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A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

HIS number brings us to another milestone, under which we bury our sixth volume. We have fared one stage farther along the highway of journalistic existence. The feeling that the imprint of maturity is now become so clearly defined as to efface the feature-marks of our youth, makes us retrospective. And not only does the occasion naturally lure us into looking backward, but also the position we have arrived at lends itself temptingly to the same mood. For, we are now on higher ground than when we set out. The end of each year has found us not only one volume on.

ward, but also another upland higher. We can scan our path from its beginning. Our view is not broken by the interruption of any elevation so high as that on which our feet are now placed. The ups in our experience have run all the one way, the downs have run uniformly the other. It is against the direction of the latter we have steadily made progress, and we have acquired strength in the exercise.

The survey of the familiar ground we have trodden cannot but be attracted by triumphant interest more to the difficulties of the way than to its firm levels and gentler grades. Where the road was heavy, where the ascent was steep, where obstacles had to be surmounted, there are stakes set up in memory's plan of the route which locate each hard spot all the more vividly because each is the

scene of a difficulty overcome. But the brighter experiences of our journey are not cast into the shade by the gloomier ones. They should not be, because theirs is the heavier side of the scale. If the road was often stiff, it was skirted by dwellers whose welcome was cordial and whose support was steadfast. BOOKS AND NOTIONS had to make head against a condition of things that is peculiar to the experience of a venturer along a road that is far from thickly populated, among constituents that are slow to recognize in community of interest and action a means of benefiting themselves individually.

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But if belief in community of interest and action were not a common trade creed when we began our quest for readers, it has by degrees been growing into a generally accepted one since. And we believe we have been a leading influence in the diffusion of the doctrine that in union is strength. We preached it when there were few embraced it, and its propagation has been coincident with the extension of this journal's circulation. The fusion of the trade into a homogeneous body of influence whose principle of cohesion shall be identity of interest, in whose concerted action for the welfare or defence of trade all individual or local means shall be assimilated. This may possibly never be perfectly effected, but it is a less utopian idea now than it was six years ago. Booksellers and fancy goods dealers are arrayed in a less open order now than they ever were before, and it is not too optimistic to hope that they will close up into a phalanx yet. The fluid atmosphere of opinion is yet a loose medium to hold together so large an aggregation, but things are happening all the time whose effect tends to coagulate opinion and fix into a solid mass, that trade in which the constituent members yet act rather freely and with some waste of friction upon each other.

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These things whose tendency is thus consolidating are the wrongs of the trade. Their solidifying action will be hastened by any agency that collects and marshals them with a view to this end. In other words, the more clearly the formidable nature of these grievances is exhibited, the more will the trade which is threatened or injured by them look to its own defence. We have been and shall continue to be an agency whose reports and warnings give the true position and strength of the menacing elements that are either within or outside the trade. By this means do we hope to promote and strengthen organization, and hence to further the dislodgment from their present strong position of many encroaching practices of these times.

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We have had liberal encouragement in our efforts to unite the trade against evils of whose significance and moment we have sought to spread a general appreciation. That encouragement stands at our back in the form of a long subscription list, and we have the satisfaction of feeling that if the trade is not yet completely united in a defensive league, it is at all events united in the support of a paper which maintains a militant attitude against all forms of infringement upon rights that are the legitimate traders. That fact is gratifying to ourselves and should be hopeful for the trade. It shows that the trade is alive to the importance of keeping itself informed upon the questions relating to its very existence. This itself is somewhat assuring, in view of the fact that some time ago it seemed as if certain rights would be allowed to go by default. But the present position of the trade on some of these matters, though it might be more earnest and concerted, confirms the significance of its unanimous support of BOOKS AND NOTIONS, which significance we have already interpreted as the endorsement of defensive sentiment. The trade has not been inactive upon the question of encroachment on the part of department and tea stores, or upon that of school books. But we are sure there is a reserve of enthusiasm and force yet to be exerted.

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We have been the mutual friend to whom many wholesalers and many retailers are indebted for their present acquaintance with each