

écarté with Warrington—toll solemnly the hour just as they did when Fielding listened to their chimes at midnight, and lonely, fierce, industrious Johnson dusted his books in his lodging near to Wren's gateway. I think it would be an impossibility for even the most prosaic person not to feel the influence of the place, with its peaceful charm and quaint memories of the past accentuated by the busy, vulgar roar from the Strand highway. At every season of the year, at any hour of the day, these lanes and quadrangles have attractions possessed by no other quarter of this wonderful old town.

I turned from the window back to the darkening room with its beautiful panelling hung with carved oak garlands, its fine frieze delicately cut into a leafy design, and looked about me at the very parlour once furnished by Goldsmith with mahogany, and mirrors, and Wilton carpets; and I stood by a hearth that has been altered not at all since the days when his ricketty entertainments were condemned by his neighbour Blackstone. Here in the sunshine of a brief prosperity came those friends, every line of whose faces we know by heart, to take part in the gorgeous dinners, the many suppers, at which the host was the cheeriest, the kindest, the gayest. I should like to have seen the modern furniture vanish, with the piles of law books and littered tables, and in their places to have found the shelves full of such treasures as the first edition of *The Deserted Village*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the blue draperies against the panes, a great armchair pushed aside from which maybe Reynolds and Johnson had just risen. I can fancy an Indian Repast (as Boswell in the *Journey to the Hebrides* grandly calls tea) spread out by the side of the bright fireplace, with Miss Horneck ready to fill the china cups, and the "Captain in Lace" appointed to hand the cakes. Then, as now, the flicker of the flames fell on the same square of wall, decorated, maybe, with the flute, to the piping of which the Flemish peasants listened, the children of Green Arbour Court danced; then, as now, the fresh wind on its journey riverwards whistled past the windows, past the shadowy sundial: and the dusty casements opposite (behind which Porson once looked) glittered in precisely the same way with little sparkles of light. Nothing was altered (except that the rooks no more fly home to their nests in the elm-trees, and roses have ceased to bloom in the garden-borders) and I could hear, I thought, the last words of a parting speech, catch the last notes of a parting song, and could figure to myself the chairs that were in waiting down below to take on some of the merry party to the playhouse, to applaud, I suppose, at *The Good-natured Man*, or *She Stoops to Conquer*. And Goldsmith, left alone, must have sat times out of number by the chimney corner, pondering on a hundred delightful fancies and, resolutely refusing to think of that burden of debt gradually growing larger and larger, have occupied himself instead with the fond memories of that home in Ireland which cruel Fate never allowed him to re-visit, where his sisters trimmed their saques and concocted their face-washes, where little Oliver knew and sang all *Bill's* charming songs, and where the good pastor set an example of the most admirable piety. It was Rogers the poet who declared "that of all the books which, through the fitful changes of these generations, he had seen rise and fall, the charm of *The Vicar of Wakefield* had alone continued as at first." *Such is the reward* (says Forster), *of simplicity and of truth*. Think of that, ye would be George Merediths and Brownings, with your bags of tricks, your tiresome mannerisms, or do you scorn the good opinion of the multitude, and is it only the applause of the select few for which you crave?

Then there came those inevitable last days when there was to be no more rioting, days when Blackstone could certainly no longer complain of the dancing and feasting overhead, for Goldsmith lay dying in the small closet wedged in between the two parlours—a comfortless, windowless place—his remaining hours made wretched by the tardy remembrance of that debt of two thousand pounds which he was so incapable of paying. Here sat the doctor to feel the rapid pulse of his patient, and complain of the unaccountable amount of fever, to which remark the poor author answered that his mind was not at peace. There by the coffin that April day when the *Jessamy Bride* cut a lock of hair from the head of the dead poet, there, fitting a corner, was the old elbow chair, (now in the Kensington Museum) and the clamped desk stood on the table, and the gold-headed cane rested by the skirts of the Tyrian bloom satin coat, by the side of the cocked hat with its steel buckle. Here in the front room facing Essex Court gathered the crowd of mourners (you remember how Reynolds laid down his brush, and would paint no more, the day he heard of Goldsmith's death?) who afterwards assembled round the open grave in the Temple churchyard, and who later protested at Johnson's use of Latin in preference to English for the epitaph in Westminster Abbey. *Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man*; these words, written by one of his best friends, came to my mind as I stumbled down the dark staircase where nothing had been altered, even to the odd lanterns in the walks, since the time when those poverty-stricken men and women came thronging here to lament their benefactor's death. *Let not his frailties be remembered*. Who remembers the frailties of that generous, tender heart? I warrant no one dared to say a rough word of the dead man in the presence of Johnson, of Reynolds, of Topham, Beauclerk—their names are legion. *He was a very great man*. To be sure he was—and is: he, the author, poet, playwright is immortal.

