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CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, Dec. 22nd, 1877.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

We take occasion of the present issue to wish all the friends and patrons of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS a most Happy Christmas. We trust also that we shall long continue in intercourse together, and that the pleasant relations which have hitherto existed among us may be enhanced. After this salutation, we shall not detain them further, but introduce them at once, with our compliments, to the literary and artistic feast which we have spread out before them.

1877.

ON the eve of a new year, and the opening of the seventeenth volume of our journal, we feel justified in calling upon the public in every part of the Dominion to aid us in making the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS second to no journal of its class in the world. We have accomplished much in the way of improvements, and we think that we have fulfilled the promises which we made twelve months ago. But we feel that there still remains much to be done, and we call upon our friends to assist us in doing it. This is the only illustrated newspaper in the Dominion. It is also the only purely literary weekly. In this double capacity it has special claims upon the patronage of Canadians. It is a national undertaking, designed to reflect, FACTORIALY AND EDITORIALY, the life, the sentiments, and the daily history of Canada. No other paper can do this in the same way, and hence the ILLUSTRATED NEWS has an intrinsic value quite distinct from any other publication.

Its principal features are:

- I. The pictorial illustration of all leading Canadian events as they occur.
- II. A complete gallery of all Canadian celebrities, with biographies attached. This gallery has now reached beyond three hundred, and is the only one of the kind ever published in the country.
- III. The reproduction of the finest works of art.
- IV. A great variety of original and selected literary matter.
- V. Stories, sketches, poems, and other contributions by leading Canadian writers.
- VI. Special attractions for the home circle.

Every Canadian ought to be interested in the success and continued progress of the ILLUSTRATED NEWS, and should consider it his duty to encourage it to the extent of at least one year's subscription. None know better than ourselves how much it can still be improved, and we warrant that if we receive the patronage which we solicit, no effort on our part will be left untried to introduce a number of the most desirable improvements. Let the public throughout the country come forward generously with their support, and we guarantee to furnish them a paper which shall be a real credit to the Dominion. We will supply the material if our friends will only furnish the patronage.

We have made the present almost exclusively a Christmas number, holding over for that purpose a mass of otherwise interesting material. We are pleased to find, among other gratifying signs of public appreciation, that our column of Notes and Queries is attracting wide attention. Several gentlemen have already contributed to it whose articles will be published next year. We invite all students of antiquity and all who are fond of research either to send us their notes, propound their queries, or write replies to questions asked, having no doubt that we shall thus be enabled to accumulate a great deal of most valuable matter.

SURSUM CORDA.

(A Christmas Hymn.)

FROM THE FRENCH OF MME. P. R.

Watch! the day is breaking, one tardy star
Glimmers through the crown of vapours from afar:
Give to the earth her part,
To Jesus give thy heart.

Watch! it is the morning,—skies all bright,
But on the horizon, one speck, black as night—
Rises, widens, wild with storm,
Hope, and dread no harm.

Watch! the moon is on, the sun is high and burning,
Rest from worldly toil, while yet there is a turning:
Hands drop folded, spirit soar,
Knees incline, and soul adore.

Watch! the night is coming, the chill airs creep on high,
To where the sunlight lingers, soon to fade and die,
Get thee closer, God has smiled,
His two arms are round his child.

L. Original. Ont.

R. L.

OLD CHRISTMAS-DAYS.

This is Christmas-eve. I am an old man now, living my quiet days not unhappily; surrounded, thank Heaven, with every kind of comfort, having come to a quiet port after stormful seas, with very much of what Shakespeare tells us should accompany old age, "as honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." But I know that mine is the twilight of life, corresponding with this brief wintry twilight of Christmas-tide, and am content that the tender gracious darkness should in due season wrap me round. I find that I forget many things. I fail to remember all that law business which I had to attend to yesterday. I am not uneasy about it. My son John is a good man and a clever; and I have laid most worldly things on the shelf now. I do not care for politics, and new books, and fresh inventions, as I once did. It is very right that these things should be vigorously carried on in the busy roving life around me, the murmur of which, afar off, sounds not unmusically to me. These things interested me once most deeply. But I have had my day. I am content now to yield all things to younger men. I have had my place at the fair banquet, and as a satisfied guest, I am ready to yield my place to those who are coming afterwards. But while I forget so much, I remember the old Christmas-days. I may forget even the recent Christmas-days, but I am true to the old ones, as I somehow think that in a sort of way they are true to me. In fact, I count by them. They are my kalends. I bind fact to fact and date to date by their recurrence. I close my eyes, and, as in the shifting of a kaleidoscope, scene after scene passes by me in rapid transition, and with one beloved form gliding through most of them. I see the roaring fires, the circling wassail-cup, the merry party; but most my memory seems to cling to the garlanded columns and pictured perspective of the one or two old churches which I know best. In reverie I hear the merry bells of Yule, I listen to the solemn music of my favourite anthems.

Yes, I love my old Christmases. In my life, in a remarkable degree, each Christmas has been a centre and a pivot. Each seemed the unveiling of a new scene in a drama, a point of departure for a fresh epoch in life.

