

Dr. Fordney's Christmas Gift

by Belle Maniates

DOCTOR Fordney came out of the big department store, deposited an armful of packages in his runabout, and then started to pay the last visit on his daily round.

It was the afternoon before Christmas, but the young physician's heart was not filled with the proverbial holiday cheer. Good will he had toward all men—but not toward all women.

One little spot of resentment lurked in his thoughts of June Leigh. She had accepted his tender devotion with downcast eyes and an entrancing air of demureness and timidity combined. Then, suddenly, she had been transformed into the most bewildering of coquettes, openly flirting with a man the doctor detested.

At speed-limit rate, he drove his machine into the poorest of the poor precincts of the city and stopped before a forlorn-looking little house. He knocked and then opened the door. A pale, anxious-eyed woman came forward. He held up a cautioning finger and smiled as he deposited his load of toys in a corner.

"I see you have the wherewith for a Christmas dinner tomorrow," he said, glancing at a chicken on the table.

"A young lady brought us a basket of good things from the Aid society," she replied, smiling happily as she preceded him into the adjoining room.

A delicate little face with wan eyes looked up from the pillow.

"You are better, little Lou," he asserted, taking the tiny hand in his. "It's the thought of Christmas?"

"Yes, and a lovely young lady brought us a Christmas dinner, and there's jelly and pie. She is coming again tomorrow to see if Santa Claus came. I don't think he will, though."

"You must have faith in him and believe that he will come," assured the doctor. "You see he makes a mistake once in a while, but he wouldn't miss you twice. I feel sure that he will come."

"Oh, do you? If I could only see him! Do you think he would care if I remained awake?" asked the quaint little invalid.

"Well, you know he generally comes when everyone is asleep, but maybe, since you are sick and because he forgot you last year, he may come here first, early in the evening, and let you see him."

"Oh!" cried the child ecstatically. "Maybe he'll have a Christmas tree here for you," said the doctor, his imagination taking lofty flights.

The child's eyes gleamed.

"No," she sighed. "That would be too beautiful."

The doctor asked a few questions, left some more medicine, and then beckoned the mother to follow him into the outer room.

"I will send a little tree and all the trappings as soon as I get back to the city. You have it all trimmed up and

lighted at six o'clock. Then I'll come in and be Santa Claus."

"Oh, you mustn't do so much," she protested, looking at the many parcels.

"I have no one in the world to do anything for," he said earnestly, "so you will be giving me all the Christmas cheer I shall get by letting me do this. And, more than that, it will do little Lou more good than a load of medicine."

He returned to the city for another shopping expedition and promptly at six o'clock he was back at the little home. On the door-step he slipped into a big fur coat, adjusted a beard and the usual Santa Claus make-up. Then he softly opened the door and slipped in. He gave an approving glance at the gaily-decorated, brilliantly-lit little tree to which Mrs. Ellis was putting the last touches.

"That is fine!" he exclaimed. "The young lady came back with a doll for Lou, and when I told her what you had done, she stayed and fixed it for me. She was here all the afternoon, stringing cranberries and popcorn, and making candy bags."

"I'll slip behind the tree, now, and you bring the little girl out. She won't be afraid of me, will she?"

"Oh, no; she loves Santa Claus!"

The doctor was more than repaid for his efforts by the cry of delight that issued from Lou when her mother brought her from the bed-room and propped her up in pillows in an old rocking chair.

"I couldn't find you last year," said Santa Claus in a gruff but tender voice, "but I have brought you enough this year to make up."

The tree was nearly stripped before Doctor Fordney discovered a tiny blue envelope addressed to Santa Claus in a handwriting that made his heart-beats quicken. He opened it and by the light of a tiny candle read that which made his Christmas eve an eye of beauty.

"And this is the last, little Lou," he said, carrying her a picture-book.

"Santa Claus, you won't forget Miss Leigh, the young lady who brought us the Christmas dinner?" she pleaded.

"Little Lou, I am going there right from here. She shall have everything she wants."

"And you won't forget Doctor Fordney?"

