

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

and so the joyous anticipations of Advent-tide are at last realized in miniature, so to speak; for the bright and happy thoughts of preparation reach their annual climax when—in lieu of the culminating joy of the Second Advent welcome ("Even so, come Lord Jesus")—we have a kind of reflection of that joy which made even Heaven tremulous with delight, so that it poured forth its host of angel heralds with the Gospel song

"PEACE ON EARTH,"

—and earth must, from time to time—and most naturally and fittingly on the Anniversary itself—yield its hearty response: "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the Name of Jehovah! Hosanna in the Highest." As the great cycle of the Church's year revolves, each period freighted with consecutive thoughts for the seasons, the "world without" looks somewhat askance at our solemn observances, and perhaps at times with many a wistful glance, as who would ask "Have I no right to share in all this joyous ceremony, stately, grave and confident as it is?"

YES, THE BRIDE SAYS "COME!"

The Church has regard not only to those already within the sacred enclosure, "safely folded in," but to all those yearning, wistful, enquiring, doubtful ones—possible additions to the well-housed flock of Christ. We may be sure that the Great Shepherd is never more pleased than when He sees the "merry" proceedings of annual Christmas-tide diversified by happy "nativities" of new souls, new-born into His Kingdom, to tread the "narrow way" to Heaven!

WANDERING THOUGHTS.

The glad season of Christmas-tide is now close upon us, and doubtless many minds, young and old, are busy making plans how to make the best of it.

Some who read this may sadly be forced to think of the stress of hard times and altered circumstances, and well will it be for such if their sorrow is turned into joy in a hopeful contemplation of the great event. Well will it be for them if in faith they can—"behold and adore in Him, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and if being filled with His fullness they can see in Him, "whose goings forth are from everlasting," the One who now with human pity and tenderness metes out for all a discipline in life that is but the preparation and training for the brighter day that is to be. But all are not in that condition, and even those who are—will on Christmas Day gladly join with us in making it a day for sober, chastened joy, and with us strive to forget trials of life in upward thoughts, and a re-echoing of the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will towards men."

If Christmas-tide is a time for special worship of the Incarnate One, and glad contemplation of the great mystery, it has also its social aspects. Domestic life becomes pervaded by another spirit. The home succumbs to influences more genial, more ennobling, more humanizing, than can possibly be felt at any other time of the year. It is, moreover, the children's festival, and that perhaps gives the largest scope for generous effort in creating happiness.

Our child friends are dear to us. Full of high spirit, sometimes very trying, still less sinful than we, links between us and the angelic world, we tenderly regard them for the sake of Him Who was once a child Himself. Here we older ones find much happiness, "it is better to give

than to receive." I am sure the children will agree with me. But how these thoughts take one back through the many years to one's own childhood; and when troop of juvenile friends was not likely to land their elders in the regions of bankruptcy or drive them out of their minds with perplexity, when the question had to be settled how best to gain the affections and gratitude of lively and loving boys and girls. Still we were quite as happy and quite as easily pleased as children are to-day. I think in looking back, the thing that first rises conspicuously in memory is the joy of the week before Christmas. To begin with there was no school, no lessons, and consequently lots of scope for young limbs and active brains to destroy the usual quiet and order of the house.

We were very willingly permitted to go and make ourselves useful—this was the invariable plea made for this permission—to those who were decorating the church. And so we went. Generally we behaved very well, though I have a vivid remembrance of a red pepper finding its way very stealthily to the top of a stove, a general attack of sneezing, and a sudden and indignant adjournment of all labours for the night. My great happiness was to become attached to some beautiful young lady and break twigs for her. She sometimes had a pocket from which with great prudence and forethought she doled out tangible expressions of gratitude and possible encouragement to go on breaking twigs. In the light of her bright smile and glowing eyes I enjoyed supreme content, except in the evening when her young man came round, and I felt myself discarded for a gentleman who did not break twigs except in a very desultory fashion. This I freely resented, and after having possessed myself of all I wanted of their entertaining conversation, I betook myself to the society of other discarded ones, and then I think it was generally conceded that though things became a trifle more lively, we were not so useful.

