

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

He little knew the sorrow that was in his vacant chair. He never guessed they'd miss him, or he'd surely have been there;

He little knew the gladness that his presence would have made. And the joy it would have given, or he never would have stayed;

He couldn't see the fading of the cheeks that once were pink, and the silver in the tresses; and he didn't stop to think how the years are passing swiftly, and next Christmas it might be

There would be no home to visit and no mother dear to see; He didn't think about it—I'll not say he didn't care. He was heedless and forgetful or he'd surely have been there.

Are you going home for Christmas? Have you written you'll be there? Going home to kiss the mother and to show her that you care?

Just sit down and write a letter—it will make their heartstrings hum. With a tune of perfect gladness—if you'll tell them that you'll come.

LESSON OF CHRISTMAS DAY

Christmas Day should inspire a world of unselfishness. The example before us is almost too perfect, for it rather frightens us to attempt such Divine heights of self-abnegation, but we can try. It will at least take us out of the depths of selfishness, where most of us now are.

CAROLS IN PROSE

"Joy is the atmosphere of heroic virtue," said one who had devoted his lifetime to the noble vocation of spreading cheer about him. And surely at no time of the year is the spirit of joy more abounding than during the festive season of Christmas.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

MIDNIGHT AT BETHLEHEM

At last Thou art come, little Saviour! And thine angels fill midnight with song; Thou art come to us gentle Creator!

Thou art come to Thy Beautiful Mother; She has looked on Thy marvelous face; Thou art come to us, Maker of Mary;

Thou hast brought with Thee plentiful pardon, And our souls overflow with delight; Our hearts are half-broken, dear Jesus!

We have waited so long for Thee, Saviour!

In the realm of fiction, there was once an ancient firm by the name of Scrooge and Marley. After the death of Marley, Scrooge never painted out his name on the signpost. There it stood, years afterward, above the warehouse door;

Christmas is essentially a season of peace. The angels who announced the advent of the great Feast, sang of peace, but Christmas, unfortunately, is not a season of peace to all men.

Christmas is essentially a time of giving. But true giving does not consist in remembering one's friends, who possibly lack nothing of this world's goods, so much as in doing something for those who, like, the little Babe, are poor.

Are there no workhouses in operation? asked Scrooge of the man who came to solicit for the poor at this season of beneficence. Could it be that a spirit might appear and conduct men at Christmas from one spot to another where the cheer of the blessed season does not fall, surely the many strange sights and experiences they would encounter must change the most callous heart and infuse warmth and charity into the most heedless of men.

And so, one should strive for contentment, "the determined cutting off of useless and unreasonable desires." It may be that for some men it is necessary to learn how to do without things in order to be more generous to others.

And then, running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. It was the first time in long years that he had permitted the glad bright sunshine to flood the dull room, or that he had breathed in with alacrity the keen crisp air.

There were men who laughed at the conversion of Scrooge, just as there are people who laugh at every sincere conversion and people who doubt its honesty. But that does not matter. For he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe for good at which some people did not laugh.

Thou art come to us, Maker of Mary; And she was Thy channel of Grace. Thou hast brought with Thee plentiful pardon, And our souls overflow with delight; Our hearts are half-broken, dear Jesus!

Art Thou come to us, dearest! at last!

Oh, bless Thee, dear Joy of Thy Mother! This is worth all the wearisome past!

Thou art come, Thou art come, Child of Mary! Yet we hardly believe Thou art come; It seems such a wonder to have Thee, New Brother with us in our home.

Thou wilt stay with, Master and Maker! Thou wilt stay with us now evermore; We will play with Thee, beautiful Brother!

CHRISTMAS CATECHISM

When was Christ born? About 4,000 years after the creation of the world, in the second year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus.

Why do Priests say three Masses on Christmas day? To indicate the three-fold birth of Christ according to the distinction of His two natures, and also of the graces which He confers on us.

Of which He does the first Mass remind us? It reminds us of His divine birth from His Heavenly Father, according to His divine nature.

Why does the Church have Mass at midnight on Christmas day? First, to indicate that the eternal birth of Christ is, for us, hidden in mystery, second, because Christ was born at midnight; third, to indicate that those who lived under the laws of nature were as yet walking in spiritual darkness.

Why is the second Mass celebrated early in the morning, at the break of day? First to indicate that those who lived under the law of Moses, like the shepherds to whom the birth of Christ was announced, did not have as clear a knowledge of God as we have; second, because the shepherds came about dawn to Bethlehem to adore the new-born Christ.

Why is the third Mass celebrated at broad daylight? To indicate, first, that the birth of Christ has given us the broad light of the knowledge of God, second, that the spiritual birth of Christ takes place under the influence of His enlightening grace.

