

STRANGE CHRISTMAS CUSTOM.

One of the most singular and ludicrous customs of the middle ages was observed at Beaurais, France, called the Feast of Asses. The name seems to have a double meaning! The flight into Egypt was represented in Church. A beautiful young woman with an infant in her arms was seated upon an ass elegantly adorned. Entering the Church the girl and ass were placed near the altar, on the Gospel side. High mass was then begun, and the Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, &c. all terminated with an imitation of the ass's bray! At the end of the mass, when the priest turned to the people saying "Ite, missa est," he actually *he-hawed*, or brayed twice, as ordained by the ritual. Instead of the usual response "Deo Gratias," the people *he-hawed*, or brayed in like manner. A Latin hymn was sung, during Mass. The following is a translation.

In an Eastern region chanced an ass to be,
Beautiful and bravest, fittest loads to bear.

CHORUS.

He-haw—sire—ass you sing fierce mouth you grin.
Hay enough you'll have Oats now to plant.
Here he is with big ears, primitive clod hopper,
Ass as big as ever, lord of all the asses.

Now say Amen, O Ass!

(Here they fell on their knees.)

Belly full of clover, Amen, amen ever.

He-hair, He-hair!

This appears in Harper's Magazine some years ago, and the Editor sarcastically but truly added, "There was as much braying on the other side," as exhibited by the outrageously silly attacks upon Christmas observances made by the Puritans, who made out that mince pies and plum pudding were Satanic devices for ruining souls, just as their successors to-day are finding in the moderate social enjoyment of God's gifts the root of evils that arise only from abuse. There is an intolerable amount of braying done in connection with the puritanic agitations of this age. The mixing up of the mummery above described with the solemn rite of Mass seems to us very shocking. Yet it was not one jot more irreverent or revolting to a refined christian mind than the violent utterance of those falsehoods and slanders which constitute the braying of men on the prohibition platform, who in one breath quote Scripture and in the next pervert it, and in the next break its injunctions as to Charity, and truth. Verily there may yet be seen celebrated "The Feast of Asses," in association with religion.

CHRISTMAS.

Christmas will bring sad thoughts instead of glad thoughts into some homes this year. We are thinking now specially of one home, from which a dear boy whose bright face gladdened all hearts last year, has gone to keep his Christmas in the Better Land. It will be the Christmas of all Christmases to him—kept in Heaven, with Jesus! Let sweet thoughts of his great joy help to comfort the sad hearts who will miss him so sorely.

We want to tell our young friends a few things about this dear boy. If they had seen him, they would have thought him, perhaps, very much like many other boys, as indeed he was—full of fun and frolic, and delighting in mischief; yet, at the same time, beneath all this there was much more; there was good fruit springing up in his heart that showed that the good seed that had been sown there had not been sown in vain; and, though he was only twelve years old when called away, he was ready to go. His life was a short one, but it was not lived only for himself. He took pleasure in making himself useful to those around him, by doing for them such little things as came in his way. He took thought for others, and his friends grew to know that any errand they might commit to him would be faithfully done. Even in his last illness his little duties were constantly on his mind, and he would complain in his delirium that he could not attend to them, asking his brother to make sure that the letters he had undertaken to carry were delivered, etc.

Like many of our young friends, he dearly loved THE PARISH VISITOR, and would welcome and read it every month. After his death, his mother found

a large number of the papers carefully preserved among his treasures.

But there is one thing we wish especially to tell you about in connection with him, and that is, his real love for the Prayer Book. He had been early trained to know and love its holy words, and value its sacred teachings, and now when he lay on a bed of sickness and suffering, these were not forgotten. Over and over, in his times of severe pain, he would repeat sentences from it, such as "O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity"—"God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," and it seemed to comfort and help him when nothing else would. One text from St. Matthew's Gospel was always constantly on his lips in the last hours of his sickness, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Who can tell but his ears, closing to earthly sounds, had caught these words from the lips of the dear Saviour who has promised that even a cup of water given in His Name shall not lose its reward, and who had taken account of the "few things" over which His little follower had been found "faithful."—Parish Visitor.

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A CHRISTMAS MEMORY.

TO S. B. S.

'Tis Christmas night: the gusty gale without
Bears back to me the children's farewell shout.
The sports are ended, darkened stands the tree
About whose glistening boughs they danced in glee.
With heart content, I sit and muse a space
Upon a dearly loved, but absent face.
I trace the features in the firelight glow,
The while without drifts down the eddying snow.
In years gone by how many hearts leaped bright
Around her radiant tree on Christmas night.
That good grey head that crowned a youthful heart
As girlhood's, fresh and free from worldly art.
She led the sports that made her mansion ring
With laugh and song as sweet as lark's on wing.
Away, ye cynic crew, who frown on mirth,
It is the sunshine of the winter hearth.
Thrice blessed be he who bars the door to sin
By making genial merriment within!