I was one of a large family, and we held Christmas-day in high esteem. For many years there was the glad succession of beautiful Christmas feasts. We were at our house great admirers of the cheerful Christmas philosophy of Charles Dickens. Beef and plum-pudding, turkey and champagne, crackers, bouillons, dances, kisses. It was all very nice, so far as it went, as long as it lasted. I did not understand then, as I came to understand afterwards, the struggles of my father, a slender-beneficed clergyman, from one bounteous Christmas to another. We were a house of many kinsmen, and towards Christmas hamper upon hamper flowed in, so that we not only had the pleasure of receiving, but the more exquisite pleasure of also being givers in our turn. We were motherless children, and the father did his best to be motherlike as well; and my sisters, while still little creatures struggling with French verbs and the musical scale, were wondrous wise and solemn, planning all sorts of housewifely things with preternatural ability, especially at Christmas-tide, in a superior manner, which might make any one believe that they had gone through life beforehand, and heaped up experiences in a previous state of existence.

Once I remember having a very thorough and curious acquaintance with Christmas-tide in various aspects and with various people. Old Lady Toddington, who lived at the pretty villa out-

side the town, had put a ten-pound note into my father's hand, with the words on the envelope, "For the deserving poor." Lady Toddington, when she gave the money, might as well have included him under the definition. There was never a time when he would not be the better for ten pounds. The living looked large enough in the nominal returns, but there were so many outgoings that the net returns were surprisingly different. There was no School Board in those days, and the responsibility rested almost entirely on the Vicar, which is now equally distributed among the ratepayers. I know our school cost my father three times what it cost the Squire or any landowner in the place. I think my father would have been entitled to half that note, and I am sure that Lady Toddington, if she had taken the trouble to think at all about the matter, would have offered no objection. The people who most want our help, are not the very poor, but those of the class impinging upon ourselves, who have, as the saying goes, a hard struggle to keep their heads above water. My father had no thought for himself. But he was very busy that week with the extra Christmas sermons, and he left the distribution to my sister and myself. He was wise and just, and gave us a list of his poor friends, and told us generally what we were to do. There was one case, however, about which he gave very special directions. This was that of an old clerk who lived in a neat little row of houses, a clerk in our country bank, as punctual and punctilious as the bank itself. He had a long family, and one or two sick ones among them. Father told us to send him a decent Christmas hamper, and not to forget some wine and brandy. It was impossible to offer the old clerk money; for him to accept it would be to acknowledge himself defeated in that life-long struggle against poverty which he had so nobly sustained. But that hamper would come in very sweet, not only in the contents, useful enough to a large family at Christmas, but as suggesting thoughts, sincerely enough entertained, of sympathy and regard toward him.

And let me not record it, to the honour of Grimes, our grocer, that in packing our hamper, and probably divining its import, although he assured us that sugar gave him a little loss, and tea very little profit, he added some currants and crackers, and a whole bottle of wine, which undeniably must have been something out of Mr. Grimes's pocket.

So we worked away with a will that Christmas-eve, and being unable to get through our gracious labour that day, we reserved a few hours for it on Christmas-day itself. The old dowager's money enabled us to deal with various cases after a substantial fashion. When there was some dull, heavy, worthless, but old fellow, who would be sure to drink away the money in gin and beer, we laid out the money in purchases to the best of our judgments. But when there was some careful housewife, who doubtless would lay out the money better than we could, and perhaps had her own various calls for Christmas-tide, we handed her the cash. Up-stairs and down-stairs we went, climbing the attics and penetrating to the parlours of our town. Wherever we went, we saw evidence of the Christmas season. There was always the Christmas pudding, or something that did duty for the Christmas pudding. There was an old woman, who lived very contentedly on bread and water, occasionally varied with something a little better. But she was hale and hearty, and bore the weight of her well-nigh ninety years cheerfully. I know very rich people who would give up their riches if they could only have her years and health. There was another old woman with her, whom I found out to be her daughter, who had once been house-keeper in a gentleman's family, and who had been bequeathed a small pension for faithful services. For the first time for years, she had come to her mother's this Christmas, and had been able to bring her a lot of good things. Their feeble hands had stuck bits of holly about the house, and their quavering voices were giving out some old Christmas tune. In one or two places I found servant-girls who had come home to spend Christmas with their parents, or, at least, had sent them a present of some of their wages. Relations and old friends, who had not written for years, were writing to one another now. In the streets the children were singing their carols, and high up in the steeples the bells were sounding their glad carillons. There is something in the very aspect of the streets, in the ladies' furs and sables, in the worn frail attire of even the poorest, that is cheerful. I know that there is beef and plum-pudding in the workhouse, and I would trust—though I am by no means so certain—in the prison. In all the cottages around there are mighty hams, worthy of Chicago, for the pig has been killed which is to do something towards the Christmas rent and much towards the Christmas festivities. I early learned to be thankful that Christmas comes, when it does, in the dreariest part of the year, enabling men practically to exhibit peace and good-will, rather than at a time of fruits and flowers, which might almost encourage men to take a selfish epicurean view of life.

