

## NOTES BY "THE LOUNGER."

Reprinted from "The Surrey County Herald," January 3rd, 1902.

Come to a gossip's feast,  
And go with me.

*Shakespeare.*

EVERY moment is a point standing between the present and the past, but not thus can every moment be regarded; they vanish too swiftly to be seized by reflection. Days elapse with almost as little note; even weeks and months depart, and leave but dim and vague impressions. It is not till we stand on the limits of the larger portions of time that we note them "by their loss." Thus, though the passing hour may not awaken a thought, it is not so with the passing year. It is impossible, when that which has witnessed so much of human chance, change, and passion is joining "the years beyond the flood," not to pause, and looking back on the past through memory, and on the future through hope, reflect on all the old year has left us, and all the new one is likely to bring.

Such reflections are by no means mournful, for we find the New Year is generally welcomed among us with gladness, as if men were "not rejoiced" to see the other face of old Janus. Twelve months have made us familiar enough with the departed guest; we are not ungrateful for his good, nor peevish with him for his evil; it is not in anger we part, though perhaps with something of weariness; he has gone as a "tale that is told"; he had run through his changes, and we began to say "Friend, thou art tedious." So as he sat with us in his last hours we made them cheerful ones, and dismissed him from our hearths as we received him—with festivity. He hears his last song, drinks his last cup, and as the foot of his successor crosses the threshold he vanishes into the darkness of the abyss of the past and we see him no more for ever.

Hail to the night when we gather once more  
All the forms we love to meet;  
When we've many a guest that's dear to our  
breast;

And the household dog at our feet.  
Who would not be in the circle of glee,  
When heart to heart is yearning—  
When joy breathes out in the laughing shout  
While the New Year's log is burning?

This is the time when the grey old man  
Leaps back to the days of youth;  
When brows and eyes bear no disguise,  
But flush and gleam with truth.  
Oh, then is the time when the soul exults,  
And seems right heavenward turning;  
And we love and bless the hands we press,  
While the New Year's log is burning.

Yes! the old year leaves with us varied memories, dark or bright, according to our deeds in his presence; he leaves many tokens of his course, which, sad or pleasant, none can escape. But all this only makes the new year more welcome. It awakens new hopes, fresh energies, and often better resolves; and, however vain the year as it becomes old may prove them to be, they give a charm to the time and character of the season, of which it were a pity to see it deprived. At this time, too, we look back, and sum up all that the past year has borne to us; it were well if it could always be done in a kindly spirit—if the good alone could be remembered, and the evil the old year saw among us passed over, and like the faults of a departed friend, be "not remembered in his epitaph."

I AM glad to note that Sir Edward Clarke is rapidly recovering his health. His late illness must have involved him in a loss of about a hundred and seventy guineas a day from refreshers in the great cases in which he was

acting. Sir Edward is one of the counsel who always return fees taken for cases to which they cannot personally attend. There have been counsel who have stuck to their fees, even when promotion to the Bench has prevented them from appearing in the cases in which they were retained. Sir Edward Clarke's present illness is the first he has had for nearly a quarter of a century, not counting a boating accident. This is an eloquent testimony to the accuracy of the saying that hard work does not kill, for there are few men who have worked harder than Sir Edward.

DRAWING attention to the great similarity existing in the methods of great crimes a writer in "The Sheffield Telegraph" says, If one may compare great things with small, it is curious to note the points of similarity in the Marson and Humbert cases. Marson, "The Sheffield Millionaire," according to the story, had a rich relative who left him a vast estate, "half the size of Ireland." On that estate were gold and precious stones, to say nothing of a two mile long subterranean passage with a cave thrown in. Within the cave was a strong room, and in the strong room a safe, which contained riches in gold, diamonds, and rubies beggaring all the ill-gotten gains of Ali Baba, and the Forty Thieves. To get possession of the estate and its wealth there were certain preliminaries to go through. For these preliminaries money was wanted, and