The gust grows drearier. With the chilling blast
Another merry Christmas night is past.
—Kate Dooris Sharp.

"GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT IT."

A TRUE CHRISTMAS STORY.

It was a frosty evening in December, a few days before Christmas, when two lads might have been seen wandering through the streets of a great city. Their day's work was done; and though the night was setting in cold and cheerless, there was no fire in their home grate to warm them. So they preferred to walk the streets till bedtime, rather than sit still and shiver in their room. There was certainly some attraction in those bustling streets, with the brilliantly lighted shops gayly decorated with Christmas presents of every imaginable shape and price.

Amongst the crowd of children who, with envious eyes had been gazing into these tempting windows, might have been seen our two boys; the younger, named Joe, was about ten years old; the elder, Bill, about sixteen. Very hungry they looked, and shabby too, as the gaslight showed to the worst advantage, the rags that clothed them. Joe was all eyes and ears as he stared into these shops, and listened to the praises of their contents. Bill was all ears certainly, but no "eyes;" for an accident had deprived him of both some years before. They gained a poor living by going around to ash-boxes, dust-bins, etc., and collecting and sorting every scrap that was saleable, the elder carrying a bag and the younger a hook.

The two boys had stood in silence a few minutes, each absorbed with his own thoughts, when the younger said with a sigh, "Why can't we have something nice at Christmas, like other people?"

"Where's the money to come from, Joe?" Then each relapsed into silence again.

Next morning they were early in making their usual rounds. Joe had just raked out some paper from a dust-bin near the garden gate of a comfortable looking suburban villa, when he suddenly exclaimed: "O Bill, here's a funny piece of paper! Isn't it strong, and doesn't it crackle? And there's figures on it!"

"Let me feel it, Joey," said the blind boy. Taking it in his fingers, he was not long in deciding that it was none other than a bank note. Before father and mother had been called away, and his sight had left him, the elder lad had known what a Bank of England note was like. "Read it, Joey," said Bill; and Joey, after a lot of trouble, made out the words "Five Pounds." "What's it worth, Bill?" "It's worth five gold sovereigns, Joey." "O Bill, what a find! Now we will have something nice! What shall we buy! Oh, what shall we buy?" The elder lad could hardly speak for emotion, but making an effort, slowly said: "This isn't ours. It must have got in that bin by mistake. We must take it up to the house, Joey." Poor Joe, he could not give up such a prize. He was too young when his mother died to remember her parting words to her boys, as, on her death-bed, she had committed them to the care of Him who had promised to be "Father to the fatherless." But the elder lad had never forgotten her words, and though there was now blindness outward there was inward sight.

"Bill, it's ours as much as anybody else's. You don't know who dropped it."

"Joey, lead me up to the door," he obeyed. With a slow and rebellious step he obeyed. They knocked at the door. The servant came, and seeing their ragged clothes and hungry looks, closed the door without waiting for their inquiry, saying sharply, "Nothing to give."

Joey looked at the shut door, and then at the note, and said, "Now it is ours come away." "Joey, I'll knock again," and before the youngster could check him, he had brought the knocker down heavily once more. Soon the door was opened again, and this time the master of the house appeared.

"Why don't you go away? You've been told we've nothing to give. If you knew what I've just lost you wouldn't come here with your begging."

"What have you lost, sir?" said the blind lad, "perhaps we've found it." And he produced the note without further question. The gentleman was staggered; but hastily thanking the lads he hurried off to show the recovery of his note, and when he returned, the lads not liking to wait, had gone. Poor Bill had to listen to many reproaches as they went home; but his answer was simply, "Joey we've done right: God knows all about it, and perhaps He will send us something for Christmas."

Christmas Eve found the two lads at their daily business, sorting their collections from ash-box and dust-bin, and as they lay down in their one room that night, there was but little in hand to tide over the coming day. Joey had tried hard to believe that his brother's words might be realized, but now fairly gave up hope, and began to compare their lot with that of others. Next morning came a tap at their room door, and a message was brought that a man with a hamper was waiting for them at the door. Down went the boys to discover their unusual visitor.

"Here! are you the boys that found a bank-note a few days ago? Well this is for you then, and a nice job I've had to find you."

"What is it? Who is it from?"

"Never mind!" and the man was gone.

The hamper was soon carried upstairs; and you should have seen the amazement and delight of those two lads, as the younger, with excited exclamations, drew from underneath the straw a piece of bacon, and a large fowl, and a plum-pudding, all ready cooked, and some big apples to fill up the corners! Bill could scarcely speak a word for some time; but when he found his tongue he

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