

The Social Side of Christmas.

The writer in the New York Post of "Home Thoughts" thus pleasingly dwells on some of the features that characterize domestic life during these days of Christmas. He says:

There is a strange subtle force in the far-reaching spirit of Christmas which is inexpressibly touching and delightful; it carries not alone in the dwelling of the rich or the happy, but finds its cheerful way into the dreariest of places and creeps into the narrow entrances of sunless alleys, and brightens the eyes of lonely children who somehow believe good is on its way, though they know of no full hand which to look for blessing. It is delightful to realize that the small bare feet which traverse the slippery pavements are less tired because of this anticipation, and that acutely covered little toes hug close together on cold nights and forget to complain while they talk of the possibilities of light and warmth and feasting of eyes and mouths on the way to them in these dark days. I doubt if there is a "stim" in our great town in which the children are not acting as torch-bearers in these gloomy days and nights, and waking in the dull brains of their parents thoughts of something hidden in the future which shall bring joy.

A truck loaded with cruelly lopped fast-bound young trees which will soon be so gayly dressed will kindle whole settlements of grimy children into enthusiasm, and they catch up the broken bits about the markets as precious treasures and wave them in triumph as they run towards home. No Christmas is familiar to their tongues, but they are the heralds of "good will on earth" towards suffering men, and are happier than at any other time in the whole year.

We cannot be cynical or cross even in the pandemonium of the toy-shops which at any other time would be unbearable, and unless in what a good German friend calls "the last despair," we will not be infuriated even by the rudeness which snatches the thing we hesitate over, from under our nearly closing hands or pushes between us and a long-fought-for goal. If our pet loses that special curly white-wooded dog, some other brown-eyed little one will tug it to sleep on Christmas night; it is all for the children.

And when, in houses whence the minstrels are banished, and in which the yearning of sorrow grows more intense with remembrance of "happier things," the spirit of Christmas stands hesitating at the door, let him but find a child to lead him by the hand and shadows will fly before him. To how many a grandmother and grandfather the sudden entrance of a jolly boy or girl is like the coming of a deliverance from bondage! The doll little figures, muddled and legged and bundled and "hopped," rushing in with glowing cheeks and noisy voices, bring back the days of long ago, the dear memories of the departed, the missing, the separated, and the old warmth kindles in their hearts and the old delight in "making the children happy" asserts itself, and they also are visions of drums and rocking-

horses and dolls and baby-houses, and forget that an hour ago life had seemed narrowed to a retrospect.

For the dreams and longings of the grown folk we may have misgivings; they are rarely realized, and to the young girls and lads on the threshold of manhood such intense reality appears to their desires that no "almost the same thing" fills their need. What impossible wishes sometimes enter the unreflecting minds of girls of sixteen and seventeen! But the child-heart is so easily, uncritically happy over so little that we can never fear that we cannot at least make one little soul blissfully satisfied. The blessedness of caring for little things, of treasuring trifles, is one of the joyous qualities of manhood. Our youngsters may all shout for joy and yet leave us something to carry down into the dark places where their less fortunate brothers and sisters find ecstasy in the discarded bit of gilt paper from last year's tree and clap their hands over a string of colored glass balls.

If the children's expectation of receiving and dreams of acquisition are delightful to their dear hearts and keep them on a sort of mental tip-toe through these gloomy weeks, surely the making ready to gratify them, which is our share, is the better half of all this vivifying, cheering preparation.

There are old women, I know one very intimately, who absolutely enjoy the beauty of a sweet-faced doll, and take the keenest pleasure in examining the dainty clothing and delicate fineness of detail which shall always enhance its charm. An instinctive gesture of protection and care will arise in even a grandame's heart and she fancies how her namesake of the second generation will cuddle her baby in her round arms, and see a vision of the soft cheek and last of her daisy curls.

