

MY LAST CHRISTMAS EVE

It was Christmas Eve, 1879. The hour was late, being past nine o'clock, and I had just arrived home laden with the inevitable, time-honored Christmas luxuries.

I was always voracious in regard to books and newspapers, and on this occasion I had brought home some choice reading, which I meant to devour "seriatim." The Vigil of Christmas once again!

A loud knocking broke my soliloquy. An agitated man presented himself at the door. His mother, an elderly Frenchwoman, was dying a few streets off, and he, not being much known among the Catholics, besought me to procure one of the good-hearted sisters to watch with her during the night.

Here was a dilemma. I endeavored instinctively to efface myself. I represented that the Convent of the Maternal Heart was two miles off, across a bleak and darksome forest; that the night being so densely foggy, I should be sure to miss my way; that I was unknown at the Convent of the Maternal Heart; that it was the festive time of Christmas, and that the good Sisters, like everyone else, needed rest and a little enjoyment.

Nature made me eloquent and him persistent. It was no use, he would not be gainsaid. So I sallied out, first to verify his statement about the lady, and then proceed for aid. I found all as he had said. The poor woman, in a silent house a small lamp burning beside her, seemed to be dying. There were sounds of mirth and revelry from the adjacent houses as I sped from the forsaken little house, and the cemetery clock striking ten warned me to be nimble.

Oh, that weird, dreary journey! Often I lost my way in pervading mist, and stumbled on patches of ice, placed as if by some malignant demon to obstruct me.

Eventually I found that I had quite strayed from the beaten wood and was lost on the moor, or forest as it is called, of Ison Green. It may possibly cause merriment to behold a supposed intelligent man out of humanity's reach, with in a few yards of the ordinary safe thoroughfares, yet to me it was anything but amusing, and, moreover, I was nearly perishing with the intense cold. I believe I made an attempt to pray, that ancient remedy for ills. Visions of the old romance days floated before me; of the old Catholic days when there were no roads in England, and our pious ancestors trudged cheerily to the midnight Mass, or on their errands of unstinted benevolence. I thought of the pilgrimage of the Holy Two on that first Christmas eve. Forgive me, reader, if poor human vanity made me compare and ally my adventure with their heaven directed journey.

A Christmas hymn struck on the murky atmosphere. Ah, who can be the singers. I recognized the chant. It was the ever-bright and ever sweet "Adeste Fideles." Surely, surely it breathed of the convent I was seeking. I would advance in the direction of the sound. I forgot to inform the reader that I had no idea from the first, of the situation of the convent (at least to half a mile) and now I knew not my own latitude or longitude.

By degrees I could distinctly hear the harmonium accompaniment, and a few minutes a light from the convent windows struck on my view. Surely they were "singing to welcome the pilgrim of night." In suspense I rang the convent bell. To the nun who answered I explained my errand. She responded that, as a rule, the Mother Superior did not like the sisters to be from the Convent at Christmas; and certainly, unless, it was an extreme case, the night itself deprecated the idea. Being a stranger I felt I could offer no proof but my word. Fortunately, one of the novices passing down the cloister, recognized me as one of the brothers of St. Vincent. The leave of the Superioress was gained and the nun promised to follow in a few minutes.

It is again the dimly lighted room, and the apparently dying woman. Sister Agatha, accompanied by a novice, has arrived. The wasted invalid gathers strength from gratitude. I had accomplished my task and bidding them a Christian Christmas I hastened home. Gradually and surely the aged Frenchwoman recovered. After many sorrows, and full of years, she still lives; and quite recently I met her on the Queen's highway, cheerful and full of vivacity. Would she have survived if the good sisters had not ministered to her. I know not, but I shall ever feel that but for that special ray of Providence she must have succumbed.

Russia leather is made in Connecticut, Bordeaux wine is manufactured in California, French lace is woven in New York, Italian marble is dug in Kentucky, Marseilles linen is produced in Massachusetts, English cassimere is made in New Hampshire, Spanish mackerel are caught on the New Jersey coast, and Havana cigars are rolled out by the million in Chicago.

DOMESTIC READING.

Many people mistake stubbornness for bravery, meanness for economy and villainess for wit.

I begin to have doubts says a moral writer, whether wisdom be alone sufficient to make us happy, whether every step we make in refinement is not an inlet into new quietudes. A mind too vigorous and active serves only to consume the body to which it is joined, as the richest jewels are soonest found to wear their settings.

There should be nothing new or striking in the exhibition of gratitude; yet its evidences are so truly rare that they seldom fall to excite pleasing emotions when met with. Though an unconscious testimony, it is the more praiseworthy because it needs not argument to enforce conviction. It is man's first duty, but he invariably makes it his last performance.

The man who can look upon difficulties unmoved and without fear of the result of an encounter, has already gained more than half the victory over them. He knows that they are simply appearances, and with the conviction of the possession of a power able to dissipate them, he forces them to recede with each onward step he makes until the clear passage beyond is opened up to his progress.

