

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1892.

THE MIDNIGHT MASS.

A Story for the Season, Written Expressly for "Progress."

"Riverville!" shouted the conductor with that peculiar roll to the "er" which only the French-Canadian can give.

A few moments later the train had come to a standstill within the shelter of an unpretentious depot.

There was the usual bustle among passengers, shouting of hackmen, ringing of bells, shrieking of engines, and general confusion incident to such a place.

Among the arrivals were the members of the Golden-Houde Dramatic Company, fresh from a successful metropolitan engagement, who had travelled hither to open the new theatre which a speculative citizen had erected and to which the 36,000 inhabitants of the place pointed with just pride.

At the Saint James Hotel, where they registered, letters from absent friends, kind messages from home and kindred, parcels containing season's gifts awaited many of them.

"Burton Renew!" announced the clerk as he threw on the desk a large envelope bearing in the left upper corner the firm's name, "White, Caldecott & Taylor, counsellors-at-law, Milwaukee."

The leading juvenile nodded his head in acknowledgement, took the packet, scanned its subscription, put it in his pocket and retired to his room.

There, he did not appear to be at all anxious to fathom its contents. But a week before he had attended his father's funeral at Milwaukee and on such a night as this when every one was in the best of humor, when with more than usual zest the jest and joke went round, he had no eagerness to attend to legal matters from the office of the late Mr. Renew's solicitors.

With the most unconcerned deliberation he removed his shoes and outer clothing, shoved his feet into his slippers, filled and lit his pipe, read the evening paper, and then leisurely opened the packet. There was another envelope within. Messrs. White & Co., in a short note, advised that the enclosed had been found among his father's papers, and as it was sealed and addressed to him they forwarded it with all due haste.

He manifested a great deal more interest as he tore open the second envelope. It contained a lengthy document; in fact, an extended biographical sketch of the deceased's life. Again and again he read and re-read it. There was much in it to puzzle and perplex; much that was indefinite and inexplicable; much that was pregnant with suggestive enquiry and at the same time incapable of satisfactory answer. The tenth page had for him the greatest fascination; true, it was, like the rest, more or less unsatisfactory, but then it spoke of the one thing which with indescribable force appeals to the highest, noblest and best feelings of human nature, so delicately touches the tenderest chords that affection inspires, and only fails to find responsive heart-beats where degradation has usurped the proudest prerogatives of manhood—God's ideal creation, the woman whose joy triumphed over pain and with love potential gave life to our being. At last, as if to relieve the strain upon his mind, he read aloud:

Of your mother you have repeatedly asked questions which have met with evasive answers, if not with down-right prevarication. Of how we met and were married, I have above written, and only this remains to be said:—For five years we lived together in the utmost peace and harmony. You were born, and we were as happy as happy could be. She was many years my junior and very handsome, and I was, I confess, saturated with that loathing disease, jealousy. During the regular theatrical season we were often separated, as her superior talent secured for her better engagements than I could command. Stories were told to me, the disparity in our age was suggested, it was hinted that the wife, a flirt, it was broadly intimated that the handsome young star she was supporting had greater claims upon her affections than I had; and I—God forgive me! I believed them. I met her and charged her with infidelity; her proud spirit rebelled at the accusation, she scorned to make defence, or offer proof of innocence, and we parted—parted never to meet again in this world.

The story was noised abroad, it was a fruitful subject for gossip among the profession, and eventually found its way into the newspapers. She retired from the stage and went to Canada, where she belonged. I could never get any knowledge or trace of her from that day to this; though I am forced to admit that I never made diligent search. After twenty years of estrangement, I but last week learned the truth, learned that my accusations were false, damnable falsehoods!—learned it from the lips of the man I thought had wronged me—learned it when it was too late to make reparation.

I omit names because it would do you no good to know them.

Whether she be alive or not. I do not know, but this I charge you—Leave no stone unturned to find out what became of her, and in case she still lives, tell her that if a soured life without hope, and without ambition, if the deep mortification of realizing and admitting that she was the aggrieved one, and I the sinner, if a condemnation that came in an hour of sickness, adversity and bodily ailment, and haunted

me with the awful beniousness of my crime be at all commensurate with the mis-deed, then, by the measure of my death-bed sufferings, she has been more than avenged.

"My poor mother; and this is the knowledge that comes to me after years of vain enquiry," muttered the reader as he abstractedly dropped the paper on the floor. "Mother—mother—I know not the sound of your voice or the touch of your hand; no visions of infancy come to me bearing the burden of your advice, sympathy, or reproach; your name unspoken and your memory forbidden. Ah me, the world moves on and heeds not that another has been more sinned against than sinning, that man's blind prejudice has found one more victim, and peace has again been murdered to satiate folly.—Find her. Yes, I will find her!" he exclaimed as he jumped to his feet and struck the table with his clenched hand. Then, as with feverish haste he threw off his slippers and pulled on his shoes, "Canada; let me see, where is Canada?"—By jove this is Canada!"

With hat on and coat buttoned up he appeared in the office.

"Mr. clerk, is Canada a large place?" he enquired of the functionary behind the desk.

"Well, I should say so," was the laconic reply.

"How large?"

"Bigger than the United States."

"Come, come; I am in no humor for jesting to-night."

A discussion in which all present took part had the effect of at least satisfying the inquirer that the country into which he had come to-day for the first time was, for his project, discouragingly vast and expansive.

Thus his hopes for immediately carrying out the duty entrusted to him were dashed to pieces.

He dropped into a chair in the reading room and began to think.

"Say, mister; be you one of the show folks?" was asked of him by a rustic who had come to town for the holidays.

"Yes," he mechanically replied.

"Is you the fellow what plays the bones?"

"No."

"Oh; I see, you're the tambourine man."

"No!"

"Have ye a band?"

"No!"

"Aint no good then; wont go."

Distracted by this unsought acquaintance, aggravated by his manner and matter, ill at ease he arose and rushed into the street. The night was frosty but pleasant; heavy flakes of snow were falling and scattering in profusion over building, walk and pedestrian. It was a regular, orthodox, Canadian Christmas eve. The shop windows were yet lighted and gave a pleasant and animated appearance to the city. Children breathlessly gazed at the wonders behind the half-frosted panes, friends stopped to extend to each other a cheery greeting, but Burton had no eyes or ears for all this. With rapid steps he strode on meditating on the events that this night had unfolded unto him. How far he walked he did not know, but he began to feel tired; the snow had "balled" under his feet and locomotion was both difficult and dangerous. Turning a sharp corner he found himself in the midst of a throng of people all moving in one direction, and he went with the tide. Shortly they stopped in front of a little brown stone church. For a moment he, too, stood, and then followed. Why he did not know. Some irresistible impulse as it were impelled him to seek refuge if not consolation in this temple of prayer.

Within, everything was gorgeous. Hundreds of lights shed their rays on festooned wall and decorated chancel while the thousand and more worshippers who humbly knelt in supplication to the Most High, had a soothing effect upon him.

They were waiting for the midnight mass.

Some kindly disposed person offered him a seat which he occupied with hardly a word of thanks. The organ struck up a march and priest, deacon and acolyte, resplendent in crimson and gold, filed on to the altar and the services commenced. The choir, strengthened for the occasion, filled the building with all the glorious harmony of Mozart's Twelfth; the notes and words of the Kyrie, Gloria and Credo rang out and reverberated through the arches of the building; surprised preacher from the pulpit told of a miraculous light that guided three wise men, the joy of a Virgin's maternity, and angels song over the hills once trod by the Royal David. But Burton heard not of all this; his mind had entered the regions of dream land—he was living a new life; scenes of childhood and the tender care of her he could not remember though he vainly tried to picture, of his own hopes, struggles and disappointments on the rough road that lead to the histrionic greatness, of his father and the final days embittered by the knowledge of an unrighteous act, and back again to his mother passed and re-passed in panoramic view before him. So

wrapped was he in meditation that he did not even notice the solemn hush of the Elevation.

