;  
For Jesus Christ your Saviour was born this happy night"

Wherever the story of Jesus has gone there childhood has grown dearer and motherhood more sacred. Oh tell this best of all stories to the little ones this Christmas time. Tell it to them so that it will be dearer than any fairy tale ever heard. We would not agree with some to abolish the sweet myth of Santa Claus, or St. Nicholas, or Kris Kingle. But we would have the little ones early know the sweet truth that underlies the myth. Children love myth in its place, but they love truth more, and the boy or girl who is not early told all the story of the Christ child is robbed of the best part of its inheritance.

"Oh, the beauty of the Christ-child,  
The gentleness, the grace,  
The smiling, loving tenderness,  
The infantile embrace."

Christmas on the "Polly."

It was the good ship "Polly," and she sailed  
the wintry sea,  
For ships must sail, though fierce the gale,  
and a precious freight had she;  
Twas the captain's little daughter stood be-  
side her father's chair,  
And illumed the dingy cabin with the sun-  
shine of her hair.

With a yo-heave-ho, and a yo-heave-ho!  
For ships must sail  
Tho' fierce the gale,  
And loud the tempests blow.

The captain's fingers rested on the pretty,  
curly head,  
"To-morrow will be Christmas-day," the  
little maiden said;  
"Do you suppose that Santa Claus will find  
us on the sea,  
And make believe the stove-pipe is a chimney  
—just for me?"

Loud laughed the jovial captain, and "By  
my faith," he cried,  
"If he should come we'll let him know he  
has a friend inside!"

And many a rugged sailor cast a loving glance  
that night  
At the stove-pipe where a lonely little stock-  
ing fluttered white.

With a yo-heave-ho, and a yo-heave-ho!  
For ships must sail  
Tho' fierce the gale,  
And loud the tempests blow.

On the good ship "Polly" the Christmas sun  
looked down,  
And on a smiling little face beneath a golden  
crown,  
No happier child he saw that day, on sea or  
on the land,  
Than the captain's little daughter with her  
treasures in her hand.

For never was a stocking so filled with curious  
things!  
There were bracelets made of pretty shells,  
and rosy coral strings;  
An elephant carved deftly from a bit of ivory  
tusk;  
A fan, an alligator's tooth, and a little bag of  
musk.

Not a tar aboard the "Polly" but felt the  
Christmas cheer,  
For the captain's little daughter was to every  
sailor dear.  
They heard a Christmas carol in the shriek-  
ing, wintry gust,  
For a little child had touched them by her  
simple, loving trust.

With a yo-heave-ho, and a yo-heave-ho!  
For ships must sail  
Tho' fierce the gale,  
And loud the tempests blow.

—St. Nicholas.

The Story of a Hymn-Book.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEETING TO PART, PARTING TO MEET.

THE sequel must be told as it was  
collected in course of time from various  
sources.

When poor Lizzie Cutler awoke, and by  
and by sought her hymn-book, it was miss-  
ing. Little Bob searched everywhere, but  
found it not. Lizzie was distressed, Bob  
was enraged. Mrs. Cutler declared, with  
the most awful asseverations, that she  
knew nothing of it. But shrewd little  
Bob had his suspicions, and said, "Never  
mind, Liz, we shall find it again; you may  
depend on it she's 'popped' it."

Mr. Duncan and his friend Mark Hob-  
day, coming in to visit the dying girl, were  
informed of the cause of her distress.  
And when the hymn-book was described,  
and Bob told how he had found it at  
London Bridge Station, Mark exclaimed,  
"Why, it must be mine yours, Duncan!"  
And when Duncan looked a little puzzled,  
Mark explained—

"The hymn-book that has been with me  
in all my wanderings—the one you gave  
me years ago."

Lizzie was consoled by the gift of  
another book, with nice large print, be-  
cause, as Bob said, he could spell large  
letters so much better.

But others were now interested in the  
recovery of the book.  
In vain, however, were pawnbrokers

visited, and public-houses. For, alas! as  
Henry Duncan too well knew, there were  
publicans who would take the children's  
shoes, or a family Bible, in exchange for  
drink.

Lizzie now began to fail rapidly. And  
one day, when her mother was absent,  
and only little Bob was with her, she  
breathed her last. Poor Bob, who was  
doing his best to read to his sister, did  
not know she was gone till he missed the  
short quick sound of her breathing, and,  
looking at her, saw that her eyes were fixed.

When her daughter was dead, a sense  
of her wickedness came over Mrs. Cutler.  
Remorse and prolonged indulgence in  
drink had a powerful effect upon her.  
She would not stay to do more than  
look at Lizzie's dead body. Rushing from  
the spot, she tramped from place to place,  
trying to escape from the accusations of  
conscience and the terrors of a dis-  
ordered brain.

