

Our Letter from the Home Land.

SOMETHING MORE ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

When one has chosen one's own environment and elected to pass a few quiet winter weeks with no other comradeship than one's own thoughts, or such an interchange of ideas as comes to one through the medium of His Majesty's mails, one has no right to grumble, even if one just occasionally feels a little "out of it," when already, even thus early in December, the very air is astir with the foreshadowings

Of fetivals, and fairs, and plays,
Of merriment, and mirth, and bonfire blaze,
Of Christmas mummings, New Year's Day,
Of Twelfth-night King and Queen, and children's play."

By the time my letter finds its nook in the columns of our Home Magazine, Christmas will probably have come and gone, leaving its benediction in the homes of the dear Dominion, and therefore it is more fitting that my greeting from across the water should rather be, "A Happy New Year to all," than the "Merry Christmas and many of them," which it will be in my heart to say, when, if the weather continues as bright and the air as balmy as we have been having it here for the last week or so, I shall find myself on Christmas Day, in the spirit in Canada, but in the flesh upon one of the benches upon the sea-walk facing my windows in the sunny south coast of the old land.

With you will have been the jingle of the sleigh-bells, bringing to your doors the merry children and the scattered members of your families, the crisp air of a Canadian winter, and the frost-spangles on your way-

side trees; with me, the dancing waves and the sound of their splashing upon the shore, but with a temperature resembling a bright autumn or even spring day in the Dominion.

Nor are these the only contrasts which strike the Canadian visitor to England. The daily paper brings before its readers plea after plea for cases which could hardly have an existence in Canada, but which occur and reoccur in the crowded motherland winter after winter. To-day's issue (1st December) pleads for help, through a special mission in East London, established to look after its empty homes and hungry children, where there is acute suffering amongst the unemployed, where strong men are falling out of condition and losing all labor capacity, nursing mothers fainting from starvation, little children hungry, and homes growing emptier every day." Another says: "Cast-off toys are asked for from happier children, as the only chance of beguiling Santa Claus into a visit to the little ones in these homes of poverty; the sight of those turned away last year because the contributed toys were so entirely insufficient was pathetic and heartrending. We want tons of toys, please send us some."

Next comes the "Little Cripples' Christmas Fund, for sending a Christmas hamper to every one of the 7,000 crippled children in the metropolis." His Majesty the King heading the subscription list. The Church Army is overwhelmed by the thousands imploring it for help by piecemeal only. It has 100 labor-relief centers, labor homes, through which it strives to save the respectable unemployed from utter despair by procuring work for them or by making emigration to Canada possible for them, 3,000 selected applicants having, through its efforts, been sent out during this year alone. Mr. Bramwell Booth, of the Salvation Army, asks for contributions up-

on the same lines. "We can," he says, "for £10 each, personally conduct to Canada 20,000 carefully-chosen emigrants, if only the benevolent will send us the means to do so," etc. And thus is Canada linked onto the great work of relief which is going on in the Old Country, not only at Christmas, but all the year round, experience having taught wisdom as to ways and means, and the more careful selection of people likely to make good settlers. For these dark clouds in the old land Canada provides the silver lining; so, even to this dismal tale of poverty there is a brighter side.

To the question, "Are Christmas-trees dying out?" the answer seems, in this year of grace, 1906, to be emphatically "No." Royalty holds onto its Christmas-tree, perhaps because it was Victoria the Good who practically introduced it to England just sixty years ago, on the Christmas eve of 1846. Every year subsequently of her long and glorious reign, wherever the Court was, there was the tree, upon which every gift was personally chosen by the Queen herself; and then, who does not remember, in the dark, closing days of 1899, the splendid tree provided by Her Majesty for the wives and children of men in the Brigade of Guards and Reservists serving in South Africa? Thus, Christmas, in its widest meaning of love and kindly thought for all, finds still its sweetest expression in the Christmas-tree as one of its most significant symbols.

