

Christmastide

- O Child of hope, dreaming ways!
O Child of hope, and faith's supernal cheer!

Thy birth has hush'd the voice of pain;
The day breaks glad across the plain!
Our Christ is born, the King of kings is here,

This morn of morns, this day of days.
—William Moore.

The First "Christmas Trees"

As for the tree idea, it is older than old. First of all, the pagans used to look upon the sun as a heavenly "light tree." Its rays were the branches, the clouds were its leaves, the lightning its flowers, and the sun, moon and stars its golden fruit. Later, the Scandinavians of the North chose the ash to typify this idea of the "tree of life," while through Germany and central Europe the pine was held sacred. In representing their "world tree" the Scandinavian legends always placed four harts in the branches "to devour the blossoms as the seasons devour the days," and one great stag "to consume the leaves as the year consumes the month." At Yule they decorated small fir trees with animals to carry out this idea and then covered them with candles to signify that the great "light tree" had begun to grow again.

When they were converted, the missionaries usually let them bring their Yule into Christianity, only now they had Christmas trees instead of Yule trees. In England, however, the skinned Anglo-Saxons were taught that Yule trees belonged to idolatry and must be cut down and burned at Christmas time, in token that the Holy Child had destroyed heathenism. This was the beginning of the Yule log that blazed on the Christmas hearth for a thousand years, and, in fact, only went out when hearths went out of fashion.

So when you trim your tree this year don't forget that, once upon a time, every object upon the branches had a special meaning. We string popcorn and cranberries to-day because the pagans such festoons typified mythological serpents; and later, among the Christians, they stood for the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The gilded nuts and colored globes represent the pagan idea of the fruit of the "light tree," which afterward was made to symbolize the Christian belief that "the heavens declare the glory of God."

Christmas

To-day the whole Christian world prostrates itself in adoration around the crib of Bethlehem and rehearses in accents of love a history which precedes all time and will endure throughout eternity. It is asked to explain the rapturous influence which controls us, we have no other words than the evangel of joy which the angel gave unto earth: "For this day is born unto you a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

The blessings resultant from our Christian civilization are poured out so regularly and so abundantly on the intellectual, moral, and social world, like the sunlight and the air of heaven and the fruits of the earth, that they have ceased to excite any surprise, except to those who visit lands where the religion of Christ is little known.

Before the advent of Christ, the whole world, with the exception of the secluded Roman province of Palestine, was buried in idolatry. Men worshipped the sun and moon and stars of heaven. They worshipped everything except God only, to whom alone divine homage is due.

Christ, the Light of the world, proclaimed unto all men in its fullness the truth which had hitherto been hidden in Judea. He taught mankind to know the one true God, a God existing from eternity unto eternity, a God who created all things by His power, who governs all things by His wisdom, and whose superintending providence watches over the affairs of nations as well as of men, "without Whom not even a sparrow falls to the ground."

The message of Christmas Day is intended for all men, for all times, for all conditions of existence. Only by stern adhesion to the principles therein contained can individuals and nations hope to share in that peace which has been promised to men of good will. To violated by God, and disorder is the synonym for sin and strife.—Cardinal James Gibbons.

Building Up Your Junior League

"How can we make our League a real success?" This is a live question, and all this is a live superintendent can solve it. So our first suggestion is:

1. Put your very best into it. That best is yourself, and yourself at your best. Do not think that "anything will do" for the juniors. Of course, we can-

PARENTS! REMEMBER!

"In a Christian home, the discipline of children is not so much a work of exhortation as of contagion. The prevailing climate of unaffected idealism strengthens the moral constitution of the child. Thus the Christian family gets its unity and stability not by outward regulation, but by the natural processes of its inward life."—Peabody.

not always be at our best, but we can be the best we can. And often might be better than we are if we really tried harder. An old and true saying is "The workman is greater than his work."

2. Brighten up your meetings. If they are not attractive as well as instructive, interest in them will wane. Avoid monotony of routine. Spring a surprise on your juniors occasionally. You cannot have a bright, attractive meeting without preparation. Therefore think it out, plan it, prepare for it, work it out.

3. Use the juniors. Don't do all yourself. There is a way by which the elder is really driving while the little chap holds the reins. That's skill in management, and at the same time utilizes the law of co-operation.

4. Have good music. Not only sing what the juniors can engage in, but give them something else that they can enjoy. While it is good to use them in all things possible, it will delight and profit them as well as add to the dignity and worth of your meetings to have some of your most talented musicians both sing and play at your services. Our music is often too cheap and trashy in character.

5. Enlist the parents. This is often forgotten. Fathers and mothers really, for the most part, want their children to grow up better than themselves; and, if personally approached, will to greater or less degree, unite with the junior league workers to develop the boys and girls. If

your League doesn't grip the homes of your members, something very important is lacking.

6. Keep after the irregular ones—the absentees. Don't give up because a boy or girl either seems to lack interest. By being interested in that boy you will make him interested in you, and then in what you represent. "It's the string of fish that counts," and if you quit fishing because they don't always or easily bite, you will not have many on your string.

7. Keep sweet. No worker among juniors will win who carries "a north and south face." Rather cultivate one that runs "east and west," and remember that one of the most powerful energies emanate from a smiling countenance. What is it that's "worth a million dollars and doesn't cost a cent?" A smile. Therefore, smile!

Doing God's Errands

Helen stood on the doorstep with a very tiny basket in her hand, when her father drove up to her and said: "I am glad you are all ready to go out, dear. I came to take you to Mrs. Lee's park to see the new deer."

"Oh, thank you very much. I can't go just this time to-morrow. I have a very particular errand to do now," said the little girl.

"What is it, dear?" asked her father. "Oh, it is to carry this somewhat!" and she held up the tiny gold basket.

Her father smiled and asked: "Whom is this errand for, dear?"

"For my own self, papa, but—oh, no, I guess not—it's a little errand for God, papa."

"Well, I will not hinder you, my little deer," said the good father, tenderly. "Can I help you any?"

"No, thank you," was going to carry my orange, that I saved from my dessert, to old Peter."

"Is old Peter sick?"

"No, I hope not, but he never has anything nice, and he's good and thankful. Big folks give him the little gold meat, and broken bread, and I thought an orange would look so beautiful and make him so happy! Don't you think that poor well folks ought to be comforted sometimes as well as poor sick folks, papa?"

"Yes; and I think we too often forget them until sickness or starvation comes. You are right; this is a little grand for God. Get into the buggy and I will drive you to Peter's, and will wait for you till you have done the errand, and then show you the deer. Have you a pin, Helen?"

"Yes, papa, here is one."

"Then here is a five-dollar bill for you to pin on the skin of the orange. This will pay old Peter's rent for four weeks, and perhaps this will be a little errand for God, too," said the gentleman.

Little Helen, who had taught a wise man a wise lesson, looked very pleased as her fingers pinned the bill on the orange.—Domestic Journal.

At a Disadvantage

Two boys managed to be rather unruly in school, and so exasperated their teacher that she ordered them to remain after hours and write their names one thousand times.

They plunged into the task. Some fifteen minutes later one of them grew uneasy, and began watching his companion in disgrace.

Suddenly the watcher burst out, with despair, between his sobs, and said to the teacher: "Tain't fair, mum; his name's Bush and mine's Schlattermeyer."