

It turned out to be a crowd of young married people with one or two lads, the young wives having accompanied their husbands just for "the fun of it;" and the eldest man of the party was our friend Russel, who was then about twenty-one years old, his bride of four months being eighteen years old. Not being very intimate, I did not offer to join them, but watched their actions with some interest.

As soon as their supper was ready all gathered round the food, and young Russel requested one of the boys to ask "the blessing." This was a surprise to me, for I knew they were "freighters," and I knew also that such men were not usually very religiously inclined. After supper there were the evening duties, then more games, laughter, and jokes. I had crawled into my wagon and was preparing to go to sleep when a sudden stillness from the crowd caused me to lift up my wagon cover and peer out. What do you suppose I saw? All those young people were kneeling down in the deep dust, at spring seats and around wagon wheels. Some one was praying. To say I was surprised would be a very mild way of expressing myself.

The next morning I watched them very closely. Ah well, I thought, they are in the usual morning hurry, hitching up, cooking breakfast, packing wagons, etc., and nobody will think of praying this morning. As soon as the word was given and they gathered near, young Russel said as quietly and simply as though asking for a drink of water: "Are you ready, girls? All right, we'll have prayers;" and down they went in the dirt and dust, while Brother Russel offered a simple, earnest prayer. A blessing on the food was asked, and then all began to eat with a good appetite, accompanied by laughter, jokes, and general good nature.

We separated then, but I said to myself that Brother Russel was a man rare among men, honest and brave enough to do the right when it would be much easier and customary with all his associates to be neglectful and careless. "There, that is the end of the story," concluded the lady, rising to go out in the kitchen.

"Where is the old gentleman?" inquired Hartley.

"He is the same poor, shiftless, yet pretty good old gentleman, with just enough faith in him, as my grandmother used to say, to get into heaven by the skin of the teeth. As for Brother Russel, he is a rising young man, modest but earnest, quiet, but very energetic in all his duties. He is respected and loved by all his

acquaintances. Today he is as unassuming as when a freighter on the road, and as honest, too."

"I am glad to hear the story," said Mr. Hartley. "It is a solution not only to that affair, but I believe it is the key to many other things of a like nature that sometimes puzzle one."

"It is," and Mr. Fisher drew up to the grate and rested his feet on the fender. "Every time I hear my wife tell the story I make a new resolve to be more humble and childlike."

Then the two fell to discussing the aspect of affairs today and wondering what would be our condition three years from this Christmas day.

HOMESPUN.

### CHRISTMAS.

Pleasant memories of the past increase our joy, and make more than welcome the return of another Christmas. It is a time of joy to every Christian home where peace and love inspire the refrain, where they have learned to sing the song which angels sang—the song of love they learned in heaven—"Peace on earth goodwill to men." Another link is added to the chain that binds us to the greatest and the best. Another period marks the termination of the most beautiful sentence ever written in the history of our lives, and bids us stop and think how grand the event which ushers in the most glorious epoch of the world's history, when was revealed the rich provision made in the heavens for the consummation of human redemption—the world's Redeemer.

The mystery attending His advent to this sphere, in the manner and similitude of man, seemed to check the royal reception due to Him who had been ordained and anointed to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. That mystery still clings to the mind of man though centuries have passed, and many hundreds of times the world has celebrated the event; much indeed like those of old who worshiped God, but did it ignorantly.

Mystery has been perpetuated. It has been an attractive feature of the commemoration of that event to the present; and the great wonder is how Santa Claus can come down the chimney with his bundles of sweets and toys and make good his escape after leaving his complement of generous gifts to all the little folks who are sleeping at the time. This mysterious personage is almost as world-wide in his visitations and in the distribution of gifts as was the Redeemer's mission to universal man. Childhood and youth are made joy-

ful by the one, while manhood and old age more fully appreciate the other.

The birth of Christ will be commemorated to the end of time.

Christmas is usually and appropriately devoted to merriment, though by some, perhaps, carried to excess. This should not be. No theme can possibly be contemplated that should awaken such feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving, and kindle such spiritual fire in the soul of man as the one we are now permitted to contemplate. What deep solicitude, what yearnings of the soul must have pervaded those blissful realms when Christ left the presence and glory of the Father, on that perilous mission, which was to rescue another world and its living souls from the powers of misery and death, and add another mansion to the realms of the redeemed ones.

What plannings and preparations were engaged in by the councils of that august presence when angels were made His attendants, worlds made their obeisance and the stars of heaven were appointed as lamps to light His way to this dark earth—when to Him was committed the keys of both life and death, with power to call to His aid at any time His friends from the spirit world; when a cohort of angels was placed at His service and subject to His command, with the assurance of the Father that He should not be forsaken, that He should accomplish His mission, and return to receive again the glory that He had with the Father before the world was; and added to that glory be kingdom and dominion to be shared with all those who should be saved through His divine intervention, and should desire to dwell with Him as He with the Father.

Who of today can appreciate the greatness and grandeur of the plan of salvation devised for man? Who can fathom the depth and power of that love which placed heaven's best gifts within his reach, with the kind and loving invitation to drink freely of the waters of life and live forever? All the love we can bestow, all the gifts we can impart, will inadequately evidence our appreciation of the spirit with which we should celebrate Christmas; and so teach the rising generation that the spirit of love even the love of God, may flow down with the ages, till time shall be no more, and glory, majesty, and power be the everlasting heritage of the redeemed.

S. W. RICHARDS.

Charles Mackay, the well-known English author and journalist, is dead.