

"Let me hear from you soon. I shall not be able to come again for some time."

The Nurse was a woman of first-rate ability in her work, and we had often had interesting talks together over this very subject of *manual disinfection*, and she was altogether a long way ahead of her day. A few days after my visit this is what I heard. On the night of the day I was at the hall the lady was seized with sudden and violent inflammation, the first onset of an attack of puerperal fever, that almost cost her her life, and made an invalid of her for many weary weeks. After the lady left home, the drainage of the mansion was overhauled, and a state of things revealed that showed us that the very lying-in chamber was nothing but a fever-trap. A leak in the soil-pipe led to an escape of sewer gas, that found its way along the joists, right under the bedroom floor—its only place of exit!

(To be continued.)

#### PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION.—XIV.

##### No. 3.—Six Christmas Days of my Life.

By MISS MARGARET HUNT.

FIVE YEARS OLD.

THE very first I can remember!

There was a Christmas tree so large it reached with its tapering point to the ceiling, and papa had to mount a ladder to fix the lovely angel who spread her golden wings over the wealth of toys on the branches beneath.

The treasure that came to me that night was a dear little fairy doll, about six inches high. The days to come brightened beforehand with the thought of that love of a dollie to play with. Bedtime came all too soon; relentless Nurses bore us off. But before getting into my own little cot near my sister's (and what romps we had of a morning before Nurse Charlotte appeared!) I put the little fairy safely away in a neat little chest of drawers which stood in our night-nursery near the fire. Years after that same little chest, with its various-sized drawers, held all the various bones of the human body, kept there for convenience by my doctor brother; but then it held the pink and blue sashes, bronze shoes and coral necklaces, in which we were attired every evening to go down to dessert and to say our "Good-night." Much as I would have liked to take dollie to bed with me I would not, for she was so fragile in her waxen daintiness.

Next morning, barefooted, I ran from my cot to have a peep at my darling, and there she lay—a melted mass! tinsel, dress, and stars, all in one heap!

#### TEN YEARS AFTER.

It is Germany. The dear old town of Heidelberg nestled amidst its beloved hills. We school girls had been given leave to come out into the Hauptstrasse to do our Christmas shopping. As a rule we were taught to avoid this chief street, because Heidelberg was a "Studenten Stadt," so to reach the castle, or the bridge, or the Allheiligen Kirche we had to go down a quiet side street, the Plöckstrasse. How doubly delightful it was, therefore, to be in this Hauptstrasse, and of course we all admired the aristocratic Prussian students best, with their white and gold uniforms and Hessian boots, making the Bavarians and Swabians look quite insignificant in their blue or red colouring. Yes, it was delightful, this novelty of shopping by gaslight, with all the bewilderment of making charming novelties fit in with small purses. My chief purchase was for my sister; it was a dear little waggon of hay (to be used for waxing thread); the charm of it was that the little waggon itself was of gold and the wheels went round.

All of those who have spent some of their school life in Germany will remember with pleasure a German Christmas, where everybody, rich or poor, has a "Christbaum" on Christmas Eve, for Christmas Day itself is kept more as a religious festival. We knew that for us it meant the treat of the English church instead of service as usual in the Providenz Kirche, which my father liked us to attend as a rule, as being good for our German, and indeed I got quite fond of the old solemn hymns out of the hymn book printed to look like prose, and I was quite proud when I found I could follow a German sermon right through.

So Christmas for us that year meant a "Christbaum" ornamented with shining balls, sweets and fancy biscuits, while the real presents to one another were placed about the room. Each girl found a snowy serviette, whereon was placed the inevitable plate of fruit, nuts, biscuits, &c., with her name on a card, and round about were the presents from schoolfellows and mistresses.

Christmas also brought warm new dresses from England, a large hamper and welcome letters. Before Christmas St. Nicholas had come, when a certain unmentionable figure in black (with a tail and horns) frightens all the children, as a warning that Santa Claus will not bring gifts to naughty boys and girls. Then, after dear old Santa Claus himself, comes St. Sylvestre's Abend (New Year's Eve), kept with the wild dissipation of rich hot cakes and weak punch.

Then came the pantomime of "Snow-white," or as the Germans call it, "Schneewittchen," to which I had the unexpected treat of going, because little Lionel Hodges, the English chaplain's son, asked for me. Now he was twelve, and

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