

## The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, DEC. 23rd, 1880.

WE regret to find that there is still cause for complaint of inefficient delivery of the INDEPENDENT in some parts of the city. May we ask our friends to drop us a card if the paper is not received by the Sunday following its issue. We are promised that it shall be earlier and more regular than heretofore. Any omission or delay should be promptly reported.

WE thank those subscribers who have responded to our various appeals for payment of the various amounts against them. There are still, however, a large number, some hundreds, the labels on whose papers show that they have not paid for the current volume. Will they not remit to us at once? Printers and paper-makers must be paid. We dislike these paragraphs, but when they are discontinued remittances share the same fate.

### CHRISTMAS

We disavow all superstitious regard for that Christmas which comes "but once a year," conscious that the Saviour's birth-day is still unknown, and that the wild mirth with which it has been too often kept must remain still under the old Puritan ban. We do not seek to remove that ban. Nevertheless Christmas is a fact, none the less a fact because the winter solstice, after which the days begin to lengthen and the sun gain power, has been in heathen countries ever kept as a season of festive joy; for have we not all one Father? and is not the whole world akin? We, however, are not Pagans, and therefore are not disposed to view Christmas as a Pagan season. We accept it as a fact, that is, that once a year, on the 25th day of December or thereabouts, stockings are hung up by the chimney-corner—how Santa Claus gets in where there are no chimney-corners is as yet an unsolved mystery. Carols are sung, tables spread with more than usual bounty, families do gather as throughout the year they otherwise do not, bells do more merrily ring or chime, at least to the ear, on Christmas morning than on any other morning; and the birth of our Saviour is more in the mind of English-speaking peoples on that day than on any other occasion. So long as these facts remain without the alloy of debasing superstition and of carnival rites; so long as children are made to view the season as specially a home season, storing up happy memories for the years when cares sit heavily and weary; so long as families gather, and happy memories have a place therein, so long shall we accept Christmas as a fact, ordering ourselves accordingly. We purpose, gentle reader, a little Christmas gossip in this issue with your kind permission.

John Milton was a stern Puritan; his Puritanism did not suffer, whilst his heart became more manifest, as he indulged in Christmas memories.

Hear him as he sings his Christmas Carol:

No war or battle's sound,  
Was heard the world around;  
The idle spear and sword were high up hung;  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood,  
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;  
And kings sat still, with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by  
But peaceful was the night,  
Wherein the Prince of light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began.  
The winds with wonder whist  
Smoothly the water kissed,  
Whispering new joys to the wild ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

No more appropriate season for the general remembrance of the rising of the Sun of righteousness does the year afford than when the sun in its yearly round begins anew to lengthen out the days, and lead to spring and summer glory.

Seasons of remembrance are an anchor to the heart. To stand again where once we stood in days gone by; to double back on life's pilgrimage; to walk anew along our yesterdays; "to chew the sweet or bitter herb of memory," is to make us, perhaps, the sadder, but most surely the wiser. Christmas has its memories, and as we summon up the vanished Christmas evenings, with their snowy mantles brooches with frost, we remember the years of our pilgrimage. Why not? We are nearing home, and the *Christus qui natus est hodie* has surely made that home the brighter; certainly His presence makes these homes more cheery.

Close the shutters, draw the curtains close; the fire light gleams through the room, Christmas glows the brighter for the outside winter cold. Even the chill of the year's estrangements warm and disappear before the Christmas fire; and the friends that are far away—does there not lie before us their Christmas card, they too are gazing upon ours; sundered far, yet Christmas hearts are one. And that vacant chair in the shadow of the corner,—well this is Christmas night, and he whose birth is thus commemorated is the resurrection and the life. In the light of that Christmas glow

"There is no death! What seems so is transition,  
Their life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
Whose portal we call death."

Friends live in the heart of friends even though their forms have departed, happy reunions they on our Christmas evening!

We have comfort, yes, but there are bare tables and empty stoves not far away. "The poor ye have ever with you." Will you read charitable reader another carol?

"Amidst the freezing sleet and snow  
The timid robin comes,  
In pity drive him not away,  
But scatter out your crumbs."

"And leave your door upon the latch  
For whoever comes,  
The poorer they, more welcome give,  
And scatter out the crumbs."

"All have to spare, none are too poor,  
When want with winter comes,  
The loaf is never all your own,  
Then scatter out the crumbs."

"Soon winter falls upon your life,  
The day of reckoning comes,  
Against your sins by high decree,  
Are weighed those scattered crumbs."

This Christmas, like all its predecessors to which it is linked by thousand memories, must pass; the midnight hour draws nigh, Minnie, tired out, sleeps soundly with her doll upon her rosy cheek, Johnnie's toys lie there in a heap beside his clothes, they have had a merry day, those household gems. Now they are in dreamland, living Christmas over again in fairy light; a quiet calm, a pleasant weariness invites to rest; the evening hymn has been sung, the evening prayer been said, and we

press a chastened contented pillow with the "sweetly solemn thought" that there is one Christmas the less between us now and heaven our home.

