

report of their well-doing would be an immense help and encouragement to us, and would always be most gratefully appreciated.

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A good many of our older boys have been writing to us lately asking for our advice or telling us of their plans for striking out "westward." Manitoba and the Canadian North-West is the direction taken by most of them, but others have heard better accounts of British Columbia, while, again, others are proposing to try their luck in Dakota, Missouri, or even far-distant California. We regard this westward movement as in all respects a natural and healthy movement and one which we should seek to encourage, as it means in most cases that young men can make homes for themselves and become owners of property much more quickly than if they remain in the older provinces. Unquestionably those who go west have to encounter the rigors and hardships of pioneer life. The west is no paradise, and it requires that a man shall be possessed of industry, determination and "pluck" to become a successful settler; but, given these qualities and a good sound constitution, there is, we believe, a fine prospect for those who establish themselves on the western prairies, either north or south of the boundary line

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Of course we would prefer that our boys should remain under the old flag, as we believe that nowhere else is there the same security for life and property, and nowhere else can they enjoy the same genuine liberty as distinguished from lawlessness. We would like our boys to be able to say with Sir John Macdonald: "A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die"; and, therefore, when anyone writes us on the subject of going west, we are disposed to advise them to embark their fortunes in the great Canadian North-West. At the same time, we are alive to the advantages of localities further south, and we try and keep ourselves informed as to these advantages, as well as the corresponding drawbacks, so as to be able to advise intelligently when we are asked to do so.

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The places above all others where we advise our boys not to go are the great American cities. We regard such places as New York, Chicago, Buffalo or Cleveland as excellent places for our boys to keep away from. There is always a small army of unemployed in these places, and a stranger must almost always experience immense difficulty in getting work. Except for skilled mechanics, wages are cut down to the lowest living point, the cost of living is high and the struggle for an existence always keen and relentless. The atmosphere of these great cities is morally and physically impure and unhealthy and too often proves to be deadly; and it is our opinion that for one boy who would succeed and do well in these places, there would be at least twenty who would be reduced to want, and if they remained long enough would seriously injure, if not destroy, their prospects in life. On the western plains, however, there is still room for the settlement of hundreds of thousands, and our boys can grow up with the development of these magnificent regions and rise to almost any position in life; and we are ready to say God-speed to any who, having gained the needful experience here in Ontario, are going to make homes for themselves in the west.

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We have at one time and another devised schemes for assisting our boys in taking up land, and though, owing to the prevalence of bad times, we have not during the past two or three years taken any very active part in promoting this movement, we should be glad to organize anything that would be of help; and,

at any rate, we might perhaps form a party to go west together in the spring, if a location could be agreed upon, and a sufficient number were found to join each other in the enterprise. We invite any of our older boys who are disposed to do so to correspond with us on the subject, and they may be assured that we are ready and anxious to do anything that lies in our power to promote their interests.

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We cannot conclude "Echoes of the Month" for this Christmas and New Year's number without once again wishing each and all of our boys a truly bright and happy New Year. Our earnest and heartfelt hope for them is that throughout the coming year their steps may be ordered by the Lord that their way may be committed unto Him, so that, come weal or come woe, He shall give His angels charge concerning them, and that from day to day and from month to month they shall be enabled to press onward towards the mark in that grace that is sufficient for us and in that strength that is made perfect in weakness.

*Alfred B. Owen.*

#### LETTING THE NEW YEAR IN.

WRITTEN FOR UPS AND DOWNS BY FAITH FENTON.

"Yes," said the professor, breaking from a brown study, and lifting his eyes from the glowing grate; "Yes, I have spent many a New Year's Eve in the Old Land, but one stands out above the others in my memory because of an incident connected with the night and one of the pretty superstitions belonging thereto.

"On this side of the ocean you have not had time to cultivate the wealth of quaint traditions that cling about old world life, or it may be the atmosphere is not conducive to their growth. I am not sure that you are any the better off thereby.

"The world of thought needs its twilight and its night, even as does the material world. Continued broad garish day is not healthful or natural for either. But I must tell you my reminiscences of one New Year's Eve.