"No; I'll give him the best Christmas he ever had."

"But, Santa Claus, won't some one give you a present?"

"A beautiful lady is going to give me the loveliest gift in the whole world tonight," he said.

"Oh, I am so glad! I wish I could do something for you for all the things you have brought me."

"You can, little Lou. In half an hour you will go to bed and shut your eyes tight and try not to think of your presents, or the tree or me until morning."

He stooped to receive the imprint of baby lips and to feel the lingering pressure of soft arms about his neck.

"The mirror of all courtesy" should be polished on Christmas day.

"A royal train, believe me," is the reindeer equipage of good old St. Nick.

A War Time Christmas

The incident occurred one December during the Civil War. The Army of Tennessee was in Virginia, watching closely every move on the great chess board of strategy. Sergt. Montgomery and a few men were ordered to guard a certain narrow pass through the mountains.

Orders were strict to permit no one to pass no matter what the errand. The tension was high; spies were everywhere.

Not far from the picket post was a small house, part log and part frame. There lived a young wife and two little girls. The husband had joined the Confederate army. The wife was left with two cows and some potatoes and corn.

She or her little girls brought the Union soldiers milk and butter; sometimes a few eggs.

The names of the girls were Mary and Susie. They said they liked soldiers; that their papa was one, and that they knew he would be glad to see these soldier friends of theirs if he could only get off, but he was so busy somewhere shooting at the Yankees that they wouldn't let him leave.

One day as the month was drawing to a close, Susie, the smaller of the two, asked the sergeant why they were always looking up and down the pass so close.

"To see if anybody's coming, little one," said the grizzled officer, "our orders are to shoot any man who attempts to go by here."

Instantly Susie laid her head on her sister's shoulder and cried as if her heart would break. The big sergeant was very much embarrassed; he saw he had put his foot in it, but couldn't understand just how.

"There, there, girls," he said, "don't you cry, we ain't going to shoot any of your people."

"I know you ain't," said Susie, trying to dry her eyes, "but we been a

lookin' for Santa Claus for years an' years an' it's mos' time for him to be along here."

The sergeant was dumfounded. Two days later he rode down the valley to the army headquarters and sought out the quartermaster.

"I want two blankets," he said, "big ones, and warm; 40 pounds of coffee, a case of sweet crackers, and some ginger snaps if you got 'em, and some sugar, and—let me see—got any canned goods, pears and peaches and the like o' that?"

The day before Christmas was clear and bright. The troopers were walking about their campfire, their guns stacked, but within easy reach. The sergeant was not there. Pretty soon the little girls came out from the cabin, hand in hand. They had hardly reached the camp when the captain of the guard suddenly straightened up.

"Halt!" he cried, "who comes here?" The soldiers sprang for their guns and stood across the trail. Climbing down a hill bordering the trail was a man with a long white beard and a fur cap. He was laden with parcels.

Susie saw him, and uttering a glad cry ran to him and stood between Santa Claus and the soldiers.

"You shan't shoot him," she shouted; "you shan't shoot Santa Claus!" The soldiers grounded arms and laughed until they couldn't laugh any more. Just then there was a sound of a horse's hoofs on the rocky trail. It was an unusual thing, there was no joke this time. The soldiers straightened up, ready for action. Santa Claus dropped his parcels and gripped his revolver.

In a moment the rider was among them. It was a high officer in the Federal army, and he glared about in angry surprise.

"What means all this buffoonery?" he growled, his keen eyes boring through Santa Claus.

Santa Claus, entirely unabashed, told the story, omitting nothing. He said the father of the little girls was in the Confederate army and they and their mother were alone in the mountains; that the winter had come on them unprepared, and he had ordered the quartermaster to get together some things to tide them over Christmas.

The good braided officer looked into the fearless eyes of the sergeant, the men standing respectfully about him, and then at the half-clad little girls and their blue hands and lips.

"It's all right, boys," he said, "entirely all right. I got a couple o' little chaps o' my own back in the hills of Kentucky, and I hope the good Lord will raise up friends for 'em same as you folks have been to these. Good-by!"

