

WASHINGTON IRVING'S OLD CHRISTMAS!

BY WALTER TOWNSEND.

'IT is indeed the season of regenerated feeling—the season for kindling, not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart. The scene of early love again rises green to memory beyond the sterile waste of years; and the idea of home, fraught with the fragrance of home-dwelling joys, reanimates the drooping spirit—as the Arabian breeze will sometimes waft the freshness of the distant fields to the weary pilgrim of the desert. Stranger and sojourner as I am in the land—though for me no social hearth may blaze, no hospitable roof throw open its doors, nor the warm grasp of friendship welcome me at the threshold—yet I feel the influence of the season beaming into my soul from the happy looks of those around me. Surely happiness is reflective, like the light of heaven; and every countenance, bright with smiles, and glowing with innocent enjoyment, is a mirror transmitting to others the rays of a supreme and ever-shining benevolence. He who can turn churlishly away from contemplating the felicity of his fellow-beings, and sit down darkling and repining in his loneliness when all around is joyful, may have his moments of strong excitement and selfish gratification, but he wants the genial and social sympathies which constitute the charm of a Merry Christmas.'

It is thus that dear, delightful Washington Irving writes of the feelings engendered by Christmas, and as in our lives each succeeding Christmas comes and goes, we realize more and more fully that the chief delight

of the season is derived from the sight and sense of the happiness of others. To the child, who tries in vain to keep awake to see Santa Claus make his appearance down the chimney; to the boy with longing visions of bats and balls, books, skates, and boxes of tools; to the youth with fresh and glowing aspirations after pleasure, Christmas is a season of innocent selfishness. But to the man, who has done with toys, and who has found that even pleasure will pall, the feeling that every one is doing his best to be happy, or at the very least, to appear happy, constitutes, as Irving says, the charm of a merry Christmas. Of course there is, as cynics take care to remind us, a certain amount of humbug about Christmas, but I am not so sure that humbug, if it be of the right sort, and not too rampant, is at all times a misfortune. It does no one any harm to be forced to shake an indifferent, or maybe, an uncongenial, acquaintance warmly by the hand, and wish him, with effusive enthusiasm, 'a Merry Christmas and many of them.' If he should respond with extra warmth, and if by chance a merry twinkle steal into his eye, it is just possible that we would say as we parted, 'Really, Jones is not such a bad fellow after all, although he did try to pass off on me that spavined old mare of his.' And Jones, on the other hand, might depart murmuring, 'Well, Robinson is not quite so detestable a curmudgeon as I thought, and it is not his fault if he doesn't know a good horse when he sees one.' And then, as we grow older, the accumulated treasures of memory in-