

Christmas Customs and Superstitions.

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These well known lines from Hamlet recognize these superstitions :

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

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The salmon was a great Christmas favourite, and Sandys mentions a Monmouthshire tradition to the effect that on every Christmas day, in the morning only, a large salmon appeared in the adjoining river, showed himself openly, and permitted himself to be taken and handled; but it would have been the greatest impiety to capture him.

Popular rhymes did not omit the

"sammon, king of fish,
That fills with good cheere the Christmas dish."

A Christmas dinner in those ancient days was a meal massive beyond our comprehension. Only by comparison can we estimate its proportions.

In Gervase Markham's English Housewife is a bill of fare, oft quoted, for an ordinary friendly dinner, to which the imagination may add the fitting accompaniments for the "king of dinners."

First course, sixteen full dishes: "a shield of brawn, with mustard; a boiled capon; boiled beef; a roasted chine of beef; a neat's tongue, roasted; a pig, roasted; baked chewets; a goose, roasted; a swan, roasted; a turkey, roasted; a haunch of venison, roasted; a kid with a pudding inside; a pasty of venison; an olive pye; a couple of capons; a custard."

To these add "sallets, fricases, quelque choses, and devised paste, as many dishes more to make the full service thirty-two dishes," which the housewife is admonished is "as much as can conveniently stand on one table and in one mess, and after this manner you may proportion your second and third courses, holding fullness in one half the dishes, and show on the other, which will be both frugal in the splendor, contentment to the guest, and pleasure to the beholder."

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The English gentlemen were wont to repair to their country-houses and keep open house at this season, "when good logs furnish the hall fire, when brawn is in season, and all revelling regarded, and beefe, beere, and bread was no niggard." Care was taken to provide "a noyse of minstrells, and a Lincolnshire bagpipe."

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Mummings were known very early in England, and were doubtless a remnant of the Roman Saturnalia, when men and women went about the streets dressed to represent all manner of cattle and wild beasts.

In the English country-houses disguises were provided for the guests. In 1348, at Otford, in Kent, there were furnished fourteen dragons' heads, fourteen swans' heads with wings, fourteen pheasants' heads with wings, and numerous mummers' tunics trimmed with gold and silver stars. Another year the heads were of wild beasts.

To take the place of the old heathen frolics, there were provided, under the auspices of the clergy, plays and mysteries, these being distinguished by the hidden or revealed meaning. These plays set forth the miraculous acts of the saints. Many farcical passages were introduced to enliven their monotony, often making them highly irreverent. In the Chester mysteries, Noah's wife absolutely declines to enter the ark without her gossip, and strengthens her avowal by swearing by Mary, St. John, and

Christ; when finally drawn in, she deals Noah a hearty box on the ear. These plays held their ground until the days of Shakespeare.

Space forbids a description of the Christmas pie, which our modern mince-pie, has entirely superseded. The Puritans would have none of the Christmas pie, declaring,—

"All plums the prophets' sons deny,
And spice-broths are too hot :
Treason's in a December pie,
And death within the pot."

The Christmas revels came to an end with Twelfth Night, second only to Christmas in splendour of celebration, and with a sigh of relief, perhaps, and a pang of regret likewise, the spirit of the old Scotch rhyme fell upon all:

"Yule's come, and Yule's gane,
And we hea feasted weel ;
Sae Jock maun to his flail again,
And Jenny to her wheel."

OUR BOARDERS.

(Concluded from Page 8.)

vide a number of little items of news which we feel sure will prove of interest to our readers at large as well as to those to whom they relate. We are also able in this number to give ocular demonstration that our boarders are a sturdy, well fed, healthy looking lot of little lads, Mr. Gaunt having taken his camera with him on one of his recent trips.

In our first illustration we see Charles Hawk, Charles Wall, Sidney Fishbourne, Arthur Bray, Charles Skinner, William Clayton, Ernest Gay, Ernest Dunstan, Robert Taylor, George Cornick, Alfred Gurr, William Houghton, and Charles Law, who are attending school at Chaffey, and have a very warm regard for their teacher, Miss Campbell, under whose tuition they are all making splendid progress.

The boys in our centre cut are Percy and Frank Goodman, Joey Pinder, Arthur G. Goldsmith, Horace Cruttenden, John Shayler, William Wright, Alfred Hewlett, David Morris, Fred and Alfred Sherington. The building in the background is Allansville School, and fortunate indeed are our little men in having their early educational efforts directed by Miss Proudfoot, who has filled the position she occupies for a number of years, and is known as one of the most successful teachers in Muskoka. The kindly interest she displays in her pupils secures her the fullest confidence and affection of her young charges.

