

LUTHER'S

CHRISTMAS



TREE

Philadelphia:

SCHAEFER & KORADI,

S. W. corner Fourth and Wood Sts.

L. B. Pierson *J. B. Pierson*
Christmas Dec 25 1869

Charlie Purson

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Dec 23

1869

LUTHER'S
CHRISTMAS TREE.

BY
T. STORK.

WITH
Beautiful Illustrations.

NEW EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA:
SCHAEFER & KORADI,
S. W. CORNER FOURTH AND WOOD STS.

1868.

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Preface.

DEAR CHILDREN :—

THIS little book has been prepared for you as a Christmas gift. May it help to remind you of the Christ-child, whose returning birth-day lights up your homes with mutual love and innocent joy. And though the Christmas tree is not hung with pretty toys and sugar plums, to delight the eye and please the taste, it is yet adorned with beautiful pictures and sparkling gems from the life of the great Reformer, no less attractive to the mind and heart. May this gift, or little book, add something to the innocent pleasures of your Christmas homes, while—

“Rich and poor in grateful chanting
For the joy that visits earth,
Join to bless the dear Redeemer
On the morn that gave him birth.”

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Luther's Christmas Tree.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDREN, before we gather round this old Christmas-tree, I will tell you something about Luther. You love to hear stories about great men. You like to know where they were born, what kind of children they were, and how they became such good and great men.

Well, I will begin by saying, that Martin Luther was one of the greatest men God ever raised up to bless the world.

He was born on the 10th of November, 1483, about three hundred and seventy-two years ago. If you take the map of Germany, and look for Eisleben, in Saxony, you will find the place of his birth. His father, John Luther, was a poor miner, but an honest, industrious, and a God-fearing man. It is said that he often prayed over this little child, that God would give him grace, that he might—remembering his name, Luther, which means *pure*—help to spread the pure doctrines of religion.

As Luther was born on St. Martin's eve, and on that saint's day was taken to the church of St. Peter, and there baptized, he was called Martin in commemoration of the day.

His mother, whose name was Margaret, was a pious and praying woman. She was so religious in all the duties of her home, that she was esteemed a model, for the imitation of

others. His parents at first were very poor — so that little Martin had often to help his mother in gathering sticks and wood about the mines in Mansfeld, which she carried home to make the fire. But though poor, they taught little Martin to fear God, and keep his commandments, and constantly prayed for the Lord's blessing upon their child, that he might grow up a good, Christian man.

It is a great blessing, children, to have pious parents. Better to be poor, with a pious home, than to be rich and live in a splendid house, where there is no fear of God, and no prayer. And God has often honored the pious poor by raising up their children to be great and good men. Three of the great Reformers were taken from the humblest homes. Zuingle was the son of an Alpine shepherd—Melancthon of a smith, and Luther of a poor miner. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?”

You see, then, that there was nothing remarkable about the childhood of this great man. He began life in the cradle, and gradually grew out of it, as other men. There are no strange stories told about him as a boy, as about the boyhood of some other great men. It is said of Schiller, that when he was a boy, he used to climb trees to see where the lightning came from — but nothing of this kind is told of Luther's childhood.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Martin was fourteen years old, his father sent him to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. Here young, poor, and without friends, he had great trials. His account of his life here is quite affecting. “I used to beg, with my companions,

for a little food," said he, "that we might have the means of providing for our wants. One day, at the time the church celebrates the festival of Christ's nativity, we were wandering together through the neighbouring villages, going from house to house, and singing in four parts the usual carols on the infant Jesus, born at Bethlehem. We stopped before a peasant's house, that stood by itself at the extremity of the village. The farmer hearing us sing our Christmas hymn, came out with some victuals which he intended to give us, and called out in a high voice, and with a harsh tone, 'Boys, where are you?' Frightened at these words, we ran off as fast as our legs would carry us."

A short time after, his parents sent him to Eisenach where he had relations, who, it was thought, would not allow him to want. But here, as at Magdeburg, he was compelled to join with his schoolfellows in singing from door to door for a morsel of bread. This he afterwards called *bread-music*. One day, after he had been driven from several houses, with harsh words, he stood before the dwelling of Conrad Cotta, and relieved his sad and despairing heart, by low and plaintive music. Moved by the melody of song, and the tenderness of her womanly heart, Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, hastened to the door and invited him to enter. (*See Illustration on page 10.*) You see her in the picture, standing in the door, with a look of pity and tenderness, bending towards the youthful Martin, taking him by the wrist with one hand, and caressingly patting him with the other on the chin. She was a very kind-hearted woman, and was known in Eisenach as the "pious Shunamite." She took the friendless youth into her house, and treated him with all the kindness of a mother. Thus God opened for this child of many prayers, the heart and house of a Christian family. This event led Luther to trust in God with a confidence that



Luther as a Chorister.

never forsook him in the after trials of his life. And many years after, when all Europe rung with the name of the Reformer, Conrad Cotta and his wife remembered that the poor hungry boy they fed was Martin Luther.

