



Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then they say no spirit doth stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike;
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallowed and so gracious is the time. — *Hamlet*.

That is a pleasant epigraph for our Christmas chapter, is it not? A splendid bit of superstition from the lips of the sombre young Dane's friend, to whose ghost-haunted spirit the season of "wholesome night," would prove most welcome.

Is it altogether a superstition, though? Is any belief that is beautiful built upon ought save some grand truth? and how shall we—so mortal, so finite—say what evil powers are held in check when earth and heaven commemorate the Birth that took place upon that still night in the Orient nearly 1,900 years ago.

It is a good thing that the birth of the Christ-child was surrounded by so much that is picturesque and beautiful—the stable, the starry night, the shepherds, the sleeping sheep, the wonderful sky vision, the ecstatic song—else in this very matter-of-fact age we would never dare to be so simply happy in our gifts, our carols, our Christmas joy.

The dear old Bible story gives us courage to go our way, believing with Hamlet that "so hallowed and so gracious is the time," even the powers of darkness are for a season subdued.

An old magazine tells me that a superstition, much more earthly, but exceedingly quaint, exists in certain retired places in the south-west of England. There the peasants assert that those who keep Christmas eve vigil will find the oxen kneeling in their stalls as if in adoration of the Nativity. The writer of the article mentions an old Cornishman who told him of his having, with some others, watched several oxen in their stalls on the eve of Christmas day.

"At 12 o'clock at night they observed the two oldest oxen fall on their knees at 1 make a cruel moan like a Christian creature."

But putting aside the legends of old-time Christmas so thronged with mysteries and quaint conceits; we realize that the modern Christmas is with us—a much more formidable institution. For it is an endeavor to fit the rationalism of to-day upon primitive faith; and the adjustment is inclined to engender friction.

When Christmas becomes, to modern thinkers, a mere relic of barbarism, a foolish tradition, then we may begin to wonder whether a return to primitive Christianity is not to be desired.

But while the poor are with us—multiplied a thousand times since Christ's assurance that we should have them always—and while little children dance gayly up the years, we need not fear that Christmas will die for lack of wholesome hearty "keeping."

Without little children there can be no real Christmas keeping, for it is of a truth a child festival, while, apart from holier things, there are the many pretty ceremonies, half myth, half mirth, that belong to the child world alone.

I would make every child's Christmas as bright as possible. I would brim it over with good things, not of substance alone, but of spirit—filling the little minds with song and story and sweet thought, even as the small bodies are filled with fleshly dainties.

For let us remember this always: That we are making our children's memories for the years to come, and among the dearest will be these merry, tender Christmas festivals.

Coming in out of the twilight to-night, I found upon my desk pleasant words of greeting and approval for our little JOURNAL, from Canada's best-known men, whose names are as household words among us;—to know whom is to hold in highest honor and regard.

I may not quote all the kind things these letters say, even in this our confidential column, but the greetings shall be shared between You and Me.

I should like to add that we are much pleased with the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL, and wish it all success,

very faithfully yours
Andrew

Nov. 16th, 1895.

I duly received a copy of the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL, and like its tree Canadian tone and the general brightness of all its departments. Every Canadian home is the better for having a carefully edited magazine, devoted, it may be, to those matters in which women have a special interest, but entertaining and instructive as well to every member of the domestic circle.

Please accept my sincere Christmas greetings, with an earnest wish for the complete success of the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL.

Sincerely yours,

Marquise Bennett

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,

KINGSTON, ONT., Nov. 18th, 1895.

The home is the fountain of national life. If all's well there, nothing can harm us. But if evil sits by the fireside, the country is doomed. Go ahead, then, and God bless you and all the home circles you reach. The blessed Christmas season, with its exhaustless inspirations, draws near. Accept all heartiest Christmas greetings for yourself and your readers from

George Mc. Gowan

There is yet another, from one of Canada's chiefest men, who in all the turmoil of political life has held himself so purely, so above reproach, that we all delight to do him honor. There is none held in higher public personal regard in Canada to-day than the writer of the letter that lies open beside me.

Because its words are of personal friendship and interest only, I can share with you only his name.

Wigand Smiles

OTTAWA, November 28th, 1895.

I have noted the new venture in which you have embarked and have read with pleasure the numbers of your paper which have so far reached me. I need not say that the venture itself has my warmest sympathy, nor that the contents are well diversified as to matter and excellent in mechanical execution

and finish. There is not only room for such a paper as the HOME JOURNAL, but there is undoubted necessity for it; and in your skilful hands I have no doubt it will become for Canada what older and long established similar papers have been to the homes of other countries. However excellent these other home papers may be, we need our own Canadian home papers with the distinctive Canadian flavor; appealing to Canadian sympathies and quickening that Canadian spirit and nationalism the growth of which is to-day one of the brightest features of our expanding national life. Keep it pure, elevated and spirit-full, as you have begun it, varied, robust and national and you may depend upon receiving from Canadian homes a loving and enduring welcome.

All happy Christmas blessing for you and your readers.
Sincerely,

E. J. Fenton

Christmas belongs to the poor. As with the children it should be made also for these, in all Christian lands, a season of rejoicing. The good will towards men that floated earthward on that far-off night, should find an echo in the hearts of every prosperous man and woman.

It is hard to think of a man or woman going hungry, is it not? Something chokes in the throat and blurs the eyes when we come face to face with those who so suffer. In prosperous Ontario we do not encounter it often, save in exceptional cases. But I saw it one summer on that desolate north-eastern coast of far-away Newfoundland, and the memory of those gaunt women-faces nearly breaks my heart.

Who are the poor? Well, primarily, of course, those who lack worldly possession. But I like the word as the little ones use it. In their pitying, childish vocabulary "poor" applies to all who call for sympathy—all who suffer and are sad. And if we take the word in this wider sense, who, then, is rich?

The poor in health, who suffer hour after hour, day after day, until the whole earth seems full of moaning; the poor in peace, whose days are an overshadowing of care and anxiety; the poor in knowledge, the poor in love—all these and a thousand others, who may have worldly possessions in plenty, yet are poor.

Should not the Christmas good-will go out to these also? To the sufferer we may give a gentle patience; to the careworn, a token of sympathy; to the ignorant, a sharing of knowledge; to the friendless, companionship; to the desolate and bereaved, a little heart love.

There are terrible things in the world—jealousy, evil passion and crime. There are sorrowful things, too, suffering and death. And because of these things white mounds lie in the cemetery to-day that were not there last Christmas.

Remembering the brief, brief years and the long, long silence, I wonder sometimes that men and women can ever be aught but tender and true to each other.

But there are glad things in the world also—never so glad as to-day. Music and mirth, true hearts and noble deeds, love and loyalty, and a grand Christian creed. And this is a festival season when we are called upon to rejoice, because of the benison that has descended to all men from the manger Birth of long ago.

Above the melody of pain that sobs itself through the earth arises the angel song, whose theme is always the great glad truth humanity is so slow to comprehend—that God is our Father and all men are brethren.

FAITH FENTON.