I remember well seeing two fathers men of affairs, known well in New York's busiest places of struggle, who, after a happy hour spent dressing a tree for a family of boys, sat down upon a floor of a stately hall and played marbles with many a reminiscent word about "alleys" and long-forgotten terms of the game. Something so vital had come to them in handling and admitting and labelling these toys that they were children again for the moment and believed in Santa Claus in the old heart-warming way. Keen sportsmen both, they raised air-guns to their shoulders, and ran a sharp glance down the barrels, and smacked whips and admired toy soldiers and were wholly at the mercy of the ruling spirit of the night.

What shall take us out of ourselves? Alas! how seldom does such a blessed power arise and control us. Here it is now coming fast upon us, though the heavens are dark, and the wind is cold; there must be a hard crust of selfishness and a bitter spirit of discontent to build a barrier that can stay its progress. To one who is not absolutely world-hardened there is this one chance in a year to be "out of it all" and in touch with joy and gratitude, and to kindle by the flame of the Christmas candles warm fires of happiness and comfort in strange places where they were never felt before.

The Christmas Crib.

The beautiful Christmas devotion of the Crib sprang from the simple-hearted piety of the gentle St. Francis of Assisi.

It was in the year 1223, in a lonely stable on the mountain of Greccio, Italy that the first Crib was seen. St. Francis had a great devotion to the Nativity of our Lord. "It is the feast of feasts," he said. He was clearly convinced that, if this divine mystery could be represented according to nature, it would have a strong religious effect upon all Christians. One thing only had made him hesitate. Would the Church approve of such an innovation? This was the question that he now laid before the Sovereign Pontiff. An entirely favorable answer fulfilled his desire. It was now the 10th of December. He lost no time. He sent a messenger to a nobleman at Greccio, named John, a man of high birth and of noblest mind, whom he knew to be devoted to himself. "I wish to keep Christmas night with you," he said, "and if you will agree, this is how we will celebrate it. You will choose a place in your woods, a grotto if there is one; you will put in it a manger with hay; there must be an ox and an ass; it must be as much as possible like a stable at Bethlehem. I want for once to see with my own eyes the birth and poverty of the Divine Infant." John of Greccio entered warmly into the idea of his holy friend.

All was prepared as he proposed. The brethren in the neighboring convents were informed of it, and the village populations were invited. When the time came, an immense multitude, carrying torches and lighted tapers,

went to the ceremony. The woods seemed as though on fire. Thomas of Celano, the biographer of St. Francis, and author of "Dies Irae," piously remarks that a light that has illumined to pass into the touching narrative scene. The brethren sang carols which were taken up by the people and repeated by the echoes of the forest. Francis was at the head of the spectators close to the Crib. He seemed fascinated, enraptured, and melted with tenderness, Celano says. At midnight the Mass began in the middle of the woods, over the Crib itself. The Saint wore the Levite's tunic. He sang the Gospel in a sweet sonorous voice. His whole soul seemed to pass into the touching narrative of St. Matthew. Then he preached on the birth of that King in poverty, and on the glory of the town of Bethlehem, little among all towns. With loving tenderness he called the Saviour the Child of Bethlehem, and in pronouncing the name of Bethlehem he drew out his voice as though to imitate the bleating of a sheep. In the same way when he pronounced the sweet name of Jesus, he made with his lips as though he were tasting the sweetness of the honeycomb. A holy childlikeness seemed to have taken possession of him while he celebrated the festival of the Holy Child. All who were present were in a sort of rapture. John of Greccio, who had prepared the festival, affirmed that at that moment he saw in the crib an infant of marvellous beauty, doubtless the Divine Infant, that He seemed to be asleep, and that Francis embraced Him as though he wished to awake Him. This was the "delicious night," as the author of "Dies Irae" called it.

Those who assisted at it seemed to be taking their part in the triumph of simplicity, poverty, and humility. They returned home with hearts filled with joy, and preserved ever afterward an unfading memory of all they had beheld. Five years afterwards, when Francis was canonized, they wished to erect a chapel to the honor of the new Saint on the spot where he had celebrated the triumphal feast with them.

