

## THE BLESSED CHRISTMAS TREE.

FAIR may fall the springtime, with banners all about,  
The branch and with daisy on the leaf;  
The hawthorn bush above and the primrose fair below,  
But the fairest bloom of all is the bonny Christmas tree.

Fair the hillside orchards with apple blossoms sweet  
That fall in snows of promise, while young birds sing in choir;  
Glad the shining meadows where little lambs do bleat,  
But the gladdest stem that growth is the merry Christmas tree.

For its golden root of love uplifts to human ken  
The stately trunk of charity, that riseth brave and free;  
With fruit of holy deeds done by One who died for men,  
And the cross of Christ doth burgeon in the happy Christmas tree.

With fruit of holy deeds, that whose ears shall know  
That joy divine of helpfulness that causeth grief to flee;  
The radiance loaned from Heaven to the dreary land below,  
That sparkles in the leaves of the precious Christmas tree.

Nor where its branches rise, the blight of earth shall pass  
Like dark before the dawning, till every man may see  
Life's hidden virtues shining as violets in the grass,  
Made fragrant by the shadow of the holy Christmas tree.

And springtime of the soul at its coming draweth near,  
With hope and peace and melody, with all delights that be—  
O shout, ye little children, and carol loud and clear,  
For the dearest gift the year doth bring, the blessed Christmas tree.

—Mary E. Blake, in N. Y. Independent.

### HIS CHRISTMAS WISH.

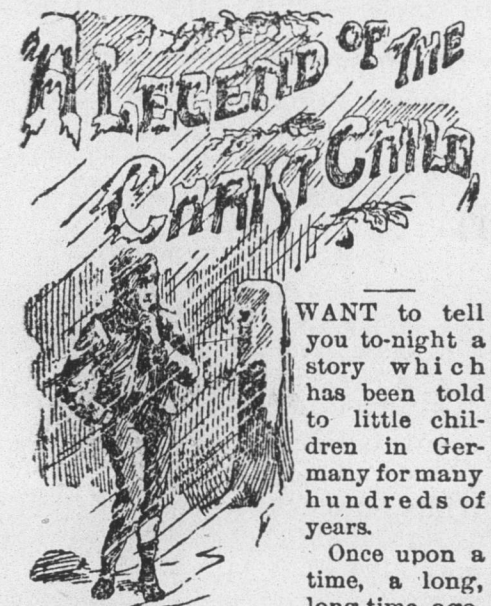
"Twix 'tarnal strange, you'll all allow. An' credit me,  
It wa'n't no meanness—that I swow—nur jealousy.  
But every time that Christmas come thet old I wuz  
I wish't th' y'unguns 'd think I knew o' Sandy Cluz.

I allus got right nervous-like th' day afore,  
An' mebbe showed it w'en we gander'd round th' store  
A-buyn' nits an' candy an' etsettyroz  
T' make th' y'unguns think still more o' Sandy Cluz.

An' w'en we'd stirred th' y'unguns' stumps up stairs 't bed  
An' crammed their stockin's full o' stuff, an' stood th' end  
Right in th' chimney corner, I tell you I wuz  
Jes' wishin' they suspect I knew o' Sandy Cluz.

Mos' y'unguns like their pop and mammy both right well,  
An' 'Crismus mornin' how they hug an' laugh an' yell  
An' kiss you w'ile they make you taste o' things. But dat  
Their love for you seem like their love for Sandy Cluz?

—J. A. Waldron, in Judge.



WANT to tell you to-night a story which has been told to little children in Germany for many hundreds of years.

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, on the night before Christmas, a little child was wandering all alone through the streets of a great city. There were many people on the street, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, uncles and aunts, and even gray-haired grandfathers and grandmothers, all of whom were hurrying home with bundles of presents for each other and their little ones. Fine carriages rolled by, express wagons rattled past, even old carts were pressed into service, and all things seemed in a hurry, and glad with expectation of the coming Christmas morning.

From some of the windows bright lights were already beginning to stream until it was almost as light as day. But the little child seemed to have no home and wandered about listlessly from street to street. No one seemed to notice him, except perhaps Jack Frost, who bit his bare toes and made the ends of his fingers tingle. The north wind, too, seemed to notice the child, for it blew against him and pierced his ragged garments through and through, causing him to shiver with cold. Home after home he passed, looking with longing eyes through the windows, in upon the glad, happy children, most of whom were helping to trim the Christmas trees for the coming morning.

