

## BILLY'S CHRISTMAS.

Zeph Davis didn't agree with the world at all.

He found very few things which met his auqualified approval, and the more persons he found agreed upon a certain point the more certain was he to discover the utter weakness of their position. He was very shrewd and looked at the world from the heights occupied by a superior and complacent being. It amused him to see all the women agreeing on certain lines of house ornamentation. It provoked him to find all the men united on theories of improvement. dress and behavior. He particularly resented the universal surrender of the race to the spirit of Christmas.

"It's all hoky poky," said Zeph. As Christmas approached his wife wondered if he would not break his usual habit and make some conventional preparation. She remembered a very pleasant gayety in these seasons when a girl, but had been unable to repeat them since becoming the wife of Zeph. And her little boy, now 6 years old, added to her uncusiness. He had caught something of the season's inspiration from the children who drifted past his cabin home and from the activities at the great house of the squire when he went up there one day to do an errand for his

Ho was full of questions which his mother could not entirely answer and which he could not suspend when his father was at home. But down through his infant consciousness at last filtered the conviction that he and his household were outside the pale embraced in the theeday held a great and joyful sigpificance to the squire's children, nor that Santa Claus came down a chimney and gave presents to all the good little boys and girls in the world. Only, of course, his house was not included. The gentle sway of the Christ child could not naturally embrace the little cabin at the edge of the woods. Yet he had an unformed, pathetic little regret that it

Zeph was in town Christmas eve and staid a little later than usual though that did not trouble his wife much. He was not in the habit of coming home till he got ready, not leaving till moved by the same consideration. Only he was sure to come some time, and always sober. He was unite superior to the nearly universal habit of acquiring a dual personality by imbibing stimulants. It was altogether an unmixed folly to him."

'Town's protty lively, I reckon, 'said his wife as Zoph came in and propared for suppor. He did not remove an overcoat. He were none, He looked upon that custom as quite as unnecessary as popular notious usually were.

"Ya-us," snarled Zeph, grinning in derision of what he had seen. "Stores all lighted up, and pandy and things in the winders.

"What things in the winders, pap?" inquired the boy, his blue eyes large and bright. "Oh, toys, and them things!"

"What things?" again, but heeitat-

Zeph glanced warningly at the boy and then slowly replied: "Skates and red mittens and some wooden soldiers and drung and pictur'

books." The boy had never seen the stores, for he had never been in town, but he had in his mind a very vivid picture of the

place and its glories. And he looked vory straight at his father as that pioture took form before him. "Many people in town?" questioned the wife. She had seen those splendors

on Christmas eve, and she had counted on seeing them again this season, ...;; "Ya-as; the stores was growded and the streets was full of teams. Couldn't git more'n 60 cents for that coonskin him he saw the points of resemblance. and had to take that in trade. Wouldn't pay no more'n 50 cents if I took it in cash. So I traded for some truck and come home. They tried to sell me a lot of plunder, but I don't go none on them

"What plander, pap?" asked the boy. The resources for trimming his fancy stores were really very slender. He needed more material. Just a hint would do. It seemed so real to him.

'Oh, a tin horse and wagon and a candy bird and a woolly little sheep that says 'bah!'''

'Big sheep, pap, or just a lamb?' "Naw. About so high." And Zeph measured a span from the top of the ta-

That changed the whole interfer of his wonder cave for the boy. These treasures were smaller than the hatural size. If smaller, why could they not be made larger? So his wonderful creations were caking delightful shape. It was quite a picture he found himself erranging when his mother said from the depths of the didipan, where she was finishing the

mp) jent work i sistemake sloppd salitop, Billy, Go so

And he hurried into his little cot. hoping he could carry the dream unbroken. How they danced before him, those excellent animals! How gravely the birds addressed him, and how reasonable it seemed that tin soldiers should become live dogs and bark aloud, and how swift it all was, for this was morning, and Dash, the hound, was challenging some noises he heard in the woods across the road.

This was just the same as any other morning to Zeph. He got up lazily and dressed in a flood of sunshine, shivering a little and complaining that his wife had no better fire. He looked out on the deep snow and knew the hunting would be excellent.

Just after breakfast a sleighload of people passed, their bells jingling with tempting melody and jingling still till the horses stopped in front of the squire's farmhouse, when they gave way to shoutings of oheer and answering shouts of welcome.

"Must be Miller's folks, from Burr Oaks," said Zeph's wife, as she closed the door and wondered if her other dress was not better than this one.

