

A Song of the Stars.

Down thro' the deep, deep blending blue, into the heart of man

Singeth each star on its glittering throne,

A song of love and triumph—alone.

A song that the angels choir'd in the morn
When Christ the Babe in Bethlehem was born.

How old, how young this song of the stars,

Voicing the ages at noontide and night;

Bearing to man a message of light.

Trumpet of heaven and cymbal of sea

Voice that was heard o'er the hills of Judea.

Hark to that message of peace from the stars

Ringeth athwart the hut covered plain.

Shepherds have paused to list to the strain

Far in the East God's love lights the morn—

Beams from the glories that Bethlehem adorn.

—THOMAS O'HAGAN.

Overlooked Aspects.

BY THE EDITOR.

The fullest trains of the year are those that leave the city stations on Christmas Eve. From noon to midnight there is a constant exodus. Old men and children, young men and maidens, a constant stream of humanity takes its way to where the locomotives stand impatient to accomplish the reunion of countless families. It is a part of our national existence, this Christmas home-coming, this one day of the year. For many years the family was undivided and indivisible. But a time came when first one place was vacant, and then as the years went, others. But on Christmas Eve the detached particles are borne swiftly back to their places, and on the morrow the group is complete. Yet the old order changeth, and soon this too comes to an end. Even at Christmas there is a vacant chair; then another and another, until the dozen laughing faces are but memories and there remain but one old and one very young. Even to these the parting comes, and presently the elder takes a place in the circle of a new generation and sits reminiscent, watching the same inevitable sequence perhaps through all its stages. And yet withal, Christmas is the merry day on which care must depart whether the circle be complete or oft times broken. Truly it is a day of peace on earth.



In certain parts of the country there are two aspects of physical nature which give opposite, though it may be concurrent appropriateness to this occasion. Along the coastline of the great lakes there is awe and inspiration from the majestic thunder of mighty waves, as they come tumbling over long miles of chafing waters. The natural stillness of the village is broken by the clock-like heave and lull of the ceaseless roar of breakers, and added to this there is usually the minor tone in nature's harmony, the plaintive sighing of the wind, that tired of driving the waves so far and so wildly stops short among the desolate leaf-shorn branches of ancestral trees. At the same time perchance there may be the silent downcoming of the snow, as peaceful and as pervading as a benediction.



When the railways began their construction in this country, after the immediate work was finished, and some little money acquired perhaps, the men who had done the work formed into little settlements, some taking up miniature farms, some working for the older settlers, and some few retaining an employment with the railways. From the nature of things some of these settlements could not be permanent. Of many of them not a vestige remains. The cabins have been torn down and nothing habitable has taken their places. The occupants and their children have gone elsewhere. But while they remained there were some striking examples of fortitude, of patience in long-suffering, of philosophic cheerfulness and earnest Christian piety the like of which are not easily found in the tumultuous onrush of life in the great centres of population.

In one such settlement the bitter blasts that swept unchecked from the far off other bank of what was once a mighty river, rattling the doors and windows of the tiny habitations, were not more cold and drear than the never passing poverty of the inmates. Neither on the other hand were the pines that grew upon the bleak banks more rugged than the human offspring. It was not an uncommon sight to see in the depths of winter the half-clad, bare-legged and bare-footed children running over snow or naked frozen ground, their healthy rosy cheeks brightened by happy smiles. Almost as soon as they could walk they were obliged to work. And yet in the fulness of their Catholic faith, in the natural joyfulness of their race, the mildly falling snow that wraps the hills in quiet and fills the valley with unvaried white was not more gentle than their upbringing. Christmas was indeed to them more than to their favored neighbors the years' day of happiness and joy. Than their's, no merrier peals of laughter rang out to greet the well told tale, and no tales were better or better told.



