

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

(According to Tommy.)

The trees in our orchard and down by the well
In summer time give us our elder and
Jell;
The apples and peaches, the quinces and
pears,
The plums I can pick from my window up-
stairs,
All grow in the summer; and oh! it's a
treat
To have all the nice juicy fruit you can
eat.
But none of the summer stuff satisfies me
Like that which we pick from the Christ-
mas tree!

The fruit of the summer is good in its
place—
With stone-bruise feet and with tan on
your face
It's fine to climb up where the robins
have found
A nice yellow apple all mellow and round,
And take it away from the robber so bold
While he and his mate fly around you and
scold.
It's fun at the time, but it never could be
As nice as the fun of the Christmas tree.

One time I remember my had cousin Jim
Dared Charley and me to climb out on a
limb
No bigger than one of my thumbs; and I
did
'Cause Jimmy was calling me "Sissy-boy
Kid."
The limb—well, you're certain what hap-
pened, I guess,
And Jim got a whipping; 'cause big sister
Bess
Told Jim's pa and ma what happened to
me—
I never fell out of a Christmas tree.

The Christmas tree grows in a night, and
it bears
Things lots and lots nicer than apples and
pears—
I've seen on its branches doll-babies and
drams
And steam-cars and soldiers and big sugar-
plums;
I've gathered new mittens and picture-
books, too,
Right off from the bent-over twig where
they grew,
And candles grow lighted there, so you can
see—
'Fore daylight the things on the Christ-
mas-tree!

Sometimes in the parlor, sometimes in the
hall,
Sometimes in the dining-room—best place
of all—
The Christmas-tree grows with its wonder-
ful fruit,
And sometimes it has a pine-box for a
root!
The funny thing is that I oftentimes find
Right there what for weeks I had had on
my mind,
And always, on Christmas, who wants to
see me
Had better look under the Christmas-tree.
—Strickland W. Gillilan, in Leslie's Week-
ly.

The Message of the Bells

UN clouds scudded gustily across the sky, hiding the peaceful face of the moon, whose radiance touched the edges of her somber veil with a fringe of silver. The great gray tower lifted its head far aloft in the midnight stillness, and the wind moaned around its rough-hewn corners a requiem for the dying year. Within the tower sat the old bell-ringer, waiting for the stroke of twelve from the clock, and, as he waited, his thoughts drifted back to the years long buried in the dimness of the past—the years when his floating white hair had been crisp and black, when his long, slender fingers were strong and supple, and struck from the midnight chimes music of entrancing beauty.

Oh, happy memory! Oh, long ago! It was on another night like that that Ruprecht was born; and the joy which beamed from the pale young mother's face was reflected in his own, as he left her with her baby on her bosom and rushed to the bell-tower to make of his chimes a psalm of praise to the Father who had filled his life with blessing. How they loved him—that baby—their only one—their all! How he and Elspeth had watched each new development—how proudly guided the first tottering step; how carefully repeated the first hisping word.

The boy studied—improving every opportunity with untiring zeal, until at last the great organ in the Cathedral below thundered its glorious music responsive to the touch of the boyish fingers. People thronged to hear. Ruprecht's services were demanded elsewhere—brilliant prospects opened before him, and the inevitable separation drew near.

New Year's Eve! How many anniversaries this shadowy hour held! The boy bade them good-by while Elspeth clung to him and sobbed, and her husband rushed away to tell the chimes his agony as he had poured into them his joy. As he sat waiting, even as now, a step came up the stair, and some one entered the belfry chamber, and the voice he loved said tenderly "Mein Vater, let me play the chimes to-night. I will leave with them a message to comfort you when you are sad—a message for you and the mother, too. When I hear it in the far-off land it will be my mother's voice that sings to me, and when you play it, mein vater, it will say to you, 'Ruprecht loves me.' Then you will pray 'God watch over my boy and keep him safe for me,' and the All-Father will hear."

When Ruprecht struck the massive keys it was the simple old Pfeifer's hymn he played, but he lent his beautiful voice to the clangor of the bells and sang his mother's favorite words:

Children of the Heavenly King
As ye journey sweetly sing,
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise
Glorious in his works and ways.

A moment later he was gone. The years had been many and long since then, but no tidings ever came, and Elspeth's hair grew white before the look of expectancy in her dear eyes changed to the calmness of resignation. He was dead, of course. They had heard of the wrecked ship. They had moved to a new

home. They were only waiting now—he and Elspeth—for the summons which should call them to the happy reunion where there would be no sad good-bys and hearts forget how to ache.

The first stroke of midnight sounded and an instant later the bells pealed forth, while the old man sang with trembling lips and voice that no one heard but God—as he had sung every New Year since that one:

Children of the Heavenly King
As ye journey sweetly sing,
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise
Glorious in his works and ways.