Bury Your Sorrow—You have trouble—your feelings are injured, your husband is unkind, your wife frets, your home is not pleasant, your friends do not treat you fairly, and things in general do not move pleasantly. Well, what of it? A smouldering fire can be found and extinguished; but when the coals are scattered who can pick them up. Bury your sorrow. The place for sad and distrustful things is under the ground. A cut finger is never benefited by pulling off the plaster and exposing it to somebody's eyes. Tie it up and let it alone. Charity covereth a multitude of sins. Things thus covered are covered without a scar but once published and confided to meddling friends there is no end to the trouble they may cause you. Keep it to yourself. Troubles are transient, and when a sorrow is passed and healed what a comfort it is to say "No one ever knew it until the trouble was all over."

Bad Books—It is unquestionable that the reading of bad books—books deliberately made to swell the volume of immorality—and of sensational newspapers as well, is one of the greatest evils of our modern society, threatening its very stability. It is too often the case that readers fail to discriminate. They have the prevailing passion for much reading; and they read everything that falls in their way, not seeming to fear any danger; or that contamination lurks between the lines. Owing to the liberty of the press, very many books, ruinous to faith and morals, are circulated; and so great is the degradation of the public taste, that the only class of newspapers by which fortunes are speedily made consists of those who publish everything, not attempting to exclude the nastiest details of the most serious and revolting social scandals. Reading of this character soils the conscience, and destroys the moral purity. Without preserving our purity, we Catholics are taught we can have little or no hope of entering heaven into which "nothing defiled can enter." How, then, professed Catholics can indulge themselves in the kind of reading we have adverted to—the most morally pestilential of publications, whether they be books or newspapers, seems to our conception altogether unexplainable.

The Secret of Longevity.

The means known, of promoting longevity, have been usually concentrated in short, pithy sayings, as "Keep your head cool, and your feet warm," "Work much, and eat little," etc.; just as if the whole science of human life could be summed up and brought out in a few words, while its greatest principles were kept out of sight. One of the best of these sayings is given by an Italian, in his one hundred and sixteenth year, who, being asked the means of living so long, replied with that improvisation for which his country is remarkable:—

When hungry of the best I eat,
And dry and warm I keep my feet;
I scem my head from sun and rain,
And let few cares perplex my brain.

The following is about the best theory of the matter. Every man is born with a certain stock of vitality, which stock cannot be increased, but may be augmented. With this stock he may live fast or slow,—may live extensively or intensively,—may draw his little amount of life over a large space, or narrow it into a concentrated one, but when his stock is exhausted he has no more. He who lives extensively—who drinks pure water, avoids all inflammatory diseases, exercises sufficiently, but not too laboriously, indulges no exhaustive passions, feeds on no exciting material, pursues no debilitating pleasures, avoids all laborious and protracted study, preserves an easy mind, and thus husbands his quantum of vitality—will live considerably longer than he otherwise would do, because he lives slow; while he, on the other side, who lives intensively—who beverages himself on liquors and wines; exposes himself to inflammatory diseases, or causes that produce them, labors beyond his strength; visits exciting scenes, and indulges exhausting passions, lives on stimulating and highly seasoned food—is always debilitated by his pleasures.

The Virgin's Tree.

The following description of the "Tree of the Virgin Mother" cannot fail to be of interest to our readers. It is situated in the village of Metarich, a few miles distant from Cairo, and in the immediate neighborhood of the ancient Heliopolis, whose site is now occupied only by a few scattered ruins and a picturesque monolith over fifty yards high. Near the monolith is the present village of Metarich, a heap of houses in a state of ruin, presenting a most wretched appearance, but surrounded, however, by large and well cultivated gardens, in the center of which rises, with an imposing appearance, the large tree of the Virgin (Segar el Mariani), an old sycamore, under whose shade tradition has it that the Holy Family reposed at the time of their flight into Egypt. This sycamore is very large. Seven men could hardly span the lower part of its trunk. Its age is unknown, but by the concentric circles which a section of one of its largest branches, which has been detached from the trunk for some years past, presents, we may conclude that it has withstood the storms of several centuries. The present Viceroy of Egypt, at the time of the inauguration of the Suez Canal, presented this sycamore to France, in accordance with desire expressed by the Empress Eugenie who went to see it. She had it surrounded with an elegant railing, and appointed two guardians to protect it and take care of the lilies and geraniums which she caused to be planted around it.

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WELLAND CANAL ENLARGEMENT.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS.

SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for the Welland Canal," will be received at this office until the arrival of the eastern and western mails on Monday, the 25th day of JANUARY next, 1886, for raising the walls of the locks, weirs, etc., and increasing the height of the banks of that part of the Welland Canal between Port Dalhousie and Thorold, and for deepening the Summit Level between Thorold and Ramey's Bend, near Hamberston. The works, throughout, will be let in sections.

Maps of the several localities, together with plans and descriptive specifications can be seen at this office, on and after MONDAY, the 11th day of JANUARY next, 1886, where printed forms of tender can be obtained. A like class of information, relative to the works north of Allanburg will be furnished at the Resident Engineer's Office, Thorold; and for works south of Allanburg, plans, specifications, etc., may be seen at the Resident Engineer's Office, Welland.