The boy stood there at the window, with his chin on the sill, and tried to regain his dream estate, from which the daylight had ejected him. Presently he saw the squire's children coming down the road with a basket, and he went out and stood on the steps in the sunshing. The squire's children were taking a turkey to old Mrs. Stevens, down by the lake. They stopped at the gate, and he went down to look at their presents. They each had a pair of skates and were going to try them on the lake if the ice was good. But no ice could add to the present pleasure of ownership. They had new shoes and a silk handkerchief, with a letter in the corner of it, and a reign of Santa Claus. He had no doubt number of candy horses, and one of the girls had-a gold finger ring. They had hung their stockings on a line behind the stove, and everything was filled in the morning.

Little Billy added another view to his Christmas lore. It was a time for making people happy. He remembered a party of children that came down here in a light wagon when hazelnuts were ripe and stopped for a drink of water from the spring, and he found himself wondering what the day had brought to those children.

Of course it never occurred to him to take a personal view of the matter. He nover imagined himself included in that wondrous embrace, "For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

His nose was red, and his hands were thrust deep in his pockets when he returned to the house. But he sat on the chest there by the fireplace and wondered silently.

Zeph was greasing his boots and regretting that he didn't have oil instead of tallow. He rather resented the fact that the house was tidier than usual, that a plate of apples was upon the table, and that his wife was rolling pie crust and dutting cookies her hair done up as she used to wear it when he went a-wooing. He expressed his disapproval of all this hoky poky and asked her what she was going to have for dinner. She said nothing for a time. She wished he had not asked her. There was so little, but she had planned to make it appear as fair as possible.

Across her silence came the bark of Dash over there in the woods, and the hunter instinct in Zeph was roused. Since no one had asked him to go hunting he felt no disinclination to look for game. So he glanced out of the window, caught sight of the hound sitting there in the timber, looking up for one moment and then turning his eyes to the house, barking occasionally the short, emphatic statement that he had found a

squirrel. Billy was in great glee. His mother had baked a colander full of cookies and had then molded with her fingers, a little gradely perhaps, a number of animals from the dough. Billy didn's recognize all of them, but when she told And when his father came back he was

quite happy playing with them.

Zeph out a hatel stick at he came back through the woods, and after the aguirrels he had shot had been dressed he hald them on the stick and broiled them before the fire. They were deliclous, and there was a dish of mashed potatoes—quite an unusual thing—and some baked apples and the wonderful cookies. Billy conidn't imagine a betcoolies. Billy conidn't imagine a better dinner than that. Zoph ate with great relian, but by no means forgetting to regard the whole thing as 'boky poky.' And after dinner he went down to the anymill and told stories with the rest of the man coming hinter rather before they had exhanated their jug of appletact. He had taken one drink himself and it may be that made the differmon. Anyway he was moved to unusu-

al behavior. The fire was low, and he stirred up the ine was jow, and he suited up the burning ends of logs till the cabin was filled with a flood or light, and as he turned he saw there on the pillow as the side of manageria of bond, a publ-ful little manageria of bond, become dough and knew that each animal had hear narray in the large that was that our posorour que ca pran de ragiour pan heavy gates of dreams.

Zeph saw the happy face and knew that somewhere his boy was wandering among delights more rare than any his hand had given. And the spirit of contention, of rivalry, of a race, awaked within him.

"Huh!" he said, and wondered why the smoke should burn his eyes to weeping. Then he turned to the door and stole out in the moon gemmed night.

Down the road he went with a sweeping step, full of vigor and with rising haste, till the miles lay behind him and he fronted the lights of the town. It was early evening, in spite of the hours of darkness, and Christmas joy was full. He turned neither to the right nor the left, paid no attention to the gaudy doors of the saloons, where loud young men were boasting, or betting, or trying to quarrel. He kept right on till he reached the shop of the tinker, down by the bridge, and there he stamped the snow from his heavy boots.

The tinker had not expected a customer, and he had been looking at the toys left over from the sales of the season. He had done very well, but he wished now he had not bought so many. The hand on his latch lifted his hopes a little, and his eager face was a strange contrast with the puzzled countenance of Zeph, now for the first time in his life yielding to the weakness of scanning Christmas presents.

"How much for this?" inquired the countryman, touching a camel with his great forefinger. And the tinker was so willing to sell that he quoted a figure far below his ruling prices.
'Ya-as, and this,' continued Zeph.

It was a candy castle, with powdered gilt and frosted silver on the sides.