CHAPTER III.

IN the year 1501, a thin, pale youth stood at the gate of the University at Erfurt, seeking admission. When asked if he was qualified to make such a request, he replied: "He who prays as he ought, has already finished half his labours and his studies."

Luther was fond of books, and spent much of his time in the library at Erfurt. One day as he was looking over the books, he took down an old looking volume, which he opened. It was the Bible; he had never seen one before. His heart beat as he turned over these leaves from God. (*See Illustration on page 16.*) You see him in the picture with one hand putting behind him Aristotle, and bending down on one knee gazing upon the open Bible. You see how intently he looks upon the holy page. He reads the history of Hannah and the young Samuel — and his soul can hardly contain the joy he feels — as he goes through the touching story. And when he returned home that day, he thought, "Oh! that God would give me such a book for myself." And God did give it to him; and he gave it to his countrymen in a translation in which Germany has, for three hundred years, read the will of God. "In that Bible the Reformation lay hid." How thankful should you be, children, that you have the Bible. And how carefully should you read it, and pray that God would make you wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

IN 1505, Luther was made a Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Erfurt was then the most celebrated in all Germany. But with all his honors, he was very unhappy. His conscience told him that religion was the one thing needful, and that above all things he should secure his salvation. About this time, a very intimate friend by the name of Alexis, was suddenly removed by death. This greatly affected Luther. He asked himself, What would become of me if I were thus called away without warning? In this state of mind, he paid a visit to his aged parents:—and on his return was overtaken by a terrible thunderstorm. The lightning flashed through the darkened sky—and peals of thunder reverberated among the mountain cliffs, that seemed to shake the very pillars of heaven. Luther is filled with dread of the wrath of God and the last judgment. And there, amid the terrors of the storm, he vows to abandon the world, and devote his life to heaven. “Help, Saint Anna!” he cried, when the lightning struck close beside him, “and I will forthwith become a monk.”

Luther entered the monastery. He became sad and gloomy. Often during the day, he would shut himself up in prayer; and often at night he would kneel for hours on the hard stone. But, all this did not give him peace. I cannot tell you all the trials he passed through, but he continued to read his Bible, and pray—until he found the truth as it is in Jesus. “The just shall live by faith.” “When by the spirit of God,” says Luther, “I understood these words, when I learnt how the justification of the sinner proceeds from the free mercy of our Lord through faith . . . then I felt born again like a new man . . . in very truth this language of St. Paul was to me the true gate of Paradise.”

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Luther found the truth as it is in Jesus—he wrote and preached, and translated the Bible into German, that all his countrymen might have the same truth. He was not afraid of the Pope, nor of kings, in preaching the truth. That you may see what a good and brave man he was, I will tell you how he acted when they wanted him to be still, and threatened him with death, if he continued to write and preach, as he had been doing.

He was summoned to appear at the Diet of Worms—before the Emperor Charles V., and a great many princes, and nobles, and dignitaries of the Church. His friends tried to dissuade him from going—but Luther thought it was his duty to go—and nothing of the threatened danger could shake his purpose.

He went to see his friend Melanchthon and his wife Margaret, about this time; and his conversation with them shows how he felt about going to Worms.

“It was on a cold evening in January, that Luther entered the little parlour of his two friends, whom he found as usual seated on each side of a round table before the fire; Melanchthon with his pen, and Margaret with her needle. A chair was drawn up, and an additional fagot added to the fire.

“News, news,” said Luther, as he took from his pocket the Imperial message. “I am summoned to the Diet of Worms.”

Margaret laid down her needle-work, and looked earnestly at Luther, his dark, piercing eye sparkling with unusual brightness.

“What would Margaret say?” said Luther.

“Don't go,” she exclaimed; “I have gloomy presentiments.”

The only drawback on Melanchthon's happiness were the pre-

sentiments of his sensitive wife. Yet a few words of reason and religious trust usually dissipated them; but Melancthon himself had but too strong a tendency to superstitious apprehensions, and, in the present instance, his wife's fears met his own.

"Margaret is right," said he. "Do not go!"

"Not go!" exclaimed the monk, with vehemence. "I have said and written, that, if summoned by Charles, I should conclude it the Divine will that I should go. That time has come. Do not try to dissuade me, my friends, but recommend my cause to God, who saved the three children from the fiery furnace."

He then drew forth the summons of the Emperor, and, holding it to the light, gently struck with his finger upon the courteous address of Charles. "See," said he, "how the great man writes to the poor, despised monk. Do you think these concessions would be made, and these measures taken, if they did not perceive their cause trembling and tottering? I have lived through the conference at Augsburg, through the disputation at Leipzig, and, if it please God, I shall return safe from the Diet at Worms."

