

spring also; remember this, father and mother who cannot forgive. Of those children whom Jesus took into His arms and blessed, do you suppose He stopped to ask if they were born of righteous mothers? Oh, let the little clinging arms clasp about your neck and bless yourself and your home by rescuing mother and child together.

Only the Merciful Shall Receive Mercy.

I do not say that you can do this easily or with joy—it is only by the mighty grace of God that such things are done—but with these returning wanderers will surely enter the Christmas blessing and the benediction of Christmas peace. Your banished child may seem to be hidden out in the trackless wilderness of the world; the grief she has brought, the spot on your fair fame, may seem to be forgotten, because she is not seen at your door, but this is a false idea. Her presence under your roof will not deepen the shadow, and your forgiveness will make such a brightness in your soul that you will feel the deep significance of every promise made to the merciful.

The grief has come to stay; silence and absence do not lighten it. Even the world will think less of the sin which drove your child forth than to the beauty of that forgiveness that brings her home. Alas, sins such as these of which we speak to-day leave a mark that cannot be effaced. We walk humbly all the days of our lives after its misery has entered our doors; where is has so defaced our dear ones there sorrow dwells, but sorrow which blossoms into loving forgiveness, is ready indeed for Christmas joy. That is what brought Christ to earth—that is why we keep the feast!

One of the Saddest Sight I Have Ever Seen.

Passing late at night through a wide square in a great city, not long since, I looked with sad eyes at the forlorn men sitting upon the benches. There were few old men. They held no converse—they were silent, sullen, comfortless. Where a man smoked a pipe it gave one a sense of relief; that man had something left he could enjoy, even if it were but a whiff of tobacco. The mass seemed dull, unclean and beyond the power to think.

What sent them there to sleep this uneasy, unrefreshing sleep? Where had they been born, these young men with their unshaven chins drooping down upon their breasts, trying to forget that they were alive? I felt like going from one to the other, touching them upon their drooping, despondent shoulders, calling them back to consciousness, and asking: "Have you no home? Have you no father, or mother?"

I thought of old people sitting together in lonely silence, mourning

for lost boys—I felt as if I must make some loud cry which would reach forth to the pleasant country places where these besotted, half-fed, half-clothed creatures had once been happy children. I longed to reach the ears of people who had sent forth "unmanageable" lads to drift about and slowly go under in the terrible vortex. When at last we have to give account of our stewardship what shall those answer who have relinquished all care for the souls and bodies God trusted to their keeping?

What must be the thoughts of a dying man or woman who has sent an erring child away from home in irreconcilable offense? How many of these dissolute men might have stood upright and begun life anew had father and mother reached forth a forgiving hand?

Remember the All-Loving Father.

This is a meeting of fathers and mothers, and all my heart is stirred with warm desire to move at least one here present to call home a missing child to sit once more at the Christmas board, rescued from banishment for the sake of Him who came to us a little child; but I pray you let the sense of what the great festival means reach out and touch every parted friend or kinsman where anger and pride keep alive an unforgiving spirit.

Let hand clasp hand again, and heart trust heart—blot out the remembrance of injuries real or supposed. The first Christmas began a new era—gave birth to a new humanity. Let us remember the great, all-loving Father who for us has made a new creation, and set before us the holy mother-maid with Jesus in her meek arms as evidence of His forgiveness of us, His erring children.

As I left the drowsy misery of the half-sleeping men strewn like wreckage about the great park I caught sight of a little boy of perhaps ten years old, who had climbed to a high window-ledge in front of a theatre. His little feet and legs were bare, his trousers were ragged, his little red and white shirt dirty and torn: he was asleep with his head on a bundle of newspapers. Had some homeless mother gone to her death and left him? Was there in some quiet country place a grandfather who might have loved and sheltered him? Would he grow up to live by theft and crime, or end his young life soon by exposure? Poor little evidence of what an unforgiven sin can produce! I longed to take him home with me.

Our hour for council is over: what have we accomplished? The dawn of Christmas is near; will it be a true feast of forgiveness for any of us? There is sure to be joy and a welcome in Heaven for "one sinner that repenteth." Shall one of our homes reflect this joy on earth on the birthday of Jesus? God grant it that it may!

The Ladder

Each day that comes to us with dawn of rose—
Each common day, filled up with common toil—
A ladder is let down by One who knows
Our passionate desire to rise above
The littleness of life, the grime, the greed,
To find the higher way, the vision clear;
A ladder swinging from the Hills of God
Straight down to this old workshop, yecept the world—

That you and I may set our feet and climb
By rungs of lowly task and broken prayer,
And self-forgetfulness and true desires,
A little nearer Heaven 'twixt dawn and dusk.

—Jean Blewett.

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