



The Night before Christmas

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

" 'Tis the night before Christmas"—
I whisper the rhyme
And wander in fancy
To "once on a time."
I see the big fireplace,
The girls and the boys,
The long, heaped-up stockings,
The drums and the toys.

" 'Tis the night before Christmas"—
So old, and so new!
With all of its dreamings
So good and so true.
I see all the faces
Forgotten so long,
And out of the twilight
There murmurs a song.

" 'Tis the night before Christmas"—
And here, by my grate,
The past rises, glowing;
The years lose their weight;
The boy-days come trooping
At memory's call,
And gleam in the embers
That flicker and fall.

" 'Tis the night before Christmas"—
Ah, could I but clutch
The gold of my fancies!
'T would go at my touch!
The shouts and the laughter
Now sweet to my ear
Would shrink to a silence
Too deep and too drear.

" 'Tis the night before Christmas"—
Remembrances stir
As sweet as the cherished
Frankincense and myrrh.
And, hark! As the visions
Grow dim to the sight,
There comes: "Merry Christmas!
And, boy-days, good night!"



St. George's Cathedral.



Y.M.C.A. Building.

The Model Song.

By Rev. E. B. Ryckman, D.D.,
Kingston.

The angel said unto them: Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men.—Luke ii, 10-14.

The incarnation was a necessity. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Men were His children and He loved them; and just as the mother is sure to be found where her child cries, and the father where his son is in difficulty and can be helped out of it, so we might expect to find God Himself where His children were in trouble, where they were sinning and suffering and dying. The fulness of time had arrived, and a choir of the angels of light was sent to announce His coming.

Listen to the song. First there was the solo—a sort of recitative—and then the full chorus. Some people do not like choirs. Especially do they dislike solo singing in the praise of God. "Let all the people sing," they



REV. E. B. RYCKMAN, D.D.

say. But sometimes that is quite impossible. On that occasion it was so. The shepherds could not have joined in the singing. They did not know the tune, but it was a perfect acquaintance—praise and those shepherds who could do nothing but listen received great benefit and blessing. They went immediately to see what the angels told them they should do, and returned glorifying and praising God, in hymns of their own, for all the things they had heard and seen. A model song, indeed! It not only gratified the musical taste of the listeners, it touched their hearts, stirred them to action and filled them with joy and peace.

I have had no personal acquaintance—hardly need say—with the original chorists; I did not hear their song, and if the music was ever written I have not met with it. But I wish to say that I know some things about both, the singers and the song. I shall not tell anyone now or where I learned what I know, but I know, all the same.

To begin with, I know that that first angel was greatly pleased that he was chosen to take the solo part. Not because it flattered his vanity—he had no vanity—nor because it gratified his ambition—ambition is not always wrong—nor because it implied that he was the best singer in the choir, but simply because it was his supreme delight to take any part the Great Choir Master chose to assign him.

Nor, as he stood before that congregation of shepherds, was there the smallest degree of self-consciousness as to how he looked, his attitudes or modulations of voice, nor concern as to how he should acquaint himself in the performance, or what credit or discredit he should get to himself, and when he came up, and up, and up towards the end of his solo and made a magnificent finish, there was no smile on his face of self-satisfaction indicating that he knew himself that he had done a brilliant thing. On the contrary, for very gladness that he had been entrusted with such a message and what it must mean to all people that on earth do dwell, he became entirely oblivious of himself. And as to the other angels, I know that not one of them envied him on account of his prominence, or wondered why he himself, being as good a singer, had not been selected for that part. If there ever were any dissensions among the members of that choir, and jealousies, and miffs on account of slight, I have never heard of them. A model choir.

Again, I know that the words of that song were uttered with perfect distinctness. The shepherds did not miss a syllable. The angels understood fully that on such an occasion, and on all occasions of divine communications to men, the words are the principal thing, and that music alone, though good, is valueless in comparison. In those early days there were comic songs in abundance, and the singers knew how to render them, articulating the words with careful clearness, what might become of the music. And down all the centuries to the present time, it has continued so to be. Bring out the words, by all means. The fun is lost if the words

are lost. Let the music take care of itself. And thus it is according to the angels, in spiritual songs, hymns, anthems and every form of words that is for the glorifying and praising God. The sentiment is the chief thing, not the music. Let there have been, perhaps are now, human choirs which, in taking part in a concert, rendering a humorous piece, would be very careful to make every word distinct, when standing up in the choir to sing in the service of praise, refrain in articulating hymns and anthems so imperfectly as to show that it is their music they are concerned about and not the precious sentiment. That is, they treat English hymns and anthems according to the genius of the French language, coming out but too strong on the vowels and smothering out the consonants. If they had been vocalizing on the notes of organ the shepherds would not have known where to look for the infant Messiah.