There was quite a store of painted woods and ruffled tins and molded candy at the end of the counter by the time Zeph reached the limit of his pursa. He felt the same stirrings he had known while husking corn, when some boaster tried to beat him in the race. He bought without reflection, with no thought but that of giving Billy a better Christmas than other children had

And then he tramped back home. There was no hurry in his walking now. He simply strode the miles, unconscious of his splendid muscles, assured of reaching home in time and giving little care to what the thing might mean.

One house was lighted brilliantly, and through uncurtained windows he saw a Christmas tree. The presente had been stripped away, but tapers burned there, and strings of wool and tiny flags. "Santa Claus brought them there things on his way out," said Zeph to himself. "He'll git to Billy on his trip back home." And then he tried to sneer at the whole affair.

At the first barb of light Zeph fought against his drowsiness and turned to wait till Billy's eyes should open. It seemed a slow, long time. But after awhile the large, blue eyes unveiled, the sense of present things came back to him, and then they rested on these glories at his pillow. He did not move. but studied them a moment with a look so strange that Zeph saw things his wisdom had not droamed. Then Billy's eyes were closed again, and soon the larger breathing told that he was deep in dreamland paths, with richer treasures on each hand than there had been before.

He roused at length and saw the toys: ngain.

wondered why his mother smiled. It was long before he dared to touch them, and all through the day his boyish play would be suspended, and he would look at them as if atraid that they would vanish into dreams again—the dreams where he was sure his happy eyes had found them.

"But it's all hoky poky," said Zeph to his wife, as he shouldered his ax and went down to the mill for the day .-Ohicago Timos-Herald.

The Kneeling Cattle.

Christmas eve in old England was a time of vigila. All were on watch, as were the ancient shepherds, waiting for the appearance of the star. This custom, to some extent, yet prevails in places. One strange belief which obtains in England, and particularly in Devonshire, is that at midnight, at the moment Christmas day comes to earth, the says was done by the oxen that were around the sacred manger in Bethlahem at the time of the nativity. Yet it is a sin to look on the cattle while in this position or to seek to find them so.

A custom which yet prevails in some of the remote portions of the British islands is to carry corn cake and hot older into the crohards and there offer them up to the largest apple, tree as a gift to the king of the orchards - Exchange

Christinia, 1900;
Christinia once more). The comm.
Out loy find passes on carrie.
Out all a think a countrie.
Out happiness sad mirrls.
When freez were with places.
In rain to charpe and size !
When freez were with places.
It is a sain to charpe and size !

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

Origin of the Christmas Tree and Decora tion With Evergreens. Among the votaries of the early Druids there was a superstition that the houses should be decorated with evergreens in December in order that the sylvan spirits might enter them and thus be kept

free from the blast of the cold north wind and the frost until a milder season renewed the foliage of their usual haunts. The Christmas tree is really from Egypt, where the palm tree puts forth a branch every month, and where a spray

solstice as a symbol of the year completed. Who does not know the poem begin ning:

of this tree, with 12 shoots on it, was

used in Egypt at the time of the winter

The mistletoe hung in the castle hall; The holly branch shone on the old oak wall Years ago over every man's door in England hung a sprig of mistletoe at this season. There still hovers a mystic charm about the mistletce, and many a girl now, with a thrill of expectancy, places a branch of it under the chandelier or over the door. According to a former belief, when a girl is caught and kissed under the mistletoe a berry must be picked off with each kiss, and when the berries have all been plucked the privilege ceases.

Among the ancient Britons the mistletoe that grows on the gak tree was the kind held in favor. Because of its heathen origin it is not used often in church decorations, a fact which is referred to by Washington Irving in his Bracebridge Hall," where he has the learned parson rebuke the unlearned clerk for this very thing.

In Germany and Scandinavia the holly or holy tree is called Christ's thorn, because it puts forth its berries at Christmas time, and therefore is especially fitted for church decorations. With its glossy, dark leaves and bright, red berries, it is an attractive decoration for the house.

The Jews used to decorate at their feast of tabernacles with evergreens and flowers.

The laurel was used at the earliest times of the Romans as a decoration for all joyful occasions and is significant of peace and victory. In some places it is enstomary to

throw branches of laurel on the Christmas fire and watch for omens while the leaves curl and crackle in the heat and The evergreen tree is a symbol used

as the revival of nature, which, astronomically, signifies the return of the sun. Hung with lights and offerings, the tree has for centuries been one of the principal characteristics of Christmastida.—New York Mercury.

THE UNIVERSAL HOLIDAY.

Christman Bells Ring Joyful Tidings to All the Earth.

