THE ACADIAN

AND BERWICK TIMES.

HONEST, INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS.--DEVOTED TO LOCAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Vol. VIII. WOLFVILLE, KING'S CO., N. S., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1888. No. 20.

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THE ACADIAN.

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Select Poetry.

Courage.

Because I hold it sinful to despond,
And will not let the bitterness of life
Blind me with bitter tears, but look beyond
Its tumult and its strife;

Because I lift my head above the mist,
Where the sun shines and the broad breezes blow
By every ray and every raindrop kissed
That God's love doth bestow;

Think you I find no bitterness at all?
No burden to be borne, like Christian's pack?
Think you there are no ready tears to fall
Because I keep them back?

Why should I hug life's ills with cold reserve,
To curse myself and all who love me? Nay!
A thousand times more good than I deserve
God gives me every day.

And in each one of these rebellious tears
Kept bravely back, He makes a rainbow shine;
Grateful I take His slightest gift, no fears
Nor any doubts are mine.

Dark skies must clear, and when the cloud are past,
One golden day redeems a weary year;
Patient I listen, sure that sweet at last
Will sound His voice of cheer.

Then vex me not with chiding. Let me be,
I must be glad and grateful to the end,
I grudge you not your cold and darkness—me
The powers of light befriend.

—*Celia Thaxter.*

Choice Miscellany.

Christmas and New Year Thoughts.

It seems but yesterday since we bade farewell to the Christmas of '87, with all its joyous associations and blissful memories, and now another one is at our door. The seasons have passed quickly away—all too quickly. Winter, with its whitened earth; Spring, with its flush of blossoms and song of birds; Summer, with its flowers and sunshine; Autumn, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness"; and now we are within a few days of Christmas again—our Nova Scotia Christmas, with its ideal wintry weather. We are averse to a "green" Christmas. Mild weather at this season does not appeal to our hearts as the cold, keen, frosty weather does. Frost and snow without and warmth and merriment within, is the combination that pleases us. We like to see the ground covered with pure white sparkling snow, reminding us of the beautiful phrase of the minstrel king, "He giveth the snow like wool," and again, "Great things doth He which we cannot comprehend, for he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth." There is a cheerfulness about it that reflects itself in our faces—causing our cheeks and hearts to glow, and our steps grow lighter as we walk over the white ground in the cold, keen, bracing air. Goethe speaks of the cheerfulness of snow in sunshine,—"All this is beautiful indeed; the mist heaps itself together in fleecy snow clouds, the sun looks through, and the snow over everything gives back to our eyes and souls a feeling of gaiety." Christmas is the most human—the most kindly season of the year, and the world—as if to make amends for the welcome it gave to its Divine Guest, whose birthplace was a stable—now throws open the door and heart in kindly feelings and impulses—the essential spirit of Christianity.

It is the season of family re-unions and happy gatherings. One of the most characteristic pictures of Martin Luther represents him sitting, on Christmas eve, at the family table with his wife, the beautiful Catherine Bora, at his side, holding her infant, while the other children stand delighted around him. The old mother sits by the great German stove, and two of his friends are with him. Luther himself holds his lute, and his hands are playing with the strings. But he and his wife and mother, and all the children and the guests, are looking happily upon the Christmas tree that stands upon the table, glittering with "lights above the gifts that are profusely heaped around it." Some of the old customs are still kept up, but Christmas festivities are not indulged in to such an extent as they were years ago—when Irving wrote "Bracebridge Hall." The mistletoe is still suspended in the English farm-houses through Christmas, and the young men have the privilege of kissing the maidens under it. Oh, ye Fates! why have we no mistletoe in this country? And in England the Waits still go from house to house on Christmas eve singing carols. Apropos of carol-singing, as Bishop Taylor says, the "Gloria in Excelsis" sung by the angels to the shepherds at our Lord's Nativity was the earliest Christmas carol. George Herbert has some beautiful lines on this event:

"The shepherds sing, and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for thee?
My soul's a shepherd too, a flock it feeds—
Of thoughts and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy word, the streams Thy grace,
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Outsing the daylight hours.

