



CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE CHILD

TWO years old he stood looking at the fire. The room was full of people to whom Christmas eve had long ago become no longer an illusion. The walls were hung with holly. A Christmas tree sparkled in the corner behind the fire, behung with toys, bangles and spangles. Mistletoe hung from the chandelier, with festoons of coloured paper, red, green and white. A child's little stocking dangled from the mantel. The firelight flickered upon it and upon the child's golden crop of curls as he stood in the midst of them—the first Christmas he could ever begin to understand. In putting up the decorations there had been one touch of sadness. One of the family was at the war; his first Christmas away from home. At last accounts he and his men were digging themselves in for the winter. Perhaps there was less magic than usual about this Christmas eve. The world was full of hatreds and slaughter that cared little for the Star of Bethlehem or even Santa Claus.

Suddenly the child stretched forth his hand to the sputtering fire. "Sa' Cos, come down chimney, fetch pitty things for baby 'tocking." He said it like a little song, with all the incredible ecstasy of perfect belief in the impossible. Some one went to the piano and played, "Adeste Fideles." The family sang the sweet old benign hymn while the glory of the fire flickered upon the child. And when the music was over, the child had gone to sleep in his little rocking chair.

A Pair of Silk Stockings

BEFORE the war they were thirty-five cents, and at that price and length they were good for two years' wear. The lady was spoiled by these hosiery. But she never complained of being weary of the same old three-for-a-dollar pair on and off and on. No, stockings after all are very inconspicuous garments and none of the lady's friends had a chance to object. But now—woe is the lady! She pays seventy-five cents for said brand of silk stockings; same length, colour and looks; said to be same quality—certainly the same brand by the name, a good old name of which nobody could be ashamed. On for the first time—a hole occurs in the knee. Next time a tear in the lower visible section, which must be darned. On examination said pair of silk stockings are found to be untenably rotten, not good for even a month's wear and tear and care. In short, they are shoddy. Dealer examines them; says it was lady's fault in being too rough; she should have put them on with a feather duster. On sufficient proof that said stockings got only the most ladylike treatment he consents to rebate a large fraction of the price on other pairs—which are inspected before buying. The dealer had good stockings; oh, yes, but he had also the others, and the lady looked innocent, so he got rid of them. Not the maker's fault, perhaps; good material scarce—and no doubt the dealer got them for a song, or how could he afford to take off so large a percentage of cost and not lose money?

Moral: Do not wear stockings.

Thrift Begins at the Top

THRIFT, which is supposed to be a personal matter, is to be made a national habit. The Minister of Finance will start a campaign to inculcate thrift in the people. We presume he will begin at the top and let the nabobs of expenditure give us all a lesson by cutting down on their expenses. A thrift meeting in Toronto a few days ago had on the platform one \$300 lady's coat and several expensive gowns, at the door over forty costly automobiles. Thrift is a pretty large order. Everybody can save something. Useless expenditure is always a waste. We used to condone extravagances in rich people by alleging that what they bought and didn't half use created a demand for raw material and paid wages for labour. Similarly big fires were regarded by some experts as blessings in disguise. Rebuilding created a demand. And insurance must be forced to

disgorge sometimes in the general business of leveling up. Now we know better. To buy what you cannot half use, to spend extravagantly for the merely ornamental, to build and then to tear down, to lay streets and rip them up, to chuck away clothes before they are decently worn, to gorge the stomach first and glut the garbage can afterwards—these are all forms of waste which any sane person knows are sins and should be regarded as crimes. We always knew it. But we refused to act on our knowledge. Now the Government comes along to teach us. And Sir Thomas White may find us all apt pupils.

