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A Merry Christmas.

"Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people," said the Angel of the Lord nearly 1900 years ago. And the wondering shepherds heard, and adored at the crib of Bethlehem, as millions will in a few days hear, go and adore.

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will," sang the army of Angels of the Lord over the lonely hills of Bethlehem some 1900 years ago, and so again will they sing, and their song will be heard around the world on the coming Christmas morn. May the echo at least of the angelic strain reach the hearts of warring men and turn them to peace and Christian charity. And yet what a frightful commentary upon 19th century civilization and Christianity is being written in blood and bitter tears by two Christian nations, both professing the gospel of Christ as their guide and salvation, and both making the Bible their standard of faith and spirituality! The greed of gold, the lust of conquest, the thirst for human blood still grow rank in the heart of man. Tyranny, injustice, oppression of the weak are yet conspicuous among nations called Christian, and they are not ashamed.

It would seem as if the Babe of Bethlehem had been born, had lived, and suffered and died in vain. But the just slumbers not for sleep, and the accounting time for every nation and every empire marked on the face of the earth will come, as surely as death will come to every living man.

The Christmas atmosphere, as it prevails over the wide British empire to-day is so full of war and slaughter that Christmas with its peaceful, happy, hallowed associations seems out of place. The brutal clamor of war, the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of dying men; the wailing of widowed mothers and orphaned children in thousands of bereaved homes are sadly out of keeping with the angelic Christmas strain, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

But sunshine or shade, in peace or during a time of savage warfare, the Catholic Church is ever the same. She neither slumbers nor forgets; and so, on the coming Christmas morn the chant of the Christmas Mass, the summons to the crib of Bethlehem to adore the Child that was born unto us for our regeneration and salvation, will accompany the sun in his journey round the earth, shining equally over the hills and plains made red with human blood, and over the smiling face of peaceful countries.

Happy, indeed, should we be, and thankful should we be in this fair and happy land, to be able to welcome the Prince of Peace in our churches, free from the turmoil of bloody strife, and the sorrow and suffering it entails on the bereaved and waiting ones at home.

Christmas in all Christian countries has always been regarded as the season of gladness, of the reunion of families, of all those dear associations and memories that are calculated to soften the heart and move the soul to tenderness and religious devotion.

No country in the world lends itself more readily to the observance of Christmas than Canada, if our ideals are those of northern nations, and nowhere is its advent looked forward to with so generous a disposition to make the best of it in every way when

it comes. All nature seems to assist in heralding its approach, covering the earth with its mantle of snow, and lulling all the land into a peaceful, prayerful stillness, as if in preparation for the coming of the Infant Saviour. But its approach is still more conspicuous in the life and energy displayed by the Canadian people—especially in the great cities. The decorated store-windows with their wealth and profusion of good things tempt the eye, and the hand unconsciously seeks purse or pocket, as visions of faces at home and abroad made glad rise upon the mental vision. After all it is pleasant to give than to receive,—pleasantest of all to be able to give abundantly, as the almighty Father did when He gave unto His children on earth the priceless gift of His only begotten Son for their redemption and salvation.

Christmas is also preeminently the children's festival, and it is meet that it should be so; for did not our Divine Lord when grown into manhood say: "Suffer little children to come unto me?" It is meet that they should go unto Him lying in the crib, and render Him homage and loving tribute, midwife of his great love and sacrifice for them in the far-off past, and of his ever present sacrifice upon our altars.

Let the children have their way just for one day, remembering that He too was once a child. Turn the house over to them, parlor and kitchen. What matters it if a few toys are broken? Toys are made to be broken—at least most of them are, and only a few will be fortunate enough to live to see another Christmas Day. Then when night comes, and weary of toys, of revels and, perhaps, of too many good things, let them kneel down once more, in spirit, beside the crib of Bethlehem, and thank the Infant Saviour for being a child like unto themselves, and for teaching them how to live good lives that they may follow through the gates opened for them by Him into the kingdom of His Father. Then, loving parents, on your knees thank God that your children were able to enjoy Christmas Day, and that you were able to minister to that enjoyment—not forgetting those others, the motherless ones, the waifs and strays of a not too kindly world.

To our readers, one and all, we wish, "A MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

The Boer War.

