

## THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1892

## NOEL! NOEL!

Nearly twenty centuries have rolled away, like waves on the stream of Time, and have gone to swell the ocean of the mighty past, since on that most wondrous of all nights the star of salvation twinkled over the little town of Bethlehem. Crowds thronged the narrow streets of that Oriental city, and the men and women, from all quarters of the land, congregated there at the order of the Roman Emperor. While the tired travellers, from distant parts, slept the sleep of the weary in the little khan outside the gate the grandest event, since the morning of creation, was taking place. It was the noon of night, the million stars that the rapt Chaldeans loved to gaze upon, glittered in the blue vault of that Eastern sky, the sheep on the hill-sides huddled together and the watch-dogs shivered in the chill of a Judean night, while the shepherds attempted to snatch a few hours repose by the fagot fires in the valley below. In the cave behind the khan the Virgin Mother was seated upon a pallet of straw beside a manger; St. Joseph kept watch outside the door way, and expectantly anxious was his vigil.

At last the hour came; the time that had been appointed by the Almighty, ever since the voice of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, after man's first sin, had arrested the thunder of Divine wrath, and had promised to become the Redeemer of the fallen race; the hour that had been looked forward to during four thousand years by the Patriarchs and wise men of old; the hour foretold by prophets and described in the books of the inspired scriptures; the hour of the wonderful appearance upon earth of of the Son of God, Co-Eternal with the Father, in the form that belongs to humanity. The hour came and the Infant Jesus was born, His mother laid Him in the crib; His foster father came in and adored! The world rolled on as ever, the multitude in the city of David slept, the wind coursed down the bleak mountain-side from beyond the Jordan, the stars shone brightly in the blue depths of the Syrian heavens, nature seemed not to recognize any more than did man perceive that the greatest of all mysteries and the most wonderful of all events had transpired.

Hark! Look! A peal of music steals down the infinite abyss of the sky; an indistinguishable light flashes across the expanse of the heavens; the sheep are startled on the hill-side, the watch-dogs begin to howl in terror, the shepherds awaken bewildered and dazzled; and still the celestial chorus grows louder and nearer, and still the celestial splendours of scintillating glory flash brighter and closer. At last the very words descend upon the air, and the rocks, off to the very shores of Tiberias, re-echo again and

again the angelic hymn, "Gloria in Excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis." At last the heavenly beams gild the turrets of the City of David and concentrate over the Manger in the humble khan, where the Redeemer of mankind lay in all the weakness of a human babe and all the Omnipotence of an Eternal God. And the shepherds went down and adored; and a star led the Magi, from the Orient, to the feet of the Infant Saviour, and the scene was impressed upon the minds of all who beheld the Holy Family when Christ was a little child. That scene has been described by inspired writers and by historians and poets; it has been transferred from generation to generation upon the painter's canvass and in the sculptor's stone; it adorned the cold walls of the catacombs beneath Eternal Rome, and it appeared in fresco upon the walls of the immortal temples of the deathless city; Luca della Robbia has preserved it in terra cotta, and Correggio, in his master-piece "The Holy Night," has glorified art and immortalized himself, by leaving in the Dresden gallery this imperishable commemoration of that wonderful scene.

In every Catholic Church in the world, on Christmas eve, the Bethlehem crib is arranged and from the lordliest Basilica, that rears its cross-crowned spire over the confusion of city roofs, down to the humblest missionary chapel upon the plains of the North West or in the fever-haunted jungles of India, the scene of that holy night is commemorated and the events recalled by the representation of the "Child in the Manger." How consoling the Faith of centuries; how wonderful the grandeur of the Church of Christ; how encouraging her doctrines and how perfect her history; how truly she connects us to-night with that glorious night and with the three sacred actors in that most sacred of all dramas—Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Oh! Holy Faith, may thy adherents ever increase in numbers, and may the day soon come, when in all parts of the earth, a Christmas will be celebrated and the children of men will, without exception, kneel at the crib on thy holy altars.

## OUR SCHOOL GIRLS.

We closed our last editorial on this subject with a short reference to the necessity in the education and instruction of young ladies: by the necessary we mean the elements of education and rudiments of instruction. This week we will move to the second factor in a complete system, namely, the useful. On this point there is an immensity to be said. However, without fatiguing our readers with a rehearsal of what has so often and so ably been argued in favor of plain sewing, cooking, general domestic economy, as well as all that goes to constitute the really useful in a woman's edification, we will confine our remarks to the useful in the instruction branch.

In our convents and academies there is no lack of history, geography, grammar, literature, sacred instruction, mathematics, and all the other studies to be found, as a rule, in every well-equipped system. But with them the end is reached. And, in all probability, these branches would suffice, were every young girl destined to either enter a religious community, or else to go home to rich parents. But it is otherwise with the vast majority of our young women of today. They who have vocations for religious life are not very numerous, they are the exceptions; they whose parents are well off and able to support their daughters until eligible young men be found to continue that support, are comparatively few. Then what about the

vast majority of our school girls? They are obliged to leave the convent or academy at a young age in order to earn their livelihood, or to help their parents along the rugged path of toil. What avenues are open for these young girls?