"Do you not dread the legates of the Pope, who will be assembled?" said Margaret.

"Dread them?" replied Luther; "if I were master of the Empire, I would tie the Pope and his cardinals in one bundle, and throw them into the Tuscan sea! Such a bath is needed to cleanse them."

Melancthon looked at Margaret, and laid his finger on his lip with a melancholy smile. He perceived that her gentle and timid remarks were ill-timed, and only added fuel to the excited mind of the Reformer.

"Let us reason this matter together," said Melanchthon. "John Huss went under the protection of a safe-conduct; yet how it was observed, we all know."

"He died the glorious death of a martyr," said Luther, "and professed his faith while the flames curled round his head. Who, if called by God, would not rejoice to yield his life in the cause of true religion?"

When Luther was on his way to Worms, some of his friends tried to persuade him to turn back. He replied, "I will enter Worms, though all the gates of hell, and all the powers of darkness oppose."

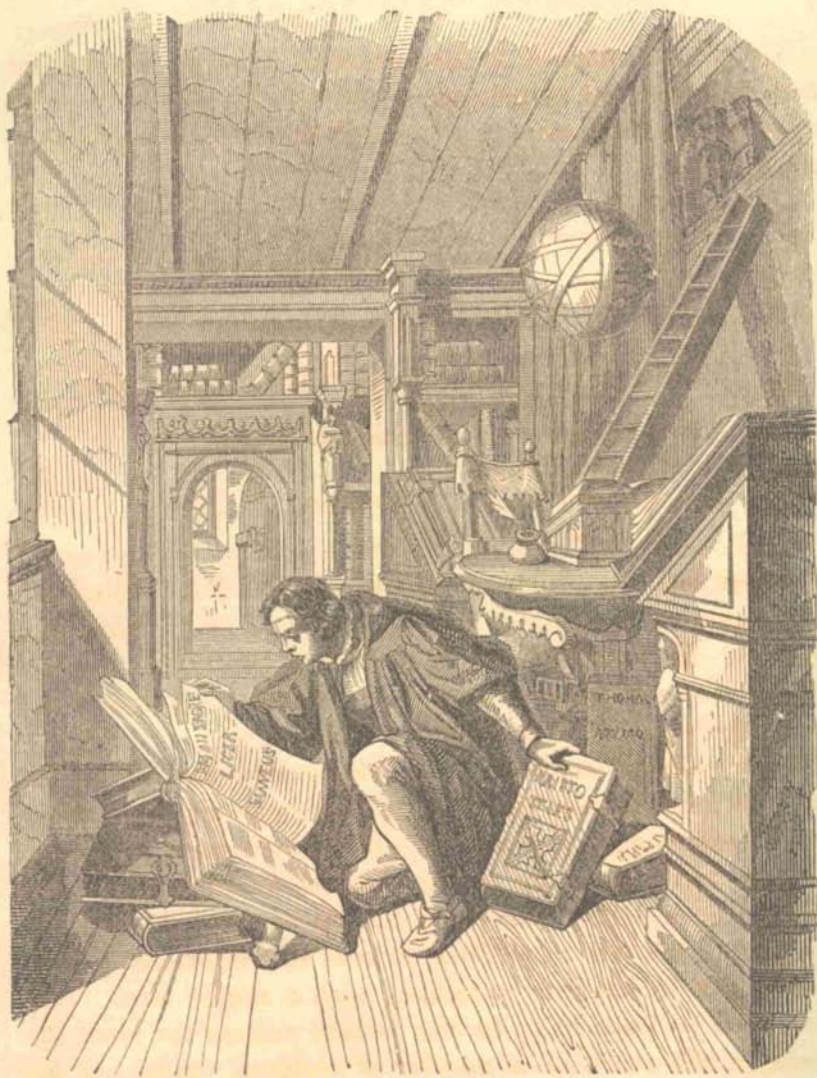
Melanchthon, his dearest friend, again tried to turn him back, "You surely will not go on," he said. "Yes," replied Luther, "though I should be obliged to encounter as many devils at Worms, as there are tiles upon the houses."

On the 16th of April, 1521, Luther arrived at Worms, and was received by a great multitude of people. Again they tried to keep him away from the Diet. "I came," said he, "to fight the battle of truth, and God is on my side."

The decisive moment came. Luther stood before that great assembly—before the Emperor Charles V. and the German princes. He stood there, calm, and unmoved.

"Crown'd with the grace of everlasting truth,
A more than monarch, among kings he stood."

He was called upon to renounce what he had written. He then uttered these memorable words, that ought to be familiar to every child. "My conscience and the word of God, hold me prisoner; therefore I may not, nor will recant. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God. Amen."



Luther Discovers the Bible.