There was long ago a Christmas festival which it is to be feared has during the last quarter of a century fallen much into disuse. About the first of December in each year it was the custom in the village school to set lessons in penmanship, usually a verse or two for the younger children, and for their elders some subject was chosen which would afford at the same time a specimen of ability in the art of composition. When these had been rendered in the child's best style upon folios of foolscap, the precious sheets were garnished with frames of manipulated tissue paper in many colors. Crinkled paper was not then known, else the profusion of decoration had been marvellous beyond imagination. The pillars and other objects in relief were pressed into service that the most favorable presentment might be ensured. To this as closing day drew near there were added long festoons of native palm, by which term were implied the foliage of all the evergreens of the district. It was not always an easy thing to procure the best varieties, and it often meant the tramp of several miles and the work of a whole day. One favored spot was by side of the cabin used for dwelling place and workshop by an old half witted recluse. Bobby's habits were never the outcome of fixed purpose except such of them as he fell into by stress of hunger. He was a familiar figure at the rear doors of the farm houses, where he was looked upon in varying degrees of kindness, but never with suspicion. He was of a musical bent, and would enter without special preference any of the churches, go straight to the organ gallery and with eyes upon the ceiling beat time with hand and foot to any measure whatsoever. Bobby had views about most things, but particularly about phrenology. He lived many years alone and was found at last nearly frozen to death during one of these severest winters of late years. He died in that common refuge of distressed humanity, the county jail. But whatever else might be said of Bobby, he was willing to give as he was to receive, and the responsible school-boys had to thank him for leave to plunder a forest that was not his, and also for the shelter his weather beaten dwelling could for such brief seasons afford. When the evergreens were brought, it was a matter of a few nights' boisterous work to weave them into the necessary decorations, to bind them about the pillars and along the walls, to make of them alphabetical letters for texts and mottoes, and to place these in the positions of honor over doorways, blackboards, and the statuette of Our Lady.

The climax came on the last day of school—Exhibition day—as it was frankly named. The parents were assembled; the children sang and recited; the specimens, before described, were inspected; the head pupils were questioned by persons of distinction present; some high dignitary of the civil community distributed prizes; the priest gave his blessing, a smile, and turned a merry jest; the school was dismissed; the children skipped merrily home over the snow haply to be met by new presents,

from pleased parents, a sleigh, a pair of skates or some other joy of the winter time. It was the teacher's day of triumph.



A tribute to the old Roman's excellence of character is contained in Sallust's comment upon Cato, that the less he coveted glory, the more he acquired it.

To no one who ever held high office could these words be applied with greater truth than to him whose passing into the imperishable future is the occasion of a nation's sorrow. There is something more than pathetic in the circumstances of this death of a great man. Even in that hour the nobility of the man shone forth. From the first stroke he was revived by stimulants administered by friends at his side. His comment upon the terrible condition in which he was, was an expression of regret that he should have caused annoyance by so pitiful a weakness. The next attack found no strength left. Under the hospitable roof of his Sovereign, fresh from the receipt of honors bestowed on him in recognition of services performed, Sir John Thompson rendered up to his Maker the talent that had been confided to him. By a coincidence, not singular, because altogether just and to be expected, a city evening paper had two adjoining editorials concerning him. The first was one hastily but admirably composed when the shocking news arrived. The second contained the assertion, written in the present tense, that Sir John Thompson was necessary to his country's welfare, and necessary to his party for at least fifteen years and until another could be produced of equal fitness for the great tasks that had fallen to his hand. It is not long since some now thrice happy few were able to see the man and to hear the bell-like tones of his voice as he paid affectionate tribute to the memory of his great predecessor whose statue was that day unveiled to the eyes of a generation who have grown through all earlier stages into full manhood since his mighty work of construction was accomplished. The moving impulse of a strong soul was there present, and the full and orderly mind stamped itself upon the flawless rhetoric of the speech. One might easily fancy he could discern in that impassive countenance the qualities of unflinching integrity, the knowledge of which from close and long acquaintance prompted a generous and equally honorable opponent to accept a wager in which the sentiment was thought to be involved. That he knew the value of an approving conscience and the folly of courting the popular clamor, his whole life was an evidence. He strove to avoid the honors heaped upon him. When an attack upon his religious convictions left an opening which might be availed of to accomplish a personal triumph, he dismissed it as an impertinence. Not St. Louis, the Catholic King of France, not a warrior in the armies of the Cross went more serenely into that other life where combats cease than this plain gentleman of our own land. Like the faithful servant that he was he bore about with him the representation of Him from Whom flow all bounties and all hopefulness. The crucifix was found upon his person as he lay inanimate in the ante room in the palace at Windsor; and a picture of the Saviour and a rosary. That he discharged his duties faithfully and for their own sake is the universal judgment and the highest praise. Surely to him may be accorded a verdict of compliance with that injunction addressed by Addison to his countrymen and transmitted by his own fame to all men, in the Spectator on that Christmas day nigh two hundred years ago, when Anne was Queen. "Let the ambitious Man, therefore, turn all his Desire to Fame this Way (toward the Supernatural Being who is the only proper Judge of our Perfections); and, that he may propose to himself a Fame worthy of his Ambition, let him consider that if he employs his Abilities to the best Advantage, the Time will come when the supreme Governor of the World, the great Judge of Mankind, who sees every Degree of Perfection in others, and possesses all possible Perfection in himself, shall proclaim his Worth before Men and Angels, and pronounce to him in the Presence of the whole Creation that best and most significant of Applauders, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into thy Master's Joy.*