The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1921

TO MOTHER

Thinkin' of Christmas and givin' things,
And, somehow, it ever and allus brings
The old times back and their quiet ways
In the dreams and the drift of the yesterdays:
An' specially the thought of the lovely joy
That every chick of us—girl an' boy—
Took in the package that held the stir
We'd marked "To Mother," an' fixed for her.

All of us give her other things,
An' they were the days, indeed, of wings
That lifted above us and sheltered all
In their love like they knew there was grief to fall,
An' perhaps to come, and sorrow to quell,
The cheer of the old time Christmas spell,
But none of the givin' was just like this,
The gift "To Mother," with all its bliss!

Weeks of wonderin' what we should buy,
An' talkin' an' figrin', tryin' to try
To get together as much as we
Could dare to spend; an' the softest glee
An' sweetest whisperin'; now and then
Openin' the package to peep again
After we'd tied it and set it there,
Marked "To Mother," beside her chair.

Allus opened our own things first
To show around, or we might have burst;
But allus saved to the very last—
In them Christmas morns that have vanished fast—
The gift for mother; because 'twas fine
To watch her smile, and her eyes shine,
To watch her guessin' an' wonderin' clear
Till the last cord fell and she cried: Oh, dear!"

Heard uv tears that were shed, no doubt,
For happiness? When horn rolled out
We knew what it meant for one to cry
For joy—an' it made not only the eye
But the heart to weep, like a gladness came
With a flood through the mark of life, its scum,
And flow all round in a crystal stream
Through that gift "To Mother" in days of dream!

—The Rentztown Bard.

CHRISTMAS JOKELETS

Only three more hinting days before Christmas.

Yes, Christmas is coming. It is near at hand. If you are going to do anything for anybody, don't delay.

Be patient with the merchants and clerks during the holidays, and do not do your Christmas shopping surly.

Gobble, gobble, gobble. If the turkey had only varied his monotonous remarks, perhaps we wouldn't have been so ready to do as he says.

For turkey now we do not care,
And to our deep disgrace,
We would not, if we met one, dare
To look it in the face.

No great composer has ever set the Christmas shopping rush to music. Here is an opportunity for some towering genius to achieve either fame or the foolish house.

A practice that is much abhorred,
Though many people do it,
Is spending what you can't afford,
Then after Christmas rue it.

A turkey in the ice-box is worth two in the barnyard, but we doubt if it is worth 50 cents a pound, for

The turkey is a gilded bird
With juicy meat and tender,
No luxury, as we have heard,
For purses somewhat slender.

These are moving days. No sooner does a man get his Christmas and New Year's bills paid than he begins saving for his summer vacation, and as soon as he gets on his feet after vacation he has to begin "shopping early."—D. R.

Wherever you bide in the world sae wide,
I wish you a nook on the Sunny Side,
Wi muckle of love and little o' care,
A wee bit purse, wi siller to spare;
Your din fireside when day is spent
In a wee bit house wi hearts content.

Have you an old friend that has seen better days, and is now crowded into close quarters and finding it hard to make his way? If so, this is just the right season for remembering him. Take time to write him an affectionate letter. And if God has given you the means, delicately inclose a check or a bank note for a Christmas gift. To know that you thought about him will do him good; but it will do yourself more good. An unselfish action is its own exceeding great reward.

The Christmas spirit is found only where people think of what they can give, not of what they can get.

BAD WRITING

A young man in Kingstone, N. Y., being out of employment recently, requested of a former employer a letter of recommendation to aid him in securing a situation. The letter was written and handed to the applicant, who was totally unable to read it, as was every person to whom it was shown. A friend advised him to take it to a printing office, where it could be deciphered, as compositors are noted for being able to make out the worst specimens of writing. It was given to compositors in various printing establishments, and in turn given up without being deciphered. At last, as a forlorn hope, it was given to the prescription clerk in a drug store, who has the reputation of being able to read anything. The man of drugs took the paper, gazed at it long and thoughtfully, and finally seized an empty quart bottle and then hurried around the store, taking some fluids of various colors from sundry bottles, and finally shaking the compound most vigorously. Then handing it to the possessor of the letter of recommendation he remarked to that much astonished individual, "Two dollars, and a very good cough mixture it is."