An old English superstition taught that oxen were always found on their knees on Christmas eve, as it was said that an ox and an ass were present when "the child was born," and fell upon their knees in suppliant posture. We must not omit to mention the beautiful notion which represents the cock crowing all night long on Christmas night, and by its vigilance dispelling every kind of evil influence, and which has been so graphically described by Shakespeare:—

"Some say that ever 'gainst the season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

Howison, in his "Sketches of Upper Canada," relates how he met an Indian at midnight, on Christmas eve, during a beautiful moonlight, cautiously creeping along, and beckoning him to silence, saying at the same time, "Me watch to see the deer kneel; this is Christmas night, and all the deer fall upon their knees to the Great Spirit, and look up." Oh, wonderful and mighty One! who since his birth—for all these intervening centuries, has been such a power among men—the influence of His life ennobling theirs; elevating their thoughts; keeping them from falling, and, when having fallen, helping them to "rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." We do not celebrate the birthday of Napoleon, the world's greatest general; nor Shakespeare's, the world's greatest poet; nor Alexander's, nor Charlemagne's; but all the Christian world commemorates the birthday of the Christ-Child, who was cradled in a manger, and who was afterward crucified among thieves. The memory of it has not faded during eighteen hundred years.

Christmas is also the season of the year best loved by the children, for did not the Master say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for *of such* is the kingdom of Heaven"?

I pity the children of parents who think it wrong to allow them to believe in Santa Claus. I know it was the saddest period of my childhood when my belief in him was forced to slip away with the years, and I knew that he was only a myth. Therefore, let them keep their illusions as long as they can; they will vanish soon enough among the stern realities of a work-a-day world. What great pleasure would there be to them in the approach of Christmas were it not for their belief in Santa Claus—who is to them a symbol of what our Heavenly Father is to his older children—the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Soon the tones of the Christmas bells will fall upon our ears, again recalling the angels' song so exquisitely decribed by Luke:—"There were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, by night, when, lo, the angel of the Lord shone round about them; and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

"Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

The words of this beautiful song penetrates into every heart and home in the land, bringing a message of joy to all, and the blessed knowledge that peace on earth comes only from goodwill to men.

* * * * * *

When Christmas is over we begin to realize more clearly that the Old Year is quickly slipping away, "like a leaf on the current cast." Some of us will relinquish it very reluctantly. To the young the past year has seemed very long, and the New Year is welcome because it is fraught with that mystery which enshrouds the future—for youth is a season of anticipation. But to the old, who live in the past, the death of the year awakens feelings of sadness—feelings that sometimes lie too deep for tears!

Some will be loath to part with the old year because, perhaps, they have found in it their greatest happiness. To others it will be sacred because someone whom they loved has gone to brighter worlds, and, as they feel the year slipping away, they long more intensely than ever "for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still."

The thoughts of many are with loved ones abroad who are roaming o'er the world of waters, or "with strangers housed in foreign lands," and you listen to the New Year bells with the varied emotions that people feel at such a time—when they realize that the old year has gone. Gone with its joys and sorrows, pleasures and pain; gone with its crushed ambitions and hopes fulfilled; its opportunities that can never come again.

With all its joyousness we cannot keep the minor strain from running through the Season's music.

"In the merry yule-tide madness
There's a minor note of sadness
Crying out amid the gladness,—
'Happy parting year, Good-bye!'
But our joy shall not be lessened
In the joyous hopefull present,
And we'll smile a welcome pleasant
On the year that's yet to try."

—MISS HATTIE MCLELLAN *in the Hants Journal Christmas Number.*

Two Christmas Eves.

EVE THE FIRST.

"Tramp! tramp! tramp!"

We were marching through the streets of Alexandria, Va., on that Christmas eve to take the cars for the front—a score of us returning from our furloughs. People wonder over the strange actions of animals. Men are stranger—children unreadable in many things. It was raw and dismal, with a cold rain falling at times and the gutters full of half-melted snow. We shivered in our warm clothing, and we picked our way over the wet spots as if our stout cavalry boots had not been to keep out the wet.

"Please take me!"

It was the voice of a child, and as I looked down he slipped his hand into mine. He was a lad of not more than ten, ragged, almost shoeless, without overcoat, and his tones betrayed hunger and suffering.

"Hi'll be so good, sir, hand Hi'll do heverything you wants me to do," he pleaded as he trotted beside me.

How queer! A child begging to go to the front, where grim-visaged war was making strong men tremble! And he was English. I tightened my grip on his hand as he trotted along and told me his story. His family had "come out" the year before, landing in New York. Then they had drifted on to Philadelphia and Washington, and the father had enlisted to be killed in his first battle, and the mother had gone to wreck and death through the curse of rum. This waif was now homeless, houseless and penniless, and as he saw us pass down the street a sudden impulse seized him to address me. He had heard of the war and its bloodshed, and mayhap he hoped the sooner to end his trials and sufferings.

