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## Editorial.

### THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.

The present age is prosaic, disillusioned, but in spite of our lack of idealism there is one vision we are loth to let go, and year by year, as the season of Christmas approaches, for a brief space we return to the beliefs of our childhood, and the spirit of Christmas, triumphant, supreme, dominates us all. Even the most confirmed cynic catches glimpses of the pervading joy and gladness, as the Christ-Child distributes the gifts with which His hands are filled to poor and rich, worthy and unworthy, while, to the children, the return of the season brings glimpses of fairyland, mystic and wonderful.

In days gone by the advent of Christmas heralded a season of revelry even greater than at present, the nearest approach to which is perhaps the observance of the Carnival in Roman Catholic countries. As the season drew near, the appointment was made in many towns and villages of the Lord of Misrule, who was an important functionary at all festivities, at which, from Christmas Eve to Twelfth Night, he reigned supreme as Master of the Revels. On his appointment he generally made some whimsical speech, explaining to the company that he absolved them from all reason, and that they were to be just wise enough to make fools of themselves; that under his rule all were to be equal; and that as he possessed the magic power to turn his audience into children, it was his intention that they should conduct themselves as such during his term of office.

One of the functions of the Lord of Misrule was to act as leader of the mummers, who, in grotesque disguise, went from house to house, playing, singing, and dancing, a favourite performance being one in which, as in the legend of St. George, the Saint fought a Turk, and a wonderful cure was worked by a doctor on the wounded man.

Those who are in a position to judge, assert

that over half a million Christmas trees are annually sold each year in this country, and as each tree is a source of delight to dozens, if not hundreds, of children, it is difficult to estimate the happiness they convey. The Christmas tree is essentially a German institution, and, as most people are aware, it was introduced into this country by Prince Albert, the Prince Consort of our late Queen. The pleasure conveyed by this simple act to the children of England, for all time, cannot well be gauged, but we have only to think of our own childhood to form some estimate of it. First came the days of expectation, preparation, mystery, and then at last, at a supreme moment, the wonderful tree in all its glory and beauty gleamed upon our delighted vision, fairy crowned, glistening with gold and silver balls, coloured candles, and jewelled sconces, and bearing on its arms gifts, conveyed to us by the Father Christmas of our dreams, gifts for which our souls had yearned during many months past. The same keen pleasure is felt year by year by the children of the present generation, nowhere more poignantly than in our hospitals, and while most of us rejoice that the excess of decorations in vogue in the past have now been abolished, with the disorder and weariness they occasioned, we are all one in hoping that the Christmas tree may flourish in perpetuity, and that the children may have a very merry Christmas.

Yet another of the joys of Christmas is that, by time-honoured custom, the members of families whose work, the year round, lies far apart, foregather under the old roof-tree and pick up the threads of intercourse with those with whom they have a thousand tender memories in common. For as we get on in years we realise that the world grants us much if it but grant us leave to work. Nowhere but among our own people do we "really matter," and so, as we turn our faces homewards, we know that the spirit of Christmas has no better gift to bestow upon us than the home that we hold dear.

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