ONE AND WON

A number of privates were waiting anxiously in the canteen for news of the regimental team, who were playing a cup final.

The orderly-room runner, an Irishman, entered hurriedly. He was asked whether he had heard the result of the match.

"Sure, and I have," said Paddy. "The regiment's won."

There was a great cheering, until Paddy spoke again.

"Yes, me bhoys," he said, "the regiment's one, and the other spalpeens is three."

SAFETY RULES IN SMOKING

1.—Watch the careless smoker; notice where he throws matches, cigars, and cigarettes, when he has finished with them; stamp out any sparks you may see.

2.—Tell your friends that smoking is harmful to children as well as dangerous to those about them.

Say, I wish you all a Merry Christmas. I'm looking forward to that blessed old festival just about as keenly now as I did about seventy years ago, when I first hung up my little red woollen socks at our fireplace in the old log house. Christmas was real to me then, and it's real to me still. Say, don't any of you folks, whether you're rich or poor; sick or well; married or single; with lots of kiddies or 'nary a chick, disappoint the children who are depending upon you this Christmas. Keep the faith in their dear young hearts about Santa Claus and Christmas. It'll pay. Then when they get older they'll do their share in bringing good cheer to the next generation of kiddies.

Well, do you know, I have to confess that I am really surprised at the interest I found was taken in those old School Board minutes I put into my space for old time recollections last week. I really believe the present generation actually does revere the names of our forefathers. When they began to find the names of Asa Hall, Thomas Davidson, Abram Matthews, Thomas Moore, Duncan Kennedy, P. H. Corrigill, Malcolm Kennedy, and on down to John Speight and Dr. McGarvin, and Charles T. Hill, and Oliver Lesler, and W. H. Storey and Capt. Allan, and James Cameron and all the rest of them, they seemed to read of their doings sixty or seventy years ago, in providing to "teach the young idea of this locality how to shoot," with as keen interest as if it had been one of Barnum's circus posters.

I told you last week I would give you a copy of that original sixty-year-old agreement when Robert Little was first engaged teacher of Acton School. Here is the document:

"We, the undersigned, Trustees of School Section No. Twelve, in the township of Esquesing, in the county of Halton, by virtue of the authority vested in us by the eighth clause of the twenty-seventh section of the Upper Canada Consolidated Common School Act, have chosen Robert Little, who holds a First-class certificate of qualification, to be a teacher in said school section, and we do hereby contract with and employ him, at the rate of Five Hundred Dollars per annum, from and after the first day of January, eighteen hundred and sixty-three, and we further bind and oblige ourselves, and our successors in office, faithfully to employ the powers with which we are legally invested, by the said Act, to collect and pay the said teacher during the continuance of this agreement, the sum for which we hereby become bound; the said sum to be paid the said teacher, annually. And the said teacher hereby contracts with the Trustees herein named, and binds himself to teach and conduct the school in said school section, according to the said School Act, and the regulations which are in force under its authority. This agreement shall continue in force for one year from the first day of January, eighteen hundred and sixty-three, and shall include all lawful holidays and vacations prescribed under the authority of the said School Act.

Given under our hands and the seals of office this fifteenth day of October, eighteen hundred and sixty-two.

NELSON McGARVIN,
CHARLES T. HILL, } Trustees
ROBERT KENNEDY.

ROBERT LITTLE, Teacher.

There, that's what I call a real binding document, and it bound Mr. Little in similar terms for eight years, when he resigned after being appointed Inspector for the County. The salary remained at $500 for each of the eight years, excepting for the year 1866, when it was reduced to $480—perhaps because the "Fenians were coming" that year.

On the fourth of October, 1870, Miss Mary Thurtell, mother of my young friend, A. T. Brown, of the drug store, was engaged under a similar agreement, at the salary of $175 per annum, and I believe Acton School never had a better teacher than Mary Thurtell. That was over half a century ago, and, oh my, it seems to me just like it might have been last fall that Mary was engaged teacher.