At first shepherds and poor people were the only ones to assist at it; now the rich and the noble, as well as the poor and the humble, crowd round, and with burning love offer the homage of their hearts to the infant at Bethlehem.

In the great church of Ara Coeli, the church of the Franciscans at Rome, the devotion of the Crib is kept up with wonderful fervor. Here, at Christmas, the Santissimo Bambino is venerated by thousands, while the little children tell in simple words of the new-born God. The graceful dignity with which they fulfill their duties and the grave respect with which they accept the applause of their audience, are most touching for those who believe that out of the mouth of Christ's little ones he has perfected the praise. Among the Capuchins of Italy and France on Christmas night the summons to midnight Office is not given, as usual, by the monastic rattle. The little choir-boys are permitted on that night to enter the cloister. They pass along the dormitories, and waken the sleeping friars with Christmas carols and the sweet tinkling of little bells. As each religious appears, he is presented with a lighted taper, which, however, adds but little to the surrounding brightness. For the glad troop of singers have kindled torches in every possible place and position in the monastery. Then friars and boys proceed singing to the church, where a new blaze of splendor awaits them. In many convents troops of little children join the procession as it enters the sacred building. At the church door they are met by the religious of the Third Order, also bearing lighted tapers, and staffs adorned with ribbons and flowers. A censer-bearer then joins the procession, and thus they proceed to the altar, where the choir sings the Mass. The faithful, who have assembled in crowds, take up the refrain as the friars and boys approach, and tears and smiles on all sides tell the love of each for the ceremonies of that dear and blessed night.

Hearts which have passed with indifference through the most magnificent spectacles of earthly grandeur are moved to tears by the simple ceremonies of the Christmas night. Our boys and girls own.

Dr. Horton, a well-known London Congregationalist minister, is seriously perturbed. He has discovered, it appears, that several Catholics are actually engaged on the London Press, and he is horrified. "The truth of the matter is," he observed to an interviewer, "that the Roman Catholic authorities utilize the services of the Press to an extent of which few who have not studied the matter have the smallest notion. At Maynooth preparation for journalism forms almost as much a part of the regular course as that for the priesthood, with the result that the Roman Catholics exercise an amount of influence over the columns of the Protestant Press out of all proportion to their actual numbers. Without actually influencing, perhaps, the declared policy of the paper, or moulding its written utterances, they are yet able to exercise influence over the matter appearing in its columns in a very remarkable, and, as I hold, a very deplorable manner, so that, as I have said, it is next to impossible to get any ordinary newspaper daily or weekly, to print that which needs saying on the subject of Romanism and its doctrines."

Catholic Pressmen can afford to treat Dr. Horton's attack with the contempt it deserves. Of course Catholics are on the staffs of several London papers, but not because of their religion, but because of their knowledge of their profession. In all probability Dr. Horton discerns in every one of them a Jesuit in disguise, and if he had his way there would be many journalistic vacancies in London in the immediate future. A similar outcry was raised about ten years ago, and one result of it was an order issued to the manager of one of the chief morning newspapers that under no circumstances was a Catholic Pressman to be engaged on the staff. That order is rigidly enforced still. Dr. Horton would evidently be glad to see it extended, and, indeed, he gives a broad hint to the proprietor of a weekly paper that he should dismiss a well-known Irish Catholic journalist on his staff.

CATHOLICITY IN THE KLONDIKE.

A Baltimore correspondent of the New York Freeman's Journal writes: Rev. Father William H. Judge, S.J., in writing to one of his relatives in Baltimore from St. Mary's Hospital Dawson City, Alaska, Oct. 6, 1898, says: "I have had a very busy summer, the building of our new church in place of the one burned, and a large addition to the hospital, together with the cure of providing for the coming winter, was no little work, and the large number of patients in the hospital for the past two months has kept me as busy as I could be day and night. We have

185 patients at present, mostly typhoid fever, which has been very bad here this summer, but the doctors all agree that we are having unusually good success in the hospital.