The principal means whereby they can utilize their instruction must be in employment congenial and suited to their acquirements. In order that a young girl can be sure of such employment, in this age of competition, it is absolutely necessary that she should have a knowledge of book-keeping, typewriting, shorthand and such-like acquirements. Are these taught in our convents and academies? We say they are not, or at least, they are not taught as they should be; they are not made a primary instead of a secondary consideration. And what is the result? It is simply this: the girls are obliged to leave the school at the early ages of fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen, in order to pick up the only really useful branches, the indispensable. Instead of remaining a year or two longer at the convent-school to learn these portions of their instruction-course they go to the public commercial school where each and all of the necessary and useful elements are taught. And what is our objection to this?

We object to it, firstly, because it is not as safe for young girls of that age as their quiet and home-like academy or convent; and, secondly, because they lose much of the charm with which their more innocent course of studies was heretofore surrounded. They are cast in amidst a crowd of men and boys, and they are forced, at that peculiarly trying period in life, to jostle with the rougher elements of the world, to rub against social corners and thread the brinks of moral precipices that should not be found in their paths until much later on in life. Not only for the sake of their institutions, the good name of their curriculum, the success of their educational system should our religious and lay teachers exert themselves to introduce into their schools all those useful branches, but especially for the sake of those young girls, whose lives are cast in lines of labor, and whose livelihoods are to be gained by their own exertions and work. It seems to us that there is no more sacred obligation upon the teachers and trainers of our young girls than that of shielding them from danger as long as practicable, and then of sending them forth fully equipped for the great struggle of life.

It is not in a tone of censure that we speak, but rather in the accents of advice. As certainly as the necessary is indispensable in the completion of an educational system so surely is the useful an all-important element. Let the ornamental come later on, it will be most acceptable; but it is not a *sine qua non* of life. On the other hand the useful cannot be done without. If these branches are not taught to the young girls, of our day, in all our academies and convents, there is not the slightest doubt that they will seek them elsewhere and at a period of life when it would be preferable not to sever the ties of friendship, love and mutual attachment that have grown into existence between the teachers and pupils. We will say no more, for this week, upon this subject; but we beg of our religious and our lay teachers, in convents and academies to establish regular and complete courses of typewriting, stenography, book-keeping and kindred subjects; they will eventually be more useful than languages and science.

Many happy returns of this festive season and may the next Christmas bring us many more intimate acquaintances.

## CHRISTMAS GREETING.

"A Merry Christmas to all our readers and friends and many happy returns of the season." Sometimes this greeting is heard with indifference, when it is merely for custom sake that it is spoken; more often is it the expression of the true sentiments of the heart and it then always awakens a responsive echo in the bosom of the one to whom it is addressed. Although we have not the pleasure and advantage of a personal acquaintance with each and all of our many readers, still we feel as though we were linked to every particular subscriber and friend of the TRUE WITNESS by a bond that grows stronger as the weeks roll past. Every Wednesday we send forth our twelve columns of editorials and through them we hold converse with several thousands upon every imaginable kind of subject. In penning these articles we actually spend twelve full hours and sometimes more, each week, in most intimate communion of spirit with our readers, and they, in perusing these columns, converse with us, thus mind speaks to mind, soul looks into soul, heart pulses to the throbs of the corresponding heart, and the writer and his readers are united in the closest of all unions—the union of thought.

For these reasons do we speak from the inmost recesses of our nature, when we wish each and every one of our readers a truly merry, a really happy, a sincerely prosperous and a most holy Christmas; and in expressing this wish we feel confident that it is reciprocated from all the thousands who, though in one sense, are strangers to us, in another and grander sense, are well-wishers and friends. May the aged enjoy many another Christmas time to "husband out life's taper" in peace and holy contentment, for truly is it sung that

"Age will come on with its winter,  
Though happiness hideth its snows;  
And if youth has its duty of labor,  
The birthright of age is repose."

May the young be happy and may the blessings of this holy time come to them in countless throngs, for along the road of their earthly pilgrimage they will need the choicest graces from above to battle with the spirits of evil that shall hover around them. May the number of your friends increase and may the Angel of Death spare those we have tonight, that when the next Christmas comes it may find us all as happy and as strong as we are this year. May the One whose lowly yet glorious birth we celebrate on the 25th of December, with His Holy Mother and His Foster Father, direct our mind, enlighten our understanding, and guide our pen, that the continuation of the bond of union between us and our readers, may be for their benefit, spiritual and temporal, and, therefore, for the greater glory of His Holy Spouse the Church.

## IMMORAL PLACARDS.

Several times already have we called attention to the suggestive and immoral placards that announced, from the city walls, the arrival of theatrical companies. Evidently our city authorities are not able to cope with this nuisance; it is to be regretted, but yet it does not leave the respectable citizens without any recourse. It would seem very easy to efface these abominations as rapidly as they are exhibited, but since that there is another way out of the difficulty, a way by which it will be made impossible for these sensational troupes to daub our walls with obscene images, and by which the city authorities will escape the dilemma that seems to empale them.

These placards are printed in the United States, and in order to reach