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WHISKEY!

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FARMER CARSON'S SONS.

BY MARY ROWENA COTTER.
Author of the "Two Cousins" and
"A Heroine of Charity."

[Continued from last week.]

CHAPTER II.

When the story was finished, the parents renewed their words of welcome to their son, telling how happy they were to see him, and that they hoped they would never be separated again. It was quite late now, and as there were duties which he must attend to at his church, he bade them good-bye; promising to call again the next day and bring the little suit of clothes which he had so carefully cherished as objects which might help to prove his identity to his parents if he ever found them.

After he was gone, Mr. Carson said: "You know, Martha, how I always told you that our boy would come some time, and you see now that I was right."

"Yes," said Mrs. Carson, "and I am very happy to have seen him once more, but oh, Edward, it does not seem possible that he can be my son, our own darling Eddie."

"And don't you know," he said, "how just before he came I told you that he resembled our son 'Charlie, and you cannot fail to see that resemblance now."

"Yes," she answered, "he does look like Charlie, but it seems so hard to believe it all; let us not talk of it any more"—and the tears which she had tried to keep back began to flow again. For some time she wept, and even Grace's soothing words had no effect on her. She hardly knew herself whether her tears were for joy or sorrow, but they seemed mingled with both; with joy because the lost one had been found, and with sorrow because—why was it that she dared not mention the cause of her grief in the presence of her husband. To think that her own child was a minister of that religion which from her childhood she had learned to abhor was almost more than she could bear.

Her husband, on the other hand, was elated with joy to know that the priest who preached such grand sermons and on whom he had long ago learned to look upon as a model of perfect Christianity, should prove to be his own son. Even now he felt that it was better the boy had been taken from him, for had he been brought up at home as his brothers he would probably, like them, be no more than a common laborer or farmer, while now, besides, being where even, though he was a good Catholic, he might do a great deal of good, he had a fine education, which was more in the eyes of this uneducated farmer than any one would have thought.

The next afternoon Father Bristol brought out each relic that he had saved from his childhood and had them ready to take home to his mother. How he rejoiced in the thought that in performing his duty God had guided him to the door of his own parents. He had celebrated mass that morning in thanksgiving for this great pleasure, but he would not satisfy himself that his identity had been proved until his mother had seen those things, and he could hardly wait until he would be at leisure to go to her with them. His office must be said before he went, and numberless other duties would occupy his time until afternoon. At length he was ready to go, and was just driving out of the yard, his mind filled with happy thoughts of his parents, when a messenger came, saying that a man was very ill in a town some twenty miles distant, and as the parish priest was not at home he was requested to go to him.

The day was quite chilly, and had it not been for the disappointment accompanying it, the prospects of such a long drive would not have been at all pleasant, but the zealous young priest thought of nothing but duty which today had called him outside of his own parish, and turning his horse in an opposite direction from his home, he started on his errand of charity. It was late at night when he returned, and the next forenoon, which was Saturday, another sick call a long distance in the country kept him away until late in the afternoon, when he reached home to find other duties awaiting him and to finish his day's work by remaining until a late hour in the confessional. The next morning after saying an early mass, he went to say another mass in a parish he had charge of about nine miles away, and vespers had to be sung on his return. Monday morning he was called away quite unexpectedly and did not return until Wednesday, so it was a week after his first visit to his parents before he could call on them again.

They had watched for him every day, and were quite disappointed that he did not come. Mr. Carson said he knew that something must have kept him away, but his mother, who was more sensitive and believed the majority of Catholics to be very bigoted, ventured to say that perhaps he did not care for them when he found they

were Protestants, and would not call on them again.

Thursday afternoon he came, and when his mother heard why he had remained away so long, she said: "I had no idea that Catholic priests have so much to do. If you were only in some city church where you would only have a small parish and would not be obliged to go out in the country, how nice it would be. I don't see how you can stand this."

"My work is easy compared with what is to be done in city churches, mother," he said, "and I should not complain."

"Easy?" repeated his mother, "how can you call it so when you are liable to be called away to visit the sick at any time and you are never sure of a night's rest?"

