

Christmas Among the Lowly

lessness so prevalent in homes where poverty and destitution hold domain. I gave them the message the angels brought, "Peace on earth, good will toward men," hoping to cheer and inspire with new life. The old question of Theodicy rose again and one exclaimed: "What! Can God be good and allow sin and misery to come into the world and permit me to suffer while others roll in opulence and enjoy the profits of my labor?" These hopeless, Christless people seemed to possess demoniacal spirits and with the flames of hell shooting from their blood-red eyes, exclaimed: "Away with your Christmas and Christ! Give us something to eat and drink and keep your religion."

Happy Homes Among the Poor.

If all the pictures from life's other side were as dark as those related we would soon become disheartened in our work. But some of the happiest homes, where peace, contentment and harmony dwell, we found among the poor. No rich carpets covered the floors, no costly paintings adorned the walls, the only music was the gleeful laugh of merry children, and the only work of art visible was designed by inmates of the home. But they were contented minds and unselfish and devoted lives, each member of the family striving to surpass the others in contributing to the happiness of all, endeavoring to overcome by kindness and intelligence their impoverished condition. As I stood knocking for admission at one home, the door was cautiously opened and a little colored child met me at the door. After a few questions were asked I heard a feeble voice inviting me into the house. Upon entering I beheld an old colored lady lying upon the bed, her hair white, face emaciated, and her body wasted from sickness and age. After a few greetings and some pointed questions about Christmas preparations, she informed me they could make no great display, as they were wont to do in the south. She said they would be happy if they could get a few nuts and some candy for the grandchildren. After a word of prayer and a few cheering remarks I made ready to go, and opened the door, when this poor woman called:

"Oh, captain, won't you come again? This is better than a Christmas treat, as this is the first praying there has been in my house for many years."

Christmas Cheer for the Sick.

Again, in another home, I found a little girl lying sick with pneumonia. I took a basket well filled with provisions, as they were very needy, and after a few minutes conversation and prayer again came that pertinent question: "What preparations are you making for Christmas?" The poor woman, with a deep sigh and tears in her eyes, remarked: "We have no hope for Christmas. With my invalid husband and sick child we will be grateful if we have plain food. During Angelina's sickness she has been begging me to get her a doll for Christmas, and have a fruit cake for Christmas dinner, as we had last year. This we cannot do, yet I have been hoping and praying that I might get these for her sake."

With my soul stirred to its very depth with pity and sympathy for this family, I took my leave, promising God I would help Him answer this woman's prayer. Suffice it to say, little Angelina has already re-

ceived her doll and fruit cake, with more to follow on Christmas.

GEORGE W. ANDRICK, A. D. C., Commanding Nebraska Volunteers of America.

Women's Work in the Slums.

Women are used for the slum work of the Salvation Army and spend their time seeking the sick and afflicted, caring for the fatherless and motherless children and, in short, adopting the life and association of those among whom they work. Heart-rending sights and sickening scenes may be had by following the slum lanes even for one day. In nearly every place where the slum work is carried on there are corps or slum posts operated in the heart of the poorest of the poor and many a soul has been led to a life of purity and cleanliness as well as had their temporal wants supplied and saved from the grasp of starvation.

While this line of work is not carried on to any great extent in Omaha, many cases have been cared for and looked after. Let anyone should think that this city is free from the class of people residing above a few incidents might be given to show that even here we have a good field for slum work.

On one occasion when our officers were out visiting they came to a very poor part of the city. Nothing a dilapidated old building they felt that there was a good place to work. Climbing a couple of flights of rickety stairs, they knocked at a door and were admitted into a small room. The room, which was very dirty, was occupied by a weak, frail woman and five children as well as two or three men, who were boarding at the same place. The children were only half dressed and in one corner lay a dirty, worn-out bedtick with a half-starved child on it. The house was almost destitute of furniture as well as anything to eat. This small room was occupied by the whole company and one can imagine how very disagreeable it must have been.

Securing the Needy.