And now the old power house is to be turned into a hive of industry again. I noticed a lot of texts for sermons in the last issue of the paper that gives me voice, and this appeared to be one of them. Of course that building is hardly historic—it isn't old enough—but I well remember the winter it was put up, and when it was finally completed and the machinery installed. It was one of the wonders of our town. And the little building now in front of it that transforms our electric energy in Acton is now one of the biggest little wonders. There's been great strides along this line from the old street lamps in a very few years. But the part of that item that did me the most good was to see one of our own Acton boys setting up an industry here. That love of the old town that makes wanderers want to come back and settle in the old town makes us stay-at-homes really think things can't have gone to the dogs completely here. It does my old heart good to see the young folks get back, and bring back with them something to keep things humming in the old town.

Another text that struck me was the approaching municipal elections. Somewhere I read that every red-blooded man liked a contest, and I believe the man that wrote that knew whereof he spoke. I've been out of politics—municipal, provincial or dominion—for years, but I can't help getting worked up a little every time a contest is likely to come off, whether it mattress or not. Seems to kind of break the monotony, even if no one else in town catches the same excitement that I have, but apparently for 1922 the race has lots of entries. We've always had pretty fair Councils in town but it seems to me, when I used to dabble in these things, I liked to know just how many people wanted me in public life, and I didn't care for getting any of the public offices handed to me on a platter with "I guess you can have it as nobody else seems to want it." I liked the contests and I like them yet. They give me a thrill of something worth trying for and a public interest in our government. Of course they cost money and sometimes cause an upset in the usual smooth running of affairs, but usually the man who gets the honor broadens to his capabilities, to the extent of being able to take care of all the duties, and when his term is ended is a better man for having fulfilled those duties, even if at a cost of his personal time. If you can judge from rumor it looks like a contest this year for some of the offices, and old as I am, and crippled up, I want to get to hearing all sides, just as I did from the Tories and Grits and Farmers. We'll know before next week at this time anyway, just about what's going to be doing.

The Old Man

MISS NIMMS' CHRISTMAS GIFT

It was a stormy, wintry night, but no one seemed to mind the storm; it was Christmas Eve. Miss Nimms sat alone at her homely fireside. She heard the music of church bells and the voices of merry children singing carols somewhere in the vicinity, but she heeded them not.

Miss Nimms was not old, but her face was exceedingly sorrowful and weary. Her burden of loneliness was more than she could bear alone. Why she had not cast her burden on Him who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," I am not prepared to say. The fire in the old-fashioned fire place danced and sparkled. There was no other light in the cosy sitting-room. The house was really furnace heated; but Miss Nimms loved an open fire and always had one when the weather permitted.

She sat and looked into the flames with a far-away look in her sad eyes. Last Christmas her widowed mother was living and she was thinking of the cosy little chicken dinner they had enjoyed together. Her eyes filled with tears. She had not realized until her mother was gone how happy they had been together.

There would be no Christmas dinner on the morrow. What was the use? What could one eat alone? Besides, she had very little appetite for dinner. Let those have them who felt like it.

The curtains had not yet been drawn. Suddenly there came a soft rap on the window. It startled the lonely watcher by the fire, who was on her feet in a moment. Pressed close against the glass was a child's face.

"What do you mean by frightening me so?" questioned Miss Nimms somewhat irritably.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," apologized the child. "I—I was going to ask if I could warm myself at your fire."

The voice, as well as the pinched face, was full of longing.

Miss Nimms opened the door. "Come in," she said gently.

The child, a little girl not over seven years, responded with a little cry of relief. A thin old shawl, fastened about her head and trailing down to her feet, was her only outside garment. This was covered with snow. Miss Nimms removed it from her guest, shook it out of the door and hung it up to dry. Then she approached the child, who stood before the fire holding out her hands to the warmth.

"Oh!" she cried out, "isn't it lovely!"

"What is lovely?"

"This fire."

"Sit down in that little chair and get thoroughly warm. You are shivering."