We are all indebted to Luther, more than we know—for those words. God raised him up to speak such words—and under the divine blessing to give the Bible and religious freedom to the world.

CHAPTER VI.

BUT I must now take you to Luther's home and fireside.

“Make bright the hearth where children throng
In innocence and glee,
With smiles of love, the carol'd song,
The spirit's harmony.”

Luther had six children—John, Martin, Paul, Elizabeth, Magdalen, and Margaret. He was very fond of his home and children. He wrote to a friend—“I must contrive to increase my income; my happiness needs no increase. I would not change my poverty for the riches of Croesus.”

Before telling you about Luther's home-pleasures, I must tell you how much he felt for all little children—and his anxiety for their early religious education. He had witnessed among the people so much ignorance on the simplest doctrines of religion, and such a neglect of the children, that he was led to prepare and publish his two catechisms, to meet this want—and as he says, to give to his little catechism such a simple form. (*See Illustration on page 20.*) In the picture you see the great Reformer in the midst of a number of children, explaining his catechism, while Jonas is distributing the book among them; those men behind Luther, are schoolmasters listening to his instructions, and thus preparing themselves to discharge this

duty in their schools. It is a beautiful picture! That great man who shook the pillars of popery, teaching those little children to lisp the name of Jesus;

"And the budding mind unfold
In faith, and freshness to the call of heaven."

Nor did he labour in vain. He saw with joy the fruits of his labour ripen among the rising generation. He says, "Tender youths and maidens grow up so well instructed in the Catechism and the Scriptures, that it soothes my heart to see how, at present, young boys and maidens pray and believe more, and can tell more of God and Christ than formerly, and even now, all foundation convents and schools can. Young people like them are truly a paradise, such as the world cannot show."

CHAPTER VII.

Now let me take you into Luther's family. (*See Illustration, on page 24.*) You see him in the picture, surrounded by his children and a few friends practising the first Evangelical church tunes. The man before the music stand, with a guitar in his hand, is John Walther, the chapel-master. The man on his left, holding an open sheet of music in his hands, is the Cantor; to the right is Mathesius, a very intimate friend.

Luther was passionately fond of music, and did more than any other man, to improve German church music. He composed a great many hymns and church tunes, which are still sung and admired.

He was very earnest, in having the young taught to sing. "Music," he said, "must of necessity be retained in the schools.

A schoolmaster must be able to sing, otherwise I will hear nothing of him."

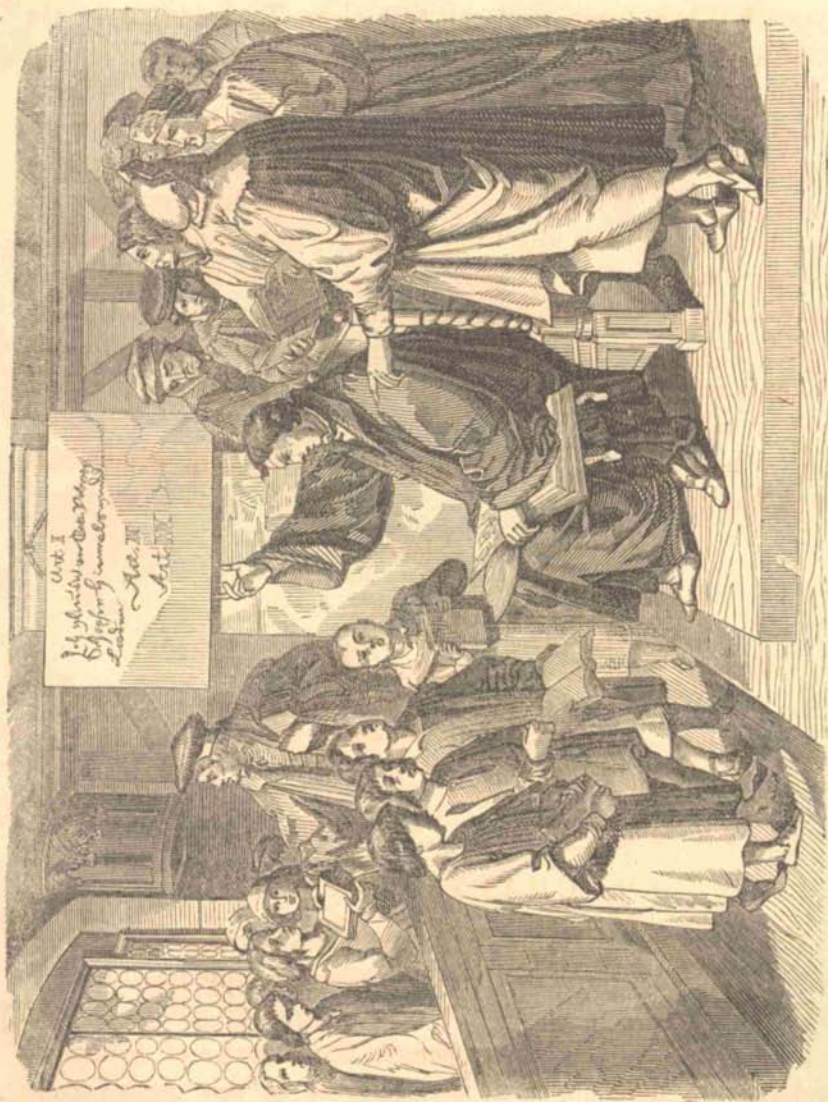
In the preface to his first collection of sacred songs and psalms, he says, that they had been set for four voices, because he wished, "that the young people, who ought by all means to be instructed in music and other proper arts, might be rid of their silly songs; and instead, learn something good and instructive; and to find pleasure in that which is good, as it beseemeth young people."