Another find was in the north part of the city last summer. At this place were seven occupants, including the father and mother and five children. At this time the children were all sleeping outdoors. The woman was very frail and did scarcely any work. One of the little girls said she had only one pair of shoes in her life. The only furniture visible in this place was an old couch, small table, cupboard and a few broken chairs. The woman and children were taken out to the fresh-air camp at Fort Omaha and were kept two weeks. They received plenty of good, wholesome food as well as plenty of outdoor exercise, and it was with pity that we had to see them go back to their little home of want and poverty.

One of the children, only 7 years old, was covered with large welts as well as having her flesh bruised in several places. Upon inquiring of the little one how this came to be she informed us that her papa did that while drunk and added, "Mamma has them too, sometimes."

At another place was found an old man and woman living alone. The woman was too old to work and the old man was blind and had to walk by the aid of crutches, consequently it left the two to depend on the mercy of the county for their support. The aged man's only son drank and would

tender no support whatever. The couple would not go to the fresh-air camp on account of their son, who threatened to break up their furniture. Our officers were told that they were the first Christian people to come into their home in four months.

A police officer directed the ladies to a colored family the mother of which was crippled and 30 years of age. Having slipped and fell the already crippled limb was broken and rendered her entirely helpless. She was also blind and it made life a very heavy burden for her. Provisions were left for these people and they surely appreciated it.

Some Touching Examples.

At another time a colored man, who had run away from the poor-arm owing to a beating he had received from one of the inmates there, came to our quarters in an unrightful condition. His face was swollen and his eyes were bloodshot. One of his arms was paralyzed and work was almost an impossibility. He was taken care of by our officers.

In a basement, dark and almost inhabitable, were found a sick woman and five children, the youngest being a baby only a week old. The pains of hunger were very sharp, as there was not a morsel of food in the house. The husband was unable to work, owing to some disease. The officers spent the greater portion of the day cleaning house and making things as comfortable as possible. When leaving money was given them to buy food.

In the cities where this work is carried on extensively the ladies devote their whole time to the caring for the poor. They dress in the plainest of clothes and armed, with a scrubbing brush and mop, wage war against dirt and disease. It is the custom in this city every year to give a free Christmas dinner to the poor. We expect to have one this year, in which we may be able to feed several hundred. We wish to thank the citizens who helped us so nobly last year and the preceding years and hope that you will help this year's dinner to be a greater success than ever.

ENSIGN JOHN MAY, Officer in Charge

Whence Ring Xmas Bells in Omaha

(Continued from Sixth Page)

climax was reached when the king laid his own crown on the altar.

And yet the bells did not ring.

A little cripple was seen hobbling up the steps and a sour-visaged verger stopped him.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"Up to the altar," was the reply.

"Nonsense," said the verger. "What do you want with the altar?"

"I have saved a sixpence for Christmas," said the boy, "and I want to give it to the Christ to get a lodging. They tell me he is in an ox's stall because he can get no place to rest."

The verger relented, and the boy went in and deposited his coin, and the moment that silver sixpence struck the alms basin the silver bells struck out in divine harmony a beautiful peal of joy and thanksgiving, while the choir sang "Gloria in excelsis."

Louder and louder rang the bells, and as the boy limped out of the church his heart



ENSIGN JOHN MAY, OFFICER IN CHARGE OF OMAHA SALVATION ARMY CORPS.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

was full of joy, and, all unconscious of the effect of his gift, he listened to the bells and sang with them, "Gloria in excelsis Deo."

The love of church bells has been always a favorite theme for writers. Poets have given utterance to their best thoughts on this subject.

Who has not read with absorbed interest the lines of Edgar Allan Poe:

Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!

What a world of merriment their melody foretells!

How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the sky and on the hill,
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight,
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells

From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

And the beautiful verses of Tennyson:

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still,
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Each voice four changes on the wind
That now dilate and now decrease,
Peace and good-will—good-will and peace
Peace and good-will to all mankind.

They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

And Longfellow has given the voices of the bells a song of their own, doubtless taken from an old legend of the bells of Strasburg. The song he gives them in the "Golden Legend" is as follows:

Laudo Deum verum!
(I praise the true God!)
Plenum voco!
(Call the people!)
Congrego clorim!
(Congregate the clergy!)
Defunctos Ploro!
(I lament the dead!)
Postem Fugo!
(I dispel the pestilence!)
Festa discoro!
(Grace festivals!)
Excito hentes!
(I arouse the indolent!)
Disiplo ventos!
(Disperse the winds!)
Paco Orientos!
(Approach the revengeful!)