Then he rode on down the trail. That night the Yankees and the little family of the Confederate soldier had a Christmas dinner in a cozy little mountain cabin.

He Was Sure of That. "West Point cadets administer 'solence' as a punishment to those who have offended them."

Could Spare Santa Man. The passing of Santa Claus would be attended with the sincere apptrophe of dwellers in Christmas lands, "I could have better spared a better man."

Christmas Eve

Christmas eve! And a blustery night— Snow-furries almost blinding the sight; Eddying winds shift to and fro And toss from the chimneys smoke-clouds low.

On the street is heard a noisy throng Of pleasure-bent stoppers, hurrying along, Laden with bundles and baskets and toys To gladden the hearts of girls and boys.

Let the wintry winds moan on, and sigh Through the forests, and sing their lullaby; 'Neath holly-wreathed branch and mistletoe I rest and sleep while the tempests blow.

Christmas eve! And the sound of bell, Yuletide harmonies, break and swell, And sing of a Babe in Bethlehem, Born in a manger—Saviour of men!

—E. A. Ferguson.

Christmas in Odd Corners

Yuletide Recollections of a Traveler

I have been my lot to spend many of my Christmases in foreign lands. I recall one dismal holiday spent in a filthy post-house on the Great Post Road at Nijal Udinsk now, in these days of the trans-Siberian railway, a place of some importance.

I was alone, on my way from Petersburg to Irkutsk. On the previous day I had overtaken a convoy of prisoners in chains, and as on the morning of the Russian Christmas day I was sitting by the high brick stove, I saw the Cossacks and their despairing charges arrive.

I remember walking and talking with several of them in that wilderness of newly fallen snow. Most of them were, or said they were, victims of the unscrupulous agents provocateurs of the government, and all seemed bitter against the czar and his advisers—as indeed they well might be.

Another Christmas of the Greek calendar I spent in Servia—in Belgrade, the capital of that gallant little state, the powder-magazine of the Balkans. It was a cold, bright, sunny day, and an air of festivity was everywhere. The service in the cathedral, attended by the king and his cabinet, was a brilliant affair, and after a stroll in the delightful Kalemegdan garden, overlooking the Danube, I lunched with my friend the minister of justice and his charming American wife. The streets were hung with flags, exchanges of presents and flowers were universal, and many were the quaint Serb customs.

The twenty-fifth of December three years ago I spent wearily in the stuffy restaurant car of the Nord express between Paris and Petersburg. Again, I was alone and I remember, as we steamed out of Vilna station to the great plain towards Dunaburg, the chef of that celebrated express proceeding in his triumphal English pudging, with a small fellow of holly stuck in the top. My fellow passengers, being all foreigners, failed to appreciate it. But I did.

Another memorable holiday was that I passed in the reindeer-skin hut of a Laplander half-way between Alexandrovsk and Kandalaksha. I was traveling by sled. I had left Kirkenaes, on an arm of the Arctic ocean, a month before and was now working my way south toward Archangel.

I produced a bottle of much-shaken port wine, in honor of the occasion, and poured out a glass for my host. He was very suspicious of it, and compelled me to swallow mine first. Then he sipped his, and pulled a wry face. His wife tasted it, and sniffed suspiciously, and afterward the servants, but all declared it was some horrid English decoction—some medicine, it must be, they said. They had never before tasted wine. They had never seen a bunch of grapes, never a rose, and never even a tree.

One Yuletide dinner I ate at Ciro's, at Monte Carlo, where the fooling was fast and furious, and with my friends I watched "the tables" afterward, supping across at the Hotel de Paris, and receiving a present from the monster tree.—William Le Queux.

A disreputable-looking Italian had followed Ophelia into the room, and when he saw the champagne flowing, his eyes glittered with an unholy light.

I had at last collected my wits enough to realize that among this strange gathering were the three children to whom my hosts had just introduced me.