The group of sturdy little fellows in the left-hand column comprises those of our lads attending school at Brunel (S.S. No. 2), midway between Huntsville and Baysville. The teacher, Miss Heasley, speaks very highly of the boys, and that they are advancing rapidly under her care is evidenced by the interesting and well-written letters which we have received from a number of them. The names of those in this group are Alfred and Edward Harris, Willie Reeve, Michael Welsh, Robert Henry Rolfe, Albert Febbell, Joe Plear, Charley Hart, Tom Wilson, George Miller, Willie Sutherland.

Our fourth and last illustration shows a good picture of the stone school at Uford, a fine and well cultivated part of the country. The three little boys here are John and Robert Lowe and Willie James, who are spoken of in very favourable terms by their teacher. Robert Lowe was unfortunate enough to break his jaw some time ago, but we are glad to say he has fully recovered and is now as bright, merry and talkative as ever. The little girls in this picture are Mary Dixon and Carrie Lillywhite, whose portraits and interesting letters appeared in our pages quite recently.

In giving the names of those forming the various groups we have not attempted to introduce each individually. We have not the slightest doubt our young friends will be able to "pick themselves out."

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We learn from a recent report that the brothers Benjamin and Charles Kelloway, 9 and 8 respectively, "have thriven well during the past summer and are now fat, sturdy, well-developed boys"; also that their guardian thinks a great deal of them. A few more years' progress like this, and Benjamin and Charlie will be able to give a good account of themselves as wage-earners on the farm. They are now at Grassmere, and came out last year.

Mrs. D. C. Cunningham, of Barrie, who has quite a 'houseful of our little lads boarded out under her care, writes of her little charges: "They have not missed a Sunday from Sunday school as yet, and will sing a piece at the Anniversary Concert on the 14th of December." "They are all nice, well-behaved boys, and we are getting very fond of them." "The dear children have a very tender regard for Dr. Barnardo."

"George Griffith is well, and getting along nicely. He is quite smart at learning and likes school." This is the report of the good farmer with whom little George is boarded out, at the end of his first month in the country.

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"Says he is kindly treated and likes his home" is the word of Thomas Collins, 11, also of last year's first party. He is not as robust as our two previous friends, but is said to be healthy.

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George and Arthur Brittain, 11 and 9, have a comfortable home with Mr. and Mrs. Bulby, on the outskirts of Hamilton. They attend school, and we hear "the master speaks well of them and says they are regular and attentive scholars." This is encouraging news, and leads us to hope great things of George and Arthur, who came to Canada in the fall of '93.

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Thomas Charles Law is 8, and lives happily at Huntsville. "Grown fat and sturdy since I last saw him, looks exceedingly well; very healthy," says Mr. Gaunt in a recent report.

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"A good lad and well spoken of by his guardian" is the very satisfactory news to hand of eleven-year-old Joseph Pearce, who is well and happy at Grassmere.

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We do not receive the best of account of the physique of little Joseph Render, one of the "smaller fry," who came out last year. He is very bright and cheery however, and perhaps when he sees this, or his guardian reads it to him, he will try and get some roses in his cheeks. He will doubtless have a good look at himself in the group of Allansville children.

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Tommy Ringrose is the junior even of Joey Render, being only 6. We are told he is "a nice, smart, chubby, little fellow." And he has a first class home and is well looked after in every respect.

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Robert Whittier, 12, who came out in April, '94, is a smart, active, bright-looking lad, very healthy; in the third book at school, where he is a regular attendant. His guardians are an elderly couple at Port Sydney, "who are bringing up the boy as they would their own, giving him a thoroughly good training."

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John and Robert Mills and George Rodwell, who came out in '91, all live together in the home of Mrs. McLaren, at Bracebridge, from whom the boys are receiving every possible attention. "They are most intelligent children, and from the way they speak are being well trained."

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"A very good boy . . . treated in every respect as one of the family; lives well and is well cared for; being well trained in religious matters." This leaves nothing to be desired for Freddy Owen, 12, who lives with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brown, of Port Sydney.

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Charles F. Ball is 12; lives at Bracebridge—his guardians being Mr. and Mrs. John C. Thompson. These good people say they cannot speak too highly of Charles, especially Mrs. Thompson, who seems much attached to him. Charlie, on his part, has the warmest affection for his foster parents, and it augurs well for his future that he is under the care of such kind, Christian people.

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"Growing fast, looks healthy and well, being brought up under good, wholesome influence and training," would indicate that Walter V. Griffiths, 10, will be well equipped in every respect when he leaves the care of his guardian, Mrs. W. F. Sanders, of Bracebridge.

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Bracebridge is also the home of Charles H. Potter, 10, who is "the picture of health," and described by his guardian, Mrs. Jas. Green, as a thoroughly good boy.

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"Guardians seem as though they could not say enough in his favour." This high praise is for Walter C. Boyd, 12, who enjoys all the comforts of a good Christian home, under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leitch, of Utterson.