Luther made music a part of his home devotions and enjoyments. And he was never happier than, when seated at his parlor organ, the whole family united with him in singing the praises of God. It was like heaven on earth. He says, "I love music: it elevates and makes me better, and brings me nearer to the throne of God, where the angels cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" day and night.

It is said of Luther, that when he was tried by discouraging news, he would say, "Come let us sing the Forty Sixth Psalm, 'God is our refuge and strength.'"

So did Jesus, in view of his last sufferings. In that upper room, just before he went out to the sorrows of the garden, he joined in singing a hymn with his disciples—as if that holy song—that psalm of exultation, usually sung at the Passover, would strengthen his soul for the dark and terrible agony of Gethsemane.

Professor Stowe tells a touching incident, showing the power of music, to soothe the mind in trouble. A poor widow in Cincinnati, during the prevalence of the cholera, lost all her children. The Professor went to speak words of comfort to her, in her desolation. She beckoned him to be seated. After a moment's struggle with her feelings, she began and sung the



Luther Teaches the Catechism.

hymn, "When I can read my title clear, To mansions in the skies, &c. When she finished the hymn, she said to the Doctor, "Now speak to me, for my heart is fixed on heaven."

Let there be music in our families — let the children learn to sing. The spring-time of life, like that of nature, may fitly begin in song. Hymns that speak of God and Jesus and heaven, may be sweetly sung into the young heart—and abide there, as a spring blossom, that in after life will appear in the fruits of piety — and the child's heart still beat on, in the bosom of the man. Yes, little children, sing religious hymns—let the words of Jesus run into your hearts in song, and abide there, making melody to the Lord.

How beautiful are those words of a dying girl, which Mrs. Dana has put into poetry.

"O sing to me of heaven
When I am called to die!
Sing songs of holy ecstasy
To waft my soul on high.
Then to my ravished ears,
Let one sweet song be given;
Let music charm me last on earth,
And greet me first in heaven."

CHAPTER VIII.

HERE is another picture of Luther in his home-life. It represents his summer-joys in the circle of his happy family. (*See Illustration, on page 28.*)

Luther had a heart, ever open to the beauties of nature;—and you see how happy he seems, to be in this garden-scene, playing with his children. With his beloved Catharine, and

the joyous little ones, sporting amidst fruits and flowers, he is no longer the stern Saxon Reformer, but the genial friend and loving father. He wrote to a friend who procured garden-seeds for him, "If Satan and his imps rave and roar, I shall laugh at him, and admire and enjoy to the Creator's praise, God's blessings in the gardens." Writing to Spalatin, he said, "I have planted my garden, and in the middle of it made a fountain. Come and see us, and you shall be crowned with roses."

Every thing around him, in nature, seemed to be full of religious suggestions to lead his mind to God. Walking with Catharine in his garden, on a beautiful spring morning, when the new-born flowers were unfolding their gay colors, and shedding abroad their perfume, he exclaimed, "Glory to God, who calls all nature to life! What a striking image of the resurrection of man!"

In the evening, as he saw a little bird perched upon a tree, and settling himself for the night, he said, "This little bird has chosen his place of rest, and will sleep quietly; he does not think of to-morrow, but sits tranquilly on his twig, and leaves God to think for him."

There was a little bird's nest in the garden, the birds were frightened when any one came near, and flew away. Luther exclaimed, "Ah, little flutterers, do not fear me; I wish you nothing but good, if you could only believe me. It is thus we refuse to trust in God, who, so far from doing us evil, has given us his own Son."

On a fine spring day, when all nature seemed to reflect the smile of God, he said to Justus Jonas; "If there were neither sin nor death, we might be satisfied with this paradise. But all shall be more beautiful still, when the old world shall have been renewed, and a new spring shall open and remain for ever."

I do not like to dim this picture, bright with joy and innocent delight, with the dark shadow of death. And yet, as life to all is mingled with light and shade, it would not be a true picture of Luther's home-life if we should omit a passing notice of his domestic sorrow. Nor, indeed, would you know the Reformer in all the depth of his parental feeling, and touching tenderness of his nature, without this shade in the picture.

