

Edith's Soliloquy—Christmas Morning.

This really now is Christmas Day;
I am so glad—so glad!
I wonder if in all the world
There's anybody sad.
But oh, dear me! I must forget
That girl across the way
Her father drinks, they're awful poor,
And once I heard her say
That Christmas Day was like all days
I'm afraid—I'd like to know—
But what's the use? It's too late now—
If I had money, though,
I'd go and—but I've not a cent.
Now let me think; they say
If anybody has the will
They're sure to find the way—
What can I give to that poor girl?
I just have this sweet doll
That Santa Claus has brought for me,
Besides this popcorn ball,
And box of candy, nuts, and cakes.
And still "Where there's a will"—
But I'm real poor myself, I'm sure,
Yet she is poorer still,
And like enough has had no gift
This blessed Christmas morn.
I wonder if she's thought at all
That Christmas, Christ was born.
He did not think about himself,
But just of others thought.
I s'pose I could divide with her
These things that Santa brought—
I will! I'll give her half of them.
But then—here's this sweet doll,
I can't divide it, possibly;
I'll just give—give—it all.

—*Temperance.*

Yule Logs for the Christmas-Fire.

BY SARA LEE.

"Christmas, merry Christmas—
Sweet herald of goodwill!"

SOME writer has said, "The Christmas-tree, like liberty, loves lands where the snow flies;" and although it was on the plains of Bethlehem the angels proclaimed their message of peace on earth and goodwill to men, thereby making a world-Christmas possible, yet Christmas customs, under different names, had flourished for countless generations.

Our Norse ancestors, living in their ice-bound land, worshipped the sun as the source of all good; and when, as the winter drew near, and from the frozen regions of the north Ymir, the frost giant, crowded upon Jol, the sun, with fierce storms and spears of ice and armaments, came crashing down from the frozen seas, Jol, pressed hard, yielded and retreated southward, step by step, and farther and farther, from his accustomed place in the heavens.

Would he flee away and leave his children—the men, the birds, the flowers, and the trees—to the mercy of the relentless Ymir, and to be swallowed up in Niffleheim, the abode of cold and darkness?

But Jol paused, looked back in his flight, marked the terrible contest to which he was leaving his loved ones, his heart relented of his purpose of flight, and he turned. Could he be, was he coming back? They scarcely dare believe it. Little by little he begins to regain his lost domain. The old giant of the north fights furiously. But in vain he flings his icy javelins—in vain he whirls his blinding storms—in vain his mighty ice-batteries come crashing down. They fear naught, for is not Jol there to oppose him? Their hearts are light, and they make the air resound with shouts of victory. They fell the mightiest oak of the forest; and the blaze of the Jol log rises up high in the air to meet the rising god; and with glad acclamation, with feasting, dancing, gifts, and congratulations, they keep the Yule-feast.

Such, the Eddars tell us, is the origin of Christ-

mas, and thus it is the forerunner of the peace and goodwill. For, as the pagans, who, with their dim foreshadowing, saw through a glass darkly, commemorated the gift of renewed life and strength, do we, with the clear light of revelation, celebrate the Gift of gifts that came down from heaven to become the light of the world.

When the Norsemen sailed across the narrow sea, and took possession of Britain, they took their customs with them; and Cassin and his men were in time to join in the yule feast, before the simple-hearted islanders had discovered in the strangers the forerunners of the terrible Romans, who "worship only the god Boundary."

The yule log was of monstrous size. Whole trees were felled for the purpose. It was lighted on the 21st of December—our present Christmas Eve—and the blazing fire was kept burning till twelfth night, the 6th of January.

The yule candles—immense branches of wax—shed lustre on the scene. Among the dishes that decked the festal board, the most important was the boar's head. To the sound of music it was carried into the banqueting hall on a platter of gold, garnished with bay and rosemary, with an orange between his smooth tusks. He was king of the feast; the peacock, in all his glory of fuss and feathers, with gilded beak, being only second to the monarch.

The ancient Britons gathered the mistletoe and holly, and decked the heads of the white bulls, which were sacrificed to Thor, and then hung up the garlands in the halls. The hanging of the mistletoe bough in our homes to-day is but a perpetuation of the customs of the painted savages who roamed the woods of the forest primeval.