Contractors are requested to bear in mind that tenders will not be considered unless made strictly in accordance with the printed forms, and, in the case of firms, accept there are attached the actual signatures, the nature of the occupation and place of residence of each member of the same; and further, an accepted bank cheque for the sum of "Two Thousand Dollars" or more—according to the extent of the work on the section—must accompany the respective tenders, which sum shall be forfeited if the party tendering declines entering into contract for the works, at the rates stated in the offer submitted.

The amount required in each case will be stated on the form of tender.

The cheque or money thus sent in will be returned to the respective parties whose tenders are not accepted.

This Department does not, however, bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,
A. P. BRADLEY,
Secretary.

Department of Railways and Canals,
Ottawa, 9th December, 1885.

J. MCGOVERN,
DEALER IN

FOREIGN, DOMESTIC FRUITS

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Address—THE MAIL Toronto, Canada.

COMPARATIVE WORTH OF BAKING POWDERS.

Table listing various baking powder brands and their comparative worth. Brands include ROYAL (Absolutely Pure), GRANT'S (Alum Powder), BUMFORD'S, HANFORD'S, REDHEAD'S, CHARM (Alum Powder), AMAZON (Alum Powder), CLEVELAND'S, PIONEER (San Francisco), CZAR, DR. PRICE'S, SNOW FLAKE (Groff's), LEWIS', PEARL (Andrews & Co.), HECKER'S, GILLET'S, ANDREWS & CO. 'Regal', BULK (Powder sold loose), and BUMFORD'S (when not fresh).

REPORTS OF GOVERNMENT CHEMISTS

As to Purity and Wholesomeness of the Royal Baking Powder.

"I have tested a package of Royal Baking Powder, which I purchased in the open market, and find it composed of pure and wholesome ingredients. It is a cream of tartar powder of a high degree of merit, and does not contain either alum or phosphates, or other injurious substances. E. G. LOVE, Ph.D."

"It is a scientific fact that the Royal Baking Powder is absolutely pure. H. A. MOTT, Ph.D."

"I have examined a package of Royal Baking Powder, purchased by myself in the market. I find it entirely free from alum, terra alba, or any other injurious substance. HENRY MORROW, Ph.D., President of Stevens Institute of Technology."

"I have analyzed a package of Royal Baking Powder. The materials of which it is composed are pure and wholesome. S. DANA HAYES, State Assayer, Mass."

The Royal Baking Powder received the highest award over all competitors at the Vienna World's Exposition, 1873; at the Centennial, Philadelphia, 1876; at the American Institute, New York, and at State Fairs throughout the country.

No other article of human food has ever received such high, emphatic, and universal endorsement from eminent chemists, physicians, scientists, and Boards of Health all over the world.

NOTE—The above DIAGRAM illustrates the comparative worth of various Baking Powders, as shown by Chemical Analysis and experiments made by Prof. Schedler. A pound can of each powder was taken, the total leavening power or volume in each can calculated, the result being as indicated. This practical test for worth by Prof. Schedler only proves what every observant consumer of the Royal Baking Powder knows by practical experience, that, while it costs a few cents per pound more than ordinary kinds, it is far more economical, and, besides, affords the advantage of better work. A single trial of the Royal Baking Powder will convince any fair-minded person of these facts.

* While the diagram shows some of the alum powders to be of a higher degree of strength than other powders ranked below them, it is not to be taken as indicating that they have any value. All alum powders, no matter how high their strength, are to be avoided as dangerous.

TRAVEL BY THE FAMOUS "ALBERT LEA ROUTE."

ALBERT LEA ROUTE. CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE AND ST. PAUL RAILWAY.

Table showing train schedules for the Albert Lea Route, including departure and arrival times for various stations like Winnipeg, St. Paul, and Chicago.

From St. Paul and Minneapolis to Milwaukee, Chicago, London, Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and all Points in Canada and the Eastern Provinces.

It is the only line running Pullman Palace Sleeping Cars with luxurious Smoking Rooms, and the Finest Dining Cars in the world through Milwaukee to Chicago without change.

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MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS R.R. AND THE "FAMOUS ALBERT LEA ROUTE."



The above is a correct map of the ALBERT LEA ROUTE, and its immediate connections. Through Trains daily from ST. PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS TO CHICAGO, without change, connecting with all lines EAST AND SOUTH-EAST.

THE CHICAGO & GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY make close connections at CHICAGO for TORONTO AND ALL POINTS EAST, WITH TRAINS FROM ST. PAUL AND MANITOBA.

Gold Watch Free. The publishers of the Capital City Home Guest, the well-known Illustrated Literary and Family Magazine, make the following liberal offer for the New Year: The person sending us the longest verse in the Bible, before March 1st, will receive a Gold Watch, Lady's Hunting Cased Swiss Watch, worth \$50.

Publ. of HOME GUEST, HARTFORD, CONN.