

# The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. XXII., No. 52.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, December 26, 1877.

WHOLE SERIES.  
Vol. XII., No. 52.

## Poetry.

### Hymn for Christmas, 1877.

BY SEWALL S. CUTTING.

Out from the wintry night  
Appeared unwonted light,  
Guiding the sages to Judea's plain:  
Echoed unwonted song  
The vaulted heav'n's along,  
Singing with mortal voice th' angelic strain.

"Glory to God above—  
"On earth the reign of love!"  
Such was the burden of celestial hymn:  
Shepherds who watched that night,  
In maze and half afright,  
With mortal ear heard songs of seraphim.

Near Maiden-mother mild,  
Behold the wondrous Child,  
Whom earth and heaven with gifts and  
praise adore—  
Trembling e'en now with fear,  
Ah! favored mother dear,  
Thy pierced heart shall know what anguish  
nigh!

O Child to sorrow born,  
O Man assailed with scorn,  
Till thou didst pay earth's forfeit on the  
cross:  
The Prophets long foretold,  
More sure than Sisy's old,  
Divine Retriever of man's deathly loss.

Hail, Prince enthroned now  
Before These seraphs bow:  
Earth waits the triumphs of Thy perfect  
reign:  
"Come—not in stable born—  
"Come—not to doubt and scorn—  
In clouds of glory come, O Lord, again."

Christmas Eve.

The supper is over, the hearth is swept,  
And in the bright fire's glow,  
The children cluster to hear a tale  
Of that time so long ago—

When grandmamma's hair was golden-  
brown,  
And the warm blood came and went  
O'er the face that could scarce have  
been sweeter then,  
Than now in its rich content.

The face is wrinkled and careworn now,  
And the golden hair is grey;  
But the light that shone in the young  
girl's eyes  
Has never gone away.

And her needles catch the fire's light,  
As in and out they go,  
With the clicking music that grandma  
loves,  
Shaping the stocking toe.

And the waking children love it too,  
For they know the stocking song  
Brings many a tale to grandma's mind,  
Which they shall hear ere long.

But it brings no story of olden time  
To grandma's heart to-night—  
Only a ditty, quaint and short,  
Is sung by the needles bright.

"Life is a stocking," grandma says,  
"And yours is just begun;  
But I am knitting the toe of mine,  
And my work is almost done."

With merry hearts we begin to knit,  
And the ribbing is almost play;  
Some are gay colored and some are white,  
And some are ashen-grey.

But most are made of many a hue,  
With many a stitch set wrong,  
And many a row to be sadly ripped  
Ere the whole is fair and strong.

There are long, plain spaces without a  
break,  
That in youth are hard to bear;  
And many a weary tear is dropped  
As we fashion the heel with care.

But the saddest, happiest time is that  
We court and yet would shun;  
When our Heavenly Father breaks the  
thread,  
And says that our work is done.

The children come to say good-night,  
With tears in their young eyes;  
While in grandma's lap, with broken  
thread,  
The finished stocking lies.

A rumor comes from Edinburgh that  
the Marquis of Lorne will shortly be  
raised to the peerage.

### The Old Year and the New.

FOR HALF-PAST ELEVEN, DEC. 31st, 1877.

O! year, I cannot let you go,  
Though life is ebbing fast;  
You've been a firm, true friend to me,  
I'm with you to the last.

A blessing ere you go I crave,  
Your life will soon be o'er;  
You to the great hereafter go,  
I'll never see you more.

And I must stay, with a sad heart,  
To greet the coming year;  
I always like old friends the best,  
Do not go yet, Old Year!

Those trembling lips would speak to me,  
"See! see! I bend to hear;  
You bid me, with unflinching trust,  
To love the young New Year!"

There! the clock strikes! He's coming  
Old Year! Good-bye! Good-bye!  
My heart is sad, for all alone  
I've stayed to see you die.

TWELVE O'CLOCK.