"Our new church is very fine for this part of the world, and would do credit to a much older town. It cost \$25,000, and was the gift of one good man, Alexander McDonald. I said the first Mass in it on August 12, and blessed it, and then turned it over to the Oblates of Mary, who have charge of the parish now. I still have the care of the hospital, which is as much as I can attend to with the present number, and expect to turn it over to the Sisters in the Spring and go back to American Alaska, where I belong.

"We have five or six hundred at Mass every Sunday, so you can understand what kind of a town we have. I have a telephone in my office, not only for the town, but also to the creeks (the

creeks are fifteen miles from Dawson). They are preparing to give us electric light. I think we will have about 15,000 people in this town this winter. I have met several Baltimore persons here lately, and indeed nearly every part of the world is represented here.

"It is sad to see how many poor people have left good homes to come here and find themselves without the necessities of life, without money and without work. I fear there will be much suffering here this winter. There are thousands still in tents and winter is on us."

Father Judge was born in Baltimore, pursued his studies for the priesthood at Woodstock College, Howard County, Md., and was ordained about twelve years ago. He was sent to the Rocky Mountain Mission and finally, at his own request, was assigned to work in Alaska, where he has been for the past eight years.

ENGLISH CATHOLICS AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS.

The enthusiasm displayed by the Catholics of Grimsby, Eng., in regard to public affairs and notably to the civic administration and the representation thereon is well worthy of emulation in this Catholic city of Montreal.

The Grimsby News, in referring to the election of a Catholic Mayor in that district, and a subsequent demonstration in the form of what it calls "A Mayor Church Parade," in which Protestants also took part says:--

The demonstration marked with distinctive emphasis the march of religious tolerance, or rather, we would say, Christian tolerance, and of the decline of bigotry in religious worship. True it is the corporation of Grimsby had previously chosen from amongst their midst a mayor whose religious principles were in direct compliance with those of the Bishop of Rome, and what is usually termed the Catholic Apostolic Church. That was the occasion when Alderman Charlton was vested with the red robe of office, but never until last Sunday, if memory serves aright, has the Corporation followed a Catholic Mayor to the Catholic Church. The day was a most unfavorable one. Still there was a large muster, and the route of the procession, especially on its return, was thickly lined with spectators. Nor were those the only signs which were new. For the first time ladies were included in the inaugural function of the Mayor (Mr. W. Southworth). The Mayoress, together with the Deputy Mayoress, joined the procession, and the public appreciated the thoughtfulness which had prompted his Worship to invite the attendance of the Mayoress to participate in his full honors and to attend him in asking the blessing of Providence and invoking Divine aid and assistance during the coming year.

The members and officers of the Corporation and others, assembled at the Town Hall, and the procession was formed in the following order: First was the band of the Lincolnshire Volunteer Artillery led by Drum-Major Kilbourn. The Guardians followed, and after these the visitors, then the officials of the Corporation, the Councilors, magistrates and officials, the Mayor's Deputy Sergeant, and the Bailiff's Sergeant, carrying the emblems of office and preceding the Mayor, who was accompanied by the Deputy Mayor (Alderman Jack Sutcliffe) and the Town Clerk (Mr. W. Grange).

Following there were two open carriages. In the first was the Mayoress and Deputy Mayoress and in the second were Mr. Dixon Brown, the Mayor's Sergeant, still looking well in his 93rd year. Then followed the lifeboat crew, the Borough Fire Brigade, and the Docke Brigade, the rear of the procession being brought up by a squad of the Borough police.

The procession proceeded to St. Mary's Church, and on arriving at the Church it was found that practically the whole of the body of the building had been reserved for the Corporation and officials, and the order of service was distributed in small pamphlets printed in Latin and English. Everyone was impressed with the Irish music, with the high dignity of the Latin intonations. When Father Hawkins commenced his sermon all were immediately at ease, and the simple and homely words of the preacher were listened to with the greatest attention.

