



SYMBOLS OF THE TWELVE TRIBES.

THESE are the symbols or "coats of arms" of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Who can explain by reference to Scripture their meaning?

The New Year.

A YEAR is dead! A year is born!
At two "cross-roads" we stand and view
Deserted paths, of venture shorn,
And death along each avenue
With no magician's hand to bring
Back from the past a single thing.

Along the second road we see
A radiant form with ample wings;
Born from the great eternity.
It partly sighs and partly sings;
Its head is circled with a light,
Its feet are hid in clouds of night.

Thus Hope is born with every year,
And wears for all a sunny look;
It always brings a festive cheer, [book;]
And keeps well closed the "Doomsday"
It sometimes sighs, but mostly sings,
And hides the gloom beneath its wings.

As days, and weeks, and months unroll,
And light breaks forth from hidden gloom,
The year, unfolding thus its scroll,
Shall crown sweet Hope with richer bloom,
While many a fear we dreaded most
Will show an angel for a ghost.

Whatever shades may meet our eyes,
That spring from our Hope's cloudy feet,
From thankful hearts let songs arise,
That shade makes light the more complete.

That every new and untried year
Brings much for Hope, and less for Fear.

Resolutions for 1884.

I hereby solemnly covenant, as God shall help me—

Never to neglect my morning and evening prayers.

Always to speak kindly to every person with whom I am associated.

Always to speak well, and never ill, of any absent person.

To endeavor to lead at least one person to the Saviour during the present year.

To strive to attend one devotional meeting during the week.

My dear young friends: The New Year is one of the times when we should gird on our armor afresh and renew our vows.

Will you cut out these resolutions; or, better still, copy them and sign your names to them, and place them in your Bibles and endeavor to keep them all the year through?

If at any time you should fail, remember you have an Advocate with the Father. Ask Jesus to forgive you, and commence again. Then shall the New Year prove to you—

Another year of progress, another year of praise,

Another year of proving His presence all the days;

Another year of service, of witness for His love;

Another year of training for holier work above.

Christmas.

The following Christmas reading was crowded out of our last number.

Hail, Holy Season of good will,
Forgotten now be every ill,
That through the by-gone year,
Brother to brother-man hath wrought,
And be we all by Christmas taught,
And by all feelings dear.

With all our fellows' faults to bear,
Since their infirmities we share,
So this our motto be,
Both to forgive and to forget,
And each to each example set,
Of Christian unity.

Christmas, with all its joyous and happy associations and thoughts, comes upon us once more; and, amid the pause in the bustle and din of life, our minds turn from the solid realities of this matter-of-fact world to contemplate the brighter and warmer things of social life. To young and old, rich and poor, this most welcome and festive of all seasons of the year, brings a feeling of gladness and rejoicing, which neither time nor circumstances can control or affect. The veriest infant in the cradle, learns to lispingly welcome to old *Santa Claus*, whose advent it appreciates as one of the great events in its eventful existence; and, as the wondering senses of the eager little toddlers of more ripening years drink in the story of the "Babe in the Manger," and the "First Christmas Morn on the Hills of Bethlehem," their hearts are filled anew with delight. Truly, the "tidings of great joy" bring then gladdening influence to all people. The very air seems to partake of the general tone of crispness and cheerfulness, as it echoes to the merry shouts of romping school-children and pleasant salutations of those more advanced in

life. Everyone seems possessed with a new vigour; and all hard thoughts and unseemly feelings are as effectually hidden away as the dark earth beneath the glistening snow.

What a host of sweet recollections are awakened within us on each return of this happy time, as we look backward to the scenes of years gone by; when, at home, perhaps, as boys, we gathered around the old family hearth, listening with bated breath to the hushed tones of the never-tiring storyteller, or as we joined with whole soul in the frolics of Christmas eve under the holly and mistletoe.

THE BURNING OF THE YULE LOG.

