

outside was of moment only for the contrast it afforded to the warmth and fun within.

Well, if that's the truth of it, the case of the old-fashioned winter is not hopeless. It will continue to be weathered by a few wise and happy mortals here and there for many a year.

Father Time Talks to Christmas

IN that whimsical way of his Stephen Leacock makes a plea for Merry Christmas, in *Hearst's Magazine*, and that the war be hidden from the kiddies till they can understand what its sacrifices meant to the betterment of the world. Father Time, Daddy Christmas and Stephen had a talk about it. Father Christmas came late to the conference—he was waiting outside, “afraid to come in” so Father Time told Mr. Leacock. The old chap seemed apprehensive and apologetic from three years of rebuff and towards the end of the interview, as Mr. Leacock sets it down, Old Father Time put the pith of their talk into this fashion:

“You see?” said Time. “His heart is breaking, and will you not help him if you can?”

“Only too gladly,” I replied. “But what is there to do?”

“This,” said Father Time, “listen.”

He stood before me, grave and solemn, a shadowy figure but half seen though he was close beside me. The firelight had died down, and through the curtained windows there came already the first streaks of dawn. “The world that once you knew,” said Father Time, “seems broken and destroyed about you. You must not let them know—the children. The cruelty and the horror and the hate that racks the world to-day—keep it from them. Some day he will know”—here Time pointed to the kneeling form of Father Christmas—“that his children, that once were, have not died in vain; that from their sacrifice shall come a nobler, better world for all to live in, a world where countless happy children shall hold bright their memory forever. But for the children of To-day, save and spare them all you can from the evil hate and horror of the war. Later, they will know and understand. Not yet. Give them back their Merry Christmas and its kind thoughts, and its Christmas charity, till later on there shall be with it again Peace upon Earth, Good Will toward Men.”

His voice ceased. It seemed to vanish, as it were in the sighing of the wind.

I looked up. Father Time and Christmas had vanished from the room. The fire was low and the day was breaking visibly outside.

“Let us begin,” I murmured. “I will mend this broken horse.”

Manchester Says: “Thanks, We’ll All Go”

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, of pills popularity, the greatest music-producer in England, wants to make Manchester a present of a new opera house and he wants the city authorities to get him a suitable site. A good many people in Canada know Manchester's fame as a music centre, even better than they do the reputation of Sir Thomas Beecham as a producer. We have here and there a would-be imitator of Sir Thomas in Canada, but none as yet who feel disposed to make any city in Canada a present of a new big opera house.

To the question of “Why does he go to Manchester rather than (say) to the Metropolis?” says the Manchester correspondent of the *Musical Times* (London), the reply would be that within a radius of thirty miles from Manchester you have the greatest accumulation of workers in the world; that for generations past the love of music has been one of the great ingrained characteristics of the district—John Wesley long ago testified to this; that in this area music has probably a securer grip upon the regular life of the community than anywhere else in Britain. This feeling finds its

most conspicuous expression in the amount and quality of music of all sorts available in Manchester, which has come to be regarded as a musical centre of this area quite as much as a commercial one. In a very real sense it is the hub of many forms of social and commercial life; nor must its remarkable accessibility be overlooked, even in these days of restricted locomotion. Manchester's fame in music matters dates back a long time. In 1777 it was the scene of a very early (if not the first) musical festival, and at that held in 1836 Malibran finished her career so tragically. At the great Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857, people realized that Manchester was a centre of considerable artistic discernment, and the Halle Orchestra dates from that time, although its founder had visited us in 1848. For sixty years this Orchestra in one way or another has been maintained, and has not only played in the city, but spread its fertilizing influences far and wide in Lancashire and Yorkshire. These, and a fine succession of orchestral conductors and enterprising impresarios, have all contributed much to prepare the ground. There now exists both an extensive and constantly growing appreciative public and a large and efficiently managed orchestra. These two essentials may exist elsewhere, but hardly to the same degree. One thing is certain, that if Sir Thomas Beecham (Lancastrian though he be) thought there was to be found in the Midlands or still further North a field that offered prospects of a finer and better harvest for the operatic seed shortly to be sowed, he would not risk his first crop here. But it is of the essence of his scheme to establish later similar centres elsewhere, and eventually to link them up and thus fulfil the “national” part of the project. Somewhere the Manchester authorities will find a suitable site, one may hazard such an opinion in advance; the crucial points are more likely to be found in the question of ultimate control, when the probationary period under Sir Thomas's direct guidance has been completed and the time appears ripe for the concern to be transferred to some local authority. Critical discussion is sure to centre round two important details: (1) the degree of probability that the opera-loving tendencies so manifest to-day are likely to endure; (2) the most desirable form and extent of municipal control when the time arrives for this to be undertaken.

