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THE CHRISTMAS SERMON.

There is a time in the life of everyone when the Santa Claus legend is beginning to be accepted with reservations. From reservations one proceeds, perhaps too rapidly, to criticism, from criticism to disbelief, from disbelief to indignation. Thus are sceptics created; the infant mind resents an attempted imposition on its alertness. Yet something of wistful melancholy lingers in one's outraged dignity; even as one mocks one half-believes, or wishes to believe a little, in the pleasant legend. How many men and women, grown old and wise in experience and disappointment, are prepared to give up their ancient habit? Savage was not limned for nothing. Like a judge who composes his features to hang a man, at this season the world composes its features to benevolence; but it is no hypocrisy that prompts it. It is a tradition. The amazing thing is not that one grows up at all but that one really grows up so little. Where is the difference between young Arthur who cries for another mince pie, and his grandfather who is thoroughly angry because his mayonnaise has a taint of rancid butter?

Yet this tradition of Christmas benevolence, at any rate, is a thoroughly sound one: why should not we, like naughty children, play at being good? To pretend is almost as effectual as to try; and, indeed, as the Christmas season approaches its climax the observer must note to the credit of mankind an increased receptiveness, an increased geniality. For once the intricate agglomeration of warm human impulses, hopes, endeavours, failures, tragedies lying beneath the surface of each man's business and behind the strict inevitableness of states and governments is allowed to come to light; in a word, for one brief space in the hurried twelvemonths humanity asks itself the wherefore and the whence. Whatever the answer that comes to each man, of one thing let us be certain—that amid the insensate desires springing from the prosecution of affairs and from action of every kind, such a pause, such an acknowledgement of tranquillity encourages a sympathy to which we are for the most part strangers. At no other time are the painful contrasts of society more pathetically pressed upon the observation of men than when the good cheer of the season and the claims of the homeless and the starving preponderate together in their immediate interests.

The question is, after all, one of sentiment. Sometimes one might well ask of oneself whether Christmas, so far from being the happiest season of the year, is not in reality the saddest. Yet there is something in the tradition imperative of rejoicing. It is the problem of Santa Claus, which once overshadowed the credulity of childhood but could not rob it of its fascination, over again. Christmas time becomes a happy time in spite of itself. The animation of the streets, whether it be in the luxurious quarters of the town or in the squalid districts of the poor, is an invitation to throw off grey care; and just as little children gaze with some sort of unsatisfied pleasure into a sweet-shop, so their parents catch something of the reflection of happiness even when the substance is denied them. Pleasures are no less sweet because they are melancholy; and it is perhaps not too much to say that he enjoys the Christmas season most who does not let it rob him of thought.

A LUCKY PURCHASE.

The purchaser of an old armchair at Saint-Dié has had a lucky bargain. It was acquired in a sale of second-hand furniture for a few francs, and when sent to be re-covered was found to contain fifty louis, which were secreted in the stuffing. They were all of the same date, and it is supposed that they had remained in their curious hiding-place for over forty years.

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DEATH OF QUEEN CAROLA.

Her Majesty the Queen Dowager Carola of Saxony quietly passed away at 3.37 a.m. on Sunday last.

Queen Carola was born on August 5, 1833, and was the daughter of Prince Gustav and Princess Louise of Wassa. She was married to King Albert of Saxony on June 18, 1853; the union remained without issue. Since the death of King Albert in June 1902, the Queen's health had been unmistakably failing, and on Saturday last her condition was such as to preclude all hope of recovery. King Friedrich August with his children, as well as the Princesses Johann Georg and Mathilde, were at the bedside to take leave of their beloved relative, who, however, was unconscious. Prince Johann Georg was unable to be present as he has not yet recovered from the indisposition which attacked him in England.

The late Queen will be long and sincerely mourned by the numerous charitable and benevolent institutions of which she was the bountiful patroness. Her strong personal characteristics were warm-hearted sympathy with the poor and afflicted, a sympathy which invariably expressed itself in material help, and a natural amiability which endeared her to all with whom she came in touch.

Court mourning has been ordered by His Majesty the King for a period of ten weeks, terminating on February 22, 1908. The officers of the Saxon Army will be in official mourning for six weeks; during the first two weeks, all decorations on the uniform will be effaced with crape.

This evening at nine o'clock the body will be conveyed from the Villa Strehlen to the Catholic Church, where the funeral will take place tomorrow at 6 p.m. There will be no public lying in state.

The news of Her Majesty's death on Sunday morning was everywhere received with deepest



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regret. Both in the English and American churches special collects were said and funeral marches were played. Flags were hoisted at half-mast, and the bells of all the Dresden churches tolled from 12 to 1, midday.

The Royal Opera House and the Royal Theatre in Neustadt will remain closed until further notice; the Residenz Theatre, Central Theatre and Victoria Salon will remain closed until tomorrow evening, inclusive.

At the Royal Villa Strehlen of the late Queen Carola there were many callers to inscribe their names in the condolence lists. Among the representatives of the English and American colonies who paid this tribute on Sunday morning were the British Minister Resident, Mansfeld de Cardonnel Findlay, Esq., the American Consul-General, T. St. John Gaffney, Esq., Vice Consul-General Alfred C. Johnson; Deputy Consul-General Ulysses J. Bywater, and Messrs. Alvin Kranich and Victor Ila Clark.

In view of the large number of applications received for places in the Church upon the occasion of the interment on Wednesday next, it is announced that no special permits will be issued.

ENGLISH NEWS.

THE BRITISH NAVY AND THE TAXES.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Tweedmouth, in a speech delivered on Friday at a banquet given by the Liverpool Ship Brokers, said that he fully recognised that the expense of the Navy was a great burden on the tax-payers, but the English fleet must be sufficiently powerful to ensure Great Britain's supremacy on the seas. He did not mean this remark to be aggressively construed, but English commerce must be protected. He (Lord Tweedmouth) as well as his colleagues, were continually endeavouring to be as saving as possible, but when they saw the necessity of making great demands the country must support them.

MISHAP TO THE "MAURETANIA".

A Liverpool telegram states that on Friday night the huge liner "Mauretania" grounded in the river Mersey opposite the landing-stage, but was refloated without special difficulty early on Saturday morning. She was expected to sail on Saturday evening at the scheduled hour.

WRECK OFF SCILLY ISLES.

From Penzance it is reported that the American schooner "Thomas W. Lawson" went ashore off the Scillies on Friday evening. Seventeen of the crew were drowned.

AMERICAN NEWS.

MR. ROOSEVELT'S RETIREMENT.

According to a Washington correspondent, who is usually well-informed on White House matters, says the *Globe*, Mr. Roosevelt, having finally decided not to stand for a third term nomination, is planning a long tour, which will probably embrace the leading countries of Europe, as well as India and Africa.

The President, it is said, is particularly anxious to visit Germany. Unofficially, many invitations have been extended to him, and of these he now intends to avail himself. Baron Speck von Sternburg, the German Ambassador at Washington, has, we are told this morning, been notified of his intention by Mr. Roosevelt himself, in characteristically unconventional fashion.

"Specky," quoth Mr. Roosevelt, according to this omniscient correspondent, "as soon as I get off this job, I'm going over to see your boss." And the Baron, who, by the way, is quite accustomed to hear himself addressed as "Specky" by the President, is understood to have replied that the Kaiser would be delighted to welcome him.

The Finest Habana Cigars, English cigarettes and tobacco. L. Wolf, Prager Str. 48.