"But I can't take you," I replied.

"But you must," he persisted. "Hi'll 'elp you to do hanything you hask, hand Hi won't be in nobody's way. Just let me get hunder your great coat."

I opened the flap on his side and he held it over him for warmth and shelter as we marched along. At the depot I meant to give him a bit of money and bid him good-bye, but he stuck to me like a burr, and, with tears on his cheek, he pleaded:

"Do take me, sir! Hif you don't Hi'll throw myself under the wheels hand 'ave done with it!"

It was against orders, but I smuggled him into the car with me, and next morning he entered our camp blacked up as a little darkey. I had a tent to myself, being a commissary sergeant, and nothing was said about my having a "contraband" for a servant. When little Jack blossomed out as white as a poppy, and appeared in a blue uniform made by my own hands, there was some growling at company headquarters, but he was allowed to stay.

And that's the way I found Little Jack, and that's the way we became fast friends—aye! brothers. Thereafter, for a year, the lad was a child of the regiment. I taught him to distinguish the calls of the bugle, and the various commands, and to ride, and where the regiment went Jack went. When he had no horse the company wagon was open to him, and when there was danger we saw to it that he was placed in safety. A dozen officers tried to get the boy away from me—coaxing and trying to bribe, but it was no use. His invariable reply was:

"Why, 'e's my big brother, you know, hand 'ow could I go hand do it?"

I know I tried to be a father to Little Jack. He'd have gone far astray but for my teachings. I know that I kept his feet from evil paths and that is my consolation to-day as I write these lines through my tears.

EVE THE SECOND.

Christmas Eve has come again. I was on picket at the front. It was a stinging cold night, and my horse shivered with cold as I sat on him under a Virginia pine which moaned and complained as the wintry winds swept through its branches. Little Jack had been with me, stopping at the reserve picket, but that day had returned to quarters with a teamster. He was there when the mail came in. I had applied for a furlough, intending to take the boy home with me and put him in school. It had been granted. He was so delighted, and so anxious to bring me the news first of all, that he started out on foot just at dark to walk the two miles.

I suppose Heaven had so willed it, or it would not have come to pass that way. In the cold and storm and dark Little Jack lost his way. When he finally approached our pickets it was from the direction of the Confederates. Was it instinct that led him to come so close to me? He was approaching the picket on my left, a coward at best and afraid of his own shadow. He was hailed and the wind bore his childish voice down to me as he answered:

"Don't shoot—hit's little Jack!"

But the picket did shoot, and the report of his carbine was mingled with a death-cry. I hurried forward, my heart beating to suffocate me, and presently I found the lad lying at the edge of the bushes. He was not dead yet. As I lifted him up and hugged him to me and kissed his cold face, he whispered in my ear:

"Hit's hall over with me! Let me kiss you good-bye!"

And there, under the moaning pines, and on this our anniversary, and with the snow-flakes falling upon his face as if to cover its expression of agony, the lad's life went out and I was brotherless forever more.—M. QUAD, *in Detroit Free Press.*

A Nightmare.

In the swaling swirl of the soughful wind, as the gust goes glooring by, I sit by the bole of a bournful birch, with a moan and a soulful sigh; the mellowing mists of the eve are low, and the frog in the dankful marsh chirps chirpingly sad in the ghoulsome gloom, in a swivering voice and harsh:

O, where is the swing of the swoonful swish,
And the voice of the flim flam fowl?
Methinks it moans from the murky mold,
From the home of the hootful owl.

Now swivel me swift from the surging spring, I'm weary of wold and wind; the grewsome graik of the jabberwock comes jimmering to my mind; the feeble song of the spotsome frog comes solemnwise soughing slow, and again I hear by the bourgful birch the wail of his wimpled woe:

O, where is the swing of the swoonful swish,
From the lane of the springful sprole?
Must the blue mists blur on the tinker's drale?
And freight with their traught, my soul?

I dreamed, I dreamed of Amelie Rives, in the dim of the danksome dark, and methought I rode on a moonlight main, in the prow of a pullful bark; I wrought a rhyme as I rolled along, in the stream of the starful gloat; I awoke at dawn in the dimpled day, and above is the rhyme I wrote.

Empress Victoria of Germany and her mother, Queen Victoria, are at Windsor together, and spend a great deal of time playing chess. Queen Victoria who was a celebrated player in the old days, and used easily to beat her husband, the Prince Consort, is no match for her daughter, the German Empress, who has made the game a study, and finds it the only consolation for her loneliness.

Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thoughts.

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