"Surely," said the child to himself, "where there is so much gladness and happiness, some of it may be for me." So with timid steps he approached a large and handsome house. Through the windows he could see a tall and stately Christmas tree already lighted. Many presents hung upon it. Its green boughs were trimmed with gold and silver ornaments. Slowly he climbed up the broad steps and gently rapped at the door. It was opened by a tall and stately footman, who had on white gloves and shiny shoes and a large white cravat. He looked at the little child for a moment, then sadly shook his head and said: "Go down off the steps. There is no room for such as

you here." He looked sorry as he spoke; possibly he remembered his own little ones at home and was glad that they were not out in this cold and bitter night. Through the open door a bright light shone, and the warm air, filled with the fragrance of the Christmas pine, rushed out through the door and seemed to greet the little wanderer with a kiss. As the child turned back into the cold and darkness, he wondered why the footman had spoken so, for surely, thought he, those little children would love to have another companion join them in their joyous Christmas festival. But the little children inside did not even know that he had knocked at the door.

The street seemed colder and darker to the child than before, and he went sadly forward, saying to himself: "Is there no one in all this great city who will share this Christmas with me?" Farther and farther down the street he went, to where the homes were not so large and beautiful. There seemed to be little children inside of nearly all the houses. They were dancing and frolicking about. There were Christmas trees in nearly every window, with beautiful dolls and trumpets and picture books,



IN SILENT WONDER THEY GAZED AT THE CHILD.

and balls, and tops, and other nice toys hung upon them. In one window the child noticed a little lamb made of soft white wool. Around its neck was tied a red ribbon. It had evidently been hung on the tree for one of the children. The little wanderer stopped before this window and looked long and earnestly at the beautiful things inside, but most of all was he drawn towards this white lamb. At last, creeping up to the window pane, he gently tapped upon it. A little girl came to the window and looked out into the dark street where the snow had begun to fall. She saw the child, but only frowned and shook her head and said: "Go away and come some other time. We are too busy to take care of you now." Back into the cold, dark street he turned again. The wind was whirling past him and seemed to say: "Hurry on, hurry on, we have no time to stop. 'Tis Christmas Eve and everybody is in a hurry to-night."

Again and again the little child rapped softly at door or window pane. At each place he was refused admission. One mother feared he might have some ugly disease which her darlings would catch; another father said he had only enough for his own children, and none to spare for beggar brats. Still another told him to go home where he belonged, and not to trouble other folks.

The hours passed; later grew the night, and colder grew the wind, and darker seemed the street. Farther and farther the little one wandered. There was scarcely anyone left upon the street by this time, and the few who remained did not seem to see the child, when suddenly ahead of him there appeared a bright, single ray of light. It shone through the darkness into the child's eyes. He looked up smiling and said: "I will go where the light beckons; perhaps they will share their Christmas with me."

Hurrying past all the other houses he soon reached the end of the street and went straight up to the window from which the light was streaming. It was a poor, little, low house, but the child cared not for that. The light seemed still to call him in. What do you suppose the light came from? Nothing but a tallow candle which had been placed in an old cup with a broken handle, in the window, as a glad token of Christmas Eve. There was neither curtain nor shade to the little square window, and as the little child looked in he saw standing upon a small wooden table a branch of a Christmas tree. The room was plainly furnished, but was very clean. Near the fireplace sat a lovely-faced mother with a little two-year-old on her knee and an older child beside her. The two children were looking into their mother's face and listening to a story. She must have been telling them a Christmas story. I think. A few bright coals were burning in the fireplace, and all seemed light and warm within.

The little wanderer crept closer and closer to the window pane. So sweetly seemed the mother's face, so loving seemed the little children, that at last he took courage and tapped gently, very gently, on the door. The mother stopped talking, the little children looked up. "What was that, mother?" asked the little girl at her side. "I think it was some one tapping on the door," replied the mother. "Run as quickly as you can and open it, dear, for it is a bitter cold night to keep anyone waiting in this storm." "Oh, mother,

er, I think it was the bough of the tree tapping against the window-pane," said the little girl. "Do please go on with our story." Again the little wanderer tapped upon the door. "My child, my child," exclaimed the mother, rising, "that certainly was a rap on the door. Run quickly and open it. No one must be left out in the cold on our beautiful Christmas Eve."