Good-Bye Old Year,  
Good-Bye Old Year,  
Good-Bye Old Year, good-bye!

Good-Bye Old Year, good-bye!  
I told you you'd have to go,  
Don't scowl up your face  
With such a bad grace,  
Because you're turned out in the snow.  
You remember we gave you due warn-  
ing of all  
That would happen when you should  
grow old,  
And you see now, alas!  
It has all come to pass,  
And you'll have to step out in the cold.

You've been a good friend to us all, Old  
Year,  
You have given more sunshine than rain,  
And tho' all thro' the way,  
Night follows the day,  
There has been far more pleasure than  
pain.

And we thank you and bless you for  
this Old Year,  
For the good you have laid at our feet,  
You've crossed our dear land  
With a bountiful hand,  
And crowned it with plenty complete.

I wonder what record you carry, Old  
Year,  
Of all we have thought or done.  
Have we been good and true,  
The whole time thro',  
Since your pilgrimage first begun?  
Or do you go laden with memories sad  
Of the good deeds that might have  
been?

Of duties unheeded, of moments mis-  
spent  
In idleness folly and sin?

Ah—"Well, good-bye," we can only sigh,  
And wish we were better by far—  
May the good angels guide,  
And walk close by our side,  
Till we get were the blessed age;—  
May they keep us from sinful and danger-  
ous ways,  
Where pleasures un sanctified lie,  
With this prayer on our lips,  
While each sweet moment slips,  
Good-bye, dear Old Year, good-bye.

## Christmas.

### Christmas in Europe.

There is no Christian country in which children are not made happy by the promise of the coming Christmas. The festival is called by different names, and its presiding genius is painted with a different costume and manner. You know all about our jolly Dutch Santa Claus, with his shrewd twinkling eyes, his frosty beard, his ruddy face and the bag of treasures with which he comes tumbling down the chimney, while his team of reindeer snort and stamp on the icy roof. The English Father Christmas is equally well-known, and the wonders of the German Miracle-tree, the first sight of which no child ever forgets. But you are, perhaps, not so familiar with the spirit of the blessed season of advent in Southern Europe, and so I will tell you some of the pleasures and fancies of

THE SPANISH CHRISTMAS.

The good cheer which brings every-  
where is especially evident in Spain.  
They are a frugal people; and many a

good Spanish family are supported by less than the waste of a household on Murray Hill. But there is no sparing at Christmas. This is a season as fatal to turkeys as Thanksgiving in New England. The Castilian farmers drive them into Madrid in great droves, which they conduct from door to door, making the dim old streets gay with their scarlet wattles, and noisy with obstreperous gabbling. But the headquarters of the marketing during those days are in the Plaza Major where every variety of fruit and provision is sold. There is nothing more striking than those vast heaps of fresh golden oranges, plucked the day before in the groves of Andalusia; nuts from Grenada, and dates from Africa; every flavor and color of tropical fruitage; and in the stalls beneath the gloomy arches, the butchers drive their flourishing trade. All is gay and joyous—chaffering and jesting, greeting of friends and filling of baskets. The sky is wintry but the ground is rosy and rich with the fruits of summer. At night the whole city turns out into the streets. The youths and maidens of the poorer classes go trooping through the town with tamborines, castanets and guitars, singing and dancing. Every one has a different song to suit his own state of mind. The women sing of love, and religion, and many of the men, cansing of nothing better than politics. But the part which the children take in the festival bears a curious resemblance to those time-honoured ceremonies we all remember. The associations of Christmas in Spain are all of the Gospel. There is no northern St. Nick there to stuff the stockings of good children with rewards of merit. Why, then, on Christmas eve do you see the little shoes exposed by the windows and doors? The wise kings of the East are supposed to be journeying by night to Bethlehem, bearing gifts and homage to the heavenly Child, and out of their abundance where good children sleep, they will drop into their shoes some of the treasures they are bearing to the Baby Prince in Judea. This thought is never absent from the rejoicings of Christmas-tide in Spain. Every hour of the time is sacred to Him who came to bring peace and good-will into the world. The favorite toy of the season is called "The Nativity." It is sometimes very elaborate, and costly, representing a landscape under the starry night; the shepherds watching their flocks; the magi coming in with wonder and awe, and the Child in the stable, shedding upon the darkness that living light which was to overspread the world.

