

"Saint Klaus he is a right good man,  
Gives the children all he can;  
Of older folk he takes no heed,  
They can buy them what they need."

There is an old French carol, that may not be familiar to everyone, but which is very quaint—

"Quand Dieu naquit à Noël,  
Dedans la Judée,  
On vit ce jour solemnel  
La joie inondée (fer);  
Il n'était ni petit, ni grand,  
Qui n'opportât son présent.  
Et n'o! n'o! n'o!  
Et n'ofrit! 'frit! 'frit!  
Et n'o! n'o! n'offrit,  
Et n'ofrit sans cesse  
Toute sa richesse!"

German literature is simply full of songs and carols in praise of—

"The best of days in all the year—  
Tell the children everywhere—  
The sweetest day, the happiest day,  
The dearest day is Christmas Day."

And the one German children are never tired of singing round their Christmas trees:

"Oh, du fröhliche! Oh, du selige,  
Gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit!  
Welt ging verloren,  
Christ ward geboren.

Treue Dich! Treue Dich, Christenheit!"

where the very heart of the singer is poured into a great shout of rejoicing as he sings of the joyous, the blessed, the grace-bearing Christmastide; and he calls on all Christendom to "Rejoice, rejoice!" Perhaps nowhere, except in Flanders, is the language used to express joy and thankfulness for Christmas, for the "Christ-child," warmer, more heartfelt, homely, and tender than in Germany.

Our old English Christmas ditties are generally practical, and have an eye to the comforts of the season:—

"At Christmas be merry, and thanke God of all,  
And feast thy poor neighbours, the great and the small;  
Yea, al the yere long have an eie to the pore,  
And God shall send luck to kepe open thy doore."

Or Herrick's Christmas Songs, with their praise of—

"The rare mince pie,  
And the plums that stand by—  
To fill the paste that's a-kneading."

And others, all alike full of turkeys, capons, plum porridge, mummers and lordly feasting. I think it is Addison, in his "Sir Roger," who, in enumerating the good knight's gifts to his tenants at Christmas, does not forget the pack of cards to each family, that they might be able to amuse themselves in the long winter evenings.

Who does not know the quaint litany?—

"The cock croweth:  
'Christus natus est!'  
The raven asked:  
Quando?"

The crow replied:  
'Hâc nocte;'  
The ox crieth:  
'Ubi?'  
The sheep bleateth:  
'Bethlehem.'

Two other little more serious carols obtrude themselves still upon me:—

"When Christ was born of Mary free  
In Bethlem; in that fayre cyté  
Angells songen with mirth and glee—  
'In excelsis gloria!'"

and

"Sweet Ghesus is cum to us,  
This good tym of Chrystmas;  
Wherfor with prayers  
Syng we always—  
Welcum our Messyas!"

In spite of all indifference, real or affected—in spite of all the changes time has wrought in customs and fashions—in our heart of hearts I think the most inveterate grumbler among us all still bears a fondness for the old feast of gladness and rejoicing, if only for remembrance sake; still feels a glow as he hears the old songs, the old cries of rejoicing, that were so *real*, so true to his forefathers. It is undoubtedly easier—much easier—to find a reason for being miserable than glad, for, twist and turn it as we may, man's existence, in nine cases out of ten, is *not* a time of happiness, of joy, of gladness, and pleasure; and we Nurses are brought into contact with so much misery and sorrow, so much mental and bodily suffering, that our life *must* sober us, but it need do no more.

"Un baben hadd uns' Herrgott sinen groten Dannenboom mit de dusend Lichter anstickt, un de Welt lag dorunner as en Wihnachtsdisch, den de Winter mit sin wittes Schneilaken sauber deckt hadd, dat Frühjahr, Sommer un Harwst ehre Bescheerung doruge stellen kunnen." ("And overhead the Lord God had lighted His great Christmas-tree with the thousand candles, and the world lay under it like a Christmas table, which Winter had neatly laid with his white snow-cloth, for Spring and Summer and Harvest to lay their presents on.")

And the thousand candles of the great Christmas-tree are still lighted every year over the snow-covered earth, on which the seasons lay their gifts. And as they shine, they tell us as no words, however noble and true, can do, for they speak direct to our hearts, that there is still gladness in life, in duty fulfilled, happiness in the pressure of a friend's hand, belief and truth in love; they call to us to have confidence and trust in that which is higher, nobler, truer than the pebbles of science we gather on the shores of the ocean of existence; that there is something that can stir us to fuller joys than fleeting excitement or passing amusements. While art still

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