The reverses which have attended the British in South Africa during the past week, have somewhat dampened the ardor of those who erstwhile were predicting a speedy and easy victory. How dreadfully astray in its calculations, even the War Office was, at the beginning of the struggle, may be gathered from the fact that at the extra session of Parliament, it stated that the Boer war would cost \$60,000,000, while now the figures are placed at the high figure of \$200,000,000. Instead of an army of 75,000 British soldiers parading through the Orange Free State, and swarming through the passes of the Drakensberg mountains after the defeated Boers, there is now in South Africa a magnificent British army of 80,000 men, with an additional 10,000 in the process of mobilization, or on their way to the scene of action, and yet the beginning of the mighty death struggle, which seems sure to take place before the Union Jack waves at Pretoria, can scarcely be said to have been reached. It would look as if the officially acknowledged checks sustained by General Gatacre and Methuen are but the preludes to a succession of bloody battles, entailing a frightful loss of lives to both sides.

And yet it must not be concluded on the strength of the exultant shout of a continental press, almost wholly hostile to Great Britain, that the British arms have sustained an irretrievable defeat, while it must be candidly admitted that the Boers have proved, in military parlance, foemen worthy of British steel, and adepts in the art of defensive warfare. It is to the credit of the British generals, and the fair-minded portion of the British people, that they recognize this fact, and it is within the bounds of probability, that the Boers by their splendid valor and endurance have won that respect of nations by their arms which a century of peace would not have secured for them.

But viewing the war in its causes, we dissent from those who say that it was a necessity. It was not a necessity.

any—never should have been a necessity. If patience and wise diplomacy on both sides had been allowed to prevail. Nor is it right to hold President Kruger wholly responsible for the bloody work inaugurated by his so-called, hastily and ill-advised ultimatum, which the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain and his supporters, would have the world believe precipitated the conflict. We must, to be fair, take into consideration, the continued provocation and goading, by the constant and more and more exacting demands made upon the Transvaal Government by the imperial authorities, as well as the undoubted strength and preparedness of the Boers to engage a powerful and determined foe.

So far, it must be admitted that the advantage remains with the Boers, whom with the present available forces, it seems impossible to expect even from British territory—not to speak of the arduous and dreadful work which lies before the British, when they have carried the war into the home land of the Boers. Viewing it from any standpoint, this war with its frightful train of death and suffering, and with its still more frightful carnage and losses, making the future look red and ominous of tears and bitter wailing, in thousands of once cheerful and happy homes, we say, viewing it from any standpoint, this war is to the whole British Empire, the most deplorable event since the fruitless and equally unnecessary war that deluged the Crimea with blood some forty five years ago. It is difficult to conceive how any peace-loving man can exist in the butcheries that are daily dyed the South African soil with human blood; and when the true inwardness of things is brought into the calmer day of sober history, doubtless, the blame will be placed on the shoulders of those who are really responsible, and God in his justice will demand a strict account for them.

Meanwhile, even the English press has not been, and is not a unit on the question of the righteousness of the war, opposition to it, however, being chiefly confined to the radical journals, such as Reynolds's newspaper, and Laborer's Truth. Neither can it be said that the Canadian Press is uniform in its attitude towards the war. Opinion and sentiment are diversified, ranging all the way from the Jingoistic to genuinely disloyal utterances. Of course, on this subject as upon others, every man is entitled to his own opinion, and even to the expression of it, but it is undoubtedly a matter for more serious consideration when journals, ostensibly acting as the organs of the various sections of the Canadian people, not only make no secret of their condemnation of the war, but take a decided and even enthusiastic stand on the side of the Boers in their conflict with Great Britain.

While it is far from our purpose to impugn the rights of the press to the free and open discussion of all public questions, by which only we can gauge the trend of public sentiment, now becoming such an important factor in determining the grave issues affecting the life and welfare of nations, we have no hesitation, so far as we ourselves are concerned, in recognizing and acknowledging the danger that attaches to intemperate and untimely utterances in a country like Canada, and at a critical time like this. It is our opinion that every section of the Canadian Press, if it cannot endorse the course Great Britain has chosen to take in its dealings with the South African Republic, should remember that it owes a duty to Canada, and to the Canadian people as a whole. To go to work to stir up strife and racial differences, or hatred in a country where so many different nationalities have to live together and work out their joint destiny does not seem to us to be an over-wise policy. No Englishman could at present expect France to love England. No Irishman could expect Ireland to love England. But France is not Quebec, nor is Ireland Canada; but Canada should be Canada to all her people.

It is openly charged that all the French Canadian journals of any note, except Mr. Plessard's paper, La Soléil, are, like their Parisian brethren, distinctly hostile to the British in their war against the Boers. If this is so, it is to be regretted, as it is difficult to understand why the people of the Province of Que-

bec should be so hostile to the British, under whose flag they have enjoyed a much greater measure of freedom and far treatment than they ever received under the "Old Regime" or were likely to enjoy under the colonial government and guidance of modern France. If there is one Province of the Dominion that has less cause than another of complaint just at the present time, that Province is Quebec. We do not wish to be disagreeably uncharitable, and so will rest in the belief that this hostility is founded upon sufficient reasons so far as the French-Canadians themselves are concerned.

