

FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME JOURNAL

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875

Vol. XLV

Winnipeg, Canada, December 15, 1909

No. 899



CHRISTMAS is the Home Day, and on this day the children all come home. It was to a home that the Christ Message first came and came with a Child, nay, was itself a child. And round the child the home has grown ever since, and wherever the Christ Message has come the home has been for the children a sanctuary, a place where they are both sacred and safe.

The spirit of the Christ Message is the spirit of the home, for the Child that came that Christmas morning was at once a gift and a sacrifice. He was the very embodiment of glad giving and of complete sacrifice. Out from a home, God's Home, the Child came, and came demanding mother love and care and sacrifice, and not in vain. And the mother, in the sweet sacramental mystery of her pain, received the gift and gave the child reverence and care and love, pouring out her life in sacrifice drop by drop till all was spent. And so the home has come to be a place in which a child appears, demanding in God's behalf reverent love and care, and where a mother, accepting the challenge

Christmas, the Home Day

By Rev. C. W. Gordon, D. D.—"Ralph Connor"

nourished by sacrifice, till He went forth to give to the world His rich treasure of love and sacrifice stored up for many years, till for the world He had spent it all, leaving Himself bankrupt of life, though not of love.

And ever from homes where the Christ Message has come, and where the Christ Spirit reigns, men will continue to go forth strong to love and suffer by reason of what they have received of both love and sacrifice in their homes. And ever as the Christmas Day comes round, it recalls the Christ Message and receives the Christ Spirit, persuading us that God is kind and reassuring our hearts toward Him. And every Christmas morning as the children gather home, the spirit of mutual trust and mutual love and mutual sacrifice will revive the Christmas joy of the Angel Song, and every home will be a replica of that Home from which came forth at first the Christ Child with His Spirit and His message for the world.

of God's trust, gives life gladly in response.

In the safe sanctuary of a home the Christ Child grew, strengthened by love,

SUPERSTITIONS connected with Christmas are legion. Every child knows the time honored legend of Santa Claus; how on Christmas Eve he travels through the land in his reindeer sledge, leaving in the stockings of his little friends welcome traces of his stealthy visits. In the play of "Hamlet" Shakespeare makes Marcellus, when speaking of the disappearance of the ghost at the crowing of the cock, say as follows:

"Some say that ever 'gainst the season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then they say no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy tales, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

There is a belief in some parts of the country that robins will sing near a house where a person is dying to cheer him. Another legend says that the robin attended our Lord on the Cross, and was there sprinkled with His blood, the marks of which the little songster still shows on his ruddy breast. The legend relates that when our Lord was on the cross the little bird strove frantically to release Him, patiently working hour after hour with wounded beak and blood-stained plumage in the attempt to draw out the cruel nails. Longfellow alludes to the legend in his poem on the Cross-bill.

Crowds of people used to assemble on Christmas Day at Glastonbury in Somersetshire to see the thorn in bloom, which was said to have sprung from a staff planted by Joseph of Arimathea, to whom tradition attributes the introduction of the Gospel into Britain. It was long a popular belief that this famous thorn would produce flowers in full bloom on Christmas Day. There is, however, no miracle in the case, for the thorn is one of a species which frequently buds in mild winters.

The heavy pudding so generally seen at Christmas was in early times supposed to signify the three-fold offer-

Christmas Legends

ing of the Magi, viz., gold frankincense and myrrh; but the mince pie was supposed to represent the manger in which the baby Christ was laid at Bethlehem.

Another curious custom was the making of "Yule dough." This consisted of a little flat cake in the shape of a baby, with the hands crossed at the breast; currants did duty for eyes.

We have heard of the legend of Santa Claus, the good old spirit who fills the stockings of good little boys and girls with acceptable presents at Christmas time. His proper name was Saint Nicholas, and he was Bishop of Myra in Lycia, in Asia Minor, and died about A.D., 392. He always loved and protected children. The story of how he became associated with people's stockings and chimneys is told as follows:

"In his native town there lived a nobleman who, by force of circumstance, had been reduced to poverty so great that, unable to provide his daughters with marriage portions, he was about to send them forth to earn their bread. Bishop Nicholas heard of this, and going down to the house after dark on Christmas Eve, bearing with him a purse of gold, was puzzled as to the best method of conveying the gift to the impecunious nobleman without its donor being known. Looking through the window he saw the old man had taken off his stockings and had hung them up near the fire to dry. After all was quiet, Nicholas ascended to the top of the chimney, an old-fashioned wide affair, and threw the purse of gold down with such dexterity that it fell into the old man's stocking. On Christmas morning the old gentleman rose, found the money, and with it provided a marriage portion for his eldest daughter."

Similar presents followed for the two younger, the old man hanging up the stockings regularly after that. Thus, according to the tradition arose the practice of hanging up the stockings to receive the present of Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus) on Christmas Eve. J. HUDSON.