

## CHRISTMAS.

Familiar, yet welcome, awakening associations, alternately pleasing and painful,—what mingled recollections does the natal day of Christianity bring to our bosoms. With what a pleasure do the scenes of infancy return to the mind at this season: memory paints, in revered brightness, many an hour of unalloyed happiness. The house of our father,—the maternal tenderness that cherished our youth,—the happy group that shared that love with us,—companions of our sports, with whom we knelt around that mother's knees, and nestling together, enjoyed the slumbers of childhood; these, linked with a thousand sweet remembrances, arouse feelings which neither the cares nor the evils of the world, nor time itself, can utterly extinguish. How soon, alas, does the happy and affectionate company which, from our paternal home, set out together in life, become broken, separated, perhaps alienated. The mother who nightly breathes a blessing over her sleeping group, as they lie like "folded flowers," not yet severed from the parent stem, blest in her ignorance, little thinks where they may repose their heads, when life's wanderings are ended. For those who arrived midway in their career, can seldom look around upon an unbroken circle, and it is the penalty of living long to live alone. Some with whom we commenced our course were early hid in the grave from the storms of life; others were shipwrecked almost as soon as they had left the shore, and live to pain us with the sorrowful spectacle of their ruin. Seas and mountains intervene between one; perhaps anger and unnatural strife separate us from another of those who have been hushed to rest upon the same bosom. Oh, how should such retrospects tighten the bonds which unite us to those that remain, and imbue, with kindness and forbearance, our social intercourse, for very bitter is the thought of past harshness to friends who are beyond the reach of our repentance.

But this season, while it suggests remembrances which are tinged with sadness, brings with it also cheerful images and pleasurable hopes. The countenances of our friends seem now to wear a kindlier aspect, the heart expands and throws off awhile its worldliness, and for one brief day society looks placid, as if to each ear some kind voice had whispered, 'there is peace on earth and good will towards men.' All Christian nations have delighted to consecrate this occasion with various and singular ceremonies, and hallowed customs have been borrowed for its observance, until hallowed by time and identified with sacred images, their origin has been forgotten. The remains of druidical superstition lent to an English Christmas many of its ancient rites; the misletoe bush and the yule log were evidently of indigenous growth. In Germany, the custom of exchanging presents—which, indeed, is one of the pleasantest which has come down to us—arose from the celebration of a pagan festival in honour of the birth of Sol, which was afterwards transferred to the day of Christmas.—That is a beautiful picture of the first Christmas Eve represented by the sacred historian with graphic skill, but in the perfection of simplicity. Eighteen centuries ago, nearly at the season, and in much the same climate, we enjoy, we may imagine the shepherds of Palestine, as they watched upon the plains of Judea.—The scenery of that picturesque country, in its diversified beauty, was spread around them, touched by the moonlight and arrayed in mellow splendour, while the constellations of heaven, familiar to their gaze, looked out of the deep blue ether with unwonted lustre. Solemnly impressive is the midnight stillness of nature, "nor eye nor listening ear an object finds; creation sleeps;" and solemnly was that silence broken, when angelic heralds clothed in the glories which irradiate heaven, appeared to their dazzling vision, and in sounds of melody worthy of the message they conveyed, spoke of peace and hope to a benighted world. A light then dawned upon earth, which, through each revolving year, as ages have elapsed, has emitted a clearer radiance; a plant

then upreared its head, which time has matured to a stately tree, beneath whose ample shades nations have found shelter. A power then appeared, whose influence has sustained the hopes, and guided the steps, of millions; and which remains in undiminished plenitude to administer to the happiness of all earth's countless tribes. Well, then, might the messengers of gladness address the awe-struck peasants with "fear not," and impressively to every heart does each returning anniversary of the scene repeat those words of encouragement. Though life looks dark, though our course seems perplexed, and the draught which we must drink is sometimes mingled with our tears,

"Though wide the waves of bitterness around our vessel roar  
And heavy grows the pilot's heart to view the rocky shore!"

Let us fear not, but look for length and strength to that moral sun which shall know no setting. Or, if surrounded by enjoyments, reflecting happiness from the eyes of those we love, our hearts responding to the voice of friendship, we are so rich in blessings, that our very abundance excites a feeling of instability, let us fear not, though the friends and pleasures of earth must pass away, the favour of Him endures. Life is, indeed, mutable, but "there surely is some blessed clime, where life is not a breath," and the event which this season recalls to mind, is a pledge of that happier existence.

While many are reciprocating expressions of kindness, and the coldest heart aroused to livelier sensibilities, it should not be forgotten that there are some to whom this season of general hilarity brings no joy. Will not a slight search, (if, indeed, search be necessary) discover a helpless orphan, a desolate widow, or a poverty and disease stricken sufferer, whose woes a little active kindness may alleviate. Are there not within our observation some in painful sorrow, or penury, to whom we might be messengers of joy, and bid them fear not? If there is no demand upon our charity, are there no claims upon our kindness, no humble merit to advance, or modest worth to encourage? Have we inflicted harshness or injury on a fellow mortal—is there one to whom we owe reparation or concession—let us hasten to make it; are there any to whom kind notice or attention would be a grateful balm, let us not delay those friendly offices, but consecrate this season by acts of kindness and by words of peace

## MY OWN FIRESIDE.

Dear, happy home!  
All other pleasures I deride,  
Nor wish for change from thee to roam—  
My own fireside.

There, unreserved,  
Free as the wind on mountain side,  
Our thoughts and feelings are preserved—  
My own fireside.

There, unrestrained,  
Our words may flow and mirth abide;  
No effort there appears constrained—  
My own fireside.

Encircling thee,  
May friends and kindred ne'er divide—  
Thy light unite in harmony—  
My own fireside.

Domestic peace  
There calmly dwells in silent pride;  
Thy comfort all my joys increase—  
My own fireside.