There is no holiday in all the long calendar of the months that is so universally and so enthusiastically colebrated as Christmas. All men everywhere take heart of grace and smile a cheerier smile as the music of the Christmas bells talls upon their ears. Whoever will look back to his young days cannot help remembering what a strange, mystlo time Christmas was. There was somothing almost awe inspiring in the music of the Christmas carols sung at midnight in the open, frosty air. "I dreamt of thom," he said and And these Christmas "waits" who sung who were they? Unseen and unknown we almost deemed them beings of fairer world sent down to make Christmas delightful. If we had known in those days that these men who broke the party, which will cause much wonder silence of the starry night to tell us what "the herald angels" sang were mortals given to the smoking of tobacco and the drinking of porter, all our romantio dreams would have ended there and then. As we grow older we grow wiser, and therefore a little sadder. We know, of course, that there is no real Santa Claus; but, oh, how we wish there were!

How the Greek Celebrates Christmas. It is more than likely that many of our Christmas customs were born in Greece, mure particularly the decorations, lights and games. Here ghosts and hobgoblins are rampaut between Christmas day, and Epiphany, and children are often frightened into unwilling obedience by the tales. As the plous Greek fasts for a month before Christmas the feast of that day is very wel come to him, though it consists principally of macaroni and atrong obceso. On the island of Chice there is in use

strange sort of Christmas tree, which is sometimes simply a pole adorned with fruits and flowers, carried by a tenant farmer to his landlord as a present that typifies the good will and wishes for an abundant barvest - Exopunge.

Kinging Under the Mistleton The mystic mistletce bough then a now granted a kissing charges to the swaits, and the maids were willing sittings. The manes might be an account.

Diurus, and its decrees of pears as symbols of purity and associated with the rites of marriage. From this the transition was but slight to the kiss beneath the cabelistic bough- This traditional sacredness, the genesis of which is unknown, has endured through the ages, and today for man and maid to meet beneath the mistletoe gives the right to a sacred kiss. - New York Herald.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN SWEDEN.

A Funny Verse With Each Gift-The Gingerbread Tule Buck.

Christmas presents in Sweden are always distributed on Christmas eve, the festival beginning with a 6 p'clock tea. with cakes, says Anna Cronhjelm Wallberg. The lighted Christmas tree is the next attraction. Some one plays a merry polks, and young and old form a ring, dancing around the tree. On a table, lighted with numerous candles, are apples, nuts, raisins, oranges, cakes, caudies, etc., in abundance, and, lording the whole, stands a huge Yule buck of gingerbread and Adams and Eves arm in arm. These delicacies having received proper attention and the lights in the Christmas tree having been extinguished, all gather around the biggest table in the house, where the head of the family presides with a basketful of Christmas presents. This is the supreme moment for which young hearts have been longing for mouths, the well sealed presents having gradually been accumulated in mother's closet, where no curious eyes were allowed to penetrate.

It is customary to write some funny verse on every parcel, which is now read aloud. The opening of the presents is watched by all with the greatest interest, as paper after paper is torn off in feverish hurry to find out what the parcel may contain.

But the basket is not bottomless, and the excitement has an end. Santa Claus, who plays such an important part in America and England, is not known to the Swedish children. However, some one dresses up as the "Old Christmas man" for the amusement of the children. —Selected.

DISTRIBUTING GIFTS.

The Spider Party Will Furnish Much Amusement For Christmas.

A "spider party" is a novel method of giving presents at Christmas to children and may be thus arranged: The guests, on arrival, are greeted by an enormous spider in the center of a bage web spun across the entire room, and from all possible nails and projections should be a maze of white cotton threads, each attached at one end to a large, brightly colored spider, at the end of which must be hung a little wooden winder. Each guest, in turn; chooses one of the spiders, and, winding up the thread, following all its intricacles, reaches at last a special insect. inside of which has been placed the small present.

Great amusement is produced by these unexpected finds, which may be varied according to the wishes of the hostess from bonbons and knickknacks or small toys to little articles of jowelry, neckties, etc. Of course, if wished, the name of each guest may be written on the little winders, so as to insure the right gift going to a right child or grown up person. Any one can make the large colored spiders at home, or procure them from any large toyshop, and when sending out her invitations they should be so worded as to invite her friends to a "spider at home" and interest to be taken in the approaching party by her intended little visitors. —Exchange

A Christmas Legend From the Alps. Here and there prevails the strange belief that horses and cattle speak in human language on the night prededing Christmas day. It is a sin to listen to what the animals say, or in any way to try to hear them. Not to believe that they talk is also a sin.