Luther was called to part with Magdalen at the age of fourteen. She was a most endearing child, and united the firmness and perseverance of the father, with the gentleness and delicacy of the mother. When she grew very ill, Luther said, "Dearly do I love her! but, O my God, if it be thy will to take her hence, I resign her to thee without a murmur."

He then approached the bed, and said to her, "My dear little daughter, my beloved Magdalen, you would willingly remain with your earthly father; but, if God calls you, you will also willingly go to your Heavenly Father."

She replied, "Yes, dear father; it is as God pleases."

"Dear little girl," he exclaimed, "O how I love her! the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

He then took the Bible and read to her the passage in Isaiah; "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

He then said, "My daughter, enter thou into thy resting-place in peace."

She turned her dying eyes towards him, and said, with touching simplicity, "Yes, father."

The night preceding her death, Catharine, worn out with watching, reclined her head on the sick-bed and slept. When she awoke, she appeared much agitated; and, as soon as Philip



Luther Sings at Home with his Family.

Melanchthon arrived, she hastened to him and told him her dream.

"I saw two young men, who seemed to be clad in robes of light, enter the room. I pointed to Magdalen, who lay quietly sleeping, and made a sign to them not to disturb her; but they said they came to conduct her to the bridal ceremony."

Melanchthon was much moved, and afterwards said to his wife, "These were holy angels, that Catharine saw in her dream; and they will conduct the virgin to her bridal in the celestial kingdom."

When her last moments were near, she raised her eyes tenderly to her parents, and begged them not to weep for her. "I go," said she, "to my Father in heaven," and a sweet smile irradiated her dying countenance. Luther threw himself upon his knees, weeping bitterly, and fervently prayed God to spare her to them;—in a few moments she expired in the arms of her father. Catharine, unequal to repressing the agony of her sorrow, was at a little distance, perhaps unable to witness the last, long-drawn breath. When the scene was closed, Luther repeated fervently, "The will of God be done!—yes, she has gone to her Father in heaven." Philip Melanchthon, who, with his wife, was present, said, "Parental love is an image of the Divine love impressed on the hearts of men;—God does not love the beings he has created less than parents love their children."

When they were about putting the child into the coffin, the father said, "Dear little Magdalen, I see thee now lifeless, but thou wilt be reanimated;—thou wilt shine in the heavens as a star! even as the sun! I am joyous in spirit, but in the flesh most sorrowful. It is wonderful to realize that she is happy, better taken care of, and yet to be so sad."

Then turning to the mother, who was bitterly weeping, he said, "Dear Catharine, remember where she is gone,—ah, she has made a blessed exchange. The heart bleeds without doubt; it is natural that it should; but the spirit, the immortal spirit, rejoices. Happy are those who die young;—children do not doubt,—they believe; with them all is trust;—they fall asleep."

When the funeral took place, and people were assembled to convey the body to its last home, some friends said, they sympathized with him in his affliction. "Be not sorrowful for me," he replied; "I have sent a saint to heaven. O may we all die such a death! gladly would I accept it now!"

When they began to chant, "Lord, remember not our ancient sins," Luther said, "Not only our ancient, but our present sins."

To his friend, Justus Jonas, he soon after wrote the following letter:—

"23d September, 1542.

"I doubt not thou hast heard of the birth of my little Magdalen into the kingdom of Christ. My wife and I ought only to think of rendering thanks for her happy transition and peaceful end;—for by it she has escaped the power of the flesh, the world, the Turks,* and the devil; yet nature is strong, and I cannot support this event without tears and groans, or, to speak more truly, without a broken heart. On my very soul are engraved the looks, the words, the gestures,—during her life, and on the bed of death,—of my obedient, my loving child! Even the death of Christ (and what are all deaths in comparison with that?) cannot turn away my thoughts from hers as it ought. She was, as thou knowest, lovely in her character, and full of tenderness."

* At this time there was great apprehension from the war with the Turks.

CHAPTER IX.

HERE we have the Christmas Festival. (*See Frontispiece*). "The garden which now delights Luther's eyes are his children, whom he looked upon as God's greatest blessing." One day Dr. Jonas suspended a beautiful branch with cherries over the table, in remembrance of the creation, and praised the noble blessings of God in such fruits. Luther said: "Why do you not much rather consider this in your children; fruits, which are more excellent, beautiful and noble creatures of God than any fruits of trees."

Luther was charmed with the faith and simplicity of little children, and had great joy in observing the happy faces, and artless manners of his children. When playing with one of his children, who was full of the gayety and sports of childhood, he said, "Thou art the innocent little *simpleton* of our Lord, under grace and not under the law. Thou hast no fear and no anxiety.... We old *simpletons* torment ourselves by eternal disputes upon the word. Children, in the simplicity and purity of their faith, are certain, and doubt nothing which regards their safety. We ought to follow their example for our own salvation, and trust to the simple word. But the Devil is always throwing something in our way. Therefore it is better to die early."

