

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

BY "MARAH."

MARK 'the merry, merry bells
Christmas chimes are ringing,
Each the same glad story tells
Angel hosts were singing,
When on far Judean plain,
Shepherds heard their sweet refrain
From the welkin ringing.

"Peace on earth, good will to men,"
Tidings glad they're telling,
"Blessed Christmas come again"
On the air is swelling,
Now let notes of praise ascend,
Voices all together blend,
Joy till every dwelling.

"Christ is born, the Prince of Peace,"
His are now repeating,
Let all strife and discord cease,
Give all kindly greeting,
Let this day of Jesus' birth
Bind together hearts on earth,
Time is all too fleeting.

Still the bells, with silver tone,
Merrily are pealing,
Our sad hearts that grieve alone,
Lo! this thought comes stealing—
"Jesus, born that one and all
Thou mightst ransom from the fall."
This glad thought brings healing.

Ring, ye bells, your merry chimes,
Tell the wondrous story,
Story told in ancient times—
Priests and prophets hoary,
Long before His birth proclaimed
He should come, Messiah named,
Messenger of glory.

Down the ages, clothed in light,
Still the tale is ringing;
Still the children, fresh and bright,
Carols sweet are singing,
Yes, with spirits glad and gay,
Hail we now this blessed day,
Heavenly message bringing.

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY.

THE ideal Christmas is in Germany. All classes, the old and young, emperor and peasant alike, enjoy the festival. Yet it is distinctively the day of the children, and as such has been celebrated by Germany's greatest bards, from Klopstock to Otto Rognette; and Goethe, Schiller, and even such a grim cynic as Heine have enshrined the day in undying verse. The German idea of the day, too, is one of sacred sentiment. The lesson taught to the young is, that the offerings of the Christmas tree are from the Saviour, testifying his love for little children. The *Weihnachts mann* (Christmas man) is supposed to distribute his favours to the good children; but so impartial is he in apportioning his gifts that all children are good. Thus the religious instinct is cultivated in a most beautiful and telling way, and the anniversary is, indeed, a happy one for the children of Germany, where the Christmas tree had its birth, and where all the delightful festivities of Christmas, as known in England and the United States, first took root.

As it is a boast of the Jews that they founded the family, so it may be a proud one, too, of the Germans, that they have given to the children a day in the year, the approach of which they always eagerly await. Many tender and touching stories of this Saxon outgrowth are told in many forms of German and Norse literature, to the delight of the young; but, perhaps, Hans Anderson has done more to hit the child's fancy in this regard than any author of our time. There is also a beautiful poem of Hebel, "Christ-Baum," which celebrates the ceremonies on Christmas eve, and which

gives an adequate idea of that sentimental side of the German nature, which shines so resplendently in the poetry, painting and music of the Fatherland. The manner, too, in which the Christmas eve festivities are conducted, reflects the sober side of the German mind in a very striking way. A large yew bough is erected in one of the parlours, lighted with tapers, and hung with numerous gifts, sweetmeats, candies and ornaments, the whole producing a very decorative effect calculated to strike the juvenile eye. Every object is marked with the name of the intended recipient, and when the distribution takes place, the scene is one of great happiness, not alone to the children, but to the adults as well. The mother takes her daughters aside, and the father his sons, and the parents then tell their children what has been most praiseworthy or otherwise, in their conduct during the preceding year.

There still exists in Germany the vertebal Santa Claus, known there as "Knecht Rupert," who, dressed in high buckskins, a flowing white robe, with a mask and enormous flaxen wig, goes from house to house, being received with great reverence by the parents; and, after inquiring carefully about the behaviour of the children, distributes the presents with apparent justice. It will thus be seen that Christmas in Germany is almost entirely a children's festival; that the effort has been to make it a high moral institution by giving rewards to the most deserving, and kindling in the mind of a child an aspiration to deserve recompense for obedience to the parental authority. As such, the natal day of Christianity is certainly more poetically understood in Germany than in any other civilized nation.

Aside from the mere juvenile aspect of Christmas, the Germans, indeed, make this a feasting day. All the members of the family who can reach the homestead gather about the great fire which is sure to be burning on every German hearth. It makes little difference the distance. Every German will be at his ancestral seat if it be within the range of possibility; and in this is the maternal triumph. The mother is sure to see her children once a year, and thus the anniversary is to her a moment of supreme satisfaction. Even the students at the universities travel hundreds of miles to go to their homes on this day, and no expense is spared to be present at the family reunion. No good German ever fails in this duty, which to him is sacred. From the throne to the hovel the same spirit pervades. Indeed, it is the national feeling that

"A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year."

The Germans in the United States, as a rule, keep up their reverence for the day, and Christmas, as Americans observe it, is largely the result of German contact. While our Christmas notions come from England in the first instance, it should not be forgotten that England got hers from Germany.