On Christmas eve the old church was transformed, and we began to realize, as beauty and order began to assert themselves, that the great feast of the Church meant something more than fun and breaking twigs, and then to us the bright stars, piercing with their light the frost-laden air, spoke solemnly of that world whence came the blessed angels to proclaim the birth of the Virgin's child.

That week of usefulness (?) ended with a little Christmas eve feast, one I often look back upon in sad and sweet reminiscence, a warm drink, some cake peculiar to that night, and a great treat, and then we were packed off to bed. Ah! then it was a mother's/loving voice that sang our lullaby, a mother's hands that smoothed our pillows, and a mother's embrace that comforted us ere sweet sleep steeped our young eyes in forgetfulness, and we were off to the beautiful land of dreams.

Then Christmas Day came. Our presents were simple and satisfying, but I think the chief enjoyment to me was the Christmas service. On that day the choir strove to out-do itself, and the Christmas anthem was the supreme effort. How greedily I drank it in! Was there ever such music? I fear now I might smile, and call their ambitious attempt a failure, or patronizingly say it went very nicely, but then it was beautiful, nothing else but beautiful. The little man who sang the bass solo was a man to be envied; the young man who incontinently broke in upon it, though I resented the intrusion, still made up for his boldness and captured my heart before he had got through

a dozen bars; the lady who sang surpassed them all, and the maidens who sang the chorus with them were angels. Oh! it was heavenly. The Christmas sermon we children honestly looked forward to. We were in those days called "High Church," and our priest a Puseyite, chiefly because, as I understood things at the time, he read the prayers from a desk turned sideways—a great innovation. His sermon proclaiming the good news that "Unto us a Child is born," and preached with earnest voice and trembling lips, always deeply impressed our childish hearts.

In those days in the middle of the eucharistic service we were dismissed. How little they seemed to understand the needs and thoughts of children.

One thing in the decoration of that church has always seemed to me very beautiful. The church was lighted with candles which were placed in candlesticks at the end of wire rods. These were put at the ends and middle of each pew. At Xmas time small branches of evergreen were also made to stand upright in the same places. I shall always remember the pretty effect, the little bunch of evergreens, the lights shining through them, and the anxiety lest they should catch fire. Those days are gone, gone forever. The boys and girls are now old men and women. The priest and most of those to whom he ministered are sleeping their last sleep. The laughter and the joys long since have died away, but amid all changes the old church still stands. This Christmas time the work of garnishing the sanctuary will be done by other men and women, other boys and girls. Other voices on Christmas day will join in worship, but blessed thought, the same faith will be professed, the same psalms of praise sung, the same eucharistic sacrifice will be offered.

So Christmas comes with many fond recollections, laden with their gracious influences. What a debt the world owes to the Church! Her message to humanity never loses its power. The incarnation of God must stand throughout all eternity before angels and men the supreme fact in all human histories, its colossal proportions overshadowing all other events in the history of the universe. The gentle maid of Nazareth, the birth at Bethlehem, can never lose the halo of splendour that must ever surround them. At thought of them men can lay aside their griefs, banish their anger, treat with generous indulgence and consideration their fellowmen. They can forgive unkindnesses, they can "seek peace and ensue it." In the poor and unfortunate they can see Christ, and in great comparison strive to be Christ-like.

IDLER,

COMMUNION WINES.

The question of pure wines of suitable character for the purposes of the Holy Communion was for many years a source of trouble to both the clergy and church wardens. Some fifteen years ago Messrs. J. C. Hamilton & Co., of Brantford, Ontario, sole general and export agents of the Pelee Island Wine and Vineyard Company, Ltd., gave the matter their attention, and to-day their registered brand, "St. Augustine," is used with satisfaction in hundreds of churches in Canada. This wine was officially chosen by the dioceses of Ontario and Niagara for use in the churches of both dioceses. The prices are reasonable, and if not kept by local wine merchants can be procured by writing direct to Messrs. J. G. H. & Co., at Brantford. Messrs. J. G. H. & Co.'s agent for the Maritime Provinces is Mr. E. G. Scovil, of St. John, N.B.

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