When Buying Books, Remember Personality

HAS it ever occurred to you that nothing else in the way of a gift reveals personality as does a book? says Esther Matson, in a delightful little discussion about Christmas gifts in the “*Outlook*.” It is almost impossible to choose a book and yet be utterly impersonal about it. Unconsciously the characteristics of an individual will come out in the making of his choice. If there is any truth in the old adage, “Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are,” there is surely truth in its paraphrase, “Tell me what books you pick out and I will tell you what you are.”

But here there is a kind of double action. For the giver of a book does not merely reveal his own personality. He also suggests yours. In selecting what he thinks will please you he indicates his conception of your individuality. He takes account of the likes and dislikes, of the fondnesses and the passions, which are the outer fringes of your self. And here, by the by, comes in the chance to pay you the subtlest kind of compliment. You cannot help but be gratified thus to have a mirror held up before you in such flattering wise. Perhaps the gift is a rattling good yarn. The implication is that you have a normal, common-sensical appetite. Perhaps it is a book of travels. That intimates a knowledge of one of your tastes. Possibly it is a philosophic tome. Now philosophy happens to be one of the predilections you pride yourself on. Or again the gift may prove to be a volume of essays, or else a bit of verse. In

either case there will be a pretty suggestion of belief that it will find in you a responsive vein.

We know how pleasant it is in some strange city to meet some friend of a friend. Now it seems to me that to receive the gift of a book is a little like this. It comes from the giver like a letter of introduction, to the end of mutual friendship—as who should say: “I have found this author's mind entertaining, or gracious, or large and ennobling; I wish you too to enjoy this same entertainment, to know this grace, or this greatness and inspiration.”

I come now to that word of Thoreau's about books. “A written word,” wrote he, “is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself.”

Just to Read Aloud

A TOURIST walking along a quiet Irish country road came upon two men fighting desperately and rolling in the dust of the wayside. The upper man was pummelling the under man mercilessly, and the spectator thought he ought to interfere. “I say, old chap,” he began expostulating, “it's not playing the game to hit a man when he's down, you know.” The victor paused a moment and raised his head. “Faith,” said he, “an' if ye knew all the trouble I had getting him down ye wouldn't be talkin' like that.”

LYSANDER, a farm hand that Everybody's tells about, was recounting his troubles to a neighbor. Among other things, he said that the wife of the farmer who employed him was “too close for any use.” “This very morning,” said he, “she asked me, ‘Lysander, do you know how many pancakes you have et this mornin’?’ I said, ‘No, ma'am, I ain't had no occasion to count 'em.’ ‘Well,’ says she, ‘that last one was the twenty-sixth.’ And it made me so mad I jest got up from the table and went to work without my breakfast!”

ON the new brakeman's first run there was a very steep grade. The engineer always had more or less trouble to get up this grade, but this time he came near sticking altogether. Eventually, however, he reached the top. Looking out of the cab, the engineer saw the new brakeman and said, with a sigh of relief: “We had a hard job getting up, didn't we?” “We sure did,” assented the new brakeman, “and if I hadn't put on the brake we'd have slipped back.”

A WOMAN who thought she was a singer was walking through a building where some workmen had left some pitch in such a position that she swept her dress against it, and, of course, soiled the dress. “Oh, what shall I do to get it off?” she said to her woman friend. “Why don't you sing to it?” said her friend. “Why, what good would that do?” said the singer. “You always get off the pitch when you sing.”

ANDREW, a sweet-voiced Cockney chap, was chosen to sing in a London slum concert and obliged with “Kathleen Mavourneen.” His enunciation of one line, “The 'orn of the 'unter is 'eard on the 'ill,” jarred very much on the nerves of one man, who mentioned that Andrew really ought to put a few “aitches” in now and then. “Garn!” said Andy, eyeing him with pity, “don't show yer ignorance—don't yer know there ain't no H in music? It only goes up to G!”

AN attorney was consulted by a woman desirous of bringing action against her husband for a divorce. She related a harrowing tale of the ill-treatment she had received at his hands. So impressive was her recital that the lawyer, for a moment, was startled out of his usual professional composure. “From what you say this man must be a brute of the worst type!” he exclaimed. The applicant for divorce arose and, with severe dignity, announced: “Sir, I shall consult another lawyer. I came here to get advice as to a divorce, not to hear my husband abused!”