"Adeste fideles,
Læti triumphantes,
Venite, venite, in
Bethlehem,"

sang a voice tremulous and low but which as it proceeded gathered steadiness, strength, and volume while it still retained all its sweetness and harmony. This was the first thing to summon him back from the realms of fancy and awake him to a realization of present surroundings. There was so much tenderness, feeling, and expression in the performance that it at once arrested his attention. Associated for the most part of his life with singers of the highest order, a musician himself of more than average ability, always vain enough to constitute himself a competent critic of anything in that line, he turned directly around in his seat and gazed with undisguised admiration at the unknown and divinely tuned songstress. But if the ease with which the most difficult notes were taken surprised him judge of his astonishment when he beheld a lithe figure, clear cut, wonderfully beautiful, and expressive face, and golden tresses that seemed to form an oriole around the head of another Saint Cecilia. Until the last word was sung and the last note ceased to give back an echo from the pointed Gothic arches he did not take his eyes from off this vision of loveliness. The service was soon over and with the mind sculpturing feminine images that appealed to his romantic nature, his heart keeping time to hymnal music and his lips mechanically repeating some latin words his ears had caught he arose and departed.

Outside, he stopped and wondered in what direction he ought to go and then turning enquired of some one near, the way to the Saint James Hotel.

"I can show you; I go very near there myself." It was the voice; aye, and the person of the soloist.

"Then if you will permit a stranger to take the liberty of accompanying you," he managed to mutter, rejoiced at his good fortune.

"It will be a pleasure to me if it be a service to you."

"Thank you very much," he responded not knowing just what he ought to say.

His companion proved affable and pleasant and, somehow or another, under her influence he forgot all about his family troubles, grew talkative, told her who and what he was, and as a return for her kindness begged that he might be permitted to provide her with tickets for the next evening's performance.

"I am obliged to you," she said as they stood by the door of her residence, "but I could not accept without my mother's consent. You see I have no other relative."

"And I am sure that she could not resist your entreaties."

"I never knew of her to go to the theatre in my life, but, strange to say, for several days she talked of the opening of the new one on Christmas and actually spoke about going."

This is, you see, a Christmas tree, one of the best type, too! and while, dear sir, 'tis not a Dryad, yet it was made "fir" you. 'Tis true, you see upon this tree no presents rich and rare; yet please be kind, and bear in mind, in which the gifts are there. We now wish all, the short and tall, young, middle-aged and grey, the poor, the rich, the white, the black, as pitch, "A Merry Christmas" Day.

E
This
big
one
too,
is meant
for you to
profit by, in
fact, on every
bough you'll notice how a letter
one by one gives
out a name of Dry
Goods fame. The one
who in the coming year
will rackle late and
laurels great give Dry
Goods never dear. Bear
this in mind and you will find
success will be assured.
We nothing but the best will
buy, for fame is this secured,
and having bought the choicest
stock in all that word implies,
we have it displayed to increase
trade and then we advertise.
We're courteous to one and all who come inside our
store that they who purchase from
us once will soon come back or
more. We have on hand a stock so
choice, we know that we can sell,
elsewhere you'll never do better, we
doubt you'll do as well. 'Tis we that sell
the cheapest that always sell the most.
Who does not reckon in that way, reckons without his host.
Then quality will always tell and merit
hold its sway. But now we'll greet that
time so sweet the merry Christmas day.
A Christmas gift from our choice stock—
'tis known both far and wide—will
bring sweet solace and good cheer at this the Christmas
tide. So
from our
stock your
present
take in many
a home 'twill
peace create for
golden dreams
the key unlocks
when given as a Christmas Box.

GEORGE MCKAY.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

Ladies' Fitted Bags,
Ladies' Fitted Cases,
Feather Fans,
Gauze Fans,
Satin Fans,
Shopping Bags,
Ladies Silk Scarfs,
Chiffon Bows,
Fancy Plaid Scarfs,
Silk Bodice Fronts,
Silk Swiss Belts,

Silk Initial Handkerchiefs,
Lawn Initial Handkerchiefs,
Linen Initial Handkerchiefs,
Emb'd. Silk Handkerchiefs,
Emb'd. Linen Handkerchiefs,
Emb'd. Lawn Handkerchiefs,
Emb'd. Chiffon Handkerchiefs,
Emb'd. Crepe Handkerchiefs,
Real Lace Handkerchiefs,
Black Silk Fichues,
Handsome Black Lace Scarfs,

Satin Tea Cosies,
Oriental Tea Cosies,
Oriental Silk Ties,
Gold Emb'd. Japanese Ties,
Easel Silk Scarfs,
Emb'd. Lawn Handkerchiefs,
Hand-painted Table Scarfs,
Hand-painted Cushion Tops,
Brass Mountings for Fancy Work,
Fancy Silk Cushions,
Fancy Cretonne Cushions.