Why does the Priest kneel at the altar at the High Mass on Christmas day, when the "Et Incarnatus est" is sung? Because the article of the creed (credo) contained in the "Et Incarnatus est" refers to Christmas day in particular.—Michigan Catholic.

TWO LITTLE GIRLS' CHRISTMAS

It was Christmas morning, a Christmas tree, still gay with tinsel, colored tapers and garlands of popcorn, but shorn of its presents, stood in the center of the room. A little girl sat near by with her lips extended in a disagreeable pout.

"But, mamma," Ethel said crossly. "I don't like my presents one bit. My doll is a brunette, and I wanted a blonde; and I don't like my book."

"I know it's horrid anyway and I wanted—" Just then the doorbell rang and a newsboy threw in the morning paper. He was about to go away when the Christmas tree caught his eye.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands together, "how beautiful! I wish Ruth could see that." "Is Ruth your sister?" Ethel's mother asked kindly.

"Yes," the boy answered. "Well tell her that we will be pleased to have her come to see the tree."

"She can't, ma'am. She's an invalid and has to lie all day in bed but she's always so patient and good."

"Was she pleased with her Christmas presents?" Mrs. Gray asked with a glance at Ethel. "She got only one, but she was so pleased with that. It was an orange, a great big one. I bought it for her, and she says it will make her happy all day."

Santa Claus. I don't exactly know what she meant by that, but something nice, I'm sure. A rattle of wheels was heard outside, and a step sounded on the porch. Tom ran to open the door and Ethel and her mother entered.

Ethel passed over to where Ruth was lying and, after a few words of greeting, tied the softest handkerchiefs over her eyes. "I'll soon take it off," she said gaily.

Then there were excited whispers, a hurrying back and forth, and shouts of pleasure from Tom. Soon the handkerchief was removed, and Ruth opened her eyes in—fairly! There stood Ethel's tree, again loaded down with presents. On one of the branches hung the doll that Ethel had despised, but that Ruth thought a marvel of beauty; and under the tree were piled bundles containing warm clothing and groceries.

I haven't the time to tell you about the happy evening the little girl spent together, but that night just before Ruth dropped asleep, she murmured: "This has been the loveliest day I ever had mamma. I won't care now because I can't run and play like other girls; I have so many, many things to make me happy."

ST. NICHOLAS AND CHRISTMAS

The origin of the idea that gifts are presented at Christmas time by St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, probably originated from the following circumstances: St. Nicholas is said to have been bishop of Myra, and to have died in the year 326. He was noted for his fondness for children, and he became their patron saint, and the young were universally taught to revere him. He is said to have supplied three destitute families with marriage portions by secretly leaving money at their windows, and as this occurred just before Christmas he thus became purveyor of the gifts of the season to all children in Flanders and Holland, who hung up their shoes and stockings in the confidence that Knecht Clobes, as they called him, would put in a prize for good conduct.

Formerly, and still in some parts of Germany, the practice is made of all the parents in a small village sending the presents to some one person, who in huge buskins, a white robe, a mask and an enormous flax wig, goes from house to house on Christmas eve and, being received with great pomp and reverence by the parents, calls for the children and bestows the intended gifts upon them, after first severely questioning the father and mother as to the character and conduct of the child.

As this custom became less frequent the custom of children hanging up their stockings was substituted, and, as the purveyor no longer visited the houses it was necessary to explain by telling the children that he came into the house at night, coming down the chimney and leaving their presents and departing. The custom of decking the houses and churches at Christmas with evergreens is derived from ancient druidical practices.

It was an old belief that sylvan spirits flocked to the evergreen and remain unrippled by frost until a milder season, and it was probably on account of the good omen attached to the evergreen that Christmas trees came into use. —Intermountain Catholic.

PEACE ON EARTH

Prior to 1914 comparatively few of us thought that War among the great nations was more than a bare possibility. It may be that diplomats knew of its likelihood and were planning accordingly, and once the conflict started there were plenty of wiseacres who had been "expecting it all along;" but the average man in July, 1914, looked for immediate world-wide hostilities about as little as he did for the end of the world. In the seven years that have elapsed we have grown used to War and slaughter, but we have not grown to like them. Peace on earth is still the thing to be desired and that towards which our thoughts are increasingly being directed.

