Christmas 1922

THE President, Directors and Officers desire to offer to the Customers and Friends of the Bank their Best Wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

The Royal Bank of Canada

dec23,11

RINGING IN THE YULETIDE.

WITH ITS LEGENDS AND HALLOWED CUSTOMS.

By ALICE A. PARSONS.

[illegible] the sounds of the Christmas [illegible] of the ivied towers [illegible] welcome the dearest of [illegible] festival times [illegible] Western world of ours.

As Yuletide approaches we are reminded of its legends and superstitions as well as its happy and hallowed customs. For instance: the cock crows for Christmas in England; in Italy the ass sings; in the Netherlands the cattle kneel; in Switzerland the sheep go in procession; to the Indian the camels kneel; in the German Alps the bees have the gift of language given them on Christmas Eve; in Austria candles are put in the windows so the Christ Child may not stumble as He goes through the village streets. On Christmas Eve in Scandanavia all the shoes in the household are put together on the table, signifying that all the members are to live in peace and harmony during the coming year; a bath is also taken by every member of the family on the day before Christmas. In Norway a sheaf of wheat is placed on a pole in front of each house for the birds. In Peru every door of every house is open, and hospitality abounds to the stranger as well as to the friend. And so in every land is there a different legend or custom celebrating the Saviour's birthday.

Yet, however remote these superstitions may seem at first thought, we need but turn aside from the highways of the Christmas season to find them thriving in simple faith among our neighbors and fellow-beings, and lending to this merry tide a mysterious and fairy-like romance, which makes us almost sorry that we have not retained our hold upon them along with the sainted Santa Claus and the mythical mistletoe. They are not, as I have said, confined to any one race nor to any one locality. Wherever we go, at home or in foreign lands, we encounter these innocent Christmas superstitions holding sway among good and lowly folk. My readers will remember how Shakespeare puts that beautiful superstition about "the bird of dawning" into the mouth of Marcellas in Hamlet:

"Some say that ever 'against that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then they say no spirit can walk abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm:
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

If time and space were not limited I could include in an article like this many really interesting stories of the Yuletide as told by some of our most popular writers of fact and fiction; but two or three must now suffice; In Daudet's collection we have for instance, "Christmas in Exile." The time is the Franco-German War, the scene a Bavarian hospital, and the central figure two wounded soldiers from Provence, Bernardou and Salvette. They are old comrades, and many are their reminiscences of old days in their far-off home, and their hopes for a speedy return. But as a matter of fact, while Salvette is making a quick recovery, Bernardou is dying, and Salvette is aware of it. "Christmas is at hand, the last Christmas that Bernardou will ever know; and it seems hard that he should pass away with his last desire ungratified, especially when the sum and substance of it is only a white roll and a bottle of red wine. So finally Salvette, who has been secretly cherishing his last forty francs, carefully sewn into his clothes, and that was destined for a grand feast when his release shall come, makes his sacrifice, and with the connivance of a Jew peddler, who has the freedom of the hospital, obtains the modest little bouquet and stands treat to his dying friend. The fading spark of life flames up, under the stimulant of the red wine, and for a brief hour Bernardou knows revived hopes. But before the bottle is drained the spark has flickered out, and death, the mightiest of all conquerors has intruded upon this pathetic attempt at festivities in exile."

Indeed, most of our great modern novelists have had something to do with Christmas story-telling. True Thackeray's Christmas books are such in name only, and the name stands merely by accepted convention. But he did introduce Christmas into his novels at least once in "The Newcomes," and here he, too, imbues us with the spirit of the season. One recalls the Chapter, "Christmas at Rosebury," in which Ethel Newcome, very sore at heart, and much out of key with the feeling peculiar to the day, finds comfort in the kindness of her good French friends and pours out all her pent-up sorrow over the tragic position of the dear old Colonel and her cousin Clive. And then, the very next morning comes the "shortest and Happiest chapter in the whole History," in which Ethel announces the finding of the old grandmother's missing letter to her lawyer, ordering a codicil to her will in favor of Clive. Yet what we are apt to remember longest is not the unforeseen happy outcome, but the sadness and resignation of the preceding night, Christmas Eve. Much the same comment may be made in George Eliot's use of Christmas in "Silas Marner," when Dolly Winthrop, on her way to church with her little son Aaron, does her best to persuade Silas to break his custom and come too. But, of course, Silas refuses; and in consequence, "spends his Christmas in loneliness, eating his meat in silence and sadness of heart, though the meat has come to him as a neighbor-ly present. And nothing else could have made us feel so vividly how far apart the old recluse was from all good will towards men than this voluntary isolation when the rest of the world was merry-making.

