

Remember the Poor at Christmas.

MRS. E. T. WALL.

On many in life's hard struggle for bread
Tolling from day to day,
With ever an hour that is free from care,
Or with scarcely a moment's time for prayer,
Or to think of the better way.

It is work, work, work, from the dawn of day
Until weary, sad hours of night,
To keep from starving—it is little more;
And to keep the grim, gaunt wolf from the
door,
It is often a bitter fight.

It may be a father, toiling for bread;
Or it may be a drunkard's wife;
It may be a widow with children small,
Who patiently labours to feed them all—
A continual battle for life.

Weary of toiling, with never a rest,
Often hungry and poorly clad,
Day wonder that some commit dread deeds,
Of labour, want, and pain were the
ends?
Do you wonder that some go mad?

The poor have much to contend with at best;
Their inmost thoughts nobody knows;
But the rich are gay, with plenty of friends,
The poor have nothing but what God
sends,
And only the Lord counts their woes.

But I believe that in everyone's heart
Is something that is good and true,
And a kindly word or a Christian deed,
Given to a heart in time of need,
Does good like the heavenly dew.

So give to the poor with a willing hand,
All you who are blessed with gold,
And for every Christian act which you do,
Sure as the promises of God are true,
Will repay you an hundredfold.

For the Christmas-tide is a blessed time
To lend to the Lord of your store,
So open your hearts and your purses wide,
And lend to the Lord and this Christmas-
tide
By giving good gifts to His poor.

Christmas.

WHEN Irving was reproached for describing an English Christmas which he had never seen he replied that, although everything he had described might not be seen at any single house, yet all of it could be seen somewhere in England at Christmas. He might have answered, also, that the spirit of what he had described was visible everywhere in Christendom on Christmas-day.

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawn singeth all day long;
And then they say, no spirit dares stir
abroad;
The nights are wholesome, then no planets
strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to
charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

This is the Christmas sentiment of to-day, as it was of Shakespeare's time. It is the most human and kindly of seasons, as fully penetrated and irradiated with the feeling of human brotherhood, which is the essential spirit of Christianity, as the month of June with sunshine and the balmy breath of roses. Santa Claus coming down the chimney loaded with gifts is but the symbol of the gracious influence which at this time descends from heaven into every heart. The day dawns with a benediction; it passes in holiday happiness; and ends in soft and pensive regret. It could not be the most beautiful of festivals if it were doctrinal, or dogmatic, or theological, or local. It is a universal holiday because it is the jubilee of a universal sentiment, moulded only by a new epoch, and subtly adapted to newer forms of the old faith.

Christmas looks out at us from the dim shadow of the groves of the Druids who know not Christ, and it is dear to

those who now renounce the name of Christian. The Christmas log, which Herriock exhorts his merrie, merrie boys to bring with a nois to the firing, is but the Saxon Yule-log burning on the English hearth, and the blazing holiday temples of Saturn shine again in the illuminated Christian Churches. It is the pagan mis-lotus under which the Christian youth kisses the Christian maid. It is the holly of the old Roman Saturnalia which decorates Laceybridge Hall on Christmas-eve. The huge smoking baron of beef, the flowing oceans of ale, are but the survivals of the tremendous eating and drinking of the Scandinavian Walhalla.

The Christian and anti-Christian feeling blend in the happy season, and the Christian observance mingles at every point with the pagan rite. It is not easy to say where the paganism ends and the Christianity begins. The carols and the wassail, the prayers and the games, the generous hospitality, Hobby-Horse, and the Lord of Misrule, Maid Marian and Santa Claus, are a curious medley of the old and the new. As the religious thought of all ages and countries, when it reaches a certain elevation flows into an expression which makes the Scriptures of the most divergent nations harmonious, the history of this happy festival is evidence of the common humanity of the earlier and later races; and the stranger in Bracebridge Hall musing by the glowing hearth on Christmas-eve, as he watches the romping revelry beneath the glistening berries, and listens to the waits caroling outside in the moonlight, or as he is awakened on Christmas morning by the hushed patter of children's feet in the passage, and the shy music of children's voices at his door, may well seem to hear a more celestial strain, and to catch a deeper meaning in the words, "Before Abraham was, I am."

But it is no longer a superstition of any scarlet woman, no longer a festival whose observance implies perilous adherence to papal or prelatical errors. The purifying spiritual fire, historically known as Puritanism, has purged the theological and ecclesiastical dross away, and has left the pure gold of religious faith and human sympathy. When the neophyte asked his confessor what was the central truth of Christianity, the old man answered, "Charity." Then he explained that charity meant love, and that love meant the spirit of universal fraternity. The almsgiving which is the technical interpretation of the word is but a symbol of that giving of the heart and soul and life to help others of which the supreme sacrifice of Christ is the accepted type. The day that commemorates His birth is the festival of humanity, as the inspiring sentiment of actual life. The lovely legends of the day, the stories and the songs, and the half fairy-tale that gathers around it, the ancient traditions of dusk woods and mystic rites; the magnificence or simplicity of Christian observance, from the Pope in his triple tiara, borne upon his portative throne in gorgeous state to celebrate pontifical high mass at the great altar of St. Peter's, to George Herbert humbly kneeling in his rustic church at Bemerton, or to the bare service in some missionary chapel upon the American frontier; the lighting of Christmas trees and hanging up of Christmas stockings, the profuse giving, the happy family meetings, the giving, the happy family meetings, the dinner, the game, the dance—they are all the natural signs and symbols, the

flower and fruit, of Christmas. For Christmas is the day of days which declares the universal human consciousness that peace on earth comes only from good-will to man.—Geo. Wm. Curtis in *Harper's Magazine*.