This house (No. 2, Brick Court) should be marked with a tablet, for the casual visitor hardly knows how to find

the place; and there is another in Crown Office Row where Lamb was born, it is said, which I should like to see similarly decorated; and yet another nearly in Pump Court where Fielding wrote, which should be honoured with an inscription, too. The scent of the roses (the Cabbage, the old Provence, and the Maiden Blush all flourished till the beginning of this century) still clings to the pretty gardens in which I leant against a sycamore which must often have sheltered Goldsmith, and touched a cat-alpa tree planted by Sir Matthew Hale in the time of Elizabeth; the rooks still cawed for me, the river still flowed in a silver streak, swans floating double ("swan and shadow") on its untroubled waters. But it was a deceptive light, that twilight; I am conscious of that; and I knew, without being able clearly to see, that changes in the last few years have altered much of the dear old Temple. The house in Tanfield Court has gone, in which Sarah Malcolm murdered her mistress (there is a gruesome but interesting account in Thornbury's *Old Stories Re-told* of this lady, who sat, dressed all in red, to Hogarth, three days before her execution in Fleet Street), and Garden Court, loved by me, for Pip's sake, in conjunction with Barnard's Inn, has been re-built; and the Fountain has been barbarously restored; and the Thames is much further off than it used to be, and a good deal dirtier. But the Middle Temple Hall will survive my time, I know, as will the Church, so I threaded my way through the courtyards, past the twinkling lights, and the Jacobean porches and the old pumps and cisterns up to the Strand feeling thankful the alteration was no worse.

Such an uproar all about the Law Courts, where the newsboys screamed the latest news of the Commission and loafers, idling in packs, cheered, or jeered at those of the witnesses and principals in the great Case who were coming, weary enough (I should think), from the wrangling discussion. The splashes of mauve, yellow and red on the pavement, cast by the chemist's bottles of coloured waters,—there are not many of the old trade-signs left us—stained the damp greasy flagstones here and there with their coarse hues; otherwise the gas-lighted street and the hurrying crowds were colourless. It was odd to turn out of the quiet Temple precincts where the houses dream on of the Georgian days, and hardly a footfall sounds at this hour in the deserted quadrangles, into all the turmoil and strife of the nineteenth century. It is curious to remember that close to the spring which is to-day bubbling and filling the Roman Bath (where David Copperfield bathed) exactly as it has unceasingly done since the days of Julius Cesar, this great stream of Life pours unheeding past the arched walls and marble floors. Again, if you desire another strong contrast I do not know a much greater than to turn into Wine Office Court and so to Gough Square; in the former still stands The Cheshire Cheese where Goldsmith used to dine (they show you his favourite chair and table), nearly opposite to which are still the lodgings where he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield*, while in the latter Square, from a corner house, Tetty, rouged and bedizened if we may believe Garrick, used to gaze eagerly, on the watch for her Johnson's safe return from his walk. Literary folk are certainly nearer and dearer to us than ancient Romans, and though I could have died content if I had missed the sight of the Bath and its black and white paved passage, I would have been sorry indeed never to have seen the hiding place of those who have made London what it is to me. These back waters, echoing with scores of old-world legends and stories are to be found at every turning off the Strand and Fleet Street, almost untouched by time, wholly untouched by the Special Commission.

As I turned westward on the way back through the parks my companion told me the outline of the story of an old South Country squire who died the other day, whose life, begun curiously, has ended "curiously," as *Alice in Wonderland* would say. It seems that, only a lawyer's clerk, but cadet of a good family, he fell in love with an heiress at a race-meeting. The heiress reciprocated, and an elopement shortly ensued. The office was deserted, of course, the bridegroom having insisted on large settlements on himself, living with the bride on her estates, where he had much to look after. But soon came wars and rumours of wars, she crying of cruelty, he talking of foolish pride and nonsense; and then after fifteen years of terrible misery in a beautiful old house the poor heiress died, leaving all the rest of her property strictly tied up for her two little girls, which property was not to revert to the father unless the children died unmarried. So the squire, with many oaths, swore they never should marry; and he allowed them to grow up with absolutely no education, never permitting them to see anybody except the men and maids of the household, conduct which made them shy to the verge of idiocy. But Fate, that inscrutable power, arranged matters her own way, for a managing General, knowing of these great heiresses, contrived by a stratagem that his son should see the ladies, who, choosing and proposing in the space of six hours while the squire was away shooting, was clever enough to persuade the shy girl to trust to a post-chaise and a special license; so she, pretending to go nutting one fine morning, eloped as her mother did before her. One can imagine the squire's rage! He shut the other daughter up for the rest of her life ("She died a few years back," said my companion, "and on the occasion of her death the father wrote to me for congratulations, and sent me a haunch of venison in honour of the event") and never saw the married one again, or would hear her name mentioned. Some time ago he began to prepare for the Day of Judgment by building for himself a magnificent mausoleum which he had heated with pipes, as he hated the cold,