"We do it for the love of God," was the reply; "and we should thank him for giving us the strength to perform our duty."

"What a true spirit of Christianity," his mother said more to herself than to him. "If we only had such as he among our ministers, I think there would be more true Christians."

There had been a time when her child Eddie was at home with her that she had entertained some hope of his becoming a minister when he grew up, and before he was taken from her she had begun to try to instill in his infant mind a love for religion and a desire to be a preacher, perhaps a missionary to some heathen land. In spite of her bigotry Mrs. Carson was most sincere in her religious belief and desired to do what was right. She had prayed for her boy, and although she was as yet unable to realize it, God had rewarded her simple, earnest prayers, by giving the greatest blessing that could ever fall upon any son, namely, the privilege of performing the sacred duties of a Catholic priest, for what man, however holy his life may be, if he is not a priest, can perform that sacred and sublime mystery of changing bread and wine to the body and blood of Jesus Christ by using the same words the Divine Redeemer used at the last supper, the night before he suffered to expiate the sins of the world, and which he authorized—yes, commanded, his apostles, and their successors, as well, to do in commemoration of Him.

The mother was blind to the sacred office her son held, but he, her boy, for whom she had prayed, also prayed for her, prayed most earnestly that she might learn to know and love her God, not as she worshipped now in darkness, but in the light of the true faith, and that prayer would be answered, for the time was to come when like another Saul, she would in a moment be converted. But that time was far off and another than himself was chosen to reap the harvest of the seeds sown by his most earnest prayer.

Carefully Mrs. Carson opened the parcel her son had brought to her, as if it contained relics made almost sacred to her by being treasures that had belonged to some dear, departed dead, and carefully she examined each little article of clothing which her own fingers had made years ago, when she was a young woman, and which recalled so many memories of those days. If there had been any shadow of a doubt lingering in her mind as to his identity, there was none now, and she saw in him not a leader and a strong professor of a religion which she despised, but her own lost boy grown to a man, whom she felt proud to call her son.

CHAPTER III.

Thanksgiving eve the same family circle that had been here two years ago were assembled around the table, Eddie, the same as on that night, being the only one that was absent, and he might have been here, but Mr. Carson thought it best to wait until to-morrow, when Clara and her two brothers, who were still ignorant of the happy meeting in store for them, would be prepared for it.

Grace had set the table for tea, and after all were seated, Clara, glancing to where the vacant place should have been, said: "Haven't you forgotten something, Grace?"

"What is it, Clara?" asked her sister with a merry twinkle in her eye, for she knew what Clara meant.

[To be continued.]

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A CHRISTMAS MUSING.

A truth lies veiled in Christmastide,
Taught by the Saviour crucified,
A spiritual truth too grand
For man to fully understand.
To me it is a single link
Of that sublime and flawless chain,
Which started at creation's brink
And ends when God shall cease to reign.

From mist to sun in flaming robe,
From setting sun to mundane globe;
From cell to nerve, from nerve to brain,
Are links or fragments of the chain,
And so from seed to germ and root;
From leaf and bud to harvest gold;
From barn to elevator chute;
From ships to market manifold.

From brute to savage in his cave,
From savage unto hero brave;
From those who died defending kin
To those who died to conquer sin.
From war to peace; from rage and hate
To joy and love; from force and fear.
The tokens of barbaric state,
To civilization's atmosphere.

From kith and clan to civic tie,
And thence to nationality;
From clashing tribes in endless feud
To universal brotherhood;
From babes around the Christmas tree,
With merry pipes and noisy drums,
To missions far beyond the sea
And Christian workers in the stams.

From Him who died that sin might die,
Disclosing endless love on high,
To human kind in years to be,
When sin is but a memory
These are the links which brightly shine
For all on every Christmas eve:
This is the thread which hands divine
In every fabric fortunes weave.