On a Christmas-eve it was that I first saw my Aglaia. She came bounding into the drawing-room that evening, having come to spend the Christmas holiday with us. She came to me and clasped my hands and kissed my forehead, for we were not second cousins, once or twice removed or so, which made no difference; and we agreed that we had been, and would be, friends and relations all our lives. Her name was not really Aglaia—indeed, it was very dif-

ferent, being simply Sara; but in those days I was painfully hammering away at the *Odyssey*, with a dim perception, amid the drudgery of the grammar and lexicon, of the divine depths of poetry revealed by old Homer, and the name of one of the nymphs was Aglaia, the said name signifying brightness and joy; and so I gave Sara (observe, not Sarah) the pet name, the *plume de plume* of Aglaia. It was a comfort to rave about Aglaia, or talk sensibly about Aglaia, or write verses to Aglaia, and no one actually to know who Aglaia might be, except, indeed, Aglaia herself, to whom some of the verses were at first starting painful—indeed exceedingly painful; but just as I hammered some sense out of the *Odyssey*, so I hammered some sense into my verses. It was the next Christmas-eve that I proposed to Aglaia—I remember it so well—and not the next Christmas-eve, but the one after that, I proposed once more, and was accepted. You see I was only seventeen when I perpetrated the first offer, and she lay back on the drawing-room settee, and went into a peaking fit of delicious delicious laughter. She was nineteen—two whole years ahead of me—and gave herself the air of being my grandmother. That Christmas-day, during dessert, I made a collection of all the most sentimental notions in the crackers and bouillons, which I read with I don't know how much feeling and emphasis, while she laughed immoderately at the very great nonsense exhibited by myself and by my mottoes. But this I will say for myself, that for the intervening years, and indeed all my lifetime, she was my ownest Aglaia, and I never had an Aglaia beside. I believe she knew and felt this, and this ultimately caused her to reward my devotion. For, lingering one Christmas-eve in the drawing-room, where we sometimes found ourselves alone, while the others were going on with the decorations at the church, hard by—when I was pressing what I had begun to consider a sad and hopeless suit, I found Aglaia's bright eyes dim with tears, and she could hardly answer me. And later, meeting her on the dark staircase, without a word we found that our arms were around each other and our lips sealed; and then, of course, matters were settled. I cannot say that we were married on Christmas-eve; but there came a Christmas-eve when it was arranged that we should commence a new life with the new year. But before then I had waited Christmas after Christmas for my wife—seven years in all—and I could have waited another seven before I would have my Aglaia.

It was so odd bringing my Sara, *alias* Aglaia home, to spend the very next Christmas-day we had. How the old servants grinned to see Master Johnny and his wife! How it was a matter for which my old nurse, still extant, opined that I ought to be slapped and sent to bed! Our one grand sleeping-apartment at the vicarage—best room, or guest-room, or sleeping-room as it was severally called—was set apart for us with all the wealth of ornament and comfort which the dear dad could give. It was the grand room where the Bishop had slept when he came to confirm, and where Uncle Robert, an irascible gentleman from whom we had expectations never realized, figuratively speaking pitched his tent.

How charmingly pretty and becoming the bride looked at church! and indeed most of the congregation had some knowledge of her. My old schoolmaster—the Rev. Othello Gumbler, of King Edward's Grammar School—who had always entertained the meanest opinion of my power of translating the *Odyssey*, expressed an opinion, which came round to us, as such opinions generally do, that my wife was a great deal too good for me—which was so far complimentary to my wife; and he wondered how in the world I persuaded her to have me, which was by no means complimentary to myself. He remarked sarcastically that your Queen Titania was always partial to a certain description of animal, which, upon investigation, I found to be a donkey. It was not very civil, but I never could bear that man. He was always my Doctor Fell. I little thought at the time that this was to be my last Christmas-tide at the old home. The dear old father passed to his rest, and we never all met again, as in former years. He passed away, leaving blessed words of comfort and hope to those around him, and seeing blessed visions with his fading eyes, which we earthly ones could not see.

There was a large family of us, and his last anxiety was what would become of those of us who were not placed in life. And indeed, in a clergyman's family, the death of the clergyman is a most serious matter in a business point of view. The branch falls, and the warm nest upon it falls at the same time. When an incumbent dies, his income dies with him that very day; all accruing proceeds are scroved up for the next incumbent, after paying the necessary expenses of carrying on the services. Undoubtedly it is hard on families, but then my father had entered upon this arrangement, and in the first instance had reaped the benefit of it. It so happened that none of his earthly cares were realized. We have done as well, under a kindly Providence, as if he had been spared to help us. Next Christmas we were all assembled under a roof of my own, where I had heaped up the Christmas fires on my own hearth, and gathered my own Lares and Penates, where Aglaia welcomed all my brothers and sisters, who had been so kind to her. And close to Aglaia lay an infant—John the Third, we call him—who seemed given as some compensation for the life we had lost, who gazed fixedly at the mountain of light in the chandelier, and who seemed to