I had just about shaken myself free of my weird surroundings and had summoned strength to move from my seat that I might go below and send the dear old people to embrace their children when a noise sudden and loud took my breath away.

Instantaneously my strange guests vanished, I opened the door to see if I could catch a glimpse of their departing figures, but no creature was in sight.

Whence came the noise which had startled them into evaporating? Ah, again it came! It was but the rattle of the wind upon the casement.

I looked and lo! my fire was reduced to embers, I knew only too well that I had been dreaming, that my strange company had been but the phantoms of dreams, that I had been asleep and that I was not to give my kind host and hostess the pleasure of a reunion with their lost children.

CHRISTMAS JOKES.

Sure to Enjoy It. Molly—"Do you expect to have much fun at the Christmas party?" Dolly—"How can I help having it? My hat will be trimmed with mistletoe."

The Status. "So the idea was not carried out of having the militia called out." "No; it was called down."

A Christmas Story

Finding myself far from home one Christmas eve night, I halted at the nearest farm house and asked admittance. An old man and his wife were the only occupants.

They bade me enter and gave me hearty greeting. I found them to be one Ephraim Gogard, and his wife, Tabitha, 40 years married.

After the good wife had spread a bountiful table with good cheer for the inner man, and we had enjoyed the delicious viands to the fullest extent, we drew our chairs nearer the hearth and prepared for a sociable evening. These good old people told me of their children; of the good times when Christmas Eve found them all at home hanging up their stockings and getting to bed early, hoping to stay awake till Santa Claus should come.

"But that was long ago!" sighed the mother. "Willie went to sea, and after a few years of sailing up and down the world, we heard nothing more, and we have long mourned him as dead. Rose went to the city and, growing fascinated with the stage, became an actress. She succeeded better than we had ever hoped, but her laurels did not prevent her from making a silly marriage. An Italian prince, a penniless adventurer, carried her off to Italy."

"We fear she is either dead or enduring a living death in extreme poverty, with all her illusions and her bright youth gone. We are both too old now to go in search of her."

"Alas! alas!" groaned the old man. "Our baby boy, our best beloved, grew impatient of the old home and its slow, conservative ways. He went to the great city and succeeded for a time, his bright whole-souled ways brought friends without number. But these very social graces became the cause of his downfall. He learned to gamble and drink at card parties and

at banquets where women make bold to do these things. Both these habits grew on him till they possessed him body and soul. He went from bad to worse, until at last he killed his best friend at the gaming table. He now wears the stripes and is eating his heart out in the state prison."

When I had retired for the night I found myself in a large luxuriously appointed sleeping apartment, on the hearth a fire of cheery logs, the facsimile of the one below.

As I sat and pondered, what was my surprise to see a stalwart, seafaring man, wearing the garb of a South Sea Islander. I knew he was an "old salt" by the lurch in his walk. Following him came a train of attendants. They put upon the table great jugs of liquor.

Taking no notice of me they went on hilariously cracking their jokes and taking great swigs from the jug. Just as I was wondering if the leader could be Willie, whom the aged couple had mourned as dead, I was attracted by a sound at the door, and, looking in that direction, I beheld a very beautiful young woman, attired as Shakespeare's Ophelia. She came forward and began to repeat her lines as to a crowded house. The strange company ceased their prattle and gave her the most devoted hearing. They were about to give her an encore when there entered a dissolute-looking young fellow, with refined features, bleared by the excessive use of stimulants. Willie stepped forward, and, calling him brother, embraced him as one does after a long absence. The younger man produced a bottle of champagne and began to treat all round.

A disreputable-looking Italian had followed Ophelia into the room, and when he saw the champagne flowing, his eyes glittered with an unholy light.

I had at last collected my wits enough to realize that among this strange gathering were the three children to whom my hosts had just introduced me.

I had just about shaken myself free of my weird surroundings and had summoned strength to move from my seat that I might go below and send the dear old people to embrace their children when a noise sudden and loud took my breath away.

Instantaneously my strange guests vanished, I opened the door to see if I could catch a glimpse of their departing figures, but no creature was in sight.