There can be no doubt concerning the prevailing sentiment among the vast majority of the Canadian people, and the present attitude of the French-Canadian Press will but serve to accentuate the fact that there is a clean out line of cleavage between Quebec and the other provinces, which threatens to widen into a breach, aiming at the disruption of the Canadian people, and the destruction of national aims and ideals.

The Canadian people is made up of various elements, differing in race and in creed, and the development, progress and welfare of this country can only be secured by the process of toleration, of mutual consideration and concession. Every outbreak of race or religious hatred puts Canada back a step in her national course. Just as the people in Ontario and Quebec have to live together under one and the same rule, so individuals in the country over, differing in race and creed, have to live side by side and pursue their daily avocations and lines of business together. They have to accept the conditions prevailing in the country of their birth or adoption, trusting to better them by the exercise of common sense, mutual forbearance and good government. Any act, utterance or policy, springing from the government, from religious, social or political bodies, or from that most powerful factor of all, the Press, that aims at setting man against man, section of people against section, race against race, creed against creed, is distinctly hostile to the welfare and best interests of the Canadian people.

On the other hand, so far as England is concerned and apart from Canada, no fair-minded and well-informed man could reasonably expect the Irish people, either of the motherland, or in the various parts of the British Empire, to which they have been driven by hard conditions, and to whose progress and development they have contributed so much by the energy, genius, versatility and good citizenship that are characteristic of their race, to greatly sympathize with England in this her day of trial. The memory of centuries of oppression, cruelty, confiscation, exclusion, and enforced self-banishment on the parts of millions of Irishmen, is not likely to be effaced by British reverses and Boer victories. It would be unreasonable to expect such superhuman generosity even in the Irish people. To presume such a desirable attitude towards England at present, would be to stamp the Irish people as void of the ordinary feelings and passions that sway the human heart, would proclaim them pitiless to the cause they have so much at heart, the realization of an Ireland enjoying such a share of free constitutional government as that which prevails in the most important of the British colonies. As to the outspoken hostility exhibited towards England by the Irish home press—with the Irish-American Press we have no course for comment—and of certain of the Irish leaders, amongst whom Michael Davitt is conspicuous, we say that, considering the history of the past, remote and immediate, it is quite natural, and what might be expected. The prudency or wisdom of such a course, in view of its influence upon the future, we leave to the judgment of our readers, who are probably wiser and more far-seeing than we have any desire to claim to be.

Newspaper Education.

It behoves the Catholic parent to keep a watchful eye on the literature that finds its way into his house. It comes chiefly in three forms, news paper, the magazine and the novel or story, and of the three, the last mentioned possesses decidedly the greatest possibilities for doing mischief in the home. The educational possibilities of the press must be acknowledged,

and it must also be admitted that the enterprise shown by some of our leading papers, in gathering news from the remotest corners of the globe, is phenomenal and highly creditable. Canadian newspapers, as a rule, are maintained at a high moral standard, and are free from the gross suggestions, brutal illustrations, and degrading phraseology, that so disfigure and defile even some of the best American journals. Judging from constant and careful examination of Canadian city papers, there is little that in these days a Catholic parent could object to from a purely moral standpoint, if we except some oft-recurring advertisements, aiming at the relief for all the ills that flesh is heir to. The Press is a power in the land. The Canadian public, the great mass of the wage-earning people, is a reading public, and its main source of information is the newspaper. The laboring man reads his paper with more fervency probably, than he reads his prayers, provided its political views are to his liking; and he cannot read without becoming influenced in thought and character. The same holds good of his children as soon as they can read and understand. With a better system of selection to supplement that of indiscriminate collection, which prevails among the great journals, the daily press might become an educational factor of very great value—might stand to the great uneducated masses, what the University is to the educated classes, for it reaches into every laborer's cottage, and is read with an avidity which is startling in its intensity. If newspaper editors and managers would put on their best thinking caps, and try to realize the power and influence of the educated force they scatter every morning or evening throughout the land, they would most surely exercise a judicious censorship over the columns of their papers.