A CHRISTMAS HOMILY

The establishment of the Christmas festival, now the most joyous of the yearly holidays throughout the civilized world, is the most recent in date of the great church days. Its social and secular significance, of course, followed its religious adoption. Yet curiously enough, it derived its rite of merrymaking not from Christianity so much as from the customs of the heathen world. The rulers of the early church, from Constantine down, were shrewd politicians. They knew how important it was to include as many as possible of the old pagan usages and beliefs to which the people of the Roman Empire had been attached in the observance of the new faith.

Just why December 25 was selected as the natal day of the Saviour of the world nobody has ever been able to tell. Certainly there is no historic reason nor the slightest authentic clue, and it is well known that December is the rainy season in Judea, when neither shepherds nor flocks brave the open sky. It is more than probable that the celebration of Christ's birth, which up to the fifth century had not been observed at all, got them to be recognized as not less worthy of holiday consecration than Easter and Whitsunday. It was a happy thought to make this as nearly identical as might be with the old Roman saturnalia, which still survived in some of its forms, and with the annual feast of Thor, observed among the Teutonic races, even those which had accepted the Christian faith. It was the more so, as the Roman festival and the Teutonic alike had symbolic reference to the great natural fact that the sun at or about that date rises out of the decadence of his power to augmenting heat and splendor. This was readily applicable to the first appearance of the son of God and the Sun of the World among men.

No wonder it is so important in the observance of the Christian holiday from the heathen usages and ceremonies. The universal present of a ring of the saturnalia, especially to children, and the democratic equality which abolished distinction of rank at that period were it once followed by the Christian merrymakers. From the old Norse usages the day borrowed the customs of the huge bonfires, the Yule log of holy ash or oak to be burned indoors, the symbolic of the holy and misletoe boughs, alike sacred to the deities, the great bear's head served as the peace resistance of the Christmas feast and the general bacchanaliam of the occasion. The latter, however, was also typical of the old Roman festival. Santa Claus (St. Nicholas) came by and by into the rich symbolism of the Christmas show as the successor of Odin, the all-father and all-giver. The Scandinavian god on the occasion of the festivities of his eldest son, Thor, distributed universal gifts, the father of each family being his special agent in the matter. As Odin, or Woden, became in later myths the mighty huntsman who ranged the forests, we see how the Christmas tree and evergreens found their places. Why, however, the functions of Odin should have specifically been finally transferred to St. Nicholas out of all the Christian canon unless from the fact that this god was the special patron of children and schoolboys, it is not easy to divine. These things go to show what a curiously tangled composite our Christmas is and how lustily it has grown out of diverse elements till it has become the most significant and allowed of holiday seasons, marking really an epoch of the year.

Among the causes which have enshrouded this day so deeply in the heart of the world the fact that it is peculiarly children's day is probably the most fetching in its magic. The young people everywhere among Christian peoples constitute the factor which dominates the social observance of the season. Rich wassal at the dinner board, seraphic music and pomp of church service, even the giving of rich gifts among the elders, were these all would leave Christmas but little different from other holidays, notably so in the case of Easter, when present giving among the rich has become so common. The Bambino, or infant Christ, as the idol of the occasion, would then have but little significance, but when the juvenile world declares that it rules the jubilee the keynote is struck which sends its thrilling music tingling throughout humanity. How Charles Dickens, the prose poet of Yuletide in fiction, has spun this pregnant fact into exquisite episodes is probably the highest measure of his success in imaginative work. The images he has created will live forever

in the Christmas procession far more than puppets to the warm hearts of countless readers. And it is not among the children of the rich that Christmas most diffuses its felicity in real life any more than among the offspring of the great Christmas romance.

It is among the poor and the lower middle classes that Christmas joy reigns with most potency. The trifle spent to secure a Christmas tree with its burden of cheap toys and sweets in the tenement house represents vastly more than the corresponding splendid show among the affluent. The story of the little cripple, "Tiny Tim," sets its candle to more resounding strains of harp and cymbal than can ever attend the festive music of a palace. The true "Chrissom child" was found in the humble manger.