An Alpine story is told of a farmer's servant who did not believe that the cattle could speak; and, to make sure, he hid in his master's stable on Christmas eye and listened. When the clock struck 19, he was surprised at what he heard.

"We shall have hard work to do this day week," said one horse, You; the farmer's servant is heavy, answered the other horse.

"And the way to the churchyard is long and steep," said the first.
The servant was buried that day week.—Kansas City Times.

Croutes a la Nosl.

Line some party pans with fine short paste, all them with minoemeat, cover with a cardboard box ild and bake. Santa Clans does with us. He is usually them with equal parts of fresh butter sade he is represented by a maider in white with a silver bell in one hand and forced with a square of lamon that a bakes of sweetments in the state of sweetments in the same with a silver bell in one hand that a bakes of sweetments in the same with a silver bell in one hand that a bakes of sweetments in the same with a silver bell in one hand that a bakes of sweetments in the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with a silver bell in one hand the same with the same

SANTA CLAUS IS REAL

THOUGH MANY PEOPLE SPEAK OF HIM AS A MYTH.

In England St. Nicholas Was Recognized as the Guardian of Youth-Legend of the Wicked Butcher-In Germany He Puts' Good Things In Lucky Bags.

In spite of the fact that Dec. 6 was St. Nicholas' day thousands of people talk of Santa Claus as myth. St. Nicholas was a very real personage. He was archbishop of Myra in 342, and the name under which he enjoys an annual popularity in this country is the German form that came with the German custom of the Christmas tree and all

the rest of it. St. Nicholas is a great saint with all the Teutonic and Scandinavian peoples. It was his prerogative, says the New York Recorder, to manifest his piety when at his mother's breast, for even then he is said to have fasted Wednesdays and Fridays. As a matter of course he soon became famous in working miracles, and here again he appeared to seek favor with the young people.

An innkeeper having killed two young gentlemen and put them in the pickle tub, intending to sell them as pickled pork, the saint, who, in a vision, had seen the deed done, declared he would put a stop to the business, and thereupon he transformed himself from Lycia to Athens and stood before the astonished innkeeper and said, "What hast thou done?'

The man trembled, confessed and implored forgiveness. Having patted the man on the back and said, "Don't do it any more," the holy man turned to the ickle tub, when the imitation sides, legs and hands of pork began to stir, and in quick sticks there came forth not two boys merely, but three, as may be proved by reference to the Salisbury missal of 1534, wherein there is a picture of the event, and one of its peculiarities is that, as the three boys rise complete out of the pickle, the barbarous butcher is still busy in entting one

of them up. St. Nicholas established yet another claim to be regarded as the friend of youth, for he was partial to boxing and employed his skill in the "manly art" upon the heads of bishops.

The guardianship of the young by Santa Claus was of old recognized in England by the custom of choir boys in cathedrals choosing a boy bishop on the day of St. Nicholas, Dec. 6. This was a very important event, as may be seen by Hone's "Every Day Book," I, 1559. where there is an effigy of a boy bishop from Salisbury cathedral. The custom was in full observance from early times until 1549, when it was abolished by a proclamation of Henry VIII.

According to the old north German custom, the happy time for the children is the vigil of St. Nicholas, the night of Dec. 5. Then it is that he glides about. putting good things into lucky bags and spying out the merits and demerits of boys and girls and sometimes unsparingly praising or rebuking them.

The north German fashion requires the saint to pay a visit to the house where the young are assembled in feetivity on the night of his vigil. He speaks in kindly words to the juvenile throng, reproving some, encouraging others. On retiring to rest, each member of the party places an empty shoe on the table, and the door of the room is at once looked, and behold! when morning dawns and the doors are opened in the presence of all, the shoes are found to be filled with gifts for their owners and the table is covered with trinkets and sweetments.

We have simply incorporated St. Nicholas' day with Christmas day and made the night of Dec. 24 the time of the saint's visitation. But he is not a myth now any more than he over was He is a very real as well as a very good saint indeed, and for the children's sake, may his shadow nover grow less!

. The Bird of Dawning.

A popular superstition is that on the eye of Christmas the bird of dawning singeth all night long to frighten off any ovil thing ... It was from this belief that Shakes

peare wrote:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes wherein our Saviour's birth is selebrated. The bird of dawning singeth all night long. And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad. The hights are wholesome. Then he planets strike. No fairy takes nor witch hath power to So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

St. Nicholas In France.

St. Nicholas holds a prominent posi-

tion in France as the dispenser of gifts. though in many places it is the Christ child who distributes them. The Christ child frequently appears to children as