The child sat down, but looked up appealingly.

"Do you think I really can?" she asked.

"Can what?"

"Get thoroughly warm."

"Why, of course you can."

"I'm so glad!" said the child gratefully, a faint smile creeping across her pale face. "It's so lovely here by the fire. I've been so cold—so cold—you can't think. It seems so good to think of being really warm again!"

"Why did you come out in the cold and storm?" asked Miss Nimms wonderingly.

"I was so lonesome I couldn't stay in the room. It's so cold there, too; awful cold! It's down cellar and there is no fire, you know."

"No, I don't know anything about it, but you can tell me. Where is the cellar and who lives with you?"

"Do you know Gorman's block?" asked the child, shivering again at the very thought of the place.

"Yes."

"Well, it's there I live and I'm all alone. Mamma went to heaven yesterday. They took her in a box. I cried and cried. I didn't want to live without mamma, you know," tears rolling down her cheeks and choking her voice. "Miss Stone said they buried her in the ground under the snow, but I don't believe it."

"Why don't you?"

"Because mamma told me she was going to heaven. Mamma said I should meet her there, but I don't know the way, do you?"

The question startled Miss Nimms, but she did not reply. She sat quite still looking into the fire and thinking remorsefully of her lost opportunities.

"Do you?" repeated the child eagerly.

There was no response.

Presently the child's eyes closed, the little tired head nodded and fell to one side; the little one was asleep.

Miss Nimms watched her with keen interest. Her eyes slowly filled with tears which presently flowed down her cheeks.

"Poor baby! Poor little lonely soul!" was her pitying thought. "What blessings I have compared to here! And she asks me if I know the way to heaven? Could I show her?"

She arose softly and went into the kitchen where her faithful maid of all work sat by the table finishing a pair of red mittens. A boy of ten years sat near her. They were mother and son. Their faces looked sad; and no wonder for well they knew there was to be no Christmas cheer within that house.

"Rocky," said Miss Nimms, "there is a little girl in the sitting room who says she lives in Gorman's block in the cellar. Would you and Tom be willing to go over there and find out what you can about her?"

Rocky and Tom were more than willing to go for on the way they might get some glimpses of Christmas cheer. They went and came back quickly. Rocky reported thus:

"Oh Miss Mimms, it's a dreadful place, that cellar; 'taint fit for the rats to live in and there's no fire at all. They told me there that Mrs. Morse, the little girl's mother, had been a lovely Christian woman and that before she died she had prayed to the Lord that he would provide a happy home for her one little lamb."

Rocky went in and looked at the sleeping child.

"Lord bless her!" she exclaimed under her breath.

"Rocky," whispered Miss Nimms, "I believe the Lord sent her here, and I shall keep her."

"God bless you!" said Rocky. Together they put the waif to bed, working so gently that she did not awaken. Tears rolled down their cheeks as they saw the thin underclothing and the emaciated body.

"But please God, we'll bring her out all right," said Miss Nimms. "Bring in some of to-night's milk, Rocky, so that if she should waken I can give her some."

After the child was snugly covered up in the warm bed Miss Nimms followed Rocky to the kitchen.

"Rocky," she confessed, "I have not done right in neglecting to make any preparations for Christ's birthday. I am sorry."

So they all had a merry Christmas together, and the little girl found a happy and loving home.

A SANE CHRISTMAS

A number of Christian ministers in Los Angeles and other points in California have inaugurated a movement toward a sane observance of Christmas. In view of the fact that the universal custom prevails of making gifts at the Christmas season without regard to the true spirit of Christ; that this custom has taken on extravagances that impose heavy burdens on people of moderate means as well as the poor; and again, that fashionable giving imposes on recipients a feeling of obligation to reciprocate in kind and quality equal to the gifts received, working hardships in many cases that might be avoided but for the prevailing custom, the recommendation is made that thoughtful moderation be exercised in bestowing gifts; that the remembrance be limited to some simple token of love in the name of Christ. The further recommendation is made that Christmas celebrations in our Sunday Schools be conducted in ways not to excite expectations of gifts, but rather to afford great opportunities for giving for the relief of the sick and the destitute, and for the support of homes and hospital wards for children.