The feeling that Christmas Day is peculiarly consecrated to the poor as well as to the children has always been quite characteristic of the usages of the day. The lowest classes in medieval times were made to share fully with their superiors in feasting and merrymaking. At the present period we see an ever-increasing benefaction in the way of helping the poor to enjoy Christmas more generously—the turkey or goose for the home table, toys and clothing for the youngsters, and public dinners often supplemented by substantial presents for the homeless waifs. On this special occasion such philanthropy shows its most sweeping and liberal form, and the human heart is softened to the thought that in spite of earthly distinction all men are equal before Him whose natal day as man is thus observed. The beneficent influence of Christmas thus stands out a great social factor.

When classes are driven by so many other influences to become hostile, it is a pregnant thought that more and more should be done to intensify the spirit and tendencies of the Christmas season as an object lesson in kindly sympathy between rich and poor. What wealth does for poverty is sometimes turned from blessing to bane by a haughty and patronizing air in the giver. The Christmas spirit is that of the fortunate man, who cordially helps his unlucky brother, the spirit of the good Samaritan. The habitual exercise of this feeling on one day when all tradition and religious sentiment turn toward it helps to extend it to other days, and that is the true function of Christ's natal festival.

A QUIET CHRISTMAS.

According to the Western Idea Things Were Not Lively in Golebville.

Cherokee Bill, of Golebville, called on 'Cactus Kit, of Tucker Bend, shortly after the holidays and inquired of the latter how he had spent Christmas Day.

"Oh, I never seed such a durned quiet day as 'Crismas wuz yere!" exclaimed Kit in tones of disgust.

"Nothin' goin' on 'tall, eh?" continued Bill.

"Wall, nothin' to speak of—nothin' to speak of. S'pose y' heard 'bout the hangings we had yere on 'Crismas, did y'?"

"No, I hadn't heard of 'em."

"Yaaa, we wuz a few boss thieves soon arter breakfast. Did anybody tell y' 'bout the dawg fights yere on 'Crismas?"

"No—not yit."

"Wall, thar wuz seven as terrible fights as y'd wish -o- see, an' I won clus to a hundred dollars on 'em. I might hev won more, but about noon I wuz a big riot over at the county jail."

"Big riot, eh?"

"Yaaa, the prisoners kicked up a 'tip-rarin' ole fuss for some reason, an' it took ten of us an hour to quiet 'em with our guns. Arter that the town got on fire, but y'e've heard o' that, in course?"

"Yaaa—heard a word o' two 'bout it. Much damage done?"

"Wall, yaaa, fourteen or fifteen people burned up an' a dozen or so people injured. Arter we got that out we heard the stage had bin held up, an' we helped the Sheriff chase the robbers."

"Ketch 'em?" queried Cherokee Bill with a longing sigh.

"Yaaa, we got 'em arter a fifteen-mile run an' arter three or four on both sides had bin wounded. Say, did y' hear 'bout the big poker game we had yere on 'Crismas night?"

"No."

"Wall, thar wuz the biggest game y' ever seed. Why, it cost a man twenty dollars to git in the smallest pot. A fuss up at the Prairie Saloon, though, busted it up at midnight."

"What wuz the trouble over thar?"

"Oh, a shootin' scrape, in course, an' everybody took a hand in it. I reckon saloon wuz totally wrecked. When that wuz settled thar wuz another hangin', another dawg-fight an' the post-office wuz robbed."

"And—wuz that all that happened yere on 'Crismas?" asked Cherokee Bill with another deep sigh.

"Yaaa, blame it, that's all!" exclaimed Cactus Kit. "As I said afore, I never did see such a durned quiet 'Crismas as it wuz in this town, an' y' kin bet y' wuz that next 'yar 'I'll go to some place whar thar'll be 'nuff goin' on to keep a feller from fallin' ter sleep!"

Christmas in England.

Christmas is just as pre-eminently an English festival as New Year's Day is in New York. The English are a week ahead of us. They never forget the sacred origin of the day they celebrate, and they never fail to think of religious traditions on that day, and of religion itself as a joyful thing, a part of life remote from cares and gloom. It is a day of kindly remembrances to and for everybody.