

Dick is struck with amazement that in so small a town, there should exist a more stately structure, than any in Canada, larger than any building he had yet seen, and as beautiful in detail as though time and labor and skill were costless. The holly sprigs and laurel wreaths and illuminated texts sadly interfere with Dick's devotion. Indeed what with trying to decipher the memorial brasses in sight of his seat, dating back six or seven centuries, poor Dick's mind is bewildered, and all the more so as he had been placed, as he was told, over the very spot where Druidical sacrifices had been performed and where his Saxon forefathers had worshipped God in a wooden church fifteen centuries ago, served by a travelling priest just as the Canadian Church works in the wilds of Muskoka now. Indeed Bede's story sounds very like the Bishop of Algoma's letters. "If any priest chanced to come into the village (that is twelve hundred years ago) the people earnestly entreated instruction and spiritual advice—for in those days itinerant clergymen went into villages to preach, baptize, or visit the sick, and when a church was built the people came many miles to hear divine service." All this and much more touching the history of England's church in the days of the Romans, the Saxons and the Normans, the days too of the Romish usurpation and overthrow, gives Dick a very firm conviction that what he was told in Canada about the Church being the Church of the Reformation and the church founded by Henry the Eighth is all an idle, foolish, false story, and Dick's opinion is that it is a great shame not to teach the people in Canada all the interesting things he has learnt this Christmas day. After morning service, the waits, the choristers and bands, and the boys who had so disturbed the early morn call at the mansion and are regaled bountifully with seasonable good cheer and gifts. While this hospitality is being dispensed, a group of girls are ushered into the presence of the family and guests. The elder one carries a cradle bearing in it a baby doll, set in the midst of evergreens and flowers, reminding those who have been in Italy of the Bambino in churches. Of course the ladies are all charmed with the wax figure and its adornments, and the troupe of merry girls bearing it, being invited, sing shyly their Christmas song:

"God bless the master of this house, the mistress also, Likewise the little children that round the table go. We have not come to your house to beg or to borrow, But we have come to pray that God will drive away all sorrow."

This is our jolly wassail,
Love and joy come to you
And to our parents too,
God bless you and send you a Happy New Year."

This ancient, touching, Christmas ditty, sung by tender girls of from nine to twelve years of age, is to them a charming break in the monotony of a life of poverty. To those whose hearts are in tune with Christmas it is a custom they see dying out with great regret, as it not only links the present with the past, but links also the family life of the poorest with the domestic joys of the rich when Christmas celebrations make the heart susceptible of sympathy which wells out in kindly, neighbourly deeds. The children's Christmas song is seldom heard without a tear, never without loving words of response, which these little ones remember and delight in from Christmas to Christmas.

From them the household is called to witness the Morris Dancers, with their absurd dramatic sketch, which sends Dick and the boys into fits of laughter, and makes them wild with envy as they watch the elaborate sword play and sword dance of these merry men. So flies on the day, in neigh-

bourly greetings, hilarity and old time observances. The railway and the telegraph are killing off these ancient customs, would that they would substitute something better! But they do not.

The bonds of Christian brotherhood are relaxing in these days of rush, so much the more then is it desirable for true-hearted Churchmen to see to it that Christmas is observed with all fervour, first as the outward and visible sign of the fact and spiritual teaching of the INCARNATION, upon which is based the only true brotherhood; next as a time of friendly gatherings, of healing social wounds, of neighbourly charities, in the spirit of "Good will towards men," especially they of the household of faith, as Christmas has been observed for more than a thousand years in "The Land of Ivanhoe."

