

A Christmas Meditation.

Christmas Day, the birthday of our Saviour, the Festival of the Incarnation. How infinite are the lessons which cluster round the manger of Bethlehem!

From the time when God created man in His own image, and imparted something of His Divinity to the father of the human race, and the first voluntary act of man was a direct violation of the Creator's command, the Father and the Son, Who had existed with the Father from the eternal beginning, willed that humanity must be redeemed from the penalty of sin. The result was that the Divine Son emptied Himself of His glory, and took upon Him the likeness of men. He was born of a human mother—born in poverty, unknown, unwelcomed.

The Jewish nation had long looked forward to the coming of Messiah, the Anointed One. They knew every prophecy which told of His advent. And yet they could not recognize Him when, in the fulness of time, He was born into the world. They knew that He would come as Prophet, Priest and King. But they failed to understand that His sovereignty would be over the hearts of men, and that He would rule by more powerful weapons than the sword.

The strange, impressive scene; the busy tourists bound for Jerusalem; the Virgin Mary and Joseph, toiling painfully southward from their Galilean home; the enforced halt at Bethlehem; the crowