

A CHRISTMAS CARD.

No harsh thoughts on Christmas Day;
Hatchet buried, peace pipe smoking,
Hearts aglow though skies be grey,
Genial chat and harmless joking;
Kindly actions far and wide
To the sad and lonely-hearted,
Who this glorious Christmas tide,
From old friends and scenes are parted.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

It is not strange that Christmas should awaken so many tender feelings, and that its return should be hailed with emotions so glad by old and young, and by persons of all classes and conditions of life. There could be no sweeter story than that which is told us at this season, none appealing more strongly to the best and purest, the kindest and noblest instincts of our hearts. If the busy world will stop to listen to anything divine, it will be to the recital of how the Son of God came down to earth in love to man, and took upon Him our nature as the Son of the Blessed Virgin, to share its experiences as well as to redeem it from its woes. Everything is here which most touches the heart. With all the world's self-seeking, its evil ambition, its strivings after power and fame, its admiration of the rich and the mighty, nothing moves it like deeds of love and self-forgetfulness, or the exhibition by the great, of common human relations in their simplest and most hallowed forms. Greater than the sight of the warrior spurring his steed into the thick of the battle, is that of the commander stopping to lave the brow of some wounded soldier by the roadside. More moving than the spectacle of the king upon his throne, is that of the monarch divested of his trappings of state and surrounded by his children. Childhood, poverty, humble and simple life, these are the choice themes of poetry, and they do especially bestir our tenderest emotions when brought before us as parts of the lives of the world's great and illustrious characters. And they all are contained in the story of our Lord's Nativity, the story of the way the great Creator of the Universe, rich in the glories of divinity, became poor for our sakes, and was born a little human babe of a lowly mother of David's line, in David's royal but humble city, with none to greet his entrance into the world but the angels from above, and simple shepherds below. While those only whose sense of sin and infirmity duly qualifies them to appreciate the object of the Incarnation, can be affected properly by the story of our Redeemer's birth, that event, by its divine consecration of all that is most attractive to the human heart, will ever be rehearsed in all its freshness, and listened to with unwearying delight as often as the festival kept in memory of it comes round.

But it is poor honour to pay to our Saviour at this time, only to be impressed by feelings natural to all without clearly recognizing the purpose of His human birth and according Him a welcome in the deepest places of our hearts. We are told that He came unto His own and His own received Him not; and He

may still come in the commemorations of the dear Christmas season to many who are touched with the beauty of the story without preceiving clearly their great personal interest in it. The reception which He desires can only be given Him by those whose acquaintance with their own hearts and lives has shown their need of the redemption which He came to accomplish—only by those who rejoice in being lifted up into fellowship with God; only by those who respond to the story of His love by trusting in His grace and obeying His commandments. And our interest in Christmas will have little that is profitable, and our observance of it little that is appropriate if among the feelings with which it is hailed are not those of a humble and grateful spirit. We shall celebrate it in a manner pleasing to our Incarnate Lord and beneficial

anything distinctly religious. The people in the streets are sober, industrious, harmless folk. Even on Sunday, if he misses the melody of church bells and that Sabbath stillness which is peculiar to England, yet the Sabbath stillness of some of our great towns is less disturbing than the ordinary stream of life in Peking. Consequently, he walks the streets at ordinary times without any deeper sense of this void in life more than is to be found in the half-conscious comment on return to the compound: Ah! this is Christian. If he stops to think as he sees an old woman toiling along under her bundle, and to wonder what is her hope for this life or the next, why that is no more than he did in England, and the answer is almost as vague and indistinct in England as in China. But at Christmas! Where is the prize beef? Where are the

turkeys, with coloured ribbons round their necks? Where are the carol-singers? Why does all the world look so dull? He feels inclined to march up to the first man he meets and say: "My dear Sir, have you forgotten that it is Christmas?" Easter is the festival of the few in England; it is not so noticeable, then, that it is the festival of the few in China. But Christmas! Everybody keeps Christmas, however little they may enter into its spirit; and to find all the world ignoring it strikes one as absurd. I confess, for my part, I could scarcely hold my tongue. I felt I must say: "Good people, you are all making a mistake. This is Christmas, you know. You ought to be making preparations." It's maddening to walk through a city and not to hear a single person wish another a Happy Christmas. But then, they don't know anything about it. That is Christmas outside—a saddening, depressing, astonishing thing. Inside it is the festival of a little body of Christians. The church is decorated with white chrysanthemums and evergreens, and lighted with Chinese lanterns; the children sing carols, the boys ring bells, presents are exchanged, a feast is held, the missionaries meet at dinner in the Bishop's house and rejoice (wondering all the time in their hearts what their people are doing at home), and the feast is kept. At the British

Legation the chapel is well attended. Here, again, it is the festival of a small body. The old feeling of a Christmas at least recognized, and, in some sense, appropriated by all, is lost. Outside there remains the mass who are not touched by it. But, indeed, they are touched by it; it is theirs, too, ready for the day when they awake to it. That is the consolation of one who walks through Peking on Christmas Day, and perhaps his truest cause for rejoicing.

—Let us beseech God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that Jesus Christ, born in the winter, may be born within every heart where winter reigns, and that the new birth in each soul may make this a truly happy Christmastide.

—May this Christmas bring us more of love and holy joy than we have before known, and not to us only, but to the whole world.



THE CHORISTERS.

to ourselves, if we open our hearts to our Saviour, that He may dwell in them, and pray to be made partakers of the blessings which He has brought us.

CHRISTMAS IN PEKING.

By the Rev. Roland Allen.

A first Christmas in Peking has something startling about it. To one who has lived there for six or seven months it acts as a sudden reminder of half-forgotten things. He is forced back at a bound to his first sense of astonishment at finding himself living in a heathen city. The things which at his first arrival struck home and forced his attention have grown common to him. The air of Peking, its dirt, its indecency, its uncouthness, are familiar, and Peking heathenism is not blatant. The festivals are either quiet and kept in the privacy of the family, or else rather partake of the nature of a bank holiday than