The *Christmas Tree*, a beautiful German product, is not unknown in this country. "Originally the Christmas Tree represented the birth of the *Christ-Kindlein*. At the foot of the tree was seen the manger, the mother and the child. These have now disappeared, and the only figure remaining, is that



Luther's Summer Picares.

of the announcing angel who appears at the top of the tree, and is generally mistaken for the Christ-child himself."

In the picture, you see the great Reformer keeping the Christmas Festival with his children. Although he was such a great man; a man who stood before kings and princes without fear, he was nevertheless as much at home in his own family circle, and enjoyed the innocent pleasures of his children, with the relish of a man who never stepped beyond his own threshold.

Now look at the picture,—Luther in the midst of his family, round the Christmas Tree. There you see, the little child just come from its cradle, with its loose gown and nightcap, and bare feet, how lovingly it clasps the father round the neck. It reminds me of those beautiful words of Mrs. Sigourney, that almost seem as if written for this picture.

"An infant came from its cradle-bed,
And clung to the mother's breast,
But soon to the knee of the sire it sped,
Love was its gift, and the angels said
That the baby's gift was best."

To the left is Melancthon, directing Martin how to shoot the apples on the Christmas Tree, with his cross-bow. On the right is Aunt Lena, showing Paul the pictures in a book, lying open on the table; on this side of the table you see Magdalen playing with her doll, representing the angel of the Christmas Festival.

When you are done looking at this beautiful picture of the Christmas Tree—you will read with pleasure, Luther's Christmas letter to his son John, then four years old. Here is the letter written from Coburg in 1530.

"Grace and peace in Christ, my dear little son. I see with

pleasure that thou learnest well, and prayest diligently. Do so, my son, and continue. When I come home I will bring thee a pretty fairing.

"I know a pretty merry garden wherein there are many children. They have little golden coats, and they gather beautiful apples under the trees, and pears, cherries, plums, and wheat-plums; they sing, and jump, and are merry. They have beautiful little horses, too, with gold bits, and silver saddles. And I asked the man to whom the garden belongs whose children they were? And he said, they are the children that love to pray and to learn, and are good. Then I said, Dear man, I have a son, too, whose name is Johnny Luther. May he not also come into the garden, and eat these beautiful apples and pears, and ride those fine horses? Then the man said, If he loves to pray and to learn, and is good, he shall come into this garden, and Lippus and Jost too, and when they all come together they shall have fifes and trumpets, lutes, and all sorts of music, and they shall dance, and shoot with little cross-bows.

"And he showed me a fine meadow there in the garden, made for dancing. There hung nothing but golden fifes, trumpets, and fine silver cross-bows. But it was early, and the children had not yet eaten; therefore I could not wait the dance, and I said to the man, Ah! dear sir, I will immediately go and write all this to my little son Johnny, and tell him to pray diligently, and to learn well, and to be good, so that he also may come to this garden. But he has an Aunt Lehna, he must bring her with him. Then the man said, It shall be so; go and write him so.

"Therefore, my dear little son Johnny, learn and pray away, and tell Lippus and Jost, too, that they must learn and pray. And then you shall come to the garden together. Herewith I

commend thee to Almighty God. And greet Aunt Lehna, and give her a kiss for my sake. Thy dear father,

“MARTINUS LUTHER.”

It would be well for us to keep up the German custom of preparing a Christmas Tree. It helps to make Christmas day the special holiday of childhood.

It is good for the old and young, to mingle, as in Luther's family in this joyous festival.

But before I close I must tell you a touching story about the Christmas Tree.

On a certain Christmas eve, in a certain German city, while a Christmas Tree was sparkling in every house, a poor homeless orphan was wandering, faint, weary, and cold, through the streets. He gazed longingly at the windows from which joyful lights streamed. He knocked timidly at door after door, but was unheeded. He would fain have gained entrance to one of those happy households, merely to look on, but no one heard him. At last he retired sick and miserable to a dark corner, and there, as he shivered with the cold of the December night, he remembered that an answer was promised to every sincere prayer. So he prayed to the Lord Jesus, to give him a Christmas Tree. And as he prayed, he beheld a star in the distance, and as he gazed, the star approached him, and he descried the glorious form of a beautiful child. It was the Christ-child who came to answer his prayer, and who drew down stars from heaven to light a Christmas Tree for the poor orphan.