Whence came the noise which had startled them into evaporating? Ah, again it came! It was but the rattle of the wind upon the casement.

I looked and lo! my fire was reduced to embers, I knew only too well that I had been dreaming, that my strange company had been but the phantoms of dreams, that I had been asleep and that I was not to give my kind host and hostess the pleasure of a reunion with their lost children.

CHRISTMAS JOKES.

Sure to Enjoy It. Molly—"Do you expect to have much fun at the Christmas party?" Dolly—"How can I help having it? My hat will be trimmed with mistletoe."

The Status. "So the idea was not carried out of having the militia called out." "No; it was called down."

Christmas Everywhere

WHEN Christmas bells are ringing merrily on Christmas eve it is pleasant to think that the whole world is celebrating, and that as long as the human family has been on earth it has made merry at a midwinter feast. The little children in your house or mine, and the little children across the street, are just like other little children in Russia, in Norway, in France and in Italy, or the German Fatherland who have made ready for their Christmas trees when the winter's sun has set and the Christmas stars are shining over head.

At the time that the Holy Babe lay in the manger in Bethlehem to be the Christmas Babe for the Christian world the Romans were celebrating their Saturnalia and trimming willow wands, as we trim Christmas trees, of course with a difference. But just the same they were celebrating the midwinter festival. They danced and sang, gave gifts, and hung wreaths while across the Alps to the north the Wild Huntsman was chasing through the woods to be the terror of all naughty children.

The Christmas tree honored because it was evergreen gained fresh honors when adorned with tapers. The evergreen was eternal, and the lights shed glory around. How jolly is the raising of the Christmas tree! How the children love to talk about it before hand and to trim it, or to get the gifts from its overladen boughs.

In Germany the whole household goes to church. In many villages the church is left in darkness, and the worshippers carry lighted candles, come in one by one, until it is a brilliant sight. When the season is over the old hymns are sung. "Es ist der Tag des Herrn," and Christmas greetings are heard on every side.

The Julefest, or feast of Christmas, is publicly proclaimed in Sweden and Norway. The churches are decorated, and the children are the first to enter in the gray of the early morning. No one is forgotten. The poor are remembered with food and clothing, and best of all the little brothers of the air, the birds, have a tree hung with a sheaf of wheat for Christmas cheer.

In Servia and in Bulgaria no one crosses a strange threshold if it can be avoided. Friends rejoice and sing and the little children dance and sing and gifts are exchanged. An ancient ceremony has to be performed by the head of every household. Before a mouthful of food is eaten early in the morning, corn is placed in a stocking and the chief of the family sprinkles a little before the householder, saying "Christ is born;" to which one of the family replies: "He is born indeed." Then the house-father has to "wish," and, advancing to the burning logs on the hearth, he strikes them until the sparks fly upward, with a good wish for the horses, another for the cattle, the calves, and the goats, and so on through the entire band of stock on the farm, concluding with a special prayer and an extra blow upon the embers of the logs for a plentiful harvest. In this manner the gods of nature are appeased. Then the ashes containing "the wish" are collected and buried secretly. As for the Yule logs, they are not permitted to burn entirely away, but the fire being extinguished the burnt ends are placed in the cloths of fruit trees so as to ensure a bountiful crop.

The more playful customs of putting hats about for presents as French children do, of baskets which Italian children make, of gift boxes and the tour of St. Nick prevail everywhere. Even in the tropics Christmas is observed, as if the cold snow lay round about. Mexico has many beautiful customs, and Catholic countries never forget the feast of the Babe in the Manger in church.

At the time that the Holy Babe lay in the manger in Bethlehem to be the Christmas Babe for the Christian world the Romans were celebrating their Saturnalia and trimming willow wands, as we trim Christmas trees, of course with a difference. But just the same they were celebrating the midwinter festival. They danced and sang, gave gifts, and hung wreaths while across the Alps to the north the Wild Huntsman was chasing through the woods to be the terror of all naughty children.