"You are aware that while in England I had a parish in Lancaster for some years. And here at the time of which I speak the superstition prevailed that good fortune would be ensured you during the ensuing year, if someone you loved were the first to cross your threshold on New Year's morning—the preference being always in favour of a fair-haired guest.

"The ceremony of letting the new year in was the occasion of much festivity among the people; and care was taken by the cautious house-mothers to insure the coming of a fair and favored friend to step first across the door-sill upon the early New Year's morning.

"My parish was a scattered one and by no means wealthy, but the people were simple-hearted, and I believe they loved their pastor. Being, as you perceive, of the Saxon type, I was considered exactly the right sort of man to 'let the New Year in;' and many a starry morning after the watch-night service, I have journeyed from house to house, accompanied by a group of laughing young people, to perform the ceremony.

"Carefully each good wife would lock and bolt the door, nor open it to any summons, until a peep from the window assured her that the right guest awaited entrance.

"'Is it you, Pastor?' would be the anxious query.

"And with my reply the bolts shot back, and I crossed the threshold, followed with a rush by the merry crowd. Greetings were exchanged, good wishes given, New Year bread was broken

—in the shape of Christmas cheer—then we passed on to repeat the ceremony at another bolted door."

The professor looked dreamily into the fire. "I see it all so plainly to-night," he continued. "The hilly street; the scattered houses, bright on the last night of the year with gleaming lamps; the small stone church on the hill-top; the cluster of kindly, homely people issuing from its gates; the clamor of the shrill-toned bells celebrating the year's incoming; the frosty sparkle of the hedges; and the moon riding swift through the fleecy sky.

"I see again the dear English faces, and hear the homely English speech; and while deep snows drift about my Canadian home, my heart is warm with memories of the old land and the old loves—for they seem always best.

"There was one home in the parish where none ever let the New Year in, nor indeed any other festive season—a house that was barred and bolted to all kindly hospitalities. It stood by itself in a neglected garden, shut away from the village street by a straggling, untrimmed hedge. Of dull, unpainted brick, with rusty shutters rarely opened, and rusty door bell rarely rung, it looked what it was—the home of a morose, unsociable man.

"Reuben Stephens was a hard man, the villagers told me when first I went among them; a man lacking social instincts and without mercy; a man who had turned his fair-haired boy out into the world, because of some boyish misdemeanor, and watched his pale little wife fret into her grave, without relenting; a man honorable as the world goes, just and precise in business relations, but adamant to all human weakness, flint to all tender impulse.

"He was a regular attendant at church. From the pulpit each Sunday I scanned the furrowed face, the bent shoulders, the iron-grey hair, the shaggy eyebrows; and as I looked, I wondered what lay behind the grim countenance; whether aught I could say would move the morose spirit within.

"He lived an isolated life. The village people avoided him because of his harsh treatment to his son; and beyond business intercourse none sought his company, nor, indeed, did he invite it. In his dreary home he lived a solitary existence, with only an elderly servant woman to wait upon him.

"I endeavored to make his acquaintance, but my advances were met with such brief courtesy—almost rebuff—that I was compelled to desist. Yet my heart ached for the man, so grim, so proud, so lonely; and I wondered again and again what was needed to break the set face into softness, to made pliable the unyielding will.

"It was the fourth year of my ministry in the parish, and it was New Year's eve. A light snow covered the ground, and through the keen air the stars sparkled as frostily as in our Canadian winter sky. The little clock on my mantel had just struck nine, and I picked up the latest *Review* with the prospect of an hour's quiet reading before preparing for the watch-night service.

"Deep in a critical essay, I was deaf to the tinkle of the door-bell, until, with the preface, 'A gentleman to see you, sir!' I looked up to see a visitor in the room. That he was a stranger the first glance told me—a tall, fair man, with a face that puzzled me by some fleeting sense of familiarity. He bore well wrapped up in his arms a sleeping child.

"He laid his burden upon the sofa, then came over to me with outstretched hand.

"'Pardon my intrusion, sir,' he said, in a voice that trembled slightly. 'To you I am unknown, but of you I have heard a great deal since our arrival in the village a few hours ago. And what I have heard has emboldened me to ask your advice and aid. I am sure you will refuse neither.'

"'I do not know you; yet your face is