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THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.

December is upon us once more and the time has come to think about Christmas, about how we shall gather in the holly and the mistletoe and otherwise prepare for "good cheer." "There is one thing to be thankful for," said someone, "Christmas calls for no new ideas; we'd just hate a Christmas full of new experiences and amusements." "True," we replied, meditatively, "but there's the Christmas article for the JOURNAL; that must be written afresh, so just give a subject for it." "Write of the Spirit of Christmas" came the answer at once from the Fairy Godmother who chanced to be in the Club that night. The problem did not seem to grow easier with the choice of a subject, but Fairy Godmothers must be obeyed, or who knows what colossal ill luck may befall you in the coming year? But, of your charity, refrain from overmuch criticism of the literary quality of your Christmas message because it is an illusive subject to treat of in words—the Spirit of Christmas. For surely it does not lie with reasoning, phraseology or philosophy to interpret the Spirit of Christmas, but each one of us must, to a certain extent, penetrate into its mystery and find in our own individualised way its inspiration, its meanings and what it may have to teach.

Quite often we hear people say that they do not like Christmas because it is full of memories of "have beens"; folk who speak thus are very apt to become the "wet blankets" of the Christmas season. Far better is it to remember the lesson of a new translation (which, it is contended, is the correct one) of the first Christmas carol of all—"Peace on Earth to men who are of good will." In this connection we are reminded of the wonderful Fairy Tale—one's mind is apt to revert to fairy tales when the Spirit of Christmas draws near—we are reminded of the Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily. We read in it of the entrance of the Old Man with his Lamp into the cave of the four kings, of how, from the lamp, there comes the most lovely light leaving no trace of shadow anywhere. When questioned as to why he brings his lamp when there is already light in the cave, he explains that it will not shine on what is dark, but only where light is. Here, in the symbolism of this really beautiful Fairy Tale, we are taught what it is so hard to inculcate in our time, namely, that knowledge can only be of value, can only be taken in as concepts, when it reaches minds which, through experience or effort, have attained to some knowledge already of the subject to which the particular branch of knowledge, being dealt with, pertains; and so also spirit can only shine into those who cultivate something of the light of the spirit in themselves. The Spirit of Christmas must meet with a spirit among men which has likeness to itself if it is to be felt.

Agès before the Christian era men felt this season to be one of inspiration, felt, indeed, that at this time the earth breathed in cosmic forces whereby, during the coming

year, would be brought about the shooting and blossoming of the plants and the harvest that would follow. And so it is not surprising that, when Christianity was adopted, those converted to it kept, at a time when this feeling persisted, the festival of the drawing near of the Christ, the inspiration for the earth of a new era to be marked by the development of love, good will and service for the progress and well-being of humanity. And so, two thousand years after the first Christmas morning, we welcome the Spirit of Christmas and seek to gain inspiration, to help us to lift the burdens of the sick in the year that is coming and to do the road-making for the higher evolution of a profession which makes them its chief care.

LECTURES.

PRE-NORMAN LONDON.

By Major Rigg, O.B.E.

Mr. William Vaux Graham, J.P., F.S.A., formerly Chairman of Westminster Hospital, presided, when Major Rigg gave us, a short time ago, a very interesting lecture on Pre-Norman London. In commencing, Major Rigg said that the solid foundation of facts proving the condition of the earliest London are the waste, marshy ground, with little hills rising from the plains, and the dense forest on the North (a forest that remained almost up to the walls of the city in historic times), animal remains, flint instruments, and pile dwellings; these make up the sum of the evidence on which to base our knowledge of the beginnings of London. All else is conjecture.

The strongest point of those who disbelieve in a British London is that Julius Cæsar does not mention it; but this negative evidence is far from conclusive. We learn from Tacitus that in A.D. 61 the Roman city was a place of some importance, the chief residence of merchants and the great mart of trade; therefore, we cannot doubt that to have grown to this condition it must have existed before the Christian era. Saxon London was a wooden city surrounded by walls, marking out the same enclosure that existed in the latest Roman city.

From the date of the departure of the Roman legions to that of the Norman Conquest nearly six centuries and a half had elapsed. Of this period we find only a few remains, such as some articles discovered in the river and some entries in that incomparable monument of the past—the Saxon Chronicle. All we really know of Saxondom we learn from the Saxon Chronicle, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, and the old charters. The history of England for the greater portion of this time was local and insular, for the country was no longer a part of a great Empire. In the seventh century the city of London seems to have settled down as a prosperous place and to have been peopled by merchants of many nationalities. It was at this time the great mart of slaves. It was in the fullest sense a free trading town; neutral to a certain extent between the Kingdoms around,

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