Cold Storage and the Commonwealth

DOES any government in Canada, does any large municipality containing hundreds of thousands of consumers know within fifty per cent. what goods are held in cold storage in that vicinity? In spite of Government warnings and spasmodic reductions, prices of certain staples persist in crawling up. There is said to be a lack of materials held in storage. On the other hand, dealers are blamed for holding goods in storage and keeping them there to force up the price. That is a corner on commodities; knowing that people must have them and must pay the price. Who is right? Cold storage was invented for a boon. Is it becoming a popular calamity? Is the cold storage merchant a benefactor or a robber? Well, it would seem as if we shall never find out until the commonwealth is able to estimate early enough in the season what will be the necessary average consumption of the population for a period of non-productive months, what is the gross aggregate of production, how much is safe to export, what are the facilities for importing in case of too much export, how high prices should go based upon storage and present production. In fact, cold storage is not a private business. It is as much a case for the commonwealth as a bank is.

On National Service

AGREEABLE it is to see how earnestly Sir Robert Borden and Mr. R. B. Bennett are working in the interests of recruiting in various parts of the country, but the spectacle cannot be really satisfactory until the machinery of the National Service Board is put into operation along with the oratorical efforts of our statesmen. Surely the young men and the women of this country are thoroughly possessed of the facts of the situation. They know the need and they must know that their

duty is to help fill the need. Another curious point is this: the people who go to recruiting meetings now-a-days are chiefly those who have good excuses for being in "civies" or else cast-iron stubbornness to protect them from being persuaded.

Gold and Hard Times

CONSIDER how the inrush of gold works economic ills in the United States. It is a well-worn truism that high prices are caused by too much gold, which means cheap money which always—vide Leacock for confirmation—must mean dear commodities purchased by money. It is merely a case of balance; what goes up must come down—somewhere else. Well, the present high prices in the opulent United States are not so simple. But it seems to work out something like this: First of all, cheap money means money pushing itself out for investment, people seduced into bad investments, unthrifty expenditures, speculation and poverty. That is always probable. But there is a more direct cause. There has been, for instance, a rise in the price of diamonds, accompanied by heavy rises in many luxuries. Why? Not only because of the increase in the cost of making diamonds and other luxuries—though that is something; but because a lot of people have been enriched by the war enough to afford diamonds. There is a greater demand. Up goes the price. At the same time a large percentage of people are not able to afford a heavy increase in expenditures. In order not to be left clean behind they must pay the prices demanded from the rich. They pay the price. As long as they pay it, up it goes. Too much money, therefore, is easily able to produce hard times by increasing the cost of living. Henry George's axiom of progress and poverty may be replaced by—gold and hard times.

Opera First

ANOTHER woe is added unto the already paralyzing burdens of New York. Not the glut of gold that causes prices to go up and the people at large to rush into fool investments because money is cheap. No, it is far more subtle. Mr. Gatti Casazza, manager of the Metropolitan Opera, ruefully announces that if the war continues to keep up, it will be impossible to give Gotham its continuous fill of grand opera with the necessary crescendo on the new great stars. So many musical and dramatic artists are being sent to the front in the producing centres. The grand exodus of artists from Europe promised to make New York the centre of the world's music. Then the war orders abroad made Gotham the centre of the world's gold. Now, with all the gold, it seems that New York is not to be allowed to spend enough of it on grand opera. This is the irony of economic fate. Poor little old New York! Let her weep like Gallia. Opera must be kept up. Or the world goes down.

An Heroic Return

THE taciturnity of admiralty officers and the obedience of their men are all that stand between the Canadian reading public and as stirring an episode of the sea as one would wish to hear—the struggle of our Canadian torpedo boat, the Grilse, against overwhelming seas, her call for help, the official report that she was lost, and her final return, bruised and battered, into the harbour at Shelburne, N. S. Canadians who have crossed the Atlantic in the last eighteen months or so will remember this little bit of a ship escorting them out past Cape Race, or stopping them peremptorily for the "countersign"—like a sort of official terrier, travelling always at top speed and looking the very picture of importance and efficiency even when a common ground swell seemed big enough to hide it. Remembering her, one is the more moved at the thought of her daring a serious Atlantic gale.