

A Yuletide Sang for the Bairnies.

BY THE REV. M. B. HUTCHISON, M. A. OXON.

Dreepin' on the drookit yird,
 Fa's the wearie rain;
 Clouds come curlin doon the hill,
 Mist creeps up again.
 Nae a breath o' halsome life—
 Caller air there's nane;
 Nature sabs hersel' asleep
 Owre the year bygane.
 But there's licht i' the sheiling,
 And licht i' the Ha':
 And there's music and dancing
 For great and for sma';
 For Ane's cam' amang us
 Frae realms far awa,
 And the Bairn that is born
 Is the Brither o' a'.

—o—

How Christmas is Observed in Germany.

Perhaps in no other country do we find so much of the true Christmas spirit as in Germany. The delight in the day is not confined to any set or class, but its celebration is universal. Even after the children have left the home, the old people continue to celebrate it. For weeks before the day arrives, it is the general topic of conversation. The papers are so full of it as almost to exclude all other news.

In the cities everything is bustle and stir. The sidewalks are nearly obstructed by the numerous booths, presided over by the gaily dressed peasants. Here can be found curios from all parts of the world. Every available nook and corner is filled with Christmas trees until it looks as though a forest had grown up by magic in the heart of the city.

In the confectionery windows you see the chocolate slip pers out of which St. Nicholas is supposed to feed his school. The fancy cakes are also a special feature of a German Christmas. They are cut in forms to represent cats, dogs and horses, cows, elephants, tigers, &c., and are placed upon the trees as decorations. They are about as indigestible as the real animals would be.

Going up and down the streets of the city are bands of peasant children, who go from house to house, singing their Christmas carols and gratefully receiving the pennies thrown from the windows above.

About a week before Christmas St. Nicholas visits the homes with his basket of fruit and candles and his bundle of birch switches, to inquire into the conduct of the chil-

dren. One question he always asks: "Can the children say their prayers?" If they cannot, he gives them a switching and some good advice for the coming year. To those who know their prayers he gives the candy and nuts. As the day draws near the enthusiasm increases. Little German children all over the land are busy fashioning presents for their parents, while the elders are planning for their amusement. There is always a mysterious room from which the children are excluded, and into which many curious packages go.

The Germans have three days which they celebrate—called first, second and third Christmas. The first Christmas is our Christmas eve. This is the children's day, All day long the "haus frau" has been busy preparing all kinds of German dishes for the grand dinner in the evening. This is an exceedingly busy day, but at about six o'clock the good time begins. The Christmas tree has been decorated, and the many candles upon its branches are lighted up until it is resplendent with tinsel and lights. All the animals of Noah's Ark are represented by the little cakes hanging from its branches. At the top of the tree is a large star—the Star of Bethlehem—and somewhere on the tree or below it is the Christ Child in His cradle. The presents are not on the tree, but below it or on tables in the room.

When all is in readiness the door is thrown open and the bell is rung for the children, and no second bell is needed. They first inspect and admire the beautiful tree, and then the presents are distributed. Later the children gather in a semi-circle around it, and sing the beautiful Christmas carols that they have been taught, for the Germans all love and understand good music. The dinner then follows, and, after a pleasant evening, the first Christmas is ended.

The second Christmas is a very different day. In the morning the children give their presents to their parents; many of the presents have taken days of patient toil, for these gifts are made and not bought. This day is a religious holiday. Those who attend church no other day of the year will be present on this day.

The third Christmas, Dec. 26, is much like Sunday, but ending with many balls and entertainments at the theatres and other public halls.

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

The German Christmas tree was at first ridiculed by other nations, but it has gradually worked its way into

**Rubber Balls,
 Base Balls,
 Cricket Bats, etc.,**

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