

MERRY CHRISTMAS

the beauty of it has gone, crushed and killed by the greed of commerce and the horrors of war. I am not, as you thought I was, a hundred years old, but I can conjure up, as anybody can, a picture of Christmas in the good old days of a hundred years ago—the quaint old-fashioned houses, standing deep among the evergreens, with the lights twinkling from the windows on the snow—the warmth and comfort within—the great fire roaring on the hearth—the merry guests grouped about its blaze and the little children with their eyes dancing in the Christmas firelight, waiting for Father Christmas in his fine mummery of red and white and cotton wool to hand the presents from the Yule-tide tree. I can see it,” I added, “as if it were yesterday.”

“It was but yesterday,” said Father Time, and his voice seemed to soften with the memory of bygone years. “I remember it well.”

“Ah,” I continued, “that was Christmas indeed. Give me back such days as those, with the old good cheer, the old stage-coaches and the gabled inns and the warm red wine, the snapdragon and the Christmas tree, and I’ll believe again in Christmas, yes, in Father Christmas himself!”

“Believe in him?” said Time quietly, “you may