

The West.

Vol. 3.

Florence, Lane County, Oregon, Friday, December 23, 1892.

No. 36.

THE TRUE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT.

MANY and great changes have taken place in the manner of celebrating Christmas within the last century or two, and it cannot be gainsaid that the festival is observed in much less fervent and picturesque fashion than it was wont to be. We no longer begin our revelry on the 16th of December, (described in the prayer-book calendar as *Sapientia*) and keep it up until twelfth night. The Lord of Misrule no longer gathers his motley crew of boisterous mummings about him, and sets out to disturb the neighborhood. In fact the whole past of pagan rites, and bacchanalian excesses, with their bewildering mixture of Christian legends, mediæval fancies, and superstitious notions of all sorts, which afforded some justification for the Puritan abhorrence of Christmas festivities as the Saturnalia of Antichrist has fallen into disrepute and disuse, so that the season has lost much of its boisterousness, and become a far more decorous observance. But is this change a matter for regret? Because we confine our Christmas celebration to a single day, and then carry it out in a way that would hardly call forth the condemnation of Hezekiah Straight-and-narrow-path himself, does this necessarily imply that we have lost the true spirit of Christmas, and should set ourselves to seek diligently until we find it? Far from it. "Times change and we change with them," and the change has been for the better in both. We are most decidedly of the opinion that the Christmas of good Queen Victoria is surpassingly more in harmony with the true intent and meaning of the festival than the Christmas of good Queen Bess. The vivacious chroniclers of that picturesque period, while they have dilated in glowing terms of how it was "merry in the hall when the beards wagged all," have discreetly omitted to mention how matters fared in the *hut*. We have other sources of information, however, and from these we gather that the revelry went not far beyond the homes of the well-to-do, and that there was little effort made to extend it to those who could not provide it for themselves. This is one of the most important points of difference between the old Christmas and the new, for one may safely affirm that in connection with the Christmas of the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-two there will be a more general and generous effort on the part of those who have enough and to spare to make glad the hearts of those who have little or nothing than this world of ours has ever witnessed before. And not only so, but that each succeeding Christmas will witness a wider illustration of the beautiful truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Yet even here, so prone is human nature to cheat itself of the choicest of the blessings within our reach, there lies concealed a peril which, like the

serpent in Paradise, may work lamentable ill, and that is the growing notion that the giving and receiving of costly presents are essential features of a true celebration of Christmas. Year by year the preparation of "holiday goods," of "Christmas specialties," of "elegant novelties," has absorbed more of the time, and thought and capital of those who help us to perpetuate the fame of Santa Claus, and year by year the demand upon the purses of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of lovers and friends, has grown heavier until what was at the start a beautiful custom threatens to become ere long a burden too grievous to be borne. It is certainly time that a halt should be called in that direction. The spirit that suggests a Christmas present, not the market value of the article, should surely constitute its chief virtue in our eyes. Better by far that this incident of the Christmas celebration should fall into utter desuetude than that the commercial point of view should be generally accepted. 'Twere a thousand pities for Christendom to forget that the most joyous of her festivals commemorates the greatest of all gifts ever bestowed upon humanity, and that this was the giving of Himself by the Son of God. These wonderful lines of Lowell have peculiar force in this connection, although their immediate meaning lies elsewhere:

"The Holy supper is kept indeed
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share
For the gift without the giver is bare.
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungry neighbor and me."

That fourth line contains the true secret of Christmas giving, and if the principle it enshrines be only adhered to, one may safely join with Charles Dudley Warner in the belief that every year at Christmas time the windows of heaven will open wider than ever before, and more men and women will hear the song.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

Once again it is with us, that glorious feast of old. Once again that grand song of the Angels is sounding in our ears—"Peace on earth, good will to men." The crisp frost sparkles under foot, the bells jingle merrily, and all things herald the coming of a joyous Christmastide.