Marson boldly "exploiting" likely people piled up the romance of that wonderful property in Ontario until he seems to have fairly bewildered those who had to do with him, whether they believed his story or not. There were documents of a kind to back it up, and there were communications, more or less official looking, from correspondents whose names were given as Watson, Williamson, and Ingleby. What helped the story was the publication of an article on "The Coming Richest Man in the World," and it really would be interesting to know how that article first saw the light. In any case, however, Marson made friends and obtained loans, some of them on the princely terms, freely offered, of £5,000 for every £1 advanced. The wise man of old declared, "The borrower is servant to the lender," but it was not so in Marson's case, for his friends seem to have been his most faithful and obedient servants, one of them finding him over £3,000 pounds within three years! The play, however, could not be kept up, as the sources of supply were too freely tapped. Trouble followed trouble, until, at Leeds Assizes, an unsympathetic jury found Marson guilty of obtaining money by false pretences. As the immortal Betsy Prig, tired of Sarah Gamp's eternal reference to "her friend Mrs. Harris," shocked Sarah's sensitive soul by saying "there never was no such person," so the jury further found that Watson, Williamson, and Ingleby were "fictitious," and that their letters were written by Marson himself.

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A MERRY Christmas and a Happy New Year to all my readers.

I don't know how I can commence this article in a more comprehensive or a better manner — a goodly thought and kindly sentiment is never out of place in a Christian land, and it comes in better and sounds more seasonable at Christmas time than at any other period of the year.

It seems strange to me to read of the number of prisoners taken by the Boers at Nicholson's Nek and at Stormberg. More requires to be known about these surrenders, for they do not fit in with the traditions of the British army. The Iron Duke never lost a man or a gun, so it is proudly averred, and he fought against Napoleon's most able and experienced Field Marshals. "Hitherto," says the "Sheffield Telegraph," "surrender has been a word of shame, and, therefore, not at all to the taste of British troops fighting under their regimental flags." It remains to be known who sounded the order to cease firing at Nicholson's Nek and why, and who gave the order to surrender at Stormberg. Something, of course, may be said in extenuation. It may be urged that at Sedan a whole army, and it a large one, surrendered to the Germans, and that at Metz another army refrained from any really determined attempt to cut its way out, and cleave for itself a path through the encircling ranks of the besiegers. It may further be urged that Lord Cornwallis with 7,000 men surrendered at Yorktown to the American insurgents, under General Washington. But, in the latter case, there is a set-off that the French, with a great army, an exceptionally able commander, and a powerful fleet, had intervened and made the chances hopeless for a British General, who was over three thousand miles away from his war base, and who had no means of communicating to any purpose with the Government at home. Perhaps the best apology for the humiliations of Stormberg and Nicholson's Nek is the one

based on considerations of the altered conditions of warfare now that long range weapons of precision, coolly and skilfully handled, and so located as to concentrate a withering cross-fire, and if the fire of an all but invisible foe, upon an advancing column, make it practically impossible for the latter to get at the enemy with the bayonet; this plea holds good in cases where, as at Nicholson's Nek, the whole reserve of ammunition has been carried off by stampeding mules, untrained to face fire and frantic with terror; but we have yet to be told that there was any lack of ammunition when the order was given to surrender at Stormberg. Men are not to be blamed for having failed to do the impossible. No higher courage is conceivable than that of the Khalifa's Arabs, who went dauntlessly forward to death, but never reached the British position, or where, as at Omdurman, mere black troops from the Eastern Soudan, armed with British rifles and drilled by British officers, made short work of Arab heroes armed with weapons only serviceable at close quarters. Well may the Spaniards exclaim, with a sigh, that in these days victory goes, not to the brave, but to the rich; not to the unconquerable spirits, but to those who have money and the newest engines of destruction. The Spanish fleet did not surrender. It was defeated, but not dishonoured; it was sunk, and only in that sense was it subdued. At Stormberg our men were armed with rifles of the longest-reaching power, and if the country is to maintain the reputation of its soldiers for fearless persistency and Spartan stubbornness in battle, it must demand to know by whom and upon whose authority the order to surrender was given at Stormberg. It will also require to be told what measure of truth there is in the Boer assertion that so many hundreds of men yielded up their arms and, figuratively speaking, surrendered when only "twenty-nine" out of the whole force had fallen mortally wounded. There is a screw loose somewhere, my most worthy masters and

mistresses. Albuera, Vittoria, Rodrigo, and Waterloo were not won by soldiers of a submissive spirit. The war threatens to be a long and bloody one, and, although in a war of resources, England must win, it may, perhaps, be as well not to leave uninvestigated those repulses, which discourage our soldiers and encourage the Boers.