Father Hawkins extended to all present, on behalf of his faithful people, a hearty welcome, and reminded those that day as representatives of the government of the town that they were representatives of God in the government of this part of the Kingdom of England, and it was therefore fitting that the people should respect them. And in welcoming them he also wished to thank them for the honor they had done to the Catholics of this town in commencing their municipal year by assembling in their temple, and invoking the grace and the blessing of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their labors during the coming year.

He had also another debt of gratitude to express, and that was their recognition of the worth of him whom they had constituted their chief representative, because that was an hon-

or paid directly to the Catholics of Grimsby. It was not the first time they had done so, still the time that had elapsed since the last Catholic Mayor was so long that they had almost forgotten that they had a Catholic Mayor. They appreciated this act not only because the Mayor had recognized the worth of the gentleman they had made their chief magistrate, and because he was a representative member of their congregation, but also for the fact that they had acknowledged by that act that the Catholics had equal rights, and an equal share in the government of their country and their town, with other of their fellow-countrymen.

He asked them to forgive him pointing out that this had not always been so in England, and that it was not very long since the Catholics were regarded as outcasts and aliens, and even not constituted of the same flesh and blood on account of their recognizing certain spiritual authority and a conscientiously worshipping God in a way which they thought God Himself had ordained. They had been excluded from all civil rights, they were persecuted for their religion, and perforce to hide themselves in the back alleys of their towns and cities. But happier times had now come, their disabilities had been removed, and prejudices and bigotry had been removed from the minds of their fellow-countrymen, and Catholics were able to take their position in the country.

If one thing more than another had struck him during his fifteen years in their midst it had been not only their honesty as regarded their dealings, but also the courtesy and the kindness and the wish to give honor where honor was due to those who surrounded them, and especially to the Catholics. From the first time of coming among them to the present day he had never found his religion to be a bar to public or private respect, or to personal kindness on all sides. It made him proud of his fellow-townsmen and of his country. He asked that the bench should support the Mayor in his most difficult duties, and pointed out that the duties were rendered more difficult still on account of the goodness of him who had just laid down the name of office. He was not going to hurt the feelings of that gentleman; he would simply say what he thought was the greatest praise to any man, and that was he had done his duty; he had nobly done it and done it with the charm of an English gentleman. It was that charm that had gained all their hearts.

The procession was reformed after the service, this time the Mayor heading, with the Councilors following behind according to seniority of office. Tables had been laid out with light refreshments in the large hall of the Town Hall, and were beautifully decorated. Several people joined the Mayor here, including Councillor Hewson and Father Hawkins.

The Mayor, while the guests were still unperturbed, expressed the pleasure he felt at welcoming all present, and in returning thanks for the honor that had been done him on that occasion. He proposed the health of the Queen, and this was followed by the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the rest of the Royal family.

Alderman Jack Sutcliffe, in proposing the health of the Mayor, expressed how much he had been impressed by the beautiful service in which they had taken part that morning. They had all come away with more charitable feeling and thoughtfulness, and he felt glad that it was possible to instill such charitable feelings into men's minds. They were all indebted to the Mayor for having given them the opportunity of attending such a service. Mr. Cook rose and offered to the Mayor the congratulations of the Board of Guardians on the proud position to which he had attained. He knew the Mayor personally, probably better than anyone present that day. They had lived side by side for between thirty and forty years. Nothing but good feelings had existed between them. As members of the Board of Guardians they felt the Mayor had rendered very valuable service both at Catter and at Grimsby, and no one took a greater interest in the poor than the present Mayor, and for that reason the Guard-

ians were there to offer their congratulations upon the high position Mr. Southworth had been appointed to.