RECEIVED with thanks boxes of books for poor schools from W. W. Dalglish, Huntingdon; H. F. Bickmore, Alport; G. H. Williams, Flinton, and others. There are still pressing demands for others. Send them along to Rev. W. H. Withrow, Toronto.

HOW A CHRISTMAS CLUB WAS FORMED.

[We reprint from the Christmas *St. Nicholas* the following account of the formation at Portland, Me., of a Children's Christmas Club, which gave last year a Christmas tree and dinner to six hundred poor children of that city.]

A NUMBER of notes were written, asking two or more girls and boys from every Sunday-school in the city to meet at a certain house at five o'clock on the following Thursday afternoon. Did they come?

Come? They did not know what the call was for, save for a whisper about Christmas work; but they came: came in pairs, in trios, in quartets, and quintets—a whole squad from the Butler school; big boys with big hearts, wee tots only four years old from the kinder-garten—one hundred children, ready for anything.

O, I wish you could have been there at the forming of that club!

A lady came forward to speak to them, and their voices were hushed in expectation. I can't tell you just what she said, but her words were beautiful. She spoke of their Christmas festivities every year, of their presents, and their friends; then of unfortunate children who had fewer, some none, of these joys.

When she asked, "Does any one here want to do anything for these others?" the thought that they could do anything was new to almost all—to many even the wish was new; but like one great heart-throb came their answer:

"Yes! I! I! I! I want to do something!"

"Children what can you do?"

A pause, and then a little voice cried: "Dive 'em a cent!"

That was the first offer, but it was followed by many another: "Give 'em candy!" "Give 'em a turkey!" "Give 'em a coat!"—each beginning with that grand word, "Give."

The result of that meeting was this:

To form a club which should last "forever;" to call it "The Children's Christmas Club;" to have for its motto: "Freely ye have received, freely give;" to place the membership fee at ten cents, so that no child should be prevented from joining because he was not "rich;" to make no distinction in regard to sect or nationality; to permit to join the club any girl or boy under 18 years of age who accepted its principles, which were: To be ready at all times with kind words to assist children less fortunate than themselves, to make every year, in Christmas week, a festival of some kind for them; to save through the year toys, books, and games, instead of carelessly destroying them; to save and, whenever practicable, put in good repair all outgrown clothing; to beg nothing from any source, but to keep as the keytone of the club the word "Give;" to pay every year a tax of ten cents; and to make their first festival in the City Hall on Thursday, December 28, 1882.

MR. ANSON P. WERDEN, whose address was thought to be Greenbush, Ont., will confer a favour by sending his correct address to the Rev. W. H. Withrow, Toronto. A grant of books and S. S. requisites was sent to him by express to Greenbush, which he will receive by making application at the office of the Canadian Express Co.

OLD HANNAH AND CHRISTMAS.

"HANNAH says the cattle fall upon their knees at twelve o'clock Christmas eve," said Minnie Grant to her aunt, as she sat waiting for the child's bedtime.

"Hannah is a superstitious old Scotch woman," returned the aunt; "she believes all that she has ever heard, without reason or questioning; but that is happier than to doubt every thing, as many people do. I suppose that idea about the cattle came from an old Latin poet, who speaks of them as cherishing the new-born child with their warm breath, and falling down before the majesty of his glory. There are many human beings who never show this reverence that is attributed to the beasts; they might learn a lesson from old Hannah's superstition."

"Hannah will put her new 'besom' behind the door to-morrow morning, and a chair in the doorway with bread and cheese upon it," said the little girl; "she thinks it will bring prosperity to the family."

"If we try to make clean our hearts, and to sweep out all evil things from them, as we sweep the house with a new broom; and if we use hospitality and charity to all the poor and needy who come to us, it will indeed bring prosperity, and God's richest blessing," replied Aunt Ellen. "There is a good deal of significance in many of these old customs. It would be pleasant to use them if we always thought of their meaning."

"And Hannah has made me a 'Yule baby' from some of the bread dough," said the child.

"That is to remind you of the blessed babe, who is to us the bread of everlasting life. If we do not feed upon his love and his word and his Holy Spirit, we can no more live the Christian life than these bodies could live without our daily bread. I like Hannah's customs when rightly understood."

NEVER SWEAR.

IT is mean. A boy of high moral standing would almost as soon steal a sheep as swear.

It is vulgar—altogether too low for a decent boy.

It is cowardly—implying a fear of not being believed or obeyed.

It is ungentlemanly. A gentleman, according to Webster, is a genteel man—well-bred, refined. Such a one will no more swear than go into the street to throw mud with a chimney-sweep.

It is indecent—offensive to delicacy, and extremely unfit for human ears.

It is foolish. "Want of decency is want of sense."

It is abusive—to the mind which conceives the oath, to the tongue which utters it, and to the person at whom it is aimed.

It is venomous—showing a boy's heart to be a nest of vipers; and every time he swears one of them sticks out his head.

It is contemptible—forgetting the respect of all the wise and good.

It is wicked—violating the divine law, and provoking the displeasure of him who will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain.—*Exchange*.