Christmas.

What shall I give to Thee, O Lord?
The kings that came of old
Lay softly on Thy cradle rude
Their myrrh, and gems, and gold.

Thy martyrs gave their hearts' warm blood;
Their ashes strewed Thy way;
They spurned their lives as dreams and dust
To speed Thy coming day.

We offer Thee nor life nor death;
Our gifts to man we give;
Dear Lord, on this Thy day of birth,
Oh, what dost Thou receive?

Show me Thyself in flesh once more;
Thy feast I long to spread;
To bring the water for Thy feet,
The ointment for Thy head.

There came a voice from heavenly heights
"Unclasp thine eyes and see;
Gifts to the least of those I love
Thou givest unto Me."

—Rose Terry Cooke.

Christmastide.

DOUBTLESS there may be Sunday-schools, the generality of whose members are not able to give, but must always receive, because they are poor and deprived, and scarce ever have such joy and brightness as Christmas brings.

But there is a large number of what are usually termed church schools, to which our remarks above do not apply. Their children and young people come from well-to-do families, and the older portion of the school have abundance. In such schools it seems to us as undesirable, if not indeed a waste, to expend large sums of money in presents which are seldom appreciated because they are of but little intrinsic value, though often given at a burdensome cost to teachers and officers. A small present to members of the Primary Department is not objectionable; but to go through the whole school in that way is to put all upon a level which is not accepted; and the practice has a belittling tendency.

There is a better way. Let there be free giving; give as a blessing to those in need. The joy of giving is not to be denied, even to children. If a school is so rich and full that it knows no want, and has not any within its membership that are poor and needy, its gifts may go out to the almost numberless cases of need beyond itself. But generally there are sick and poor, and even destitute ones in your midst, and close by your doors, to whom a little aid would be of the greatest help. Give your school a chance to aid such as these, not in an ostentatious manner, but quietly and delicately. Then there are children who would be made comfortable by the half worn garments which some others have outgrown; and other children, who would be delighted with toys which to present owners may have lost their charm, and so have been laid aside; and yet others, to whom a small portion of the "goodies" that abound at Christmastide would seem a wealth of possession.

It may be supposed that such a plan would be unpopular. Try it and see. Try it in faith, and with prayer for a blessing upon the plan. Enter heartily into it, as a thing that is worthy of being done. Let the school

share in the disposition of the gifts. Send the young people out on errands of mercy made possible by their contributions. Let them have the joy of learning the value of a sack of flour to some half starved family. Let them see the comfort bestowed on the shivering poor by a load of fuel. Let them, in short, be their own almoners, and note the result. You will not then find it wanting in popularity; and you will find that, while blessings have gone out from your midst, greater ones have come in.—*Baptist Superintendent*.

Better than Wine on New Years.

WE trust that there are very few of our readers who need special caution in reference to the perils that attend our New Year customs. New Year's day is often a sad one to many a fond mother's heart, and the now-happily-waning custom of offering wine to callers on that day has led to the downfall of many a promising young man. With all the earnestness in our power we would urge every one of our lady readers to do all she can among her associates and friends to persuade them to entirely discard the fearfully dangerous practice of offering wine upon this occasion.

In many homes there has been instituted the highly commendable custom of making the visits of gentlemen friends opportunities for inducements to good instead of temptation to evil, and we expect that in not a few cases on Friday next, gentle hands and voices may administer total abstinence pledges to visitors, who may thus be immeasurably benefited. And what could be more appropriate for the commencement of a new career such as that to which a loving word of encouragement on New Year's day might lead.—*Citizen*.

Christmas Memories.

It was mother's rule every Christmas morning to read to her boys the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ and the accounts of His birth found in the Gospels. She then led in prayer and thanked God, over and over, for the gift of his Son to die for her and her children, and for all mankind.

These things—this Bible reading, and Christmas prayers—are now the sweetest recollections of the Christmases we had when I was a boy. They have grown into the "warp and filling" of my being. No matter what the discouragements were mother kept on hammering religious truth into us. Hardly a day passes now that I do not recall some pretext or example of my good old mother in the earlier years of my life. What a blessed thing memory is! How blessed it is that early impressions are most lasting; and how "awfully" important that none but good impressions be made upon small children!—*Sei*.

THOMAS FULLER, one of the most quaint and graphic of the old English writers, strikingly defined "policy" to consist in serving God in such a manner as not to offend the devil. It was he who said, "Let him who expects one class in society to prosper to the highest degree while others are in distress, try whether one side of his face can smile when the other is pinched."