

Christmas Day, and How to Keep it.

Christmas Day is perhaps the one Festival in the whole year which all unite to keep; and in some way or other it will be kept by every reader of these lines.

But even with Christmas Day there are right ways and wrong ways of keeping it; and our way will depend very much on our way of thinking of it.

How do you mean to keep it? O, you will say, Christmas is a very happy and joyful time; and I shall put away all angry and revengeful thoughts, and I will try to cherish feelings of kindness and love towards my neighbours, and feelings of compassion for those who are poorer or less happy than myself; and I will try that my friends, and especially my own family, shall be the happier for my endeavours at this happy time.

Yes! I believe there are hundreds and thousands of men and women throughout Canada who will have thoughts like these at Christmas time, and who do their best to carry them out. You will hear their cheery, hearty voices wishing their neighbour a "happy Christmas," and a "merry Christmas," on Christmas eve and Christmas morning; and they evidently mean it, and say it with all their hearts.

God be thanked for this blessing! I am not going to speak lightly of it. May the time never come in this dear land of ours when Christmas greetings of kindness and love shall cease!

But we must go deeper than this. We must ask what is our reason for keeping Christmas Day—why we bid each other be happy, and merry, and kind, and forgiving, and compassionate. And then, when we are sure that we think rightly of Christmas, we shall be more likely to keep it properly.

CHRISTMAS COMMUNION.

It is a very curious thing; but a great many people would shrink away from you if you told them that they ought not only to go to church on Christmas Day, but also to the Holy Communion. O yes, it is all very well to go to church, they would say. I should not like to miss the Christmas hymn, and the evergreens and the decorations of the church. They help me to feel that it is Christmas Day. But I don't feel that I can go to the Lord's Table.

Why not?

Ah! that is a very solemn thing; and then, I am so light-hearted and merry at Christmas that I should feel as though I was profaning the sacrament.

But why should you not be light-hearted and merry at this blessed time? Our Lord Himself took part in a marriage feast; and I am sure that a man who carried about a gloomy face at Christmas, when all his neighbours were merry, would not be a better Christian for that reason. No! It is a time of joy, and we ought to rejoice with those who are now rejoicing.

But surely this is not a reason for refusing to come to the table of the Lord. Why is it that Christmas is a time for joy? The answer is given in one of our hymns:

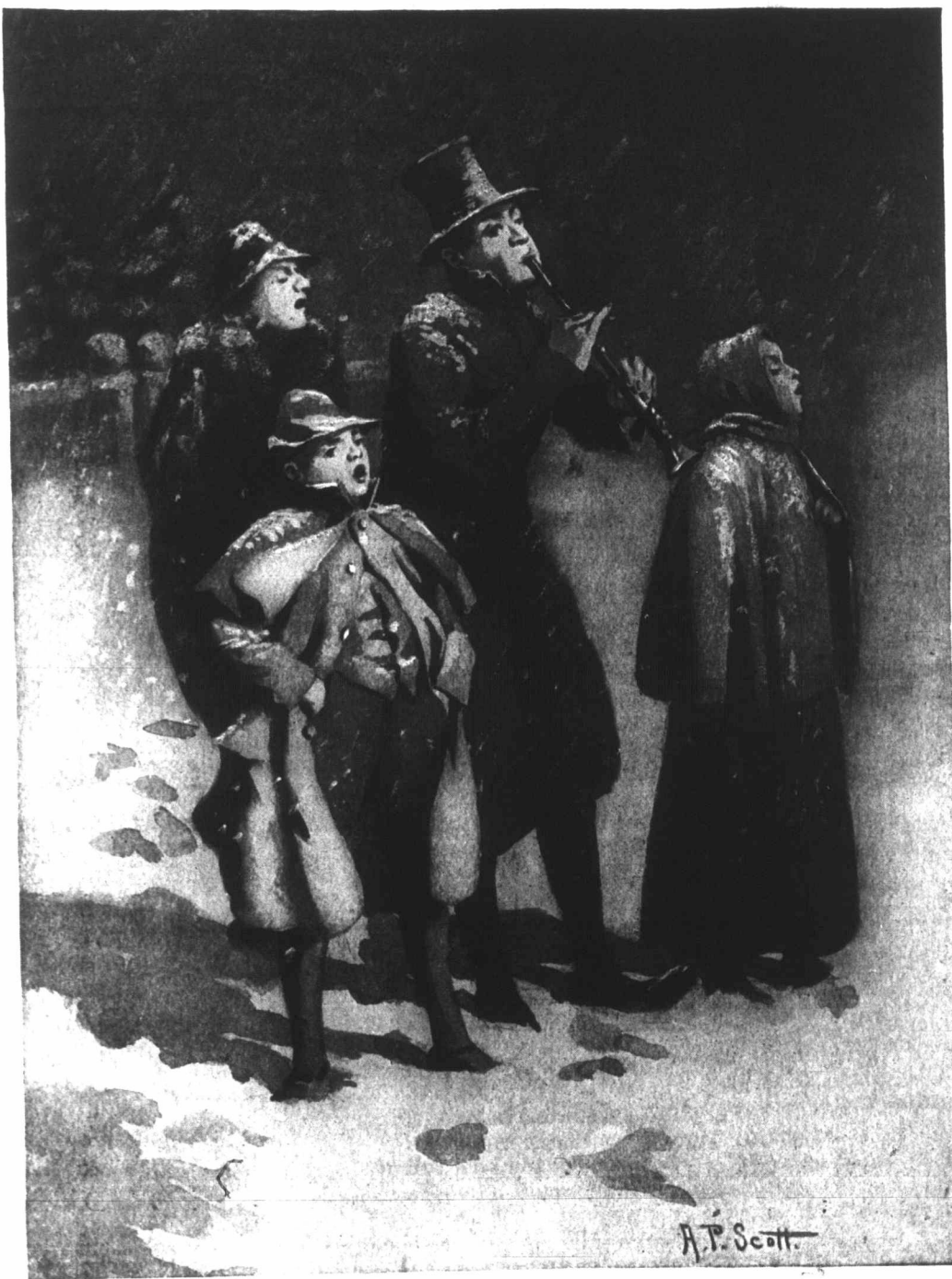
"This day has God fulfilled His promised word,
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."