Once again, I know that in that angelic choir there was no cracked voice—certainly not by reason of age. Angels do not grow old. I know equally well that no member of that heavenly host would crack his own voice, on purpose, to make it shabby as it were old. At that time, the vibrato movement had not been invented. If it had been, angels would not have accepted it. In their high vocation, praising God, whether before the throne or in the skies above the little town of Bethlehem, what use could they have made of a mere tad or fashion of their earth-born proteges? They could not have thought of it, for aives reasons, first, it is unnatural, it can only be acquired by much practice, and, goodness knows, in the great majority of cases, practice does not make perfect. Let us, it is an affectation, a masquerade, and, so far forth, a deceit. I know it is claimed that it moults a shrill, hard or harsh voice, and introduces an element of feeling, a mellowness. Why the vibrato is used a harness. A shrill voice with the vibrato attachment becomes a squeal like—like what may be heard almost any day at the concert. It is the falsest voice, which some assume in prayer, whereby they simulate tearful emotion. It is a failure, the deception is easily detected, it is the art feeling, not the heart feeling. The painful ure, though perfect as a picture, warns no one, moreover, it is a pure artificiality. Whatever embellishments may be permissible, even admissible, in a concert hall and in secular songs—all right in their places—where the object is to be regaled with sweet sounds and enjoy all that the highest art can do, there should be no attempt to show them off before the Lord. They have no relation whatever to praise or worship in heaven or on earth, from the tongues of angels or of men. If anyone would see the wretchedness of all this let him go stand where I have often stood, in the years since this style came in, while two or three vocalists with cultivated voices were behind me jiggling out the words of a hymn—now do not and fault with me for using that word; it exactly expresses what I mean, and it is the standard—I say jiggling out words, making inevitable discords, because they did not, and could not, jiggle in unison. It is the bane of choir and congregational singing. Some vibrate, others do not, and the result is most unpleasant. I know young girls who have really fine voices, flute-like, bird-like, almost angelic, who are spoiling them by affecting this style. But it is going out. The best singers before the public do not use it. Jenny Lind never did it. The last notable songstress I have heard, Madame Nordica, had only now and then the faintest suggestion of it. May we hope that this, like other fashions, will wear out and that the last shred of the ungraceful thing will soon be gone forever.

Christmas is coming. Christmas songs are the vogue of the season. Let us keep in tune with the angels. "Still through the cloven skies they come, With peaceful wings unfurled, And still their heavenly music floats— O'er all the weary world; Above its sad and lowly plains, And ever o'er its Babel sounds The blessed angels sing."

The Christmas British Whig

Once upon a time a schoolmaster propounded this problem to a class of boys:

"Now, how was it that this great discovery made by Columbus was not fully appreciated until many years after his death?"

"Because he didn't advertise," promptly responded the up-to-date scholar.

Thus it is shown that even children, in these wide-awake, hustling days, are alive to the value and influence of advertising.

That the merchants, business and professional men of Kingston are thoroughly alive to its advantages is evidenced by the splendid way they have utilized the opportunity presented by this Number of the Christmas British Whig. For some years the Whig has issued a special Christmas Number. Each year has seen it increase in the number of its pages, the excellence of its typographical style, in its fine colored illustrations and its literary character. But it remained for the 1911 issue to eclipse all previous records. Never before was such a volume of advertising offered. In order to accommodate this, without sacrificing the literary and illustrative features already arranged for, additional pages were added, making the total issue considerably larger than last year.

It has been the aim of the publishers to give to the readers of the Whig the finest Christmas Number published in a city the size of Kingston. That this object has been achieved can truthfully be affirmed. To the advertising patrons, who have made this possible, the Whig expresses its grateful appreciation.

The attention of our readers is respectfully called to the advertising columns of this issue. The users of this space comprise most of the best business men of the city. Their announcements are of especial importance at this particular time of the year. Taken together, they form a shopping guide of great value to every reader. The problem of "What shall I buy for Christmas gifts?" can be readily solved by a study of these advertisements.

Kingston merchants, through the medium of the Christmas Whig, have made the Christmas buying problem easy for all of us. There no longer exists any need of resorting to the mail-order catalogue.

To all who have contributed to make the 1911 number a success, and to every reader, big and little, we wish

"A RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS
And
A BRIGHT, HAPPY NEW YEAR!"



A municipal polling booth on an election day in January. The building is at the corner of Gore and Wellington streets, and is very old. There was not enough snow on the ground for sleighing. The Customs official awaits her landing.



A winter walk along King street.