

Going before, as he did, Scrooge is, after all, but an epitome of certain modern tendencies—the tendency to sneer at all things that have no sufficient reason for their being beyond their own inherent fairness—as if that were not reason enough, in all conscience, in a world we have done so much to make ugly!—the tendency to systematise charity into a virtue with a balance in the ledger—the tendency to turn our very tears to good account, and make weeping, in so far as may be, a profitable exercise. There is this difference. Scrooge was a law unto himself only—his transgressions would be a law unto the universe, and direct the very stars in their courses from a utilitarian point of view. Then Scrooge never troubled himself to give a reason, while his modern prototypes are, above all things, desirous of demonstrating the eminent reasonableness of the explosive “Humbug!” and the irresponsible and irresponsible “Good afternoon.”

But no modern tendency could keep us long from Marley's ghost, as it made its first fantastic and fractional appearance on the knocker of Scrooge's lodgings. And once having entered with the hapless Scrooge, and listened to the echoes that resounded through the empty old warerooms as he shut himself in, and watched the ghostly hearse precede him up the broad staircase, and shared his terror at the clangorous bells and the clanking chains, and been “interviewed” with him by the queer, dapper, little ghost, with its caudal encumbrance of cash-boxes in Mr. Leech's picture, once under the spell of the quaintest ghost story a disembodied individuality ever figured in, there is an end to reflection and an end to time, though the clock ticks on as if the moments were at par; and the Spirit of Christmas enters and fraternises with him in the platform rocker, and we all celebrate in many a toast from the empty Koransha bowl on the mantel. The lamp burns low, and the gray ashes pile up on the fender, and the snow gathers on the sill in long white ridges against the blackness of the night, and from a vase of withered petals arise and blossom, shedding a dear and a subtle perfume, the roses of Christmases long overpast; as we look down with Scrooge upon the scenes of his *séance* with the Past, the Present, and the Future.

With Scrooge as our nimble partner, we curtsy and caper in “Sir Roger de Coverley” at the Fezziwig ball, when “old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too, with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners, people who were not to be trifled with, people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

“But if there had been twice as many; ah, four times; old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to her, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons, and when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance, advance and retire, 'hold hands with your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread the needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig 'cut'—cut so deftly that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.”

And with Scrooge and the other invisible guest we look on at the Cratchit Christmas dinner, not daring, for obvious reasons connected with the size of it, to partake of anything but the general hilarity, when “at last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried, ‘Hurrah!’”

And we shudder with Scrooge over his own wretched, lonely, friendless prospective end; and look with moist eyes upon the homely domestic scene from which Tiny Tim had gone away.

“Quiet, very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet.

“And He took a child and set him in the midst of them.”

“The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hands up to her face.

“‘The colour hurts my eyes,’ she said.

“The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!”

AND so, for the twentieth time, the book performs its good office for us, and stirs in us the love and pity and gentleness that fall so easily into

a state of coma in unwatched chambers of the human heart. And the Scrooge in each of us is gloriously regenerated by the blessed interposition of Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and To Come. As they rustle and beckon about us in the deepening shadows of the room, we can find no voice for the inspiration of their presence. But at least we may repeat, as the last ember falls, that very remarkable sentiment of Mr. Scrooge's, as Mr. Scrooge's, “A Merry Christmas to everybody!” and echo, as we close the book, the gentle benediction of Tiny Tim,

“God bless us, every one!”

SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN.

## CHRISTMAS IN THE HOSPITAL.

AND is it Christmas mornin'? I've lost my count of time,  
But I thought it must be Christmas, by the bell's sweet, solemn chime;  
And I had a dream of the home-folks, just as the mornin' broke—  
May be t'was the bells that brought it, ringin' before I woke!

An' is it Christmas mornin'? An' while I'm lyin' here,  
The folks to church are goin'—the bells do ring so clear!  
Fathers an' mothers an' children, merrily over the snow,  
Just as *we* used to go, on Christmas long ago!

Oh, yes! I know you're good, nurse, an' I *do* try not to fret,  
But at Christmas time, no wonder if my eyes with tears are wet;  
For I saw so plain, in my dream, the brown house by the mill,  
An' my father an' my mother—ah me—are they there still?

And, as they go to church to-day—do they think an' speak of *me*,  
An' wonder where poor Katie is, across the great blue sea?  
An' well it is they cannot tell! an' may they *never* know;  
For sure t'would only break their hearts to hear my tale of woe!

My mother must be gettin' old; an' *she* was never strong;  
But then her spirit was so bright, an' sweet her daily song;  
She sings no more about the house, but I know she prays for me,  
An' wipes away the dropping tears, for the child she ne'er may see!

My father's bent with honest toil an' trouble bravely borne,  
But never has he had to bear a word or look of scorn;  
An' never shall it come through *me*! for all I have been wild,  
I'd rather die a thousand deaths than shame him for his child!

Ah yes! I have been sinful, but some were more to blame,  
Who never think because of *that* to hang their heads for shame!  
Ah well! I mustn't think of *them*, but of *myself*, and pray  
That He will take away the sin—who came on Christmas day!

An' thank you for the letter, nurse, you say the ladies brought,  
'Twas kind of them to think of me—I thank them for the thought;  
The *print* is easy read, but oh! what would I give to see  
Just one small scrap of *writin'* from the old home-folks, to me!

But nurse, those bells seem tellin' of the better home above,  
Where sin an' sorrow cannot come—but all is peace an' love;  
Where broken hearts are healed at last, an' darkness passed away—  
An' He shall bid us welcome home who came on Christmas day!

FIDELIS.

## SOCIAL SOLECISMS.

At some period or another in life, how many of us have had occasion to reflect that there is an inordinate amount of inconsiderateness—to call it by no harsher name—in this mundane world? With what disregard of time that is valuable, and indifference to feelings that are our own, do people intrude upon the individual privacy, from motives that are frequently trivial, and upon matters that do not at all concern us? One caller wants an introduction to so-and-so, and we are supposed to be on terms of such intimacy with him that, with no chance of escape from the request, we are confidently besought to furnish the social passport on the spot. Often, too, we are called upon for the introduction, which is tantamount to a certificate of character, by those who have no claim whatever upon us, and who, it may be, have just made our acquaintance through a chance third person, whose knowledge of the individual we are asked to vouch for is as slight as our own. To the calls of humanity, in the case of those who have been unfortunate, one's ear, of course, must always be open, and if one's purse cannot extend the needed relief one's heart may. But these are not the calls we generally feel impatient with; nor should they be those that make demand upon our interest with some acquaintance who may be in a position to help a friend in need, if we ourselves are unable to act the part of the Good Samaritan. It not infrequently happens, however, that even these requests are a serious tax upon friendship, besides upsetting our complacency, and putting a strain, which it may ill bear, upon our good nature. This is particularly the case, when the demand is for an introduction to some heaven-descended Editor or Jove in the journalistic orb, whose favour, it may be, we ourselves have only just succeeded