In our judgment this is the beginning of a noble thing. Of course, success will not be looked for, nor obtained in one or two years. Possibly a generation will be required to effect a modification of present day customs.

But it is worth a struggle, and the Church should be the source of the movement. The perversion of this beautiful and significant season should be arrested; the greed of the merchant should be stayed, and the thoughts of the Church and Christian world should be directed into more Christly channels. We welcome the sane Christmas movement.—Christian Advocate.

SAFETY RULES FOR HOLIDAYS

1.—Do not take foolish risks.

2.—Try to have a good time without burning gunpowder, but if there must be fireworks let them be handled only by grown people.

3.—Do not set lighted candles on Christmas trees. If you desire lights, use only electric lamps, carefully wired.

4.—Do not use cotton-wool, tissue paper, and other inflammable decorations.

SO IT WOULD

A citizen who was doing some marketing yesterday had his attention attracted to a boy about 12 years of age, who seemed anxious to get hold of one of the many big watermelons piled up in the Central Market. It seemed like a good chance to sow a seed in the lad's mind, and the citizen beckoned the boy, and queried:

"My son, would you like to steal one of those melons?"

"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply.

"You would eh! I am sorry to hear that. If you should steal one of those melons, my boy, do you know what the result might be?"

The lad scratched his head, surveyed the pile again, and answered:

"I spect the plaguey thing would be green all the way through."—Detroit Free Press.

THE TROUBLESOME RUBBER HEELS

"Look here, Moses," said the white foreman of a gang of colored laborers, "every time I come round you're loafing. How does it happen I never find you at work?"

"Ah'll tell you how come, boss," explained Moses aggrievedly. "It's 'cause dem rubber heels of your'n don't make no noise a-tall."

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CHURCH ETIQUETTE

The following are some of the "don'ts" and "you ought tos" that should always be regarded as we attend divine service, and now is as good a time as any to attend to them if you have been careless in these matters:

Don't come late. You ought to come five minutes early in order to get comfortable before the service begins.

Don't enter the house during prayer if it can possibly be avoided. Bow your head a moment in inward prayer as you take your seat.

Don't whisper unless it is absolutely necessary, nor turn your head every time anyone enters the church or the janitor adjusts a window.

Don't cast piercing glances at the mother when her baby cries, for she is disconcerted enough anyway. It is well, however, for a mother to go to the vestibule as soon as consistent when her baby begins to cry.

Don't put on your coat or overshoes until after the benediction is pronounced.

Don't allow your children to be out playing during the meeting, but keep them with you.

In short, learn how "thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God."

If you want to leave the church with a light heart, throw heavily into the collection.—Unknown.

SOLDIERS—LEARNED VALUE OF FORESTS

The remarkable increase in the interest which Canadians are taking in their forests is attributed by some to the fact that members of the Canadian Expeditionary force in the war came home with a new conception of how vital forests are to any state, both in peace and war, and also how large a proportion of land in countries of dense population is devoted to forest culture. This is doubtless one reason, and the rise in the cost of forest products of all kinds has also been a contributing factor. Perhaps the chief reason has been the realization by both civilians and soldiers of the folly, amounting to criminality, of allowing a great natural resource to be destroyed by the careless handling of fire.

A Spring Day Up in Muskoka

A Spring day in Muskoka, with sky and water vividly blue; the smell of pine, the song of birds in the air. On a sunny slope a girl gathered trilliums with eager hands. She smiled at the questioning stranger.

"I never picked wild flowers before," she said wistfully. "We lived in the city. Father died, and then—mother, of tuberculosis. I was all alone. I wasn't strong—worked too hard—and I got it. They brought me here to the Sanitarium on a stretcher."

"But, look at me now!" exultantly. The glow of health was in her cheeks. "It's the rest and care and good food and fresh air that saved me," and her eyes shone joyously.

Surely she was worth saving, this bonny, blue-eyed girl! Surely the Muskoka Hospital for Consumptives deserves her gratitude!

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