Then, as the last reluctant echo died away, he stumbled down the narrow stairs toward home and Elspeth.

Not far from the tower stood a mansion, where a great throng had assembled to watch the old year out and the new year in. Silken draperies rustled, jewels gleamed, music rippled on the perfumed air, and happy voices rang sweet and high. But every sound was silenced, and bright eyes grew dim in the flood of melody which suddenly poured about the gay throng. They crowded toward the music room, trying to catch a glimpse of the player. Those who were near saw a slender man, with fair curling hair brushed back from a brow as pure as a woman's. Quietly he sat before the grand piano, playing without the slightest effort such masterful music as had hushed the listeners to awe-struck silence.

"Who is he?" was the question passed from one to another.

"He is a friend of father's," the hostess told them. "Father met him abroad some years ago, and by helping him in a search for some missing friends, won his heart. Father invited him here for the holidays this year, but he declined the invitation, then this evening suddenly and unexpectedly appeared."

These great musicians are always eccentric, you know. I heard him tell father that this is an anniversary he does not like to spend alone.

At eleven o'clock the hostess seated her guests in a circle, saying, "Now we will turn down the lights and tell ghost stories till midnight." The young people fell in with the spirit of fun, and another in black, with a bunch of rods.

"God bless you all," says the figure in white. "Are there any good children here?"

"Are there any bad children here?" asks the black figure.

"My children are all pretty good," the mother answers.

"I am glad to hear it," says the white visitor. "I have gifts here for good children."

"Stop!" the black figure cries; "they are not good. Hans struck his brother yesterday. Gretchen does not know her catechism, and Petra broke a piece from the Sunday cake as it sat on cool on the window sill. I will leave rods to whip them with."

The children begin to cry. The white figure spreads out his hands and says: "The little ones will be better next year." Then he takes one of the rods from the black visitor and drives him out. The visitors play on the instruments they have brought, and the whole family sing Christmas hymns. The angelic visitor then empties his basket on the table, and leaves there a great number of iced cakes, gilded nuts, gingerbread horses, and wooden toys, and then departs. The mother tells the children to be good all the year, lest the rod should really be left for them on the next Christmas, and all have supper and go to bed.

Christmas day is a happy one for most children all over the Christian world, and I hope that because this is so they will remember that this day is kept because eighteen hundred and eighty-one years ago Jesus, who said "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," was first a babe in his mother's arms.—Mary Kyle Dallas in the New York Ledger.

Individuality in Gifts.

The personality of the giver expressed in the wrappings about the Christmas gift adds value to the simplest offering. After all, it is the spirit of the giver rather than the gift itself which gives the greatest pleasure. The favorite ribbon, the slip of mistletoe, the color of the tissue paper covering, the card which bears the Christmas greeting, all express love and well-wishing.



MAKING CHRISTMAS TOYS.

Thriving Industry in Germany, France and Switzerland.

In parts of Germany, France and Switzerland every humble householder takes more interest in Christmas than the average American boy. This seems like a strong statement, for Christmas is pretty thoroughly appreciated by the young of America. But, great as the festival is to them, it is not essential to their existence. They could get along without Christmas, but the toymakers in Switzerland, the Tyrol and south Germany would starve without this midwinter holiday which makes a market for their goods. There are wood carvers, doll dressers and toymakers in every hamlet and home of the Tyrol. They depend upon the small wages they make from these toys to put bread and butter in their mouths.

All through the winter season every boy and man carves out wood animals and toys for the factories. Everything is handmade. A Noah's ark of twenty or thirty wooden animals that retails for a quarter in this country does not pay the carver more than a few pennies.

A CHRISTMAS JOURNEY IN COLONIAL DAYS.



The boys are taught to handle the knife early, and they learn to cut out wooden ducks, hens, horses, cows and other toys before they have reached their teens. Working all through the early winter days and nights in their little homes, they make the wooden toys that delight so many children throughout the world.—New York Mail and Express.

Christmas Ghost Hunting.

The custom of chasing spooks on the night before Christmas comes from Ireland. One difficulty with making the thing go in America is that our houses are scarcely old enough to make good ghost repositories. A real haunted house should be sufficiently old to be something of a ghost itself. Like violins and whisky, a spooky atmosphere improves with age.

A ghost hunt should be carried on at midnight, of course. If no specter be found, an active imagination should have no difficulty in conjuring up one of its own. The only way to account for the fact that ghosts abound more at Christmas than at other times is that the Christmas season is a very attractive one on earth and the spooks come back to enjoy its good cheer.

Devonshire's Yule Log.

In Devonshire the Yule log is known as the Ashton fagot. The fagot is composed of a bundle of ash sticks bound with nine bands of the same wood.

