

FATHER LADDEN'S XMAS DINNER

Father Ladden had been two months at St. Bernardine of Sienna. The first week had been one perpetual nightmare to him. And suddenly some light came to him. His good fortune was unfolding to him, and he remembered what he had learned long since, but forgotten for a while; that the poor are the cream of any parish, and this parish being composed of poor, the very poor and nothing but the poor, God was showing special favor to him.

ing and closing windows during Mass. But Father Ladden suffered in silence, concluding to wait until a protest against too much fresh air came in from the congregation at large. Michael had chased out the cat, and pulled down the shades, and yet he stood, half questioning, in the doorway that separated the dingy living room that might serve as a dining room if it were ever furnished for that purpose.

Michael smiled half contemptuously. "Father Henderson's all right, and Father This and Father That's all right, but sure there ain't wan of them that can hold a candle to Father Ewing. 'Twas his doings through and through. He thought of the dinner, and of sending the money. Sure he wanted to be down in the District on Christmas Day. And sure wasn't he here?"

the hazel tree, and not the apple, was the Celtic tree of knowledge, and the Gaelic litany took up the allusion in calling the Blessed Virgin "Jesse's tree of Knowledge in the beauteous hazelwood."

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CHRISTMAS IN GAELIC LORE

Christmas is such a familiar word that we forget, and Irishmen most of all, that Ireland had her own name for the Feast of the Nativity, as indeed she had for almost every event in the "Holy Year."

Brittany, by the way, though the only part of France which speaks a Celtic dialect, is not nearer Gaelic Ireland than many parts of Galloroman France. Brittany was colonized by the British, not by the Gaelic Celts, fleeing from the Saxon.

And he meant to keep his word, but the next morning after his Mass was said and his meditation made, and after he had come back from pacifying the agent about the rent of old Mrs. Flynn with a promise to see that he got every cent of it, the door bell rang.

"A messenger-boy was there," said the young priest at bolt upright in his chair in tense consideration. Then, yielding to habit, he rose and walked into the church. As usual at that hour, the church was dark save for the ruby light that does not fail.

"Lord," he cried, "I am here! And you know well I rebelled against him, but he sent his foot-poor not good enough for me. But Your grace has changed all now. Jesus, I have a promise to make you and it is this: From now on, I shall not direct you where to send me. Do as you will with me. Keep me here or send me to the end of the world. Do as you see best. But this one thing I promise you, that in every man, in every woman and in every child, I will look for you. You will work for you, I will comfort you, I will Jesus, you alone. I will do my best to feed the flock you have entrusted to my care. In return I ask that you bless me, in whatever way you please—in poverty, in failure, in success or in happiness. As you please, Jesus—Your Will be done."

It was three weeks before Christmas, and Father Ladden, who had just come in from a sick bed, was paying the way for chibblains by tossing his feet over the register. Michael, whom Father Ewing had bequeathed to him as a housekeeper, was chasing the cat out of doors. Properly speaking, "bequeathed" is not the word to use in regard to Michael.

"You've wished him on me," Father Ladden laughingly protested, when Father Ewing had brought him over, with the suggestion that he be used in the capacity of a housekeeper. Michael had a hard luck story to tell him, which, strange though it may seem, had a solid foundation of truth.

CHRISTIANITY VS. PAGANISM

Observant readers of the better class of the current literature on the War must be struck by the frequency with which thoughtful and prominent writers are speaking of the European War as an altogether abnormal and unnatural phenomenon and as a real conflict between Christ and the powers of Satan.

Granted that in view of the peculiar social and economical development of the respective European nations, conflicting interests of even a grave and far-reaching character could not fail to assert themselves from time to time, creating feelings of deep distrust and even pronounced animosity, how came it to pass that in an age of advanced culture and civilization the rulers and statesmen of those nations found it quite impossible to settle those conflicts except by letting loose upon the world the wholly irrational and barbaric forces of destruction and War?

"To what end," writes Professor L. P. Jacks of Oxford, Atlantic Monthly, "has mind been marching in this advanced stage of its progress it has nothing better to show for itself than this? Could anything be conceived better calculated to let civilization down in its intellectual self-esteem?"

On the intellectual side it is, of course, true that marvellous things have in recent years been achieved by the intellect of modern Europe. And it is equally true that a great many of these achievements have been applied for the good of man and for the betterment of the conditions of his individual and social life. They have, in many respects, made the material world a more pleasant and comfortable place to live in, even though they have tended to fix men's minds increasingly upon the interests of the life that now is and upon purely temporal and therefore scarcely satisfying goals.

But in how infinitely greater a degree have they been utterly misapplied in that they have been applied for vile and destructive purposes! In how infinitely greater a degree have they proved a curse rather than a blessing!

Who can fail to realize this when he considers that it is the sciences of chemistry and mechanics which are ultimately responsible for the fashioning of those infamous weapons of destruction which are being employed in the present War? With absolutely fiendish ingenuity have these weapons been conceived in order to destroy human life, maim human bodies, and reduce to dust heaps what the skill and industry and art of man has, throughout many long years, laboriously built up.

industry and art and science. Think of the precious cargoes of foodstuffs wantonly destroyed while helpless women and children are clamoring for bread, of the permanent injury done to a commerce which it has taken generations of men to build up and to organize; of the irretrievable losses inflicted upon individuals and communities.