This custom comes through our Scandinavian ancestors, who, at their feasts of *Juhl*, at the winter solstice, were in the habit of kindling huge bonfires in honor of their god *Thor*. In many parts of England it is still maintained, although it has entirely lost its original significance. Time gradually changed the form of this observance, and in the feudal times we find it so transformed as to be scarcely recognizable. Then, a huge log was drawn from its resting-place in the woods by a large company of men and boys, amidst sounds of minstrelsy and general shouts of acclamation and rejoicing. All who chanced to pass, or who met the procession on its way to its destination, gravely uncovered their heads and gave exclamation to an expression of devout reverence. Having reached the baronial hall, it was placed on the hearth of the wide chimney, where it was ignited with the charred remains of the log of the previous year; and as the flames crackled and roared, casting their ruddy glow on the massive walls and lighting up the dark corners, the sports began.

The baron, for the occasion, was displaced by a humble self, who did the honors of the evening in a right royal style. All fell to with a zest, and the sports, carried over the midnight hour, lagged not until the gray dawn announced the birth of another day. And often that dawn revealed the sight of nobles, vassals, and all, heaped together in ridiculous incongruity amongst the rushes on the floor, the prisoners of my Morpheus and strong ale. Games, such as jumping in sacks, diving in water for apples, jumping at bread and treacle, follow.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

is of German origin, and still holds a high place in that land where Christmas is honoured as a high day. The tree is arranged by the older members of the family in the best room of the house, which is kept locked until the important evening arrives, when the door is thrown open. As the eager juveniles troop in, and behold the huge tree ablaze with many tapers, and loaded with little trinkets and presents, such as only children know how to prize, exclamations of delight break forth on every hand. The children, also, are in the habit of saving their money for weeks, in order to purchase gifts for their parents. These are concealed until Christmas morning, when they are brought forth; and gladdening is the sight of parents and children as they experience the truth of the saying, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Our modern

SANTA CLAUS—

a corruption, of course, of St. Nicholas—is also a German institution, although

many of his characteristic features are innovations on the original introduced by the New England settlers. In the former country, the heads of families often on Christmas Eve, after selecting a present for each child as his or her character suggested, sought out some old man in the neighbourhood, who, all dressed up with white robe and fur, flax wig, buskins, etc., came next morning and, to the amazement of the youngsters, presented each with "the very thing he was looking for." As we have said before, the old gentleman who performs the same work in this land, under the well known cognomen of *St. Nick*, has had many additions to his outfit in the shape of a handsome cutter, a team of fleet reindeers, etc., and as he goes his yearly rounds, silent and unseen, save by those who are kept awake by the effects of too hearty a supper, no person on earth is for the time being so popular. But we shall leave our friends with this jolly little old fellow without a further introduction, for we are sure there are none who do not recognize him as one of the first of their childhood's acquaintances.

OUR MODERN CHRISTMAS.

We shall now speak of Christmas in the connection which gives to it its importance and significance in the eyes of the present age. Although formerly set apart as a time for fasting and prayer by the early Church, it slowly assumed a different character, and now many look to it as a season for eating and drinking. And why, in consideration of the import of the message brought by the angelic host on the first Christmas morn that the world ever saw, should not the heart be merry and voice utter words of gladness?

Is it meet to clothe our words with sadness and our countenance with sorrow and gravity, and afflict our bodies when "tidings of great joy" are brought to us? At the present day in some parts of Europe such undue solemnity and austere gravity is given to this anniversary that the children are not allowed to indulge in anything approaching to merriment, while any thing bordering on hilarity at such a time would be regarded as almost sacrilege. Is it any wonder that children born under such circumstances should lose many of the lessons which such a celebration should bring, or worse than that, grow up to despise the doctrines of One the anniversary of whose birth brought such a calamity? Nay, let the heart be filled with rejoicings, let every gloomy cloud be banished, only let not license and depravity displace soberness, and moderation. While we manifest our sympathy with everything that would heighten the pleasure which this glad season brings, we would discountenance and decidedly frown down that which would cause it to degenerate into a period of evil carousing and debauchery of any kind whatever. With our whole soul, then, we wish all our readers "A Merry Christmas," in the very best sense of the term, and may your Christmas be made all the merrier and happier by your endeavours to make some one else glad.

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD, visiting a neighbour, was asked if she would have bread and butter. "No, thank you," she said, "mamma said I must not take bread and butter when from home;" suddenly brightening up, "but she said nothing about cookies."