Then, again, Christmas will always [illegible] ers of Dickens's works of [illegible] y of purpose with which [illegible] novelist depicts Yuletide and the great love he had for children. In his "Christmas Carol" we have Tiny Tim, the poor little crippled son of Bob Cratchit—who somehow gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much and "thinks the strangest things you every heard." "He told me coming home that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple and it might be pleasant for them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see." The home life of the Cratchits, as portrayed by Dickens, is very touching—the joyousness of the children around the Christmas fare, and the seriousness of all faces when the father proposed: "A Merry Christmas to us all ,dears! God bless us all!" And when all the family re-echoed it, Tiny Tim came in with his weak voice—"God bless us every one!" And then we are told how—Tiny Tim sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. "Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him." The whole scene is most affecting: "Spirit," said Scrooge, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live." "I see a vacant seat," replied the ghost, "in a poor chimney corner and a crutch, without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered the child will die." But Charles Dickens did not let Tiny Tim die, to the infinite delight of all who read this Christmas Carol. Dickens regarded Yuletide as a time for "peace and good will," and did more, perhaps, than any author of his time to make it so. One of his admirers says of him: "With his magic wand he strikes the rock of our self-centred indifference, and forth gush tenderness, pity and joy."

Then there is the delightful matter of giving and receiving gifts. We must remember that our gifts to our friends are nothing compared with what our friends would like to have given us! There is something beautiful and magnanimous about receiving as well as about giving. When a man has such a spirit he accepts gifts without embarrassment, even though he has only love to give in return. Emerson, I think it is, well says: "You cannot give anything to a magnanimous person. After you have served him he at once puts you in debt by his magnanimity. The service a man renders his friend is trivial and selfish compared with the service he knows his friend stood in readiness to yield him, alike before he had begun to serve his friend and now also. Compared with that good will, which I bear my friend, the benefit it is in my power to render him seems small."

Then, again, we have the message of the Christmas Bells. From time immemorial bells have been associated with religion, whether Pagan or Christian. They were rung to usher in the feast of Osiris in ancient Egypt, and they tinkled with every movement of the high priest in the Jewish temple. In mediaeval times their tones were supposed to affright demons, to allay storms and to drive away pestilence. And although such superstitions are now almost extinct, a peal of bells, especially on a Christmas morning, arouses happy memories in most of us, and may suggest some of those truths which we are all too apt to forget. To devout minds a Christmas Carillon may be what the song of the angels was to the shepherds of Bethlehem. Another note in our Carol tells of the sweetness of home, for Christmas commemorates the coming of the Christ Child into the home of Joseph and Mary.

Of course, the chief object of our Saviour's Advent was that he might reconcile men to each other and all to God. In the birth of any child there is some suggestion of this. The cradle is a wonderful reconciler. Husband and wife, who may have been secretly estranged, are brought nearer to each other by that centre of attraction on which the affections of both of them naturally converge. Angry words, too, have often been silenced by the wondering glance of an innocent child. Let us hope that the Babe of Bethlehem may exercise similar but mighter influence over us during the coming year.

Our own little community, yea, the world, is full of jangling discords. Jealousies, ambitions, plots and counterplots, contentions between political parties, between capital and labor, between sect and sect, are saddening to right-thinking multitudes. Even the church is often rent by strife, and paralysed by suspicions and dislikes. But let us now hope for better things—conditions more in accordance with the sentiment of the season. Among the few remaining of the many bygone festal days and customs which were so popular with our forefathers, none has held for so long a period such a true fascination for all classes as the good old season of **"Yule."** The probable **derivation** of this word **"Yule"** is from the Gothic "giul" or "hiul," which is the origin of our modern word **wheel** and bears the same significance. "To the present day," says Dr. Rowland, "the Scotch designation of Christmas is **Yule**, and the word is preserved in the phrase **Yule-log**, with which we are so familiar. Broadly speaking, the name Yule dates back to, and denotes the Pagan rites of this festival of the Winter Solstice in pre-Christian times; whereas the more modern name **Christmas** speaks of the survival of this heathen festival (for it had its origin in the ancient Roman "Saturnalia!") in the more or less Christian garb of the Christian Era. And the theory that **Yule** is derived from **giul** or **hiul** (meaning wheel) because December is the turning point in the Solar year, gains weight from the fact that, in the old Clog Almanac, a wheel is the device employed for marking this season of the year."