The child ran to the door and threw it wide open. The mother saw the ragged stranger standing without, cold and shivering, with bare head and almost bare feet. She held out both hands and drew him into the warm, bright room. "Oh, you poor, dear child, come in as quickly as you can and get warm! Where did you come from and where are you going? Have you no home? Have you no mamma? Have you no Christmas to celebrate?"

The mother put her arms around the strange child, and drew him close to her breast. "He is very cold, my children," said she. "We must warm him and feed him, and give him some clothes." "And," added the little girl, "we must love him and give some of our Christmas, too." "Yes," said the mother, "but first let us warm him."

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So she sat down beside the fire with the child on her lap, and her own two little ones warmed his half-frozen hands in their own, and the mother smoothed his tangled curls, and bending low over his head kissed the child's face. She gathered the three little ones together in her arms and the candle and the delight shone over them, and for a few moments the room was very still. Then the mother whispered to the little girl, and the child ran quickly into the next room and soon returned with a roll of bread and a bowl of milk which had been set aside for her own breakfast the next morning.

The little two-year-old, who had slipped away from his mother's side, was happy that he, too, could help the little stranger by bringing the wooden spoon from the table. By and by the little girl said softly to her mother: "May we not light the Christmas tree, and let this little child see how beautiful it will look?" "Yes," said the mother. With that she seated the child on a low stool beside the fire and went herself to fetch the few simple ornaments which from year to year she had saved for her children's Christmas tree. They were soon busy preparing the tree and lighting the candles. So busy were they that they did not notice that the room had filled with a strange and beautiful light. They turned and looked at the spot where the little wanderer sat. His ragged clothes had changed to garments white and beautiful. His tangled curls seemed like a halo of golden light about his head, but most beautiful of all was his face, which shone with a light so dazzling that they could scarcely look upon it.

In silent wonder they gazed at the child. Their little room seemed to grow larger, the roof of their low house seemed to expand and rise, until it reached the sky. With a sweet and gentle smile the beautiful child looked upon them for a moment and then slowly rose and floated through the air, above the tree-tops, beyond the church-spire, higher even than the clouds themselves, until he appeared to them to be a shining star in the sky above, and at last disappeared from sight. The wondering children turned in hushed awe to their mother and then said in a whisper: "Oh, mother, it was the Christ Child, was it not?" And the mother said in a low tone: "Yes."

And so, they say, each Christmas Eve the little Christ Child wanders through some town or village, and those who receive Him and take Him into their homes and hearts have given to them this marvelous vision which is denied to others.—Adapted from the German by Elizabeth Harmon for Chicago Standard.

Then He Spoke.  
"We went skating on Christmas day. I tried hard to get him to propose; but there we sat, and though he saw I knew what he was thinking of he just remained silent until I hit upon an idea."  
"What was it?"  
"I dug my skates with some force into the slippery surface and asked him to notice how easy it was to break the ice."—Judge.

"I will think of you while I'm away," he said, tenderly. "Absence, you know, makes the heart grow fonder." "Yes," she whispered shyly; "but about this time, not so much as presents."—Baltimore American.

A CHOICE contribution to literature and art has been provided for this holiday season by Messrs. A. C. McLaughlin & Co., Chicago, in a volume of poems by Kate Raworth Holmes, entitled "Pictures From Nature and Life." In these poems reminiscence and romance mingle as delightfully as rays of sunshine in summer days. The variety of the poems gives scope for pathos and the lighter and more delicate touches of sentiment, and are daintily supplemented by the exquisite lettering, and fairy-like illustrations; they are as unique as they are fitting and beautiful, and are from the camera and brush of a rarely gifted artist. The work is printed on thick satin paper, cream white, well adapted to the deliciously soft and charming reproductions. The publishers have executed a master stroke in presenting to the people so rare a work at about one-third the price usually charged for books of such merit. Frank B. Carpenter, who painted the great picture of "THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION," and the no less celebrated one of "THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC," now hanging in Windsor Palace, and author of Six Months at the White House, writing of the work says: "It is one of the most exquisite books I have ever seen. It is not too high to say that the poems are worthy of the illustrations and the illustrations are worthy of the poems, and the publisher's work is worthy of both." Mrs. Mary A. Livermore writes: "I think the best and most artistic of the poems are the coming holiday season. There is much to stimulate the imagination connected with it. It is the work of two lovely, refined and cultured women; two sisters with the common blessed experience of daughters, wives and mothers, who have found in daily life a fund of romance, and beauty, which they celebrate in song and pictured sketch. Delicate in conception, dainty in execution, the mechanical skill of the pretty book matches it exquisitely, the tout ensemble making a most appropriate and acceptable gift." From the pen of Mr. F. G. Wheeler we quote: "Charming poems, exquisitely set in quaint lines, and author is to be congratulated on the artistic cooperation so fittingly obtained."