he said, and he was always buying coffins of new design. Once when some money fell to him unexpectedly he spent some of it in lining and covering one of his favourites with the best velvet, and decorating it with old silver handles and ornaments. "Last time I went to call" said my companion, "it was a wet day, and he was rather gloomy, so to brighten himself up a little he had arranged every detail of his funeral, and as I came to the door some of the available tenants were walking along the terrace, two by two, after four men who had the coffin on their shoulders. I saw the squire leaning out of the window. 'Curse you,' he called out to the bearers, 'you will jolt me to pieces; can't you carry me steadier than that?' My appearance didn't interrupt the performance; he went on for an hour drilling each one as to his deportment on the fatal day." Sir Pitt Crawley was an angel of light compared to this remarkable person, whose mad sayings and doings would fill a book, and yet who practically was partially sane. This queer type, after the Regent design, is dying out rapidly, if it is not dead already; it is one of the things we can spare exceedingly well. WALTER POWELL.

A CHRISTMAS REVERIE.

"The bright and morning star."

THE sun goes down and the world grows old,
Meaned at sunset the chilling blast,
Life grows dark and Love grows cold,
And they mourn that Faith is fading fast;
But the Christmas bells are ringing!

And see where,—clear in the purple sky,
Hesper-Phosphor,—herald of light,
Holdeth his silver crescent high,
Gleaming brightest on winter night,
While the Christmas bells are ringing!

Hesper-Phosphor—herald of day!
The sun turns back from his downward course.
Winter and darkness are passing away,
And Faith wakes fresh from her primal source,
When the Christmas bells are ringing!

The star that shone from the Syrian sky,
Still shines clear, with its promise bright
Of the birth of a newborn humanity
That, long ago on a Christmas night,
Men heard the angels singing;
Oh, true Light-bearer, Star Divine!

Risen fair in earth's winter day,
Do thou touch all hearts with that love of Thine
That lights us on in the upward way,
Till we hear the angels singing!

THE winter solstice is here again; and while all without is at its darkest and dreariest the fire on the household altar burns its brightest, and the Christmas bells are beginning to ring; and, here and there—possibly a few Scrooges are saying—"Christmas is a humbug!" But the world is not tired of Christmas yet.

There is a bright side to the undeniable truth that human nature is scarcely ever logically consistent; and this, because it is generally swayed by forces that go deeper than its consciousness. The precept "Know thyself," is for the great mass of humanity a dead letter. And while in practice it often falls below its theory it sometimes, too, rises above it; so, while Agnostics are proclaiming that old faiths are dying out, and half the church-going people are reading *Robert Elsmere* with greater or less sympathy, and theologians are expressing gratitude to its author for maintaining at least a theistic position, the Christmas bells are ringing through the darkness as cheerily as ever—touching even callous hearts with tender associations, the sweetest and brightest that life can know! And the carts laden with greenery to be twined into Christmas wreaths for the church walls, and the richly-stocked and crowded shops, and the very decorations in the grocers' windows—all testify that the world in general is as busy as ever, if not busier, in preparing to do honour to the Christmas festival. Never, indeed, we might safely say, have so many labourers been at work—with hand and brain, pen, pencil, and tools of humbler sort—in preparing special productions of all kinds meant to serve in some way towards Christmas keeping.

Of course there are a thousand ways of keeping Christmas, for each will keep it after his own kind. Yet it can scarcely be celebrated at all, even by him who cares only for the Christmas feast, without being, at least, a remainder of that which the heart of humanity has gained by the first Christmas, never to lose again. For the Angels' Song celebrated more than the birth of a Child—even a Child perfect and Divine. It celebrated, also, the inbreathing of a new spirit into humanity—the spirit of Love. And Love is a great deal more than "Altruism," which, by the definition of some of its scientific exponents means simply, beneficence to others from any motive; while Love, simply because it is Love, must pour itself into the hearts of others, and find its own happiness in seeking their good. The Angels' Song, as we find it in one version of the passage, "Peace to men of good-will," is no arbitrary promise. It is simply the statement of an eternal law, here first authoritatively declared. Love and Peace, if not Love and Happiness, are inseparable—as inseparable as are the twin opposites. And it is the glory of Christianity that it supplies not only the glorious ideal of humanity, but also the only force that can raise weak humanity to attain unto it.

So we may well greet every Christmas with hopeful joy, glad of its good things, patient with the weaknesses and inconsistencies that accompany the good, glad that through all this we can trace the same principle at work, love finding its happiness in its active exercise. And that may gleam as brightly in the doll that delights the char-