At length she was found, many miles  
from London, ragged and bonnetless, a  
fronzed wanderer by the wild sea-shore.  
She ended her days in the paupers' lunatic  
asylum.

Little Bob found a friend in Henry  
Duncan, and was by his kind interposition  
received into an orphanage for destitute  
children.

Before, however, little Bob Cutler dis-  
appears from this history, let it be said  
that it was a hint from his sharp and shrewd  
mind that led to the discovery of the lost  
hymn-book, and the happy association of  
its several owners.

When every search and inquiry had  
been made, Bob one day struck out the  
bright idea of the second-hand book-stall.  
Diligent search was made in various  
directions. At last Mr. Duncan found his  
way to the London-road book-stall, and  
having given a description of the missing  
volume, and of the person who most likely  
offered it for sale, the wooden-legged  
vendor of literature remembered the  
circumstances, impressed upon his mind  
by the fact of his having sold the book  
almost as soon as he got it, while, as he  
said, "hymn-books, and sermons, and  
that sort of thing, are generally very slow  
sale."

"Nay," he said, "What's more, I think  
I can tell you who bought it." And from  
the depths of a bulky and dirty pocket-  
book he produced a card—Gilbert Guest-  
ling. The Hawthorns, Oakshade.

That night's post took a letter from Henry  
Duncan to Oakshade, and Gilbert Guest-  
ling knew how the hymn-book had been  
rescued from the deep, and something of  
its interesting story since.

The singular circumstances led to the  
formation of a friendship between Duncan  
and Gilbert. Mark Hobday, too, was  
invited to The Hawthorns, and it was  
around the glowing fire in the very kitchen  
where of old Mr. Richmond had preached,  
and old Allen Nichols, the shepherd, had  
painfully fluted, that the story of the  
hymn-book was recounted. The old  
farmer and his wife were gone. Their son  
Clement now held the farm, and his sister  
Alice found a home with him, as she had  
done with her parents.

I had the satisfaction of again taking  
part in a service in the kitchen, though a  
neat chapel now adorned the village of  
Oakshade. And Henry Duncan was the  
preacher, and Mark Hobday added words  
of prayer, and Gilbert Guestling led the  
singing from my own pages.

All that is past now. Mark has again  
crossed the Atlantic, and is settled in his  
Western home. His old parents have  
been called away, and entered with humble  
confidence into rest. Little Bob Cutler  
spent his last summer holiday at the farm.  
He is a big, stout lad now, no trace of the  
London gamin remaining upon him, and  
next year he is to go to Mr. Hobday in  
Philadelphia.

And Henry Duncan and his good wife—  
for he is no longer alone have found  
another field for their devoted and self-  
sacrificing labours.

Alice Wilnot I can never speak of her  
by her marriage name has gone to join  
her husband in the better country. Thirty  
years of separation have been succeeded  
by a blissful union, which can know neither  
interruption nor end. And as I think of  
those that are gone, and of those that are  
following after, I feel that no song of mine  
can be more suitable as I close this

narrative than that glorious outburst of  
poetry and piety

"Come let us join our friends above  
That have obtained the prize,  
And on the eagle wings of love  
To joys eternal rise:  
Let all the saints terrestrial sing  
With those to glory gone;  
For all the servants of our King,  
In earth and heaven, are one.

"One family we dwell in him,  
One Church, above, beneath,  
Though now divided by the stream,  
The narrow stream of death:  
One army of the living God,  
To his command we bow;  
Part of his host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now."

"Of whom the whole family in heaven  
and earth is named."—EPIH. 3. 15.

THE END.

A CHRISTMAS MESSENGER.

BY KATE L. BROWN.

It was nearing Christmas, and the Gray  
children were busy as other little people  
are apt to be at this glad time.

Every moment out of school was made  
useful. Alan locked himself up in his den  
and woke the echoes pounding and plaining.  
Madge and Cecil vanished into their own  
room and shut the door. If mamma  
chanced to come in, they would jump and  
scream, and cover things with their aprons.

But little Marjorie could have no share  
in these merry mysteries.

Two weeks before, when coming home  
from Kindergarten, she had slipped on a  
bit of ice and fallen. The little hand that  
had been stretched out to save herself  
received all the force of the shock.

The doctor called it a sprain and said, as  
he bound it up, "Let all these fingers rest  
a long time, and not do any work."

"Nothing for Christmas, Uncle Doctor!"  
sobbed Marjorie with crimson cheeks.

"Nothing for Christmas, pet," said  
Uncle Doctor firmly yet kindly. "All the  
merry little men have had a hard blow,  
and if we do not let them rest they may not  
be able to work again for many months."

Poor, dear Marjorie! In the Kinder-  
garten where so many things begun for the  
home people and her Sunday schoolteacher.  
Was she to be the only one who was not to  
be a giver this year? After the first few  
painful days Marjorie went to Kindergarten  
as usual.