"As a result of a meeting of Ministers, on Saturday last, we are able to announce, says the "Standard" of Monday, "that Lord Roberts is to be appointed commander-in-chief in South Africa, with Lord Kitchener as his chief-of-staff. The appearance on the scene of two such famous soldiers will tend to reassure the public mind, and also to restore confidence in the capacity of those at the head of affairs in South Africa, which has been somewhat shaken by recent reverses. A great novelty will be the employment, on an extensive scale, of the volunteers on active service. Several thousand men of this force, including a large number of Yeomanry, will be formed into regiments for South Africa. Mr. Chamberlain has intimated that the services of additional contingents of mounted men will be welcome, and there is no doubt there will be a ready response, both in Canada and Australasia. Already efforts are being made in the dominion to forward fresh detachments of cavalry and artillery, and it is said that five hundred men of the North-West Mounted Rifles may be included in the Canadian force. These troops, who contrive to keep order over a country larger even than South Africa, would be invaluable in the work of scouting, mounted as they are on hardy little horses, and accustomed to patrol all the great western regions of Canada, from the plains of the Klondyke to the mountain passes of British Columbia, they would speedily find themselves at home among the neks and kopjes of the veldt. To further strengthen this arm of the service, Sir Redvers Buller is authorised to

raise corps of Colonial Horse in the Cape and Natal, at his own discretion."

The domestic servant difficulty was already a sufficiently burning subject without the further complication that has been imported into it. What with School Boards, and the natural independence of the national character, the ordinary maid nowadays is of much more importance than her mistress, and she knows it. A recent case, however, appears to show that no confidence can be placed even in that bulwark of the British constitution—a servant's character. A person described as a domestic agent has just been convicted of supplying a false character to a servant. If a domestic agent means a servants' registry office, it is a disquieting thought that characters and servants are both kept on tap at the same place to meet all demands.

To very many of my readers this Christmas season will come as a time of sorrow. To most of us, it will bring sad remembrances and heavy hearts, but it will also throw the bright reflex of its sacred influence around our hearths and homes, and bid us look forward hopefully to the New Year.

We may have seen some loved ones pass  
To the land of hallowed rest;  
We may miss the glow of an honest brow  
And the warmth of a friendly breast;  
But if we loved them while on earth  
With hearts all true and kind;  
Will their spirits blame the Christmas mirth  
Of those true hearts left behind?  
No, no, it were not well nor wise  
To mourn with endless pain;  
There's a better world beyond the skies  
Where the good shall meet again;  
Then a welcome and cheer to the merry New Year,  
While the holly gleams above us,  
With a pardon for the foes who hate,  
And a prayer for those who love us.

Christmas, 1899.

# Notes by "The Lounger."

Reprinted from the "Wallington and Carshalton Herald,"  
December 22nd, 1900.

Come to a gossip's feast, and go with me.  
*Shakespeare.*

Glad Christmas comes, and every breath  
Makes room to give him welcome now,  
E'en want will dry its tears in mirth,  
And crown him with a holly-bough.

CHRISTMAS! What a host of delicious associations rush into memory at the very sound of the word! The innermost chords of the heart are touched, and sweet music is awakened within us. We feel young again, and looking back along our life-path, there is reflected upon us the golden light of many happy Christmas-times! The glad carols of Christmas Eve, the gathering of friends and relations from afar, the renewed pledges of love and friendship among all, the merry Christmas greeting so freely given and received, the cordial heart-whole geniality of the season, crowd upon us, and make our bosoms full and our throats thick. For, alas! there is a dash of melancholy in all these pleasant remembrances. There are faces absent this Christmas which we shall see no more, hands which we can no longer warmly clasp. The places of some dear little children are vacant, and Christmas comes not for them again. Let us look, however; there are still many things for us to love—many true friends, to welcome—many happy memories to cherish—many small blessings to pleasure up. At Christmas time we take stock of all these. It winds up the old year, and we enter on the coming new century with cheerfulness and hope.

While the tables of the rich are groaning under the delicacies of the season, the tables of the poor are not empty. It is one of the glories of Christmas that it reminds us of the poor. We reserve our great charities for this festival time. It is an old and time-honoured

observance—the dispensing of goods and clothing among the destitute, and infirm, and aged, at Christmas. Many dark and cheerless homes are, at this season, lightened by the Angel visits of charity; and want forgets to pine, and grief to wail, while benevolence and bounty, with gentle voice and open hands, pour forth their store of comfort and consolation. The bond of human brotherhood is drawn closer, the rich man feels that the poor man is his brother, for we have all of us one human heart.