And when the tree was all lighted, the Christ-child took the boy into the tree, and they were all wafted away into heaven. The next day the newspapers contained this item of city intelligence: “Found in — Street, the dead body of a boy, of

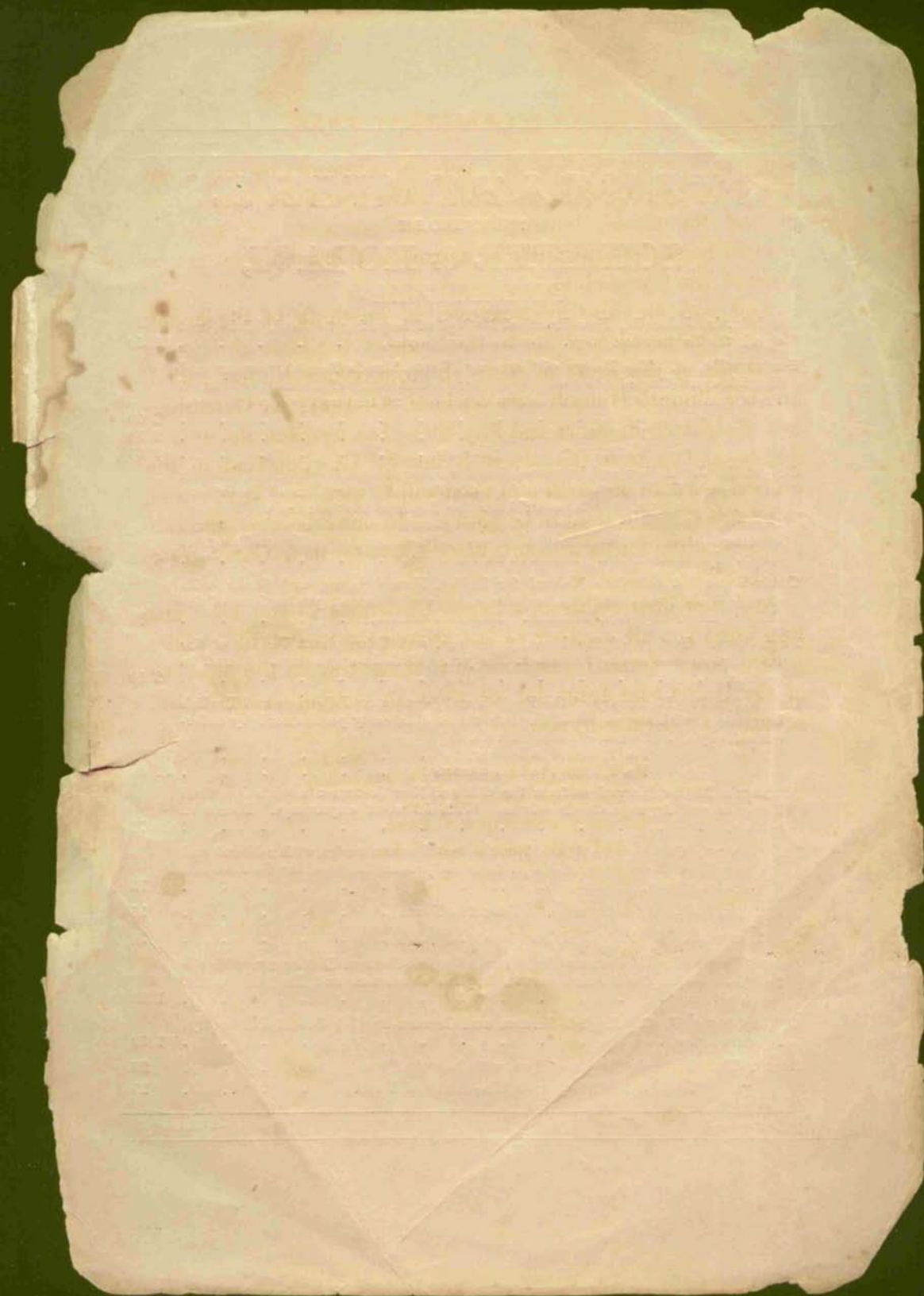
some eight or ten years of age, parents unknown; coroner's verdict, death by starvation and cold." The poor little outcast had quitted the world, outwardly in circumstances of extreme wretchedness, but inwardly in a dream of heaven, and in the arms of the Christ-child.

And now on this Christmas-eve, as we think of the happy children gathered together in the name of the Holy child—as we think of the hosts of little children, whom He has called, and is calling to Himself—we exclaim, All Hail! the Christmas-eve of eighteen hundred and fifty-six! Let us catch the angels' song—and unite in the advent hymn—"Glory to God in the highest—peace on earth and good-will to men"—"It is a time to be sober, and a time to be merry. In our soberness and our gladness, alike let us remember God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And now dear children, a happy Christmas to you all. His love bring you all together at last around the tree of life, whose fruit is peace eternal! In hope of that meeting, in the presence of the Holy Child Jesus, let all unite in singing on earth that beautiful Christmas hymn.

"Hark! the glad sound, the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song," &c.

THE END.



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