

ing for my poor mother!" when, presto, she ran against some one. As her eyes were turned upward she did not see the portly gentleman who stopped before her and with some show of displeasure exclaimed, "Is this proper behaviour for the street?"

The gentleman had just come from his dinner at the hotel opposite. He was a bachelor and a good liver, and to-day his dinner had been prolonged, because it was Christmas-eve. "Why do you run so needlessly, and knock me in the stomach?" And he looked very angry, caught the child by the arm. She cried out with pain. She stammered an apology and said that she was looking at a falling star, and asked for a blessing for her poor mother.

"Nonsense! Superstition! Stuff!" exclaimed the gentleman. "A falling star!"

Then, recovered from the sudden meeting, and his good nature asserting itself, he looked curiously into the pale, yet beautiful face of the child. The moon at that moment appeared above the houses, and its light fell directly upon the two.

The childish face upturned to him, lighted by a half-frightened, half-pitying expression, held him, and aroused the remembrance of his own childhood and of the merry Christmas time in it. In every man's heart there is a place for love and sympathy; in some the growth is small, in others large, and in some there is only sterility. So with the gentleman suddenly stopped by the little girl. But as he looked into the troubled face, the little place or garden in his heart, heretofore barren, began to show signs of life, and soon the plant which we call sympathy, or charity, sprouted, grew, budded, and bloomed with marvellous rapidity.

"What is your name, little one, and where do you live?" he asked in a pleasant voice. She told him that her name was Susan, like her mother's, that her mother was a wash-woman and lived in an alley where the sun, even in mid-summer, never shone.

"Come!" said the stranger, "I will take you home, and if all is as you say, then, indeed, will the falling star have brought you what you wish—good luck and a blessing."

They went through the market place into a narrow street where the poor people lived.

"Here it is," said the child, and running before, stood by a door on the lower floor. The stranger was obliged to stoop, and that he had never done before.

"Mother is within, and has a fire in the stove," exclaimed the child; "I can see it through the chinks."

The poor woman, who, like her daughter, during the day, had been employed in preparing rich people's houses for Christmas-eve, had arranged a surprise for her child. She sat upon a low stool before a little iron stove: in which a fire burned briskly which gave her great pleasure, for a fire did not glow in the room as often as the good woman wished; and the little stove—it seemed to be a thing of life and sense, and to take pleasure in resuming its regular trade, namely, giving out heat and making its friends happy; and the poor really imagined that the little stove danced a little jig on its four legs.

On the rickety table was a very small fir tree, two apples, a few nuts, and a little wax candle—all for the little Susie, whom she knew would be delighted with the gifts, small and mean as they were.

As the stranger entered the room Susie's mother looked up astonished, arose, gazed wildly at the visitor for a moment, and then placed her hand before her face and wept bitterly.

And now it was the stranger's turn to be astonished. He looked again and again at the child and mother; the tears came; his hands trembled, and the words failed; but the corner of his heart—that little garden where sympathy, charity and love ought to be cultivated, but had been barren many years—became suddenly transformed. The place was fertile, but charity had never been planted there, and now the woman's tears, the discovery he had made warmed it into vigorous life.

Brother and sister! Since the sister's marriage, many years before, they had not seen each other. The brother had become rich, but the sister had

lost everything; first her dowry, by her husband's debts, then the husband himself, and finally hope. The brother, displeased with the marriage, refused aid. "Why did she marry the worthless fellow!" he exclaimed, and then thought no more of them for many years—until he met little Susie, as we have pointed out.

"Susan," said the brother, "now we will forget the past. This is Christmas eve, and you shall go with me and remain with me," and he kissed his little niece.

"Let sorrow and care remain here. We will return to the old home where we played as children."

Then they left the poor dwelling, the sister upon his arm, and leading his niece by the hand, and to him, as to them, came greater happiness than he or they had ever experienced before.

And now, when the stars fall, and the silver rain illumines the sky, he invokes a blessing upon them. They brought him his long lost sister, a better heart, and a more enjoyable life.

CHRISTMAS DESECRATED.

But how is Christmas-tide desecrated? Christians do this by failing to come to the festival with the Advent preparation, spending their time in the theatre, concert hall and bazar, leaving no time for the "Mission," which they dismiss to the more devout, while they take too low a view of Christmas itself. Yet the Church, the same authority which changed the Sabbathic observance from the seventh to the first day of the week, has decreed the devout observance of Christmas, and those who respect the Sunday decree, should not hold lightly by the other. I speak not of the exact day, but of the principle involved.

