

THE GENTIAN

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Cheyenne, Wyoming

CHRISTMAS NUMBER 1911

THE EDITORIAL.

“Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
He was All-in-All to thee,
In the winter’s cave, in Nazareth’s home,
In the hamlets of Galilee.

So, Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
He will not say nay to thee;
When He lifts thy face, for His sweet
embrace,
Speak to Him, Mother, of me.”

CHRISTMAS—the birthday of the sweet Christ Child—is here, and a welcome rings from all the belfries of our dear land. Year by year it comes to visit us, growing old with those who are ageing and keeping young and fresh for the little children, whose special feast it is and always will be.

Do you know that the practice of making presents at Christmas time and the greeting, “A Merry Christmas”, began in the old Catholic days when the nations of Europe commenced the New Year with Christmas? So many of our most cherished customs began in the same way, though now they are regarded as compliments which society requires us to pay to each other. Then they were the welcome of the strong practical faith which characterized the whole mass of the people.

Let us take a peep at some of our forefathers in those good old days of faith. There they sit around the blazing yule-log, waiting for the hour to come when the whole household will start for the Midnight Mass. They have been practicing Christmas Carols all during Advent, and this is Christmas Eve; so probably now they will sing them as a preparation for Mass and Holy Communion. As they sing the story of Bethlehem, cares are forgotten and light-hearted gladness reigns supreme, when the village clock strikes the hour which summons them to the church.

Daybreak will find them again before the altar, thanking the Babe of Bethlehem for His midnight visit to their hearts; and when the majestic strains of the *Adeste Fideles* ring out at the Solemn High Mass, many of that same group of worshippers will be found before the Infant Saviour’s crib. For what good Catholic would dream of hearing less than three Masses on Christmas Day? But could they not manage to get in three Masses without giving the whole morning to prayer? Probably. There have been people in all times, ready like Judas to ask “Why this waste?” when it was a question of dealing liberally with God. But of course none of our readers belong to that class.

“And when they went home what did they do for the rest of the day?” If you have a copy of “Scott’s Poetical Works”, you will find a poem which begins “Pile on more wood, the wind is chill”, which will prove to you that our ancestors could look after their bodies even whilst

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“And, if our faith had given us nothing more
Than this Example of all Womanhood,
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,—
This were enough to prove it higher and truer
Than all the creeds the world had known before.”

—*The Golden Legend.*

It is Passiontide, and the “Example of all Womanhood”, comes before us in all her majestic beauty. Three hours our Mother stood beneath the cross on Calvary, erect, not swooning; fearless, not ~~strong~~ ^{striving} to avert mind or eyes from the dread tragedy, but bravely and unfalteringly heedless of the jibes and sneers of the multitude, she bore her part in the great Sacrifice. Yet we her children, sometimes stay away from Mass because we dare not brave a smile or comment; and when we do attend the Holy Sacrifice, instead of standing or kneeling erect by the Cross of Jesus, we too often loll and fidget and can hardly wait for our dismissal. How unlike their Mother are some of her sons and daughters! Do we appreciate our privileges? Cardinal Newman writes: “It is the boast of the Catholic Church that it has the power of making and keeping the young heart chaste; and why is this, but that it gives us Jesus for our Food and Mary for our Nursing Mother.”

But the Penitential Season is passing swiftly and soon our greeting to this dear Mother will be “Regina Coeli laetare”. Of unknown authorship, the anthem to which these words belong has been traced back to the twelfth century. Instead of the author’s name we have a legend which tells us that St. Gregory the Great heard the first three lines sung by Angels as he walked barefoot in a procession one Easter morning; and that the Saint added “Ora pro nobis Deum”. This is the anthem said instead of the Angelus during Paschal Time.

Some may ask what was the origin of the Easter Fire? It is a remnant of Paganism, still in vogue in many parts of Europe. The fire is lighted on the tops of mountains and must be kindled from new fire drawn from wood by friction. Among the Pagans this signified the victory of spring over winter. In some parts of the Tyrol and in Bohemia a figure representing Judas is thrown into the fire. The Easter Fire has been adopted by the Church into her ceremonies.

There are many other curious Easter customs, most of them remnants

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