As the knowledge of the Gift that descended on the Judean plains spread even to the shores of far off Britain, on its message of universal brotherhood, what more natural than that upon the new religion should be grafted some of the manners and customs of the old? So the yule feast and the Christmas-tide have been welded into one.

The Church tried to combat and banish the barbarous ceremonies of the heathen, by substituting dramatic representations of the birth of Christ. Thence came the miracle and the mystery plays. Hence, too, came the Christ-child superstitions of the Germans, and the manger scenes that are still in vogue among our Moravian brethren. The little Bethlehems, where the holy child rests upon a bed of green moss, while over him leans a dressed-up doll, are repugnant to us; but to those who have been taught to look upon it as a type, it is holy.

Then, too, came the pretty custom of the Christmas carols, where, for centuries, the children went up and down the streets on Christmas Eve, singing:

"God rest ye, merry gentlemen!
Let nothing you dismay.
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day."

In merrie England, up to the days of the Commonwealth, the festival was kept with joy and merry-making. When the great yule-log was drawn from its home in the forest to the huge fireplace in the baronial hall, there was great rejoicing, for its cheery blaze was believed to burn up ancient feuds and animosities, and to kindle the fires of affection and goodwill among all classes. The boys ushered it in with carols, the minstrels welcomed it with their sweetest strains, and the merry-making that accompanied it still lives in the joyous verses of the old poets.

The Christmas-tree belongs to all nations. Where we place the star of Bethlehem, a sun, in honour of Apollo, crowned the Roman tree. And

our figures of Santa Claus and flying angels, or our Christmas substitutions for the heathen Phœbus and his birds. The holly recalled "Christ's thorn in Scandinavia." The evergreen is typical of the Tree of Life. The gleaming tapers represent the feast of light. The cornucopias are plenty and good cheer. The banners, balls, and bells are remnants of the holiday pageants of the olden time. While our gifts are but mementoes of the great Gift to mankind.

Our Puritan forefathers, in their rage at the painted mummeries of the scarlet woman, tried to root out the remnants of popery, and abolished all emblems and days. They took from us the cross, and struck from the calendar Easter and Christmas as holy days, but in their iconoclastic zeal may they not have gone too far? Why may we not, amid the social festivities of the day, recognize publicly the divine element in the event we celebrate?

There is a minor in the carol, and a shadow in the light, and the spray of cypress twines in all our holy wreaths, as says one of our sweetest poets; but it is no season for repining, as we commemorate the birthday so dear us.

Let us not keep a place at our festal board for those who have gone before us. "Our holiday feast would be but poor fare for them; they are at a better banquet in the skies. Let the whole land be full of chimes and carols. Let bells, silver and brazen, take their sweetest voices, and all the towers of Christendom rain music."

And let us open our churches, and join in the strain that is echoing over land and sea—the glad tidings of great joy, that unto us a Son is born, unto us a child is given."

"God rest you all, good Christians,
Upon this blessed morn;
The Lord of all good Christians
Was of a woman born."

"Now all your sorrows he doth heal;
Your sin he takes away;
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day."

The Far-off Leaves.

WHEN the spring comes the oak tree, with its thousands upon thousands of leaves, blossoms all over. The great heart of the oak-tree remembers every remotest tip of every farthest branch, and sends to each the message and the power of new life. And yet we do not think of the heart of the oak tree as if it were burdened with such multitudinous remembrance, or as if it were any harder work for it to make a million leaves than it would be to make one. It is simply the thrill of the common life transmuted into these million forms. The great heart beats, and wherever the channels of a common life are standing open the rich blood flows, and out on every tip the green leaf springs. Somewhat in that way it seems to me that we may think of God's remembrance of his million children. In some hut to-day some poor, sick sufferer is wearing the hours out in agony, longing for the evening as last night he longed for the morning which seemed as if it would never come. Or in some obscure shop to-day some insignificant workman is doing some bit of faithful and useful but unnoticed work. They are the far-off leaves on the great tree of his life; far off, and yet as near to the beating of his heart as any leaf on all the tree. He remembers them.—*Phillips Brooks.*

THERE was a boy who, when sent to school, ran away to play instead; he grew up ignorant; can hardly read or write. We should begin early to improve our minds and to obey God.