To the children particularly should this be a time of enjoyment. Dark indeed must have been the childhood of the man or woman who cannot look back to the pleasures of Christmas. The vague uncertainty and blissful anticipation of the stocking and its precious contents—the receiving of gifts, and the merry romping that form the joys of this happy season. How well I remember emerging from bed in the gray of the Christmas morning, and pattering down the dark stairway and along the corridors of the rambling, quaint old house that was my childhood's home. Out into the sitting room, barefooted

would wend my way, and, grasping the well-filled stocking, quickly retreat to bed, to investigate my newly acquired treasures. Many joys and many sorrows my life has known since then, but no joy has equaled that I experienced in the possession of the gifts of Santa Claus on that cold, gray Christmas morning. Let the children enjoy the sweet belief while they may; disenchantment will come soon enough. When I realize that Santa Claus was a myth, my childish belief was shaken in many things, and the vanishing of the cherished idea saddened many hours.

In the days of old, an English superstition taught that the cattle bent their knees at the mystic midnight when we celebrate the coming of the Christ child, and, strangely true, the Micmac Indian holds the same belief. "Me watch to see deer kneel," the savage replies, when encountered stealthily creeping through the forest; "me watch to see deer kneel; to-night is Christmas." To one, northern-born, who is spending a winter in the south, Christmas brings but few charms. They long for the pure, white snow, the keen, frosty air, the stars blazing in the clear vault above, and inside, the great roaring fires that are one of the delights of our northern homes. This southern sultry night cannot be our Christmas.

The very name has a magical sound—Merry Christmas to all. It is a time of love, peace, joy. Lay aside the old feud, bury the petty strife—let heart meet heart in glad refrain. The year just spent has borne with it many joys and many sorrows. Old friends, it may be, have passed away to the silent land. Some new faces are about us, new friends greet us, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Somewhere, I have read a quaint and pretty German legend, that told of Elise standing to greet the New Year, with a garland of bright-hued flowers in her hands. They were the good resolutions for the year woven together. Let our good resolves greet the year, and, not as a rope of sand, let them endure. Onward and ever upward; cheering as we go, some wayward brother. Let our days be filled with a sweet content that so many blessings are ours.

The Star of Bethlehem shines brightly as of old. It illuminates all the world, and as our hearts glow with love for Him who died to save mankind, the old year dies, and across the snow—through the frosty air—comes the glad refrain:

the profits of individual enterprise, that the *Journal* has not considered. There is an effort made this year to collect delinquent taxes—or in a better term perhaps—to collect the costs for trying to get the taxes. To illustrate the point most clearly, a gentleman in this precinct was assessed \$5.00 in taxes, and although he took all the precautions necessary to find out the amount to be paid, nothing could be learned until it was seen advertised in the *Guard* as "delinquent." Then the sum to ease the grip of the tax law was easily discoverable, and it figured up to \$22.50. If it costs \$17.50 to collect a \$5.00 delinquent tax, it is not a hard mathematical problem for the *Journal* to determine the expense to collect one of a \$1000. But suppose—and it is a reasonable supposition—that the party here who was assessed for \$5.00 had no property in sight to raise the expenses, to say nothing about the principal, who pays the costs? We come to the conclusion that it is the county that would foot this cost bill, as it is quite evident that most of the \$17.50 was for advertising, and the *Guard*, we think, does not print these lists for fun, or glory, nor in the fond hope of getting its pay if the debtor settles his account. It is not our intention to find fault in an endeavor on the part of the authority to collect the taxes, nor with the *Guard* for collecting its pay for its labor performed, but only cite this case to show the *Journal* that it will take twenty-five mills to settle the costs of collecting the delinquent taxes that have been running for a term of years that we cannot name.

BRAZIL has thrown her gates wide open and invited Chinamen to partake of the blessings of the Republic.

THE legislature can prime its ears to hear from Lane county some broad and pointed hints on the matter of a better road law.—*Springfield Messenger*.

THE Southern States produce more than three-fourths of the cotton required to keep at work the eighty-five million spindles in existence in the United States and Europe.

IN ENGLAND alone more than ten million oil lamps are used nightly. They cause three hundred deaths annually, and in London alone one hundred and fifty-six fires in a single year have been traced to them.

BY REFERRING to our local page it will be seen that the Rose Hill cannery company has paid its taxes. Notices for the sale, of the canned salmon attached, were posted in conspicuous places in Florence, about the only place where such property could be sold. It is safe to say that if this attachment had been made in Eugene, the notices would have appeared in some paper published in that city.

Subscribe for THE WEST.