### Christmas in Italy.

KILLING CROWS.

We are informed that in Italy it is the custom of the peasantry at this time of the year to go crow-shooting.

The method by which our friends in the land of poetry and art make war against these birds of sombre hue is not a little amusing. At dawn a fire is kindled in the field, and about it, amply supplied with things needful to sustain the inner man, the sportsmen form a jovial circle. Melancholy finds no place at such a feast; but artless mirth breaks forth in rippling waves of laughter, or loads the air with song. What wonder, that a band so blithe at such a merry season meet to shoot such dismal birds as croaking crows?

The meal over, operations begin. A large number of holes are made in the ground, and into each one is thrust a thick piece of paper, in the form of a sugar-loaf. In the narrow extremity of each is placed a small piece of meat, and the party return to the fire to await results. A number of crows are soon seen flying at a great height over the field. Presently they pause, wheel round in circles, as though in doubt, then dart down upon the ground, and in order to get the pieces of meat, force their heads into the conical papers, which, being fitted to the holes in the ground, and copiously larded with birdlime, stick fast over their heads.

The effect is laughable. On the report of a gun, every crow rises from the field, with his head in a bag! Flight is impossible. Blinded, the awkward movements of these poor croakers provoke the laughter of their foes as they jostle one against another, and fall upon the earth. Crow-shooting is then an easy task.

Now, to a mind given to moralise, this crow-killing at Christmas conveys a lesson. There are other birds of black wing besides those above referred to. These black birds of ill-omen are everywhere. Sometimes the croaking gloomy thing builds its nest "in the bosom of the family"; then straightway everything goes wrong, or is going to. It predicts the healthy children will never be reared; that the sick baby is going to die, and the slack business is going to smash. Sometimes these croakers find a place in a Christian Church. Then woe to the pastor and all earnest workers! Fear weakens every effort for these "mediums" of melancholy, as by the spell of a magician's wand, conjure up frightful visions of the future. There is not much life in the pastor's sermons now, and there will soon be none at all— which, under the circumstances, we think very likely for a minister must have a mighty flow of spirits to preach animated sermons which his members are doleful as mummies. But these evil birds are found elsewhere besides in the family and in the church; they meet with us on every hand. True, sometimes they are very religious, profess to soar above us, and fly as high as most crows do when they seem to look scornfully on all beneath them, and treat the creatures who live a lower life to the music of their croaking! Howbeit, we need not be disturbed by their superior rebuke. These higher flyers, like those the Italians peasants caught, through "walking after the flesh," do oft experience a dreadful "coming down." Besides, like them, they have their heads in bags—these evil prophets speak with hooded eyes; not seeing the ten thousand surrounding evidences of God's gracious care, they fling the shadow of their blindness all athwart the future, and so make the future, as sombre as themselves!

Merry Christmas! Season of sacred joy, it is here again. Now grief, wherever it lingers no welcome guest should be. From the peasants of the sunny South let us learn whenever else we tolerate grave "croakers," to war against them now, to laugh at their predictions, to shoot them with the shot of experimental logic, and so kill the crows at Christmas.

### Charity versus Slippers.

OR, THE MINISTER'S CHRISTMAS VISITOR.

"Yes, rest is a great blessing, particularly when well earned; and certainly if there is one thing more conducive to rest than another, it is a pair of comfortable slippers."

Be it known that I was addressing no one in particular, unless, indeed, my slippered feet, as they stretched out before me on the comfortable rug, could be supposed to constitute a listener. Now and then I indulge myself a little in this truly homely way, and on this particular day I had been performing my Christmas charitable duties with a zeal which I thought deserved reward. This by the way.