DON'T!
DRESS UP IN COTTON
WHEN YOU PLAY SANTA
CLAUS.
57,365 PEOPLE HAVE
BEEN BURNED TO DEATH
BY THE COMBINATION OF
COTTON AND CHRISTMAS
CANDLES!

THE UP-TO-DATE SANTA CLAUS.

Once more it was Christmas and old Santa Claus,
With his white whiskers dangling around his fat jaws,
Gave his engine a start, and then, laden with zeal,
And with gifts, started off in his automobile.
He flitted past corners and whizzed up the lanes,
He ran over dogs and he smashed into trains;
He came with a zipp and he passed like a dash;
He scared people's teams and knocked buggies to smash;
He ran over chickens and knocked chimneys down,
And spread consternation all over the town.
The odor of gasoline floated behind Where he hurried as if on the wings of the wind;
He crippled old people and stayed not to see
How badly they fared or learn whom they might be.
The children who watched for his coming
wept and
Beneath his broad tires, as onward he rushed!
He scattered his gifts while he sped through the night,
Content to permit them to fall where they might.
The wrecks and the sorrow and suffering showed
The course that he took with his glittering load,
And, having gone home with his glad duties done,
He murmured: "I guess I've the records all won;
When they see where I've passed I don't think that they'll wait
Very long to admit that I'm right up-to-date!"
—L. E. Kiser, in Chicago Record-Herald.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN BETHLEHEM.

Observances in the Christian Town Set in the Heart of Mohammedanism.

Bethlehem, the central spot of interest in the Holy Land at Christmastide, is a Christian town set in the heart of Mohammedanism, where once a year the Greek church grants the use of the grotto of the Nativity to the Latin church, says London Sphere. The ceremonies begin on Dec. 24 by the image of the youthful Christ being carried from the basilica of St. Helena to the sacred grotto of the Nativity, where the traditional spot of Christ's birth is marked by a silver star set in the rocky pavement.

The service begins at 10 o'clock in the evening. It opens with the chanting of psalms without any musical accompaniment. The patriarch of Jerusalem usually officiates in the grotto, but on this occasion he is represented by the Latin bishop. The interior of the church is most picturesque, for there are only a few chairs provided for foreign visitors, while the bulk of the congregation is made up of the Bethlehemite women in their blue dresses with red frontlets, wearing peaked caps when married and flat caps covered by white veils when single.

As they enter the church they at first kneel down and then sit upon the ground in true oriental fashion. "In the dimly lighted church," says one who has seen the service, "these squatting varicolored figures, with their beautiful faces lit up by fits and starts by flashes of the candles, intent on devotion, seem like so many modern Madonnas come to celebrate the glory of the first Madonna."

Precisely at midnight the pontifical high mass is celebrated, the figure of Christ is brought in a basket and deposited upon the high altar, and the procession forms to accompany it to the crypt. As the long, chanting procession winds through the dimly lighted church there is something weirdly solemn about the ceremony, and as the sacred image passes various acts of worship are performed by the devout attendants. On the procession moves through the rough hewn, dimly lit passages from the Latin church to the grotto of the Nativity.

When the procession of richly robed ecclesiastics reaches the silver star set in the pavement the priests pause and stand in a group about the basket, which is deposited upon the star. Around this star is the inscription, "Hic de virgine natus est" ("Here he was born of a virgin"), for this is the spot upon which tradition places the actual birth of Jesus. There the impressive narrative of the birth of Jesus as found in the gospels is slowly recited, and when the passage (Luke ii., 7), "And she brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn," is read the figure is reverently picked up from the star and carried over to the opposite side of the grotto, where it is put into a rock crumpled manger. This concludes the service.

Christmas Hints.

A simple and tasteful home-made picture frame may be constructed from common gas pipe cut into suitable length, and tied together at the corners with shoe strings. A neat paper weight may be made by wrapping half a brick in paper such as butchers use and tying it with red tape. A dainty towel rack may be fabricated from a baseball bat and two cigar boxes. Shellac the boxes and sandpaper the bat. An ordinary, cobblestone hand painted with lampbrush and household ammonia makes an excellent door weight. A novel pipe rack for fastidious smokers may be made from small strip of one-inch plank. Bore holes in it for the stems of the pipes to pass through. A dried muskmelon shell makes an attractive tobacco jar.

New Year's in France.

New Year's in France is a greater day for exchanging gifts than Christmas. The custom of New Year's calls, once so popular in this country, but now fallen almost into disuse, is still supreme in Paris. Great family dinners, in which the orange figures most prominently, add to the gaiety of the day. So crowded are the pavements on the boulevards that pedestrians sometimes have to take the middle of the street.

An Adamless Eve.

Some things about the holidays are quite unfair to madams. For instance, there's a Christmas eve. But where's her Christmas Adam?