Reader, we wish you in Christ's name, a sober, merry, Christ-like Christmas, and as many happy returns as God in wisdom and in love may see best fitted for your work and preparation here.

### TO THE CHILDREN.

You have all heard of the sea, the wide wild sea, tho' few may have seen it. A wonderful sight is the sea, far as the eye can reach, no house, nor tree, nor land, nothing but sea and sky, water everywhere; and when the tempest blows the waters toss and roll and foam, roaring in glee like giants at their sport. Grand is it to see those big waves beating on the shore, for you know the ocean has its bounds, and where that shore is high and rocky those big waves dash themselves to foam and spray against the rock, forcing themselves up its rough side, seeming to climb with large white limbs, hand over hand up to the top, and then suddenly fall into the bosom of the next white billow which in like manner rushes on. Ah, sad to see a ship that with bright hope is beginning a voyage, or, the wide ocean crossed in safety, is nearing home, rudder broken, engine disabled, tempest bound, driven on such a shore.

"Those cruel rocks and angry waves all human skill defy,  
Wh. strikes them once, beyond relief must die."

Should one wave wash you up on some ledge and you begin to hope for safety, the next as if mocking will tear you down back to the briny deep. Thank God, dear children, for quiet homes when you hear the storm roar and you are safe. Often near where ships have to sail rocks stand, the terror of the sailor, and especially in the darkness of the night, seeing there are no hitching posts in the sea, amidst storms, the vessel is in danger of striking and of being dashed to pieces, and when the ship is thus shattered nothing remains for sailor and passenger but to be drowned in the deep or bruised upon the rocks to death. Some of these rocks are covered at high water, and where the channel is narrow, there is great danger especially with a heavy sea, of running on them unawares. Across the ocean where no road is marked out or land marks to be seen, the sailor boldly steers, guided by sun and stars which he has learned to use instead of landmarks, having a mariners compass on board, in a manner you may learn something of as you grow older. So true are their marks that after being days out of sight of land, he will tell almost the hour when, and the direction where, land is again first to be seen. On hidden and dangerous rocks lighthouses are built, not surrounded prettily, as among our Thousand Islands, with shrubs and shady banks, but out alone in the midst of the raging waters.

"Far in the bosom of the deep,  
O'er these wild shelves my watch I keep;  
A ruddy gem of changeful light  
Bound on the dusky brow of night;  
The seaman bids my lustre hail,  
And scorns to strike his timorous sail."  
One dark but not stormy night,  
A fine steam ship was nearing our  
Canadian waters, the captain

thought he must, ere midnight, see the light from one of the rocky headlands. He lay down in his cabin, giving orders how to steer, and to awaken him when the light appeared. The vessel steamed boldly on, fearing no danger before the friendly light should appear. The look-out reported a dark cloud looming before, which was—no light appearing—taken to be a fog bank rising. The speed was slackened, a man sent aloft, when suddenly a dull, heavy thud, the noble ship trembled like a tree struck by a sturdy axe, another, and another, she was on the rock, and there was a scramble for life before she foundered, and when passengers and crew had found landing, looking around, there was the lighthouse not far off. Were the watch asleep? How was that high shore mistaken for a fog bank? Nobody knew until some months after, one of the keepers of that lighthouse was dying, and with failing breath he told how, on that fatal night, when the steamship had sunk, he had fallen asleep, and thus neglected to trim his lamp, which, when he awakened, he found had gone out. How different from that other lighthouse-keeper, who, when asked, "Suppose your light was to burn dim, go out?" (he had been boasting of how his light could be seen ten leagues at sea), warmly replied, pointing out over the darkness, to a sail crossing the lighthouse beam, "Stranger, see there! from all quarters vessels come and watch for the Calais light. Why, sir, were that light not to shine, I might hear from some distant city that on such a night the keeper was not at his post. Go out? Burn dim? No, never!" Children just stop and sing:

"Brightly beams our Father's mercy."

And now, my young friends, let me speak a few words about "some lights along the shore," that you may take heed and steer safely through what we may call the voyage of life.

A few years ago and you were not, a few years to come and you will, so far as this life is concerned, not be, and yet we know, for God hath told us, that beyond death there are countries, either of beautiful homes and sunny days, or of prison blackness and dark despair; heaven and hell are at the end of life; it is very necessary you should take heed whither you are going, along which way you travel. Through life also there are many dangers, temptations, snares, bad companions, the dram shop, pleasures that lead to ruin. We need, and we have, from the great God and Father of us all, bright beams of mercy and shore lights if we only open our eyes to see. You would, of course, answer to the question, what is our great Light, "Jesus." Yet how do we see him? We cannot look upon him as those little children that from his kind arms looked up in his loving face; nor can we touch the hem of his garment, as that poor woman of the gospel story who was thereby healed. How can we see him? By faith you say—but what does faith see? I have been taught to say Jesus, teaches, gives light to us "by his word and spirit." Is not that a plain and true answer? His spirit given in answer to prayer, his word made plain by a careful study of the Bible, thank God, the most common, the cheapest, and the very best