It is the custom in various European countries for the government to exercise a press censorship, oftentimes of a rigorous nature, because it realizes a fact to which the American people seem to be blind, and the Canadian people dim-sighted; namely, that newspapers are the directors of popular thought, and must exercise an enormous influence on the formation of the character of the nation. It is acknowledged that the respectable small boy can be metamorphosed into a savage by a course of ultra-sensational, tomahawk and war paint, but it is not so generally recognized that a like effect may not be wholly lacking in adult experience. Close students of insanity, especially of homicidal insanity, state that the reading of gory accounts of frightful crimes frequently constitutes the initial suggestion of like deeds, such a terrible influence do these highly colored news reports exercise upon the brains of weak minded and excitable persons. It is a fact beyond peradventure, that crime fosters crime through the medium of the daily papers, and as a matter of course, such reading cannot be healthy to any sensitive and growing mind. In the publication of the details of crime, and of the consequent trials, there are newspapers in Canada every bit as bad as the glaring yellow journals of New York and other American cities. Not very long ago a vigorous protest was made against a Montreal sheet by Monsignor Brodeur, and an amendment was promised and made.

In our cities may be found exposed or not exposed, according to the conscience of the news vendor, for sale, vile sheets that, in spite of the pretence at press guardianship on the part of the Canadian Government, find their way across the border and into the hands of readers who gloat over the prurient literary trash and its accompanying vulgar and immoral illustrations.

Alluding to American papers, many of which find their way into Canada, an American exchange says, "There is another aspect of the case, and this is the unappealing lawlessness to which certain newspapers lend their columns. We refer particularly to the 'personal advertisement' columns. In these, under cover of carefully chosen phrases, propositions are advanced whose meaning palpable through the thin mask of words, is so licentious that we can only allude to them in this general way. Some of these corrupt features not only are apparent in the Metropolitan dailies, but are extending their realm to the Gazettes and Chronicles of country towns. It

is useless to appeal to journalists whose self-respect, or lack of self-respect permits them to accept the profits of so degraded and degrading a business, but intelligent readers have the matter in their own hands. The difference between a newspaper of the clean and honorable sort, and one of the sensational journals is readily perceived, and the corrupt practices of the latter would soon cease, if a thoughtful public were to make its disapproval evident enough."

To come to worthless magazines and novels filled with the veriest trash, their name is legion. They creep into the home, the office, the school room, perverting the minds of the young, and undermining and destroying the work of master, teacher and parent for good. It should never be forgotten that one of the purposes of education is an enlarged sphere for evil as for good. If a child is taught to read, he will read, if he is trained to think he will think, if advised to observe he will observe, but unless a moral and religious training looking, stimulating and regulating conscience, accompany and mingle with his scholastic work, the fruits of self culture in nine cases out of ten will be poisonous and morally destructive. Every Catholic parent should constitute himself a vigilance committee to sit upon the question of home literature.

Power of the Catholic Press.

To judge a case fairly one should hear both sides. No fair-minded man would care to condemn an accused person before hearing what he has to say for himself. This principle is admitted on all questions except religion. Here the custom almost invariably is to condemn without hearing both sides of the question. On no point is man generally speaking so set in his own opinion as on points of religious belief. Every man thinks his own religion the true one and either condemns all others or grudgingly concedes them a doubtful toleration. Controversy, unless conducted with the utmost dignity, candor and fairness, engenders ill-feeling and widens the gulf between the disputants. But to a calm, clear exposition of the truth from an accredited minister of the pulpit no impartial mind can object. Neither can there be any legitimate objection raised against the publication of works aiming at the full and truthful explanation of church doctrine, where that doctrine is clear, definite and authoritative.

It is acknowledged by missionaries and priests who have made it a special study that the objections against the faith and practice of the Roman Catholic Church come from misunderstanding the true teaching of our Holy Religion and the too ready ear given to its covert but sworn enemies, who through the instrumentality of pulpits, halls and press are ever seeking, even in these days of enlightenment and progress, to preserve that absurd anti-Catholic attitude that holds the ignorant and bigoted masses in an unchristian bondage.

Protestants as a rule do not care to hear the truth concerning the Catholic faith, would not hear it if they had the chance, and yet they profess to know all about it. They walk in the self-satisfied one-sidedness of a re-stated light and imagine that the Catholic Church is buried in an Egyptian darkness of ignorance superstition and irrational dogmas. It is the fact, that those who look upon the teachings of the Catholic Church as contrary to scriptures, superstitions, and even idolatrous, do so, because they get their information from Protestant sources, and have been brought up in an atmosphere of malicious misrepresentation, distortion of facts and perversion of the truth.

Without seeking to reflect on the religious belief of anyone, it may be fairly stated that in distinctly Protestant countries or in countries in which Protestants form the great majority, Catholics are the best educated people in the land, not only so far as their own religion is concerned, but in the knowledge of other prevailing creeds. They are the only people who hear both sides, and they are more or less forced to do, if they peruse the ordinary newspapers in order to keep pace with the times.

The public press of a Protestant country views religious matters from a Protestant standpoint and religiously avoids saying anything that can be construed into praise or a proper appreciation of the merits of the