Dick has gone to his room, but not to bed, he is deep in Scott's masterpiece, thrilled with the thought that he is on the very spot where Cedric's house stood, that his window looks out upon Rotherwood, where Gurth the born thrall of Cedric tended his lord's swine, that he has seen the altar whereon Prior Aylmer said Mass, and his spirit dances with joy anticipating a promised ride on the morrow to the Castle of Coningsborough, and other spots immortalized by the Magician of the North, touching one of whose poems Dick had read such strange reports in the papers of his native Canada. Would that all Canadian boys could spend such a Christmas! It would deepen their patriotism, enlarge their judgment, feed their imaginations, store them with fruitful memories, and enlighten their views of the Catholic and Apostolic Church which gave England unity, laws, civilization and the Gospel.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

O lovely voices of the sky,
That hymned the Saviour's birth!
Are ye not singing still on high,
Ye that sang "Peace on earth?"
To us yet speak the strains
Wherewith, in days gone by,
Ye blessed the Syrian swains,
O voices of the sky!

O clear and shining light! whose beams
That hour heaven's glory shed
Around the palms, and o'er the streams,
And on the shepherd's head;
Be near, through life and death,
As in that holiest night
Of Hope, and Joy, and Faith,
O clear and shining light!

O star! which led to Him whose love
Brought down man's ransom free;
Where art thou?—Midst the hosts above
May we still gaze on thee?
In heaven thou art not set,
Thy rays earth might not dim—
O star which led to Him!

WHAT IS A CHRISTMAS BOX?

This question is not as easily answered as you may suppose; for though all little folk know that a Christmas-box is a gift made at Christmas-tide, such was not the original meaning of the word. Christmas-boxes were at first what we now call money-boxes. They were known as thrift-boxes, and consisted of small wide clay bottles with imitation stoppers, the upper part covered with a kind of green glaze. On the side was a slit, into which money could be put, and as the money was collected at Christmas, the boxes in the course of time gave the name to the present.

THOUGHTS ON THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

WHICH of us cannot look back to the time when Christmas was the merriest and happiest season in the whole year—when the preparations for the family gathering were but a foretaste of the pleasures in store! To me, when a child, Christmas-Day was a happy one, from the moment when I awoke and jumped from my warm little bed to look out of the window and see if it were a snowy Christmas (it did not seem proper if, on that day, the earth were not a sheet of white, with a bright sun to shine upon it), until the time when I went again to my little resting-place, tired and sleepy, and yet wishing all the pleasure could come over again to-morrow. How much, too, I enjoyed the Christmas service at church! The hymns and anthems always seemed prettier, and the sermon much easier to understand than on ordinary occasions; the story of the "Savior's lowly birth," even in those early days was a favorite theme. But I grew older, and Christmas lost some of its charms, for as yet I knew but little of the heavenly joy it may bring to the most sorrowful. By the time I had reached girlhood, many dear ones had entered the celestial city, and had left vacant places by the Christmas fireside; among them was my mother. Yes, death had laid his cold hand upon that warm and loving heart; and as we gather round the hearth the first Christmas after our bereavement, all eyes were tearful as we thought of her who "was not."

Years have come and gone since then, and now I look upon Christmas as a day of rejoicing for very different reasons; though often when the Holy Day returns all I love best are far away, I can thank God for the birth of His Son, and for the blessings he has purchased for all "by His precious death and burial, and by His glorious resurrection and ascension." Now Christmas is again drawing near, and another year of our lives has almost rolled away. Most heartily do I wish the coming festival may prove a happiness and blessing to all my readers. To me it must be a somewhat sad season, for the angel of death is again hovering over our family circle, and before Christmas comes another voice may be hushed, and another place vacant by the fireside.

I have now lived long enough to experience the full meaning of the words, "This is not your rest;" and let us all beware of looking upon the coming season in such a way as to make us forget these words. Not for one moment would I wish to say anything against all enjoying what God has bestowed on them, both in the way of worldly possessions and comforts, and the richer treasure of warm and loving friends; but at Christmas, when we are rejoicing in these, let us thank God for His good gifts; and, at the same time, look beyond them to that world to which each year, as it passes by, brings us nearer. Neither let us forget, in the midst of earthly pleasures and joys, that there is a higher and holier reason for rejoicing at Christmas time; and though we cannot, like the wise men of old, go to worship "Him who was born King of the Jews," let us give Him the fittest offering from the sinner to the Saviour—a humble, lowly, and penitent heart.—M. H. N.

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