FANCY WORK

All kinds of
the latest

FANCY WORK

Ladies' Silk Umbrellas,
Fancy Scrap Baskets,
Fitted Work Baskets,
Fancy China Silks,
Plain China Silks,
Ladies' Gaiters,
Childs Gaiters,

Fancy Short Dress Sashes,
All Colors in Angoran Yarn,
Warm Gloves for Boys,
Lined Kid Gloves for Boys,
Buck Gloves for Boys,
Warm Hose for Boys,
Warm Hose for Girls,

Ladies' Kid Gloves,
Ladies' Calf Gloves,
Ladies' Chevrete Gloves,
Ladies' Wool Gloves,
Mittens for Boys,
Mittens for Girls,
Mittens for Ladies.

Black Dress Nets and Lace Flouncings at

Special Prices for Xmas.

Beautiful German and Irish Table Linens for Christmas presents, in Cloths, Napkins, D'Oyleys Table Centres, Table Strips. All these in Plain, Fringed and Hemstitch Ajour work.

Christmas Towels, - - - - Fancy Towels,

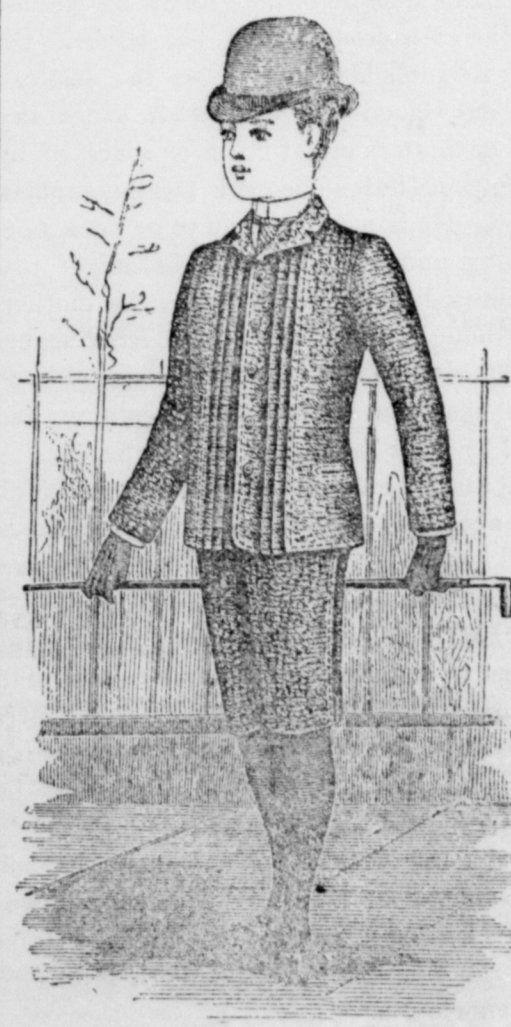
—Christmas Towels.—

Wool Goods in Shawls, Caps, Hoods, &c. Beautiful Colorings in Fancy Lawn Tennis Flannels for Blouses.

The largest assortment of most beautiful Silk Embroidered Handkerchiefs we have ever shown.

Manchester, Robertson & Allison, St. John.

Get
Your
BOY
a Suit.
\$4.00.



Get a good one,
Scovil, Fraser
& Co.,

Corner King and Germain Streets.

"I have never tasted Cocoa that I like so well."

Sir C. A. Cameron, M. D., President Royal College Surgeons, Ireland.

PURE
CONCENTRATED
FRY'S
60 Prize Medals
awarded to the Firm.
COCOA

Be Careful to ask for Fry's Pure Concentrated Cocoa.

For Sale by all reliable dealers.