"Yes," I continued, with no small satisfaction; "if ever I discharged my yearly duties aright, I have done so to-day, and that with great bodily and mental fatigue. I think my Christmas text will be, 'But the greatest of these is charity.' I could preach feelingly on these words."

"Rubbish!"

"Eh," and I stared round the room; but nothing unusual met my gaze, save the waxy Christmas rose that my little daughter had placed on the table to gladden the eyes of papa. "Rubbish, indeed!" I echoed indignantly, wondering what can have put such a notion into my head. Rubbish! I only wish my hearers may follow their

pastor's example. There will be no lack of charity then."

"Nonsense!"

There was no mistake about it this time, and as I again glanced at the innocent-looking flower I perceived a little wretched sprite in yellow attire, nodding and grimacing at me from behind its white petals. "Pray, sir," quoth I, rather testily, "what may you be pleased to term 'nonsense'?"

"Your charity," and he grimaced again.

"Indeed! Perhaps you do not like good works?"

"Excuse me; I was merely insinuating that what you term charity is not the genuine article."

I felt myself getting rather hot. "Perhaps you would favour me further, with your opinions," I retorted, with terrible irony.

"Certainly, I am Charity's clerk, looking after her interests, and I don't consider that they flourish in your part of the world. You may have been doing your duty, but as for charity—ugh!" and he snapped his fingers at me.

I was too astonished to speak, so he continued:

"Charity, indeed! Was it charity that induced you to hand over a largess greater than usual to the F.A., because they had spoken well of you? Or, that made you dole out a smaller bounty to Widow B. and her family, because you suspected her of prejudice against you? Charity suffereth long, and is kind—was it charity, then, which made you forget Mrs. A. and G. who lives such a long long way off from that bazaar where you stepped in to buy some things for your children?"

"Really," I stammered, with blushing consciousness, "I could not forget my family. 'Charity begins at home.'"

"But it does not end there," quoth my mentor; "and 'Charity seeketh not its own'—that is Scripture, and your quotation was not."

"But I really forgot Mrs. A. and G. I regret it extremely."

"Do you? Then why don't you start off at once to amend your errors?"

"Really," I remonstrated, the mere suggestion sounding most unpleasantly, "really, I am quite exhausted with my day's work"; and I looked wistfully at my slippers, and the said slippers, encasing my feet, looked placidly at their owner from their warm resting-place.

"Exhausted! Very likely; so are N. and A., and L., with all his little children, who will not taste meat on Christmas Day if you don't go to him."

"But I can go to-morrow," I groaned.

"Not at all. To-morrow you have to superintend your children's Christmas treat, after preparing your sermon. Think of L.'s little children, with no treat at all, not even the natural one of food! Go at once."

I thought of my own happy little ones, and I reluctantly thrust my feet into my walking-boots, preparatory to departing on my charitable expedition; but, a few minutes later, my hall door was slammed in a very uncharitable fashion.

I wonder by whom I was thus treated when I returned to my study, and to my fire, which had dwindled down to its last embers, and to my much-esteemed slippers, which last, toasting cozily on the rug, looked far more comfortable than their owner. Nevertheless, I settled myself in my arm-chair with the agreeable satisfaction of a man worn-out in the performance of his duty, and who feels that, come what may, none can reproach him; and forthwith I began to soliloquise on the ingratitude of some of my poor people.

"There," I reflected, "was John A., who only greeted me with black looks, as if my advent were a bore; and Ed took the relief as a matter of course. As for that garrulous widow N., I thought I should never hear the end of her long complaints; not a thought as to my bodily fatigue in ministering to their wants. The only one who at all appreciated my doings was Mrs. P., the Irishwoman, who compared me to the Angel of Mercy—flattering, no doubt, but still very pleasant to a frame