It seems quite a new departure to hear of preparations for Christmas festivities at a fashionable London hotel, but, realizing that many parents from other lands make it a common meeting-ground for the holidays with their children from overseas, the managers of the Carlton, by a happy inspiration, have devised a party for children, of which

a magnificent tree shall be the center, and no pains will be spared in carrying out the details, with the delightful aftermath of the overplus of the toys being given to those other little ones upon whom the holy season will dawn as they lie upon their beds of pain in meager homes or hospital wards. The programme for this unique festivity is thus outlined:

"It is intended to effect a complete transformation of the Palm Court and Winter Garden, removing all the flowers and towering foliage plants, rugs, lounges, and all else. In their stead will be small pines, frosted and glistening, while a thick, soft, white, mossy covering upon the marble floor will faithfully represent the snow upon the ground. In the window boxes of the overlooking balcony there will be trim little holly bushes and Christmas roses, with sparkling hoarfrost and long, gleaming icicles. Dominating everything, there will be in the center a perfectly proportioned pine, reaching from the floor to the roof, and lighted with some of the latest novelties of effect known to the expert electrician, while it will be loaded—literally loaded—with toys representative of the oldest favorites of the nursery, and of the newest developments in mechanical and moving playthings. To add to the wintry effect of this wintry forest glade out of the kingdom of Santa Claus, there are to be gently-falling flakes of cunningly-simulated snow."

I suppose I should apologize for all this chatter about Christmas so many days after your own festivities are over. Please just treat my letter as a kind of postscript, and remember that, however late it may be in reaching you, it was written quite early in December, and has had to bide its time before finding itself in "The Farmer's Advocate."

H. A. R.

The Quiet Hour.

Go Quickly, and Tell His Disciples.

Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead. . . . And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring the disciples word.—St. Matt. xxviii.: 7, 8.

Perhaps you may think that I have dipped carelessly into my barrel of sermons, and have brought out an Easter sermon by mistake, when you naturally expected New Year's Greeting served fresh and warm, straight from the heart. No, my dear friends, I have not forgotten the season of the year. As for the New Year's Greeting, I gladly reach out a hand in heartiest friendliness, sure that your answering hand-clasp will be warm and cordial. You may not always agree with what I say, but still we are really friends, are we not. We are all servants of the one Great Master, all interested in His business. More and more, as year after year rolls past, I am convinced that fellowship is the chief joy and the chief business of our lives—fellowship with God and man.

But, if you are to enjoy an ever-increasing happiness in the New Year that is now throwing open to you the door of its treasure-chambers, it certainly will not be by gathering up riches for your own use alone. Those who have freely received are bound to give freely of their abundance. This applies to all God's gifts, of course, but, to-day, let us look especially at the great stewardship of spiritual wealth committed to our care. I have been asked to give space to that beautiful poem, "The Starless Crown," which some years ago appeared in our columns, and I gladly do so, as the lesson it teaches is one we continually need. God never lights up a soul for itself alone. If it does not reach out on all sides, as a light should, to lighten the darkness and warm the coldness around it, its own light will soon grow dim, and perhaps die out altogether. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen, bringing light and healing to us, and those