Another glory of Christmas is in the extent to which it is enjoyed. In retired nooks of the country, in humble villages, nestling far among the hills, in all the dales and valleys of our land, in the solitary hut on the verge of the bleak moor, in the straggling hamlet, and in the country town, Christmas everywhere reigns. You see troops of young and old, crossing the old bridge and exchanging their cordial greetings near the church porch. But it is not Christmas in England alone. It is the great festival of Christendom. The sound of the Christmas bells echoes from the remote east to the far west; from the wildernesses of Asia to the prairies of America. It travels over mountain chains, through unknown woods, and across bounding seas. From land to land the glad sound is taken up, and as it dies in one country it rises in the next, and is carried westward with the sun. The merry bells of Christmas circle the earth, and their brazen welcome is the universal language of the season. The dwellers in our remotest colonies are reminded by them of the old Christmas at home—of the village chimes, and the cheerful English fireside crowded around with happy faces; and their hearts are stirred by old loves, old feelings, old memories, sad, yet healthful to think of and remember.



Not the least glory of Christmas is that it keeps alive among us the memory of the Great Lover of mankind, for on this day was born the divinest heart that ever came upon this earth. We are transported to the fields of Bethlehem, and the song which was sung by the angels to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. Dim centuries stretch between that epoch and this, yet the song of the angels still resounds among men. The ages have rolled on and carried the ark of christianity on their bosom, sweeping over the temples of the heathen gods and the altars of the Druids, and freighted with an ever increasing store of life and love from age to age. Let us each endeavour to realise the beautiful belief of old, that no evil spirit had power over man at this season of the year :—

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
This bird of dawning songeth all night long :  
And then they say no spirit dares stir abroad ;  
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

YET another victim to the scandalous adulteration of our "national drink." Well may Mr. Cuthbert Quilter say that this poisoning is no "chance occurrence," but a direct illustration of the danger which arises to the public out of the opportunity permitted to brewers to use any materials they choose in the brewing of beer. This opportunity, he goes on to explain, is enjoyed under what is popularly known as "the free mash tub," a concession granted by Mr. Gladstone when he foolishly repealed the Malt Tax in 1880. For twenty years, therefore, the mischief has been in our midst, and who shall say how much suffering misery, and death has been due to the unsuspected slow poison lurking in the "beer tap" of the people? So far as the Government supervision is concerned it has been worse than useless, all the examinations being made with a view to protecting the revenue and not the detection of deleterious ingredients. Now

that the use of cheap substitutes for malt has resulted in wholesale poisoning, Mr. Quilter asks Government to step in and secure the purity of the Englishman's favourite, and, at one time, wholesome beverage. In Bavaria, the use of any substitutes for malt on the part of the brewers is a criminal offence, and it ought to be made so here. It must be remembered that adulteration in any shape is only practised by those indulging in it for the increased profit it gives them, and the unfortunate consumer has a right to be protected against the use of substances that must seriously injure, and may, possibly, kill him. Why should brewers be allowed to accumulate enormous fortunes at the expense of the health of the public? Considering what immense numbers of people make bear their only drink, the least Parliament can do for them is to see that they get pure malt and hops for their money.

... his eyes, whoever tries  
To rob a poor man of his beer,

AND now, once more a hearty welcome to Old Father Christmas. Let the merry bells send their strains far into the heart of every English home; cheer the old and gladden the young; send their music where the fire blazes and crackles, and the steam of rich Christmas fare rises up amid bright faces and merry laughter. Let every old belfry ring out and give tongue, for the world takes holiday to-day; Peal through the clear frosty air into the dark lanes and alleys, through broad streets, over village greens, and by the lone hut on the moor; to the furthest verge let the glad voices of the Christmas bells extend.

One cannot choose but love the bells,  
With their harmonious din;  
Those speaking bells, whose falls and swells,  
Ring merry Christmas in.  
They sound like angel voices sent,  
From some serener sphere,  
Singing from out the firmament  
That love and hope are here.

Christmas, 1900.