When we view these things in the light of the actual facts of life, of the circumstance that all this material waste represents the industry and labor and conquest of the toiling and struggling masses of mankind, must we not come to the conclusion that the world has gone utterly mad, and that the devil has, in the true sense of the word, become the master of the situation?

Well may the human mind stand appalled and horror-stricken before the ruin and desolation thus wrought and seek for a solution of the fearful problem which they present. Significant beyond words is the description of the havoc wrought at Termonchy which is given us in the book recently published by a British surgeon (H. S. Soutar, F. R. C. S., "A Surgeon in Belgium"), who spent three months in supervising the English Field Hospital at Antwerp and Furnes. "One felt," he writes, "that one was in the presence of wickedness such as the world has rarely seen, that the powers of darkness were very near, and that behind those blackened walls there lurked evil forms. . . . One could almost hear the devil laughing at the handiwork of his children."

With minds distracted and appalled we read of the fearful scenes of slaughter and devastation which the fairest lands of Europe are witnessing day by day; but it may well be questioned whether even this scientific slaughter is, in the end, the worst element in the terrible conflict—whether a more diabolical and barbaric force of destruction and War?

From a weekly English publication which appeared some time in June, 1914—two months therefore before the outbreak of war, but upon which I cannot now lay my hands, I copied out the following:

"We seem to see the disordered elements of human life being blindly driven by the powers of darkness into the vortex of a mighty and coming story. . . . Nations and sects and people are seized with a frenzy of lawlessness, while they talk of union and liberty and order. Lawlessness takes up many names and invades the household, degrades letters, outrages art, violates liberty, subverts the fabric of society, and attacks religion in its most sacred aspects. It mimes pretence of seeking the larger liberty of creative independence in art and letters, in rebellion against conventions, indulges in an orgy of formless ugliness which shakes even its votaries with maniacal laughter. . . ."

It is most certainly a truism from which none can dissent that all that is good and true and enduring in our modern civilization is due to those life forces which were infused into the world by the coming of Christ—to the belief and conviction that they were divine in their nature and origin, since He Who brought them was divine.

created nature." 1. It is an admitted and undeniable fact that behind many of these Pagan cults are real and intelligent forces. Materialistic science itself has been compelled to make this admission.

2. Many of the modern occult practices, moreover, are the opening of doors by means of which these spirit-forces gain perilous access to the minds and souls of men.

I am personally persuaded that the greatest possible danger threatens the moral life of the modern world from this quarter, and I have not the least hesitation in saying that these unseen activities will have to be taken into account in any serious examination of the ultimate causes of the present disastrous war.

CHRISTMAS We have wandered through Advent shadows Up to the golden dawn And we wait at the gates of gladness The coming of Christmas morn.

We wait 'till a touch shall tremble And a tiny hand shall lay Its spell on the portals of darkness That prison the eager day:

'Till the infant's hand shall open The gates of gladness wide And our souls drink in the glories Of the holy Christmastide.

All the graces and the grandeurs That guardian Christmas Day; And the herald, Peace, who cometh And waiteth on His way;

All the blessings ever prayed for, The sweetest, grandest, best, Fill our hearts, and lives, wide open To the welcome Christmas Guest.

And He layeth a crown of gladness On the earth's broad brow to-day; And His sceptre of Peace uplifted Hath the whole world 'neath its sway.

All the joys of years long perished, All the joys of years to be, All the joys of the timeless season Of God's eternity.

Meet in the holy midnight By Bethlehem's starlit way Blend in one man, rushing into The rapture of Christmas Day.

THE DEAD ON CHRISTMAS EVE You think of the dead on Christmas eve, Wherever the dead are sleeping; And we, from a land where we may not grieve, Look tenderly down on your weeping.

You think us far—we are very near To you and the earth, though parted. We sing tonight to console and cheer The souls of the broken-hearted.

The calm earth watches the lifeless clay Of each of its countless sleepers; And sleepers, whose spirits have passed away, Watch over the sad earth's weepers.

We shall meet again in a brighter land, Where farewell never is spoken; We shall clasp each other, hand in hand, And the clasp shall not be broken.

We shall meet again in a calm, bright clime, Where never will know a sadness; Our lives shall be filled, like a Christmas chime, With rapture and peace and gladness.

The snows shall pass from our graves away, And the sun from the earth, remember: And the snows of a bright eternal May Shall follow the earth's December.

When you think of us—O, think not of the tomb, Where you laid us down in sorrow; But look up, look aloft, beyond earth's gloom, And wait for the great tomorrow.

And the pontiff, Night, with his star-stone on, Whispereth soft and low—"Requiescat! Requiescat!"

He who is thoughtless concerning the ordinary desires and needs of the people about him is shocked when he learns, if he ever does, that it is selfishness that makes him so.

If you do not feel like singing along the path of life, at least you need not growl and spoil the song of the man behind.