The Christmas tree honored because it was evergreen gained fresh honors when adorned with tapers. The evergreen was eternal, and the lights shed glory around. How jolly is the raising of the Christmas tree! How the children love to talk about it before hand and to trim it, or to get the gifts from its overladen boughs.

In Germany the whole household goes to church. In many villages the church is left in darkness, and the worshippers carry lighted candles, come in one by one, until it is a brilliant sight. When the season is over the old hymns are sung. "Es ist der Tag des Herrn," and Christmas greetings are heard on every side.

The Julefest, or feast of Christmas, is publicly proclaimed in Sweden and Norway. The churches are decorated, and the children are the first to enter in the gray of the early morning. No one is forgotten. The poor are remembered with food and clothing, and best of all the little brothers of the air, the birds, have a tree hung with a sheaf of wheat for Christmas cheer.

In Servia and in Bulgaria no one crosses a strange threshold if it can be avoided. Friends rejoice and sing and the little children dance and sing and gifts are exchanged. An ancient ceremony has to be performed by the head of every household. Before a mouthful of food is eaten early in the morning, corn is placed in a stocking and the chief of the family sprinkles a little before the householder, saying "Christ is born;" to which one of the family replies: "He is born indeed." Then the house-father has to "wish," and, advancing to the burning logs on the hearth, he strikes them until the sparks fly upward, with a good wish for the horses, another for the cattle, the calves, and the goats, and so on through the entire band of stock on the farm, concluding with a special prayer and an extra blow upon the embers of the logs for a plentiful harvest. In this manner the gods of nature are appeased. Then the ashes containing "the wish" are collected and buried secretly. As for the Yule logs, they are not permitted to burn entirely away, but the fire being extinguished the burnt ends are placed in the cloths of fruit trees so as to ensure a bountiful crop.

The more playful customs of putting hats about for presents as French children do, of baskets which Italian children make, of gift boxes and the tour of St. Nick prevail everywhere. Even in the tropics Christmas is observed, as if the cold snow lay round about. Mexico has many beautiful customs, and Catholic countries never forget the feast of the Babe in the Manger in church.

At the time that the Holy Babe lay in the manger in Bethlehem to be the Christmas Babe for the Christian world the Romans were celebrating their Saturnalia and trimming willow wands, as we trim Christmas trees, of course with a difference. But just the same they were celebrating the midwinter festival. They danced and sang, gave gifts, and hung wreaths while across the Alps to the north the Wild Huntsman was chasing through the woods to be the terror of all naughty children.

The Christmas tree honored because it was evergreen gained fresh honors when adorned with tapers. The evergreen was eternal, and the lights shed glory around. How jolly is the raising of the Christmas tree! How the children love to talk about it before hand and to trim it, or to get the gifts from its overladen boughs.

In Germany the whole household goes to church. In many villages the church is left in darkness, and the worshippers carry lighted candles, come in one by one, until it is a brilliant sight. When the season is over the old hymns are sung. "Es ist der Tag des Herrn," and Christmas greetings are heard on every side.

The Julefest, or feast of Christmas, is publicly proclaimed in Sweden and Norway. The churches are decorated, and the children are the first to enter in the gray of the early morning. No one is forgotten. The poor are remembered with food and clothing, and best of all the little brothers of the air, the birds, have a tree hung with a sheaf of wheat for Christmas cheer.

In Servia and in Bulgaria no one crosses a strange threshold if it can be avoided. Friends rejoice and sing and the little children dance and sing and gifts are exchanged. An ancient ceremony has to be performed by the head of every household. Before a mouthful of food is eaten early in the morning, corn is placed in a stocking and the chief of the family sprinkles a little before the householder, saying "Christ is born;" to which one of the family replies: "He is born indeed." Then the house-father has to "wish," and, advancing to the burning logs on the hearth, he strikes them until the sparks fly upward, with a good wish for the horses, another for the cattle, the calves, and the goats, and so on through the entire band of stock on the farm, concluding with a special prayer and an extra blow upon the embers of the logs for a plentiful harvest. In this manner the gods of nature are appeased. Then the ashes containing "the wish" are collected and buried secretly. As for the Yule logs, they are not permitted to burn entirely away, but the fire being extinguished the burnt ends are placed in the cloths of fruit trees so as to ensure a bountiful crop.

