

Some Quaint Christmas Customs

FROM various sources we have gathered the following, which will show with what memories and customs the Christmas season is still observed in many parts of Merry England:

"At Cumnor, a village in Herefordshire, about one hundred and fifty miles from London, a harmless Christmas custom is still observed, the origin of which no man can trace. On Christmas morning, after attending service in the parish church, all the villagers adjourn to the parson's house and are there regaled with beer and bread and cheese. This is by no means a kindness on the vicar's part. The usage is so old that now the parishioners claim the meal as a right, and the vicar is compelled to provide

"In the western counties of England and some parts of Wales, it is the regular practice to salute the apple-trees on Christmas morning. The inhabitants of a village turn out about seven o'clock, while it is yet dark, and gather at a rendezvous previously decided upon. There they are joined by the parson of the village church, beadle, parish clerk and schoolmaster.

A procession is then formed and marches around the adjacent district, visiting each large orchard in turn. On arriving at an orchard the people are revolved by the owner and admitted. Then they are conducted to one of the best trees in the plantation, which is considered a representative of all the

"At Broadway, Worcestershire. There the village crier walks through the streets on Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve as well, at about midnight. He rings his bell before the principal houses, and then proclaims the time and the state of the weather, adding on New Year's Eve a wish for a happy New Year. Some years ago in this village the crier, an old man and a rather important sort of person who wore a smart uniform, went round in the same way, and on Christmas Eve, after ringing his bell, sang a few lines ending with:

"Beef and pudding all provided,
Ah! how happy we shall be!"

"At Glastonbury, in Somerset, where the first Christian church is said to have been erected in A.D. 60, the people have a curious observance. Joseph of Arimathea, who buried the Savior after the Crucifixion, is declared by tradition to have visited Britain and brought with him the Holy Grail, or chalice, used at the Last Supper. He is said to have landed near Glastonbury, and on his journey thither from the coast he sat down to rest on a spot now known as Weary-at-Hill.

Every Christmas Day this spot is visited by people who believe in the miraculous curative properties of its associations and of the famous Glastonbury thorn, which formerly grew here. A stone slab still marks the spot.

The story connected with the thorn is as follows: Joseph, when he sat down on the hill, fatigued with his journey, stuck his stick, a piece of hawthorn, into the ground. It immediately commenced to sprout, and so it was left there and became a holy relic. It is certain that for centuries a hawthorn-tree did grow on the hill at the spot indicated, and many attempts were made to steal it, but the tree was too jealously guarded by the abbey authorities.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the hawthorn-tree still flourished on Weary-at-Hill, and, strange to relate, it bloomed at Christmas only."

"My life is a brief, brief thing;
I am here for a little space,
And while I stay
I would like, if I may,
To brighten and better the place."



a certain quantity of the viands mentioned.

He must have ready for his visitors when they arrive half a hundredweight of cheese, two bushels of flour made into loaves, and a certain quantity of malt made into two kinds of home-brewed beer. The villagers proceed straight from church to the vicarage and remain for about an hour, eating, drinking, and joking.

If any of the viands are left over, these may not be taken away by the parishioners. They are kept at the vicarage until after the evening service, when they are distributed to the poor and needy who may come from the surrounding district. This is only an example of scores of picturesque customs which are observed in Britain."

others in the orchard, and around it they gather. The beadle, or another well-known man in the village, produces a large bottle of cider and sprinkles the tree with the beverage. Meanwhile all the other people remain silent and the officiating villager addresses the tree in a quaint fashion something like this:

"O tree! O tree! O tree! Bear fruit and flourish. Thy owner nourish. Give wealth and plenty."

The people repeat these words, and then, accompanied by the owner, the procession reforms and marches to another orchard, where a like ceremony is performed. It is supposed that every plantation treated in this way will be a fruitful source of income to its owner during the coming year."

CONVENTION NOTICE

TO THE EPWORTH LEAGUES OF
THE BAY OF QUINTE CONFERENCE:

The Tenth Biennial Epworth League Convocation of the Bay of Quinte Conference will be held in the City of Belleville, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 8th, 7th and 8th, 1912. The Local Leagues of the City and the Conference Executive will endeavor to make this Conference Convention profitable, practical and inspiring. Every League and Young People's Society in the Conference should early arrange for its complete delegation.

The Conference "tidings" will not be issued as heretofore, but the January Number of The Epworth Era will contain information and necessary instructions for the delegates. Extra copies will be sent to every League President, who will kindly see that they are used to the best advantage.

Yours in the service of the
Master,
L. S. WIGHT,
Stirling, Ont. President.