What more shall I say about this great annual festival? Without it there would be little to relieve the monotony of our isolated and semi-Arctic conditions during the long and otherwise almost unbearable mid-winter month of December. To deprive us of our Christmas would be to rob the Christian world of a cherished institution—one well nigh as dear to us as life itself. The present is an intensely practical age, and men are prone to lightly esteem the venerable traditions and customs of the past. We must take care, then, that we are not induced to abolish this time-honored and holy observance, remembering that, whether we are standing breathless before our first dazzling Christmas tree, or sitting dreamily beside the crackling fire in the silence of old age, Christmas is full of wonder and delight for us. No holiday is so rich in its heritage, none so full of tradition, for down the ages has come to us a wealth of customs and observances, of legends and superstitions, and in its wake a spirit of universal brotherhood, unselfishness, of love uniting families and binding friendships, and through it all, steadily and unfaltingly, there runs a deep, strong current of religious feeling.

And now, as we recall and review the faults and failures of 1922, let us resolve to enter upon the duties and obligations of 1923 (in spite of the present gloomy outlook) with a firmer faith in the future of our country and a more charitable feeling toward one another than ever we entertained before. May old animosities, political, commercial and social, be healed; may the Tory lion and the Liberal lamb find it possible to repose in peace and honesty, one on either side of the public treasury; may the "Humber proposition" prove a veritable Eldorado to all concerned. And Heaven grant that the year through the portals of which we are about to enter may prove one of substantial prosperity to Newfoundland and her people generally. Meanwhile let us unite our voices with the many millions of Christians all over the world who are singing **Adeste Fideles.**—

"O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him
Christ the Lord."

EE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE EE

THE DOCTOR: "Ah! yes, restless and feverish. Give him a Steedman's Powder and he will soon be all right."

EE STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS Contain no Poison EE

Feasting Extraordinary.

To-day the main Christmas Day fare seems to be a choice of turkey or roast beef and plum pudding. Our forefathers in the "good old times" did better than that.

Their chief and favorite dish for Christmas Day was boar's head. There is hardly an old MS., poem, or book which, if there is any reference to Christmas, does not mention boar's head as the prime Christmas fare. Carols were written in its honour.

Next in favour came capon, goose, and pig. Beef is not often mentioned.

Plum porridge—not plum pudding—minced pies, frumenty, "plumbes and spices," concluded the meal, which was washed down with "right gude ale," or malmsey wine.

These old-time Christmas feastings were not hurried, either. They extended for many days. One chronicler records the fact that merchants went to each other's houses in turn, feasting, for three weeks!

It must be assumed that vegetables were eaten, but there is no mention of any.

Other times, other fare.

A Mince-Pie of Advice.

Y. A good song for Christmas is "Yule remember me."

Extraordinary, but Christmas happiness gains by being shared!

One of the best Christmas cards is the address card on a hamper.

If you're old all the year be young at Christmas—for the sake of the young.

It's more blessed to give than to receive—especially when you give pleasure.

If you want to marry the old man's daughter it's wise to laugh at his Christmas jokes.

If you are too old to believe in Father Christmas, remember that the youngsters are not!

Cub Cigarettes are appreciated, not only by the smoker but by those in his company.

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Mr. Moss Power says things seldom get so bad that they couldn't be worse.

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SEASONABLE JOB.

Settlement Worker—What makes your husband look so worried, Mrs. Mixer?"

Mrs. Mixer—"He's dreadin' the time, ma'am when he'll have to go back to work."

Settlement Worker—"Whom does he work for and what does he do, Mrs. Mixer!"

Mrs. Mixer—"He works for the Salvation Army, ma'am. He Santa Clauses."