The Mayor said he could hardly find words to convey to them the gratitude he felt for the high position they had thought him worthy to occupy, and if he was asked to go through the ordeal of chief magistrate for one year and give satisfaction he hoped they would be the best of friends, and close their career in the best of friendship. He thanked the ex-Mayor and Mr. Cook for their kind remarks, and he thanked those that had accompanied him to church that morning, and also referred to the fact that they had with them that morning the oldest servant of the Mayor, the Mayor's Sergeant. He had been placed under the care of the lady superintendent nurse of the House, who would see that no harm befel him. He was ninety-three years of age, and they had all the greatest respect for old servants, especially one who worked and had carried out his duties as Mr. Dixon Brown had done.

Alderman Doughty proposed the health of Father Hawkins. For over fifteen years Father Hawkins had earnestly and devotedly served the poor of this town to the very best of his ability. He would also like to refer to the vicar of Grimsby, who had been the Mayor's chaplain for a great number of years. It was with the deepest regret they learnt that after thirty years they had to part with him owing to a serious indisposition. The vicar of Grimsby had served the town in a most praiseworthy and Christian-like way.

Father Hawkins responded, and again referred to the kindly treatment he had always received in Grimsby and to the absence of bigotry, snobishness, and unneighborly feeling.

Mr. W. F. Wintingham gave the toast of the ladies. He was very pleased to see the Mayoress present, and trusted that she would always have health and strength to continue her good work. He agreed with everything that had been said about the Mayor and Father Hawkins. He had seen the noble and self-sacrificing work the Mayor had done when others had not been high, especially in aid of the poor of the town, and it had sometimes been very difficult work. As to Father Hawkins, he had to compliment him on his sermon. It had been quite a pleasure for churchmen and dissenters to be present to listen to it, and they had come away feeling better than they had gone.

HEALTH OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

At a meeting of the New Jersey Sanitary Association held last week, the president, Vernon L. Davey, superintendent of the East Orange public schools, delivered an address on "The Relation of the Schools to the Health of the Community." He pointed out that the most impressionable period of man's life--physical as well as mental--was childhood, and that the safeguards thrown about adults in their homes should be extended to the school-rooms occupied by children. He spoke of the necessity for carefully constructing windows, doors, hallways and basements. The halls should not be used for cloak rooms, and the basement should be light, dry, and airy. Floors should be so made that cracks would not open in them; cracks, he said, "receive all the indescribable filth, to be softened with every moistening of the floor, and to give off into the air no one knows what germs of disease.

The color of the walls, Mr. Davey continued, was important as affecting the eyes. The ventilating system should supply and remove thirty cubic feet of air for every pupil every minute; and to accomplish this at all times of the year, forced ventilation must be resorted to. The matter of desks was also of great importance; they should be so made as to be adjustable to the pupils; it was not possible that desks of one size should suit all the pupils in one grade. The popular theory that there should be fifteen-minute recesses was being abandoned; it had been boldly asserted that the recess is a source of harm, rather than good. "That many of the less robust pupils will become chilled, and will contract colds and lay the foundations of affections of the pulmonary system. . . . It is, of course, a part of the no-recess system that pupils should be allowed to leave the room when necessary."

"It is coming to be felt by practical educators," Mr. Davey said, "that there should be some sort of supervision of the physical side of the pupils--not merely in the way of giving a few minutes daily to light calisthenics, but in securing a frequent, professional observation of the pupils' physical condition. This may include, not only a daily scrutiny of a class as a whole, but an occasional examination of each individual, with particular reference to his sight, hearing, and the condition of his lungs. This examination should not only be accompanied by a careful diagnosis and prescription by the school examiner, but should, when necessary, be followed by a note to the parent suggesting the wisdom of consulting a physician.

A writer of genius changes sand into glass and glass into crystal, or into iron and iron into steel; he marks with his own stamp every idea he gets hold of. He borrows much from the common stock, and gives back nothing; but even his robberies are willingly reckoned to him as private property.