

as a "human invention," and as "savoring of papistical will-worship." But if dissenters in England have abolished Christmas in its religious bearing, they, as well as churchmen, consent to keep it as a *social* holiday, on which the machinery of business is stopped, and the laborer permitted to enjoy a day of sweet rest. We see, then, that from being a simple religious festival, Christmas has now become the most widely-spread, fondly-cherished, social and domestic holiday of all the year. This concludes our brief sketch of Christmas customs and observances from the Saturnalia down to our own time. We have seen that in the early centuries, in Britain, the secular idea of Christmas, rather than the religious side of the day, remained uppermost until we reach the sixteenth century. With the Reformation a kind of refinement is brought in, which caused many of the wild carousals to disappear and the people to be impressed with the need of giving the religious aspect more prominence. Within the last two or three centuries the social and domestic elements seem to be pressing the religious idea again into the background, until to-day the Christmas festival seems to be more particularly the property of children than any other; not that everybody does not join in the celebration with all their heart, but that the children, in honor perhaps of Him who became a child, are given the chief part in its pleasures.

This leads me to say a word or two about the Christmas-tree and Santa Claus. Both are of German origin. The former used to be set up in a spare room in the house a few days before Christmas, and dressed from top to bottom with little trinkets and presents such as children only know how to prize. The door is kept carefully locked and everything secretly hidden until the long-looked-for day arrives, when the good things are distributed among those who can appreciate them to the fullest. But the Christmas-tree is not so much a family affair now. Day-schools, Sunday-schools, etc., have taken this method of giving their scholars and friends a jolly good time. It may be worth mentioning that the Christmas-tree, which is the most positive feature of children's Christmas now-a-day, was not much known, if at all, among the English-speaking children till after the good Prince Albert came to England. Santa Claus, which is a corruption of Saint Nicholas, is also a German institution. The heads of families often on Christmas eve, after picking out presents for each child as his or her character suggested, sought out some old man in the vicinity, who, all dressed up with white robe and fur, flax wig, buskins, etc., came next morning, and, to the amazement of the little ones, put into their hands "the very thing each was looking for." Who, I wonder, is more beloved by the youngsters than good old Santa Claus? He is one of the first and best of childhood's acquaintances. It seems that the little ones who live in Montreal are filled with dread at the thought that Santa Claus may not come at all this Christmas on account of the small-pox. You needn't be alarmed, children. He is going to take every possible pre-