She could do very little while there with  
Mr. Right hand in a sling. But she was  
happier to go, and listened more atten-  
tively than ever.

"I'm so glad it wasn't my tongue," she  
told her mamma in confidence. "for then  
I couldn't sing or tell about things."

As Christmas drew near the weight upon  
the little heart grew heavier and heavier.  
At last one afternoon mamma found her  
curled up on the sitting room sofa, crying  
very real tears.

"Come in my lap, lambkin, and tell all  
about it," said this dear mother.

So the brown curls were pillowed on  
mamma's shoulder, and the story was soon  
given.

"Christmas means giving," sobbed Mar-  
jorie, "everyone says so. Heavenly  
Father gave us the baby Jesus, the wise  
men gave presents, people give things to  
each other. I'm left out cause I can't give.  
It won't be a truly Christmas."  
Mamma wiped away the tears.

"Why, darling, you can give something,  
even if the hands are not strong enough to  
wave and sew. You can give the sweetest  
thing of all."

"Oh mamma dear, what?"

"You can give your patience, for one  
thing. That is a beautiful thing to give on  
Christmas day. The dear heavenly Father  
would be glad to see those patient,  
good little hands, than all the beautiful  
work they might do if they were well and  
strong. The angels gave their songs of joy  
and the shepherds their gladness. These  
were just as much gifts to the little child  
in the manger as the gold and jewels the  
wise men brought."

"Why can't I learn a carol and sing it  
at breakfast, and then go to Uncle  
Doctor's and sing it there, and Miss  
Faith's, too?"

"That is a lovely idea, Marjorie. You  
can be a messenger of joy as the angels  
were."

So when Christmas morning came the  
family were made glad by the sweet music  
of the little Christmas messenger.

Uncle Doctor's people were still at the  
table, when a little figure appeared in the  
doorway.

Her arms were full of packages from the  
family, and there she stood with shining  
eyes and flushed cheeks as the sweet notes  
and sweeter words rang out.

"You are the best present we've had  
yet," said Uncle Doctor.

On the way home was a gloomy looking  
cottage where Andrew Craig and his wife,  
Janet, lived. "I wonder if they've had  
any Christmas," thought Marjorie as she  
paused before the door. The old couple  
were just eating their scanty morning meal  
when a sweet voice stole in upon them.  
Was it an angel in its white cloak and hat  
singing so cheerily?

"Good news to you;  
To great and small,  
Good news to you I bring?  
God sends to-day his noblest Son,  
To be your Lord and King.  
Bring open wide your hearts, O men,  
Receive God's Christmas gift again."

Was it an angel? "Go to the church  
to-day, Janet," said Andrew Craig, "and  
thank God for us both. We've almost for-  
gotten him." And while the wife was away,  
the invalid took down an old book that  
had dust on its cover, and with wet eyes  
read again the story of the first Christmas  
Day.

A CHRISTMAS MISSION.

Such a stormy Christmas morning as it  
was! The snow lay in great drifts along  
the village streets, and was still falling—  
the white flakes whirling and flying until  
they almost blinded one. God help the  
poor on such a day!

Margaret was very happy that Christmas  
morning, in spite of the storm without, for  
everything within her home was so cosy  
and beautiful and loving; so many gifts  
had been showed upon her that she  
scarcely knew whom to thank first.

"I have too much," she said; "every-  
body is too good to me," and the blue eyes  
glistered with tears.

She was just going to breakfast when  
she overheard the servants talking of a poor  
woman, who had been found the night  
before, in a miserable shanty, without food  
or fire. Immediately Margaret must know  
where to find her. They told her as well  
as they could. Before they knew what she  
was about, she had a basketful of nourish-  
ing food and dainties packed, and in a few  
moments was prepared to go out in the  
storm.

"Miss Margaret, it is not fit for you to  
be going out in this storm," said Ellen, the  
cook, "you will get your death."

"I guess not, Ellen," said Margaret,  
laughing rather soberly. "If some people  
can stand this weather without food and  
fire, I certainly can in my comfortable  
clothing."

But you have not had your own break-  
fast."

"Do you think that I could enjoy it  
while I knew that some one was starving?  
Why, Ellen, every mouthful would choke  
me."

She soon found the poor creature she  
was seeking, to whom she seemed an angel  
as she entered the door and came to the  
pallet upon which she lay. And so she  
was an angel one of God's "messengers"  
sent to cheer and comfort one of his weary  
children.

Margaret soon found a neighbour to  
build a warm fire, and make things as com-  
fortable as possible under the circum-  
stances, while she herself saw that the  
poor woman ate a good breakfast.

She then left her, promising to come  
again soon. She wondered why it was that  
the way home seemed so short and the air  
so much warmer. Was it not because she  
had received in her heart the blessing of  
him who said, "Inasmuch as ye did it  
unto one of the least of these my brethren,  
ye did it unto me?"