Yes, my dear friend, there would be no joy or gladness for mankind, but for Christmas Day, and Christmas Day—the Day of Christ—tells us that we are at peace—there is "peace on earth"—and are thankful, and are joyful, and are merry, because God has come to dwell with us, His fallen creatures, and to make us His children again, in a new and better sense.

Is that the meaning of Christmas Day? Is it not? Do you doubt it for a moment? This little Child, who lies to-day in the manger, is "Emmanuel; God with us."

But, if we rejoice to know that God is come to us in His Son, surely we should rejoice to go to Him in His sacrament.

There is hardly a more beautiful sight in the world than that which I have often seen at an early celebration of the Holy Communion—the father and mother, and those of the children who were confirmed, all coming together to the Lord's table. I was sure I should see them, and the smaller children with them at the forenoon service. I was quite sure that when they sat down to their Christmas dinner, and wished each other many a happy Christmas, and thought of absent friends and blessed them, and thought perhaps of some who could never spend Christmas with them again—I was quite sure they would be all the happier and the more joyful, because they had begun Christ's Day at His table, and were not afraid to think that He was with them at their Feast.



CAROL SINGERS AND THE WAITS.

The Comings of the Lord.

The name of Christmas is so common on our lips, that we are apt to take for granted that we know clearly what Christmas means. No one, of course, can explain all the great mysteries of the truths of Christmas; but we ought to ask how far we try to see what God makes clear. We need the weeks of Advent that we may dwell long and earnestly upon what is so full of marvel. No one should take his part in the joy of Christmas who has not sought to make the truths of Christmas real to his mind and heart.

We think of the Advent—the coming to earth of One who, in the beginning, before all worlds, was with God, and was God. More than this, we think of His coming to befriend man. Yet more, we think of His being made man. He is still God; but He begins to be man, that in our nature He may be our Saviour.

This world in which we live is not the same as it was before Christ came. This nature of ours is not what it was before the Son of God joined it to Himself. The scene of that Divine life of

which the Gospels tell us is holy. We live in that world in which Jesus Christ passed His childhood, and youth, and manhood. And when we are tried and tempted, we know that One made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, was in all points tempted like as we are. Wearing our nature Christ died; on this earth the Cross was set up, on which the Son of God hung, when He shed His blood to gain life for us.

There was a time when the Son of God was not man. He is man now, and will be always man. In that nature in which He was born at Bethlehem, and which was glorified when He had conquered death, He comes now, and He will come again. We see Him not; but as, when seen on earth, He was the Son of Man in heaven, so now, when He is seen in heaven, He is the Son of Man present with His Church on earth. We know not how He comes; but we know that by the power of the Holy Spirit He draws near in His own chosen ways, of which He tells us, to bless and comfort souls. He takes men one by one into union with Himself, and forms them into His likeness. The Holy Spirit goes on in the case of each with the work which was begun in the whole human race, when the Son of God was made man.

There is another coming yet to be, for which all this makes ready. We look to the Saviour to come from heaven, that He may bring, to be with Him there, those whom He has made His own on earth. Then He will perfect in each one the work which He began for the whole Church at His Incarnation. Those to whom He is now making known the power of the salvation He provided, shall then be made safe for ever. He will bring them where no harm or stain can reach their souls.

Fairy Gold.

There are old stories of men who in the night received from fairy hands gifts of gold in some cave, and when the daylight came upon them, what had seemed to be gold and jewels was a bundle of withered leaves and red berries, already half corrupted and altogether worthless. There are many things that the world counts very precious which are like the fairy's gold. Nothing that can be taken from a man really belongs to him. The only real riches, correspondent with his necessities, are those which, once possessed, are inseparable from his being, the riches of an indwelling God, and of a nature conformed to His.

For Christmas Day.

"Unto us a Child is born—unto us a Son is given."

BY A. K.

No beacon star burns in our sky
Whilst softly sleeps the silent earth,
As when a thousand years ago
It knew the Blessed Christ-Child's birth.

No pure maid-mother bends above
Her baby, laid in manger bare;
No wise men journey from afar,
Star-led and baring presents rare;

No serried ranks of angels stand,
To sing their praises from the sky;
No God-sent wonder give us sign,
As on that holy night gone by.

Yet Christmas peace broods o'er the earth,
And Christmas love fills hearts of men,
And Christmas joy wakes everywhere,
At His glad coming—now as then.