The more playful customs of putting hats about for presents as French children do, of baskets which Italian children make, of gift boxes and the tour of St. Nick prevail everywhere. Even in the tropics Christmas is observed, as if the cold snow lay round about. Mexico has many beautiful customs, and Catholic countries never forget the feast of the Babe in the Manger in church.

At the time that the Holy Babe lay in the manger in Bethlehem to be the Christmas Babe for the Christian world the Romans were celebrating their Saturnalia and trimming willow wands, as we trim Christmas trees, of course with a difference. But just the same they were celebrating the midwinter festival. They danced and sang, gave gifts, and hung wreaths while across the Alps to the north the Wild Huntsman was chasing through the woods to be the terror of all naughty children.

The Christmas tree honored because it was evergreen gained fresh honors when adorned with tapers. The evergreen was eternal, and the lights shed glory around. How jolly is the raising of the Christmas tree! How the children love to talk about it before hand and to trim it, or to get the gifts from its overladen boughs.

In Germany the whole household goes to church. In many villages the church is left in darkness, and the worshippers carry lighted candles, come in one by one, until it is a brilliant sight. When the season is over the old hymns are sung. "Es ist der Tag des Herrn," and Christmas greetings are heard on every side.

The Julefest, or feast of Christmas, is publicly proclaimed in Sweden and Norway. The churches are decorated, and the children are the first to enter in the gray of the early morning. No one is forgotten. The poor are remembered with food and clothing, and best of all the little brothers of the air, the birds, have a tree hung with a sheaf of wheat for Christmas cheer.

In Servia and in Bulgaria no one crosses a strange threshold if it can be avoided. Friends rejoice and sing and the little children dance and sing and gifts are exchanged. An ancient ceremony has to be performed by the head of every household. Before a mouthful of food is eaten early in the morning, corn is placed in a stocking and the chief of the family sprinkles a little before the householder, saying "Christ is born;" to which one of the family replies: "He is born indeed." Then the house-father has to "wish," and, advancing to the burning logs on the hearth, he strikes them until the sparks fly upward, with a good wish for the horses, another for the cattle, the calves, and the goats, and so on through the entire band of stock on the farm, concluding with a special prayer and an extra blow upon the embers of the logs for a plentiful harvest. In this manner the gods of nature are appeased. Then the ashes containing "the wish" are collected and buried secretly. As for the Yule logs, they are not permitted to burn entirely away, but the fire being extinguished the burnt ends are placed in the cloths of fruit trees so as to ensure a bountiful crop.

When Christmas bells are ringing merrily on Christmas eve it is pleasant to think that the whole world is celebrating, and that as long as the human family has been on earth it has made merry at a midwinter feast. The little children in your house or mine, and the little children across the street, are just like other little children in Russia, in Norway, in France and in Italy, or the German Fatherland who have made ready for their Christmas trees when the winter's sun has set and the Christmas stars are shining over head.

At the time that the Holy Babe lay in the manger in Bethlehem to be the Christmas Babe for the Christian world the Romans were celebrating their Saturnalia and trimming willow wands, as we trim Christmas trees, of course with a difference. But just the same they were celebrating the midwinter festival. They danced and sang, gave gifts, and hung wreaths while across the Alps to the north the Wild Huntsman was chasing through the woods to be the terror of all naughty children.

The Christmas tree honored because it was evergreen gained fresh honors when adorned with tapers. The evergreen was eternal, and the lights shed glory around. How jolly is the raising of the Christmas tree! How the children love to talk about it before hand and to trim it, or to get the gifts from its overladen boughs.

In Germany the whole household goes to church. In many villages the church is left in darkness, and the worshippers carry lighted candles, come in one by one, until it is a brilliant sight. When the season is over the old hymns are sung. "Es ist der Tag des Herrn," and