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HOW CHRISTMAS IS OBSERVED IN SOME OTHER LANDS.

Since the celebration of the first Christmas more than nineteen hundred years ago, various myths and ceremonies have arisen among different nations. This article will relate the usual customs of some of the European countries in times of peace, when the real Christmas spirit of "Peace, Good Will to Men" is uppermost in the mind.

The Germans, whose land is the historic home of the Christmas tree, remembering that Yule-tide is in commemoration of the Child, for His sake make it a happy season for the children. On Christmas Eve the Christ-child and Knave Ruprecht visit the homes and inquire of the parents if the children have been good throughout the year. If they have, Knave Ruprecht scatters apples and nuts on the floor from the bag which he carries on his shoulder, otherwise switches are presented. They sometimes leave the latter anyway, in case they should be needed before they call again. Then while the children are scrambling after the apples and nuts they leave. The little ones hang up their stockings in the belief that Kris Kringle will fill them with toys and good things to eat, or else they will be filled with switches by St. Nicholas. The fear that the latter may occur often prompts a child to be good the entire year. It is a German custom to make nearly all the presents with their own hands and also the decorations for the tree. Every home is brightened with evergreen and has a Christmas tree decorated with colored balls, lighted candles, and tinsel. The old and young play games together, eat, drink, and are merry the entire day. It is from them that the Americans have learned to make this more of a glad day for the children.

In Holland the 6th of December is observed as St. Nicholas Day. The Dutch, instead of hanging up their stockings as the American and German children, place their shoes outside the door for Santa Claus to fill. It was in Holland that that old Christmas saint originated.

Christmas in France is not a time of general merry-making as in many other countries, but is rather a religious festival which is celebrated in the churches. On Christmas Eve the children place

O. HENRY

On the second of December, 1914, there was dedicated in the city of Raleigh a tablet in memory of William Sidney Porter, the one man who more than any other has rehabilitated the American short story. This brief sketch of his life and works is not written in appraisal of his contribution to our literature, but rather that those of us who are living almost in sight of his birth-place may at least, by having him brought before us, read and appreciate him for ourselves.

William Sidney Porter, better known as O. Henry, was born on West Market street, Greensboro, in 1867, and died in New York City in 1910. He must have inherited both from his father and his mother much of his sympathy for humanity and much of his cleverness in expressing it. His mother was something of an artist, while his father a physician and the gentlest of men dreamed away many of his later years upon fruitless inventions as churns and perpetual motion wheels. O. Henry was given over at the age of three, when his mother died, to the care of his maiden aunt, Miss Lina Porter, to whom he owes most of his love for good books and his inspiration to write.

The year 1902 marks the creative period of this writer's life when he moved to New York City and began to interpret the life of the "Four Million" as opposed to

their shoes before the fireplace and *le petit Noel* fills them with gifts. The grown people, however, wait until New Year's Day to exchange gifts, although they may do so at any time between the two dates.

England has departed from her old customs of observing Christmas, and instead of the old time Yule-log, which must be lighted by last year's fire and with which were associated many superstitions, is substituted, over almost all of England, the Christmas tree. They ring out the chimes on Christmas morning and observe religious service as a part of the day. Merriment reigns, although not to such an extent as in former days. It was from England that we got the old greeting "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." L. K.

the "Four Hundred." Living in this great city for the express purpose of seeing the panorama of undenoted faces, gifted with a flashing wit and a keen sense of humor, it is surprising that he can always put a certain pathos into his stories. He says himself that life is made up of sobs, smiles, and snuffles, snuffles predominating. Just as Dickens gives to his deformed characters something beautiful to make you love them, O. Henry takes his miserable vagabond and by mixing a dash of wit, a bit of slang, and an insight into the common sufferings of humanity, suddenly wins your sympathy for his unfortunate subject. For instance, in the "Municipal Report," when Azalea Adair is found in a most embarrassing situation financially, her husband a hopeless sot, and her only means of support a faithful family servant, Uncle Caesar, we feel that this poor wretch is almost justified in committing the murder he does for the sake of getting a little money for his mistress. We sigh with relief when an old brown button, the only clue to the murder, is casually tossed from a train window into the river below and Uncle Caesar is left alone with his secret.

Again see in what a compassionate manner he deals with these "Poor Shuttlecocks of Fate." Poor Soapy has become weary of sleeping in barrels and shivering with cold, so he determines to get arrested and be sent to the workhouse. He steals umbrellas and confesses his crime, goes into restaurants and orders a heavy meal without paying, and does numerous other bold deeds, but no one arrests him. Finally one day he stops in front of a church, is stirred by the sweet music from within and resolves to mend his ways. As he leans against a lamp-post lost in his thoughts a policeman taps him on the arm and poor Soapy is taken up for vagrancy just as the only time in his life perhaps when he has resolved to be a man.

O. Henry deals with the rich the poor, the jester, the merry maker, all of whom under his magic touch do the most humane and yet the most unexpected thing. Jimmy, a bank robber whose heart has been won by a

THE COMING OF NIGHT.

The day begins to die away
When sinks the sun behind the
hill;
Now earth begins to fall to rest,
And soon will all again be still.

The shadows creep up one by one
And shade the earth with
gloom;
The dancing sunbeams of the day
Have crept off to their tomb.

Now twilight gray steals on
And veils the wood and plain,
To hold them silently in her sway
Until the morn shall come
again.

The darkness downs upon the
earth,
The world is hushed in sleep,
For darkness reigns supreme;
The world of night drinks deep.
C. P.

fair maid, the daughter of a banker he had meant to rob, reforms, changes his name to Mr. Spencer and becomes a respectable citizen. One day just before Jimmy and Annabel are to be married, Pen Price, a detective on Jimmy's trail, comes to town and goes into the bank to wait for his prey. Soon Jimmy, Annabel and her family come in. Annabel's baby sister through play is shut up in the vault, which cannot be opened. When Annabel turns to her lover and pleads with him to do something, he deliberately opens his suit case in which are the tools he means to dispose of that day and at the risk of losing every thing, he opens the vault. Then he turns at the door to the detective to give himself over. "Got around at last, have you? Well, let's go. I don't know that it makes much difference now," and then Ben Price said, "Guess you're mistaken. Mr. Spencer; don't believe I know you," and passed out from the bank down the street.

All humanity is O. Henry's domain, and he does not fear to write on any subject. He can put into "rag-time" the tragedy of grand opera. To those of us who care for a clever combination of the commonplace in life with whimsical, sparkling humor and ready wit he offers delightful companionship. There is in his stories an originality which gives to this "master of the unexpected ending" his just claim to a very high place in the American short story.

A. T. E.