The affection of the people for the church bells, as though they were actually souls of strength instead of bodies of metal, has resulted in the bells being called by names such as Great Paul, Big Ben, Big Tom, and there is doubtless no Christmas bell song so thrilling to the hearts of the people, so vibrant with the tone of the Christmas as that wonderful carol of Tennyson:

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light,
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true;

Ring in the valiant man and face,
The larger heart, the kinder hand,
Ring in the Christ that's to be.

This beautiful poem, of which only three-out of eight stanzas have been reproduced, will stand for generations as the greatest poem of Christmastide and in its musical form, magnificently written by Dr. Leopold Damrosch, father of the well known conductor, Walter Damrosch, it will be immortalized when people become more acquainted with its intrinsic merit.

May the Christmas bells of this Christmas ring a chime of peace, happiness and joy to the people within their reach and may every heart be filled with the true Christmas spirit of good will to all men—that spirit which must result in "peace on earth" and "glory to God in the highest."

THOMAS J. KELLY.



GEORGE W. ANDRICK, A. D. C., OFFICER IN CHARGE OF VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

CHRISTMAS is the reputed anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, December 25, and as such one of the greatest festivals of the Protestant, Roman and Greek churches.

It is essentially a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing, a day of good cheer. Though Christians celebrate it as a Christian festival, to them it is the anniversary of the most solemn event in all history—the meeting of heaven and earth in the birth of the God-man. The festivities marking this epoch are part of the universal history of the race. In pagan Rome and Greece, even in Egyptian civilization in the infancy of the race, the winter solstice was ever a period of rejoicing and festivities. It was always the aim of the early church to reconcile heathen converts to the new faith by the adoption of all the more harmless features of the festivities and ceremonies. This was a hard task, for all was tainted with obscenity, drunkenness and blasphemy. License was carried to the full extent of licentiousness. In the coarse days of our ancestors riot and revelry did indeed go hand-in-hand, but gradually it gave way to quieter times which have eliminated the riot. As in the "Gloria in Excelsis" it is peace on earth, good will toward men, the Christian idea of Christmas, with its love, charity and forgiveness, has gone throughout the world. Now it is a democratic festival; all classes mix in its merrymaking; hospitality is universal. In the more wealthy homes, for days previous to the advent of good St. Nicholas, busy housewives have been secretly conspiring with the bakers in gilding nuts, preparing roast meats, turkey, goose, oysters, pies, puddings and luscious fruits. Presents are purchased with some extravagance and Christmas eve finds the parlor adorned with a beautiful Christmas tree with rich presents for all.

The Goddess Tract.

Emerson says, "There is no beautifier of complexion, form or behavior like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us." We felt that Thanksgiving day and Christmas were days of opportunity for scattering sunshine in a material way. There is a large district in Omaha which reminds us of that Goddess tract in Chicago known as "Little Hell," where 132,000 souls revel in crime and dissipation with only one church steeple pointing heavenward to remind them of God. In Omaha there is a district containing hundreds many of whom live in abject poverty, hopeless, Christless, and only two missions to herald the glad tidings of salvation to these churchless people. In visiting the homes we find many do not need money, but enlightenment, sympathy and object lessons in moral ethics. The contaminating and degenerating effects of sinful indulgence have so dwarfed and weakened their aesthetic nature they seem to know nothing and care less for the beautiful and good.

Upon entering one home we found a beer pitcher on the center table and each inmate of the home had a glass of beer, sitting around a stove having a social time. I inquired what preparations they were making for Christmas and received the reply that all they cared for was a Bacchanalian feast and they enjoyed Christmas because it was for them a time to indulge their appetites and passions and with a snarl declared this to be their motto: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die." To such Christ becomes the rock of offense.

I entered another home, where poverty sat upon the throne, swaying the scepter of desolate melancholy with fiendish delight. The inmates, reeking in filth, had fallen easy victims to the goddess hope-



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