who feel the glow and see the light are bound to "go quickly, and tell His disciples." The command is really a gracious permission, for it fits our desire so exactly. To keep one's religion to one's self is a very unnatural thing. If we care about anything we naturally want to make others care about it too. And to spread the light is the surest way to gain more light for our own souls. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself," is a proverb which has been tested and proved by the experience of ages. Every farmer knows that the only way to increase his stock of grain is to sow it in suitable soil, and every business man knows that the miser's plan of hoarding instead of circulating his gold is a very poor way of increasing it. And this is just as true in regard to the spiritual wealth which God has poured so lavishly into our hands. Unless we are constantly giving out, we shall infallibly lose what once was ours, besides failing to renew our supply. An earnest Sunday-school teacher gains a great deal through patiently preparing the lessons week after week and year after year. Then, there are also the practical lessons of faith, courage, hope, endurance and love, which can only come through experience. If you are really trying to pass on the glad tidings of great joy, you will constantly be on the watch for fresh ideas and new ways of presenting old truths; and in trying to strengthen the faith of others your own faith will unconsciously grow stronger. If you want to renew the freshness of youth, and find the joy of living increase instead of diminishing as the years pass swiftly into eternity, then pass on the good news eagerly—the good news that God is living and working in His world, working in and through His children, for their eternal good and happiness. And this gospel can only be passed on by you, if others can see reflected in your life the image of the loving Son of God. I am continually hearing people say: "I don't believe in going to church because so many church-goers care only for their own salvation." Don't let that reproach rest on you, or rest on the cause of Christ through your fault. Imperfect though your life may

be, yet if its mainspring be unselfish love it will not undermine your attempts to draw others nearer to God, as a selfish life invariably does. It has been said that "the Glory of life is found in unselfish consecration to the welfare of mankind." Greed has its charms and its delusions, but when laid bare, how base and foul and repulsive it is found. None so poor to do it reverence."

In our prayers and hymns especially we should aim more at giving than at getting. The very first words of the model prayer teach us that we are near of kin—children of one Father—and that the needs of our brothers and sisters should always interest us deeply. But how often do we pray and sing as though we only cared for our own needs. Will you begin this New Year by consecrating yourself afresh to God's service? Then He can reach out through you to help the world. If we try to keep our secret thoughts pure and clear, then the Light of the world can shine through our lives and attract hungry souls by His peerless beauty. H. S. Holland asks: "What light is going out from you, now and every day, to those who have not the joy of your secret? What radiance can they see about you? What good cheer do you bring? Is there any one dark soul that brightens at your coming—and brightens, not with your own light, but with that light which you hold in you from Him Who alone is the Light of the world. His light it must be. Is there anyone to whom that light passes, through your ministry?" "Ye are the salt of the world. . . . Ask yourself—Is there any society into which Christ's purity finds its way opened through you—a society which, without your presence, would begin to stink and putrefy? Is there any corner of the earth, however tiny and obscure, which you serve to keep clean for Christ? . . . You are salt—that by which mankind is kept sweet and clean and fresh. Christ counts on you for this. This is your high calling—very high it is! But salt that has lost its savour is good for nothing. . . . The Church is a light-bearer and a purifier—are we fulfilling our mission? Christ has washed our feet, are we washing the feet of our fellows?"

If we really care for our Lord, we must try to draw others to His feet, we can hardly fail to run quickly with the glad tidings that He is alive and close at hand. HOPE.

The Starless Crown.

"They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."—Dan. 12:3.

Wearied and worn with earthly cares, I yielded to repose,
And soon before my raptured sight a glorious vision rose:
I thought, while slumbering on my couch in midnight's solemn gloom,
I heard an angel's silvery voice, and radiance filled my room.

A gentle touch awakened me, a gentle whisper said,
"Arise, O sleeper, follow me"; and through the air we fled.
We left the earth so far away that like a speck it seemed,
And heavenly glory, calm and pure, across our pathway streamed.

Still on we went, my soul was rapt in silent ecstasy;
I wondered what the end should be, what next should meet my eye.
I know not how we journeyed through the pathless fields of light,
When suddenly a change was wrought, and I was clothed in white.

We stood before a city's walls most glorious to behold;
We passed through gates of glistening pearl o'er streets of purest gold;
It needed not the sun by day, the silver moon by night;
The glory of the Lord was there, the Lamb himself its light.

Bright angels paced the shining floor,
Sweet music filled the air,
And white-robed saints with glittering crowns from every clime were there;
And some that I had loved on earth stood with them round the throne.
"All worthy is the Lamb," they sang, "to sit as He alone."