Chicago Herald—"A lovely book, exquisitely illustrated."—The text is pleasing and musical, and the illustrations so striking as to tell the story almost without written words. The poems are sentimental, and marked by graceful expression, pure thoughts, tender home love, and for their general literary excellence. The handsome volume can be marked as among the beautiful gift books for the holidays."

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FLORA—"Do you know that a tree gets a new ring every year?" Prunella—"Every year I get one, every few weeks."—Kate Field's Washington.

High Five or Euchre Parties should start at once to John Sebastian, G. P. A., C. E. L. & P. R. R. Chicago, 723 N. Dearborn St., for a set of the latest cards you ever shuffled. For \$1.00 you will receive free by express ten packs.

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"A show which in the glare of its magnificence has never been surpassed in a Chicago theater."—Tribune.

It is a little singular that the person best with a silver spoon in his mouth seldom makes a stir in the world.—Boston Gazette.

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Sent postpaid with beautiful literature. Send 50c to A. P. Hoxsie, Buffalo, N. Y.

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Thinks before he speaks.—The man who stutters.

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Keener, N. C.  
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Has (tenderly)—"Do you think you could ever learn to love me?" She (confidently)—"O yes. Why, I learned to love Tom Barry, who was here last week, in two days."—Spare Moments.

Can a hungry man make a square meal off a round steak?

THE MARKETS.	
NEW YORK, Dec. 20	
LIVE STOCK—Cattle	43.95 @ 5.15
Sheep	2.00 @ 4.12 1/2
Hogs	5.00 @ 6.00
FLOUR—City Mill Patents	4.25 @ 4.40
Minnesota Patents	3.75 @ 4.00
Wheat—No. 2 Red	85 1/2 @ 87
Ungraded Red	65 @ 67
CORN—No. 2	44 1/2 @ 44 3/4
Ungraded Mixed	34 @ 35
OATS—Track Mixed Western	34 @ 35
RYE—Western	50 @ 57
POWDER—No. 1	13 1/2 @ 14
LARD—Western	8 1/2 @ 8 1/4
BUTTER—Western Creamery	21 @ 28 1/2
Western Dairy	18 @ 22

BEEVES—Shipping Steers	33.00 @ 5.00
Cows	1.15 @ 2.00
Stockers	2.25 @ 2.90
Poultry—Mrs. M. A. D.	3.00 @ 3.50
Butcher's Steers	2.00 @ 3.50
Hulls	1.50 @ 3.50
SHEEP	4.00 @ 5.35
BUTTER—Creamery	22 @ 27 1/2
Dairy	18 @ 25
EGGS—Fresh	21 @ 22
BROOM CORN	
Western (per ton)	35.00 @ 35.00
Western Dwarf	50.00 @ 52.00
Illinois, Good to choice	55.00 @ 57.00
POTATOES (per bu.)	45 @ 58
CORN—No. 2	12 1/2 @ 12 3/4
LARD—Steam	7.50 @ 7.65
FLOUR—Spring Patents	3.50 @ 3.80
Spring Straights	1.50 @ 2.80
Winter Patents	3.25 @ 3.40
Winter Straights	2.80 @ 3.00
GRAIN—Wheat, No. 2	60 1/2 @ 61
Corn	8 1/2 @ 8 3/4
Oats	27 1/2 @ 27 1/4
Rye, No. 2	45 1/2 @ 46
Choice to Fancy	48 @ 53
LUMBER	
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