Will you not make some one happy this  
Christmas that you too may receive the  
blessing of the Christ child?



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### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

God has power over nations and events.

God's promises will all be fulfilled in due time, often in most unexpected ways.

When God's people have learned the lessons their trials are intended to teach, he will bring them again to peace and prosperity.

Those who remain at home should give freely to sustain those who go forth to preach the Gospel.

God uses the world to aid his cause and his people—wars, explorations, commerce, wealth inventions.

God wants volunteers for his work, for the work best—Volunteering is God's sieve.

### REVIEW EXERCISE.

1. When did the captivity of the Jews begin? Ans. B.C. 605, by Nebuchadnezzar. 2. Where were the captives carried? Ans. To Babylon and the East. 3. What was the cause of the exile? Ans. The sins and idolatry of the people. 4. When was the time of return? Ans. After 70 years, in B.C. 536, under Cyrus. 5. How many returned? Ans. About 50,000 people, taking with them the temple treasures. 6. How long was the journey? Ans. About four months.

### CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

What is your duty towards God? My duty towards God is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name, his Sabbath, and his Word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

### A LITTLE HERO.

THE New York World says: "A pathetic comment upon the hard struggle for existence in this big city were the last words of little Jack Gorman, who died in Chambers Street Hospital as a result of having been severely mangled by a Broadway car. One arm had been amputated and he was in great suffering. Later his mother was admitted to see him. His face brightened as she approached him, and he said: "The money is in my coat pocket, mamma." Then he sank back upon his pillow and died without again speaking. Stronger than his fear of "the shadow of death" were his loving thoughts for the welfare of the dear ones he was to leave behind. Of such stuff as "little Jack" heroes are made.

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### O Little Town of Bethlehem.

BY PHILLIS BROOKS.

O LITTLE town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent hours go by,  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us we pray!  
Cast out our sin and enter in;  
Be born in us to-day.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
Oh, come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel!

## LESSON NOTES.

### FIRST QUARTER.

#### LESSON I—JANUARY 1.

#### RETURNING FROM THE CAPTIVITY.

Ezra 1. 1-11.] [Memory verses, 5, 6.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee. Deut. 30. 3.

#### CENTRAL TRUTH.

God is the Redeemer of his people. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

TIME. The captivity began B.C. 605, and continued seventy years till 536.

PLACE.—Babylon and Jerusalem.

EZRA, THE BOOK OF. (1) It is manifestly a continuation of 2 Chronicles. The last two verses of Chronicles are the same as the first two verses of Ezra. Like these books, Ezra consists the contemporary historical journals kept from time to time, which were afterward strung together, and either abridged or added to, as the case required, by a later hand. (2) The Authors. The first section is a compilation by Ezra; the second is his original work. (3) Divisions. Between chapters 6 and 7 there is a gap of 58 years.

RULERS.—Cyrus was king of the Medo-Persian empire 558-526. He began as solo ruler of Babylon in 536. Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, was the Tirshatha or Pasha of the returned exiles.

THE THREE DEPORTATIONS OF EXILES. (1) In 606 or 605, when Daniel and his friends with many others were carried to Babylon. (2) In 598, when 10,000 people, including

Ezekiel and the grandfather of Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin, and the temple treasures were carried away. (3) In 586, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.

THE EXILE.—The people were treated partly as slaves, and partly as foreigners, subject to many hardships, but living in communities, and some of them gaining wealth and honour. The best of the people were among the captives. The result was (1) that they were cured of idolatry. (2) They were disciplined into better characters. (3) They were led to study the Scriptures. (4) Their views and sympathies were enlarged.

PREPARATIONS FOR RETURN.—(1) As soon as the people were sufficiently cured of their sins the time came for deliverance. (2) The promises in Isaiah and Jeremiah. (3) The example and teachings of Daniel and Ezekiel and Isaiah. (4) The prayer of Daniel (Dan. 9). (5) A change in government at this time. (6) The proclamation of Cyrus. 1. "The first year of Cyrus"—over Babylon. "The word by Jeremiah"—Jer. 25. 11, 12; 29. 10. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus"—by his Holy Spirit, perhaps by showing him Isaiah's prophecies. 2. "All the kingdoms"—the Medo-Persian was a world kingdom. 3. "Who is there," etc.—only volunteers were wanted. 4. "Whosoever remaineth"—a large part of the exiles remained in Babylon. They and their heathen neighbours were to help those who went. 5. "The chief of the fathers"—they were led by Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, and Jeshua, the high priest. "To go up"—about 50,000 went (2. 64, 65). 7. "The vessels of the house of the Lord"—these had thus, in the providence of God, been preserved by Nebuchadnezzar. 11. "Five thousand four hundred"—this must have included many smaller vessels not counted above.