The Great War is over. Each nation engaged in the struggle has signed some sort of a peace treaty, and actual hostilities ceased months ago; but is there peace? Did our "War to end War" accomplish its purpose? Do we feel that peace and security have been attained? Thoughts like these arise at this season when the Second Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity took man's nature and came to earth in lowliness, and when the angels heralded His advent by singing of "Peace on earth." But here we pause to think: "Peace on earth" proclaimed on the Judean hillsides two thousand years ago, and man still contending with man in deadly strife! Is the angels' message a true one? The explanation is to be found in a single Greek letter. Following the reading of certain manuscripts, the usual Protestant version of the angelic song reads, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." If that be correct, then the message of the angels was premature and two thousand years have not seen a fulfillment of it. There is neither "peace on earth" nor "good will towards men." But add one small letter in the Greek text—the true

reading which St. Jerome used and from which the Catholic Church translates—and we have it, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." What a difference! In the one instance it lays the burden of producing peace upon Almighty God, and all the alleged "failure of Christianity" is bound up with that interpretation. But when we see that the responsibility does not rest with God, but on earth, "can come only to 'men of good will,'" then we see the reason for the War, the reason for the wranglings of politicians, the reason for the sordid expedients which are being put forward in place of a true basis of peace, the attempts on man's part to substitute his own greed for the "good" will of the Gospel.

The Church has not failed, Christianity has not failed, Christ our Lord has not failed. It is man who has failed. The angels still sing their Christmas welcome as of old. It still contains the only method of bringing about "peace on earth." This can be had, and it will be had, when man truly and earnestly repents him of his sins, when he is filled with "good will," when he really loves his neighbor as himself.—The Missionary.

"EDUCATION" NOT ENOUGH

In an excellent chapter on "The Need of the Spirit" in Mr. Philip Gibbs' recent volume, "More That Must Be Told," he effectively unmasks once more the dangerous fallacy that the wider spread of merely intellectual, rather than moral training, is all that is needed for making over anew this shatterfod, groping after-war world of ours. Answering the arguments of some who believe that by "education" alone, man "will reach greater heights of happiness and a nobler code of moral law" than the past has taught him, the author well observes:

"That is hard to believe, for the philosophers of the past and present have not claimed great stores of knowledge. Nor has education worked out to virtue, as far as we may grasp the standards of the highest culture. Germany was, beyond doubt, the best-educated nation in Europe, but the most educated among them were not most virtuous. They were most wicked. In Italy of the Renaissance there were fine scholars, great humanists, lovers of beauty, but they put no curb on passion, nor did all their talent kill their cruelty. The code of virtue is hard to obey. It is the martyrdom of passion. It is pain to the flesh, and torture to the spirit, except among rare souls who find an easy way through life. Nor will any change in the code of morality help human nature to be free of this penalty of pain. Easy divorce may break a marriage which has failed, but will not mend broken hearts."

The lack of law, the denial of spiritual duties, ordained by a God believed and feared by men ends in bestiality and blood-lust.

Unless the hard law of self-restraint binds the conscience of men by authoritative sanctions which they know to be Divine, unless the everlasting consequences of sin are feared and virtue's eternal rewards believed in, the human race is doomed to perish rapidly. It is because the Church, guided by her long centuries of experience, realizes thoroughly that educating merely the mind and the body of the child is likely to produce nothing better than a robust rascal, that she uncompromisingly insists that will and heart must be trained as well. It is because millions of Catholic parents in this country are firmly convinced that an education which ignores Almighty God and His transcendent rights is a grave menace to the family, the Church and the State, that so many fathers and mothers are cheerfully making the heavy sacrifices demanded for the maintenance of all our Catholic schools, academies, colleges and universities.—America.

A DANGEROUS PROPAGANDA

A distressing feature of recent news items is the prominence given the activities of those infamous men and women who advocate race restriction, and now seek legislation to make legal their vicious propaganda. Their efforts seem to take new energy from a conviction that the disarmament conference will give consideration to their views as a possible protest against war by the mothers of the country.

It becomes the duty of all decent-minded people to protest most emphatically these teachings that profane marriage and constitute a propaganda fatal and vicious in the extreme. Unfortunately this particular evil, although the immediate product of irreligion and a maudlin sentimentalism, is the logical development of a much wider evil that holds our people, namely, false and un-Christian views of the marriage contract. Protestantism robbed matrimony of its sacramental and supernatural character, and left its children with but purely utilitarian concepts of an institution that is the very foundation of individual and national life. Outside the Catholic Church marriage is pretty

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generally looked upon as nothing more than an instrument of convenience unrelated either to the law of nature or grace. Consequently it is an arrangement that may be modified or even broken up as personal inclination directs. Obviously it is useless to appeal to advocates of race restriction on religious grounds. Their activities must be fought and repressed in very much the same way as robbery or murder. To that wider group, however, whose views while not vicious are still false and dangerous, it is worth while to point out that in seeking to avoid the ennobling sufferings that are natural to the marriage state, they create the far greater miseries that come from pandered selfishness and morality. And furthermore no nation can survive where family life finds husband and wife in conspiracy against the first duty of their state of life. America can have no place for teaching indecencies.—The Missionary.

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