

LITTLE FOLKS

Rushes.

(E. A. B., in 'Sunday Reading for the Young.')

Where is the boy or girl who has not enjoyed gathering rushes? To many of us it is, I expect, one of the happiest memories of our childhood.

How delightful it was on a bright summer's day to start off on an expedition to some stream or pond where rushes grew; how recklessly we leaned over the bank, or even knelt on the wet grass, so as to get a better grasp of the long green reeds which were so precious in our eyes.

We knew how best to gather

a happy, careless child, with no greater anxiety on my mind than how I could reach the longest rushes in the stream at my feet.

Rushes were much used by our ancestors in the middle ages for strewing the floors of churches and halls, for carpets were then all but unknown.

William the Conqueror gave one of his Norman favorites some land on the condition that he sent the King rushes for his bed-chamber, and the chronicler Froissart tells us of a room which was 'strewed with rushes and green leaves, and the walls were hung with boughs, newly cut, for perfume.'

rushes was very unpleasant, and was the cause of many a disease.

Rushes had also another use: they were burnt as candles by the country people until the beginning of this century. Rushlights were well known also by the Romans, and were used by them for torches at their funerals.

A Christmas Tree in Labrador

'It's such a long way off,' sigh the little ones—Christmas, of course, we mean. Yes! it is a long way off, whether we look back at that lovely Christmas in the past with all its pleasures and all its pretty gifts; (some of the gifts look as though they thought so too, don't they?) or whether we look forward to that wonderful one that is coming—coming very fast, and that is sure for many of us to be even fuller of fun and happiness than the last. But, seeing we can't have a Christmas at midsummer, don't you think it would be the next best thing to hear about the happy time some children in Labrador had at their last Christmas? Do not forget that whatever you give for Labrador, will help to bring a little of such brightness into somebody's life. Those gifts that have gone and are going in the barrels that some of your mothers have been busy with this summer, will perhaps help to trim such a tree next Christmas, though we may not hear about that one till next midsummer, you know.

This is what one of the papers in St. John's, Nfld., said about that Christmas tree.

Dec. 27, 1904.—The annual Christmas tree held by the Deep Sea Mission for the children of this place, took place last night. About 150 persons of all ages and sizes attended. The proceedings took place in the building now being erected by the Mission for the Men's Social Club. Dr. Simpson gave some songs and music through his large gramophone to the great pleasure of the audience; then the curtain across the west end of the building was drawn back and disclosed a splendid tree, covered from top to floor with presents. In one corner was a large clock, and in



them; others might hack at the rushes with a knife, and thus get a handful at a time it is true, but such short, stubby rushes would not suit our purpose.

Slowly and carefully we pulled each rush separately from its soft bed in the muddy stream; then when a sufficient quantity had been collected we would sit down under a shady tree, and whilst our sisters made baskets with their rushes, with ours we proudly plaited whips—such whips! firm and strong, which we would hardly have exchanged then for a king's ransom.

I saw a poor old man selling just such whips once, and as I looked, I forgot all the cares and troubles of my manhood—forgot even the crowded street in which I stood, and was for a few short minutes

Queen Elizabeth's presence-chamber at Greenwich was also strewn with rushes.

This all sounds very pretty, but there is another side to the picture, and these green rushes were often strewn on floors to hide the dirt underneath, which no one in those days seemed to think of sweeping up and clearing away.

A writer in good Queen Bess's days tells us that sometimes rushes were left on the floor for twenty years or more, fresh rushes being laid on the top of the old ones. The habits of our forefathers were very far from cleanly—bones and grease and other refuse were usually thrown on the floor for the dogs to take or to leave, and the smell of all this and of the decaying