

“EAST, WEST, HOME’S BEST.”*

BY THE EDITOR.

ONE of the chief pleasures of going abroad, to speak Hibernically, is that of coming home again; and one of its most important lessons is that no land under the sun furnishes for the average mortal happier conditions of existence than our own Canada. The peasant hamlets of Germany may have their gift-starred Christmas-trees, the Italian churches their straw-strewn mangers and holy Bambino, the French villages their tinsel toys and sweet songs of Noel, the English cottages their holly and mistletoe; but for abundant Christmas cheer and social enjoyment our Canadian homes are without a peer on earth. Of the typical Canadian farmer, as of Chaucer’s Franklin, it may be said:

“It snowed in his house of meat and drink.”

Good food and plenty of it, not only at Christmas, but all the year round, are the first physical conditions of happiness; and this almost every Canadian may possess. But throughout Europe the poorer peasant populations are habitually ill-fed as well as poorly housed and coarsely clothed. To one accustomed to the abundance of food and generous comfort of the average Canadian home, the pitiful economies which are a stern necessity in the peasant homes of Europe are a strange surprise. The ordinary tourist, who takes his elaborate *table d’hôte* dinner at a fashionable hotel, sees little of this; but if he turn aside to the by-ways of travel he soon sees more than enough.

Ben Jonson cynically says that one’s warmest welcome is always at an inn. It is amusing to witness the affectionate solicitude of the Swiss host for the guests’ welfare. As they ride up to the door, a lackey in waiting rings a large warning bell. Then three or four waiters in swallow-tails, or valets in uniform, swarm out to assist the travellers to dismount, and the *maître d’hôtel* gives them most unctuous greeting, and assigns them rooms in turns, to which they are conducted by neat *femmes de chambre* in Bernese costume and snowy cap. At the dining table one’s seat corresponds with the number of his room. At a signal from the head-waiter, his well-trained subordinates file in

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