We should remember then, that Christmas is very unworthily kept when we make feasts in our houses and neglect the House of God, where Christ claims a "pure offering." The positive desecration, on the other hand, comes by the introduction of disorder. The suspension of labor is attended with risk and needs safeguards. It is so with Sunday, already in some quarters, a terror to the people. Holidays need to be hedged about with safeguards, or, instead of a blessing, they may become a curse. It would be unwise to ignore this. Even with respect to Christmas St. Bernard was obliged to speak in the twelfth century. In England many abuses sprang up, and the "Lord of Misrule" was in power from November until February; while the "Abbott of Unreason" was not abolished until 1555; Misrule has no Lord now, though it might be well if we had a Master of the Revels, say the chief of police. Under the head of disorder we might put the general giddiness, for at the holidays there are those who regard gluttony, drunkenness and sensuality, three of the Seven Deadly Sins, as subjects of jest; though it is declared that those who do these things shall have no part in the Kingdom of God.

But while we allow and encourage all pure and innocent recreation, let us repudiate those games that are an offence against the modesty of true maidens, and rebuke those young men who assume a degree of liberty that would better befit a court fool. And, may I say it here, the increasing popularity of mistletoe bodes little good, since, with its wholesale importation, as now coming to be practiced, there follows a loss of maidenly delicacy and reserve—though it is a loss that we cannot afford in a state of society like ours, full of young men and young women, with passions inherited from long generations of over-indulgent ancestors, and intensified in accordance with the laws of heredity. Society will grow corrupt fast enough without the help of paganism and social rot engendered under the mistletoe.—Dr. B. F. De Costa.

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THE WORD "CHRISTMAS."

The origin of the word Christmas is instructive. It is composed of two words Christ and Mass. Mass is one of the many names for a celebration of the Blessed Sacrament. Putting the word in our nomenclature, it would be Christ-Celebration or Christ's Celebration. The very name of the day itself shows what should be the prominent service of its commemoration—the Holy Eucharist. And so it has always been from time immemorial. It is not called Christ. Morning Prayer, but Christ-Mass, or Celebration, or Holy Eucharist.

ADVENT MEANS COMING.

It is the second coming of the Son of God that we have in our minds when we think or speak of his advent, and in order to mark the immeasurable importance of this most solemn subject, the Church sets apart a special season—of nearly four weeks duration before Christmas Day—for its particular consideration. During these weeks of Advent the Church calls her children to withdraw as much as possible from the pleasures of this world, in order that they may give more time to prayer, and to the contemplation of this and other kindred subjects; and if we are faithful sons and daughters of our spiritual mother, we shall gladly avail ourselves year by year of this special opportunity to ponder on the awful thought of Judgment to come. But the subject is one which demands immediate consideration on your part, if you have not already weighed its terrific import. The subject may come to your notice at a time of the year when Advent is still far distant. Do not, for your soul's sake, say that you will postpone the matter until that season comes round again! Let not a day pass until you have done all you know to commence a serious preparation for that sure and terrible Judgment which shall certainly one day overtake you in common with all mankind, for "we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ." Ask yourself candidly, "Am I ready to pass through this fierce ordeal? To stand one amidst millions of souls, and, before them all, confess and be judged for every unrepented sin I have committed? Am I ready to face the frown of my outraged God, His face once radiant with mercy, now clouded over with just anger; His eyes once beaming with compassionate love, now fixed on me with a piercing glance of inexorable justice, ready to pass upon me, if found guilty, the dread unalterable sentence—'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' Am I prepared for this? Shall I be able to stand before the great white throne whereon sitteth the Judge of the earth? Shall I have the courage to turn my head and gaze upon that mighty sea of faces, some indeed glowing with the light of innocence, reflected upon them by Him in whom they trusted, the Son of Righteousness, but others, yea, the vast majority, weeping and wailing at the thought of the mercy that they have rejected, the long threatened judgment which they despised? Shall I be able to meet the fierce glance of the enemy of souls, Satan, the great accuser of his brethren, who shall come forward to bear his terrible witness against his victims? Shall I be able to gainsay his accusation, that I fell before his seductions, that I committed the sins to which he tempted me, that I did, alas! delay—until too late—my repentance? Shall I be able to meet the sadly solemn countenance of my guardian angel who shall likewise come forward and bear witness how he strove to protect me and keep me pure, and yet how, in spite of all, I fell? Shall I be able to bear the angry uprising of my own burning conscience, which will bring vividly to my remembrance in that hour of terrible retribution every impure thought, every unkind word, every falsehood, every sin of which I have been guilty? Oh, this terrible Judgment to come—how shall I meet it—'who shall stand when He appeareth.'"

Such may well be the train of thought passing through your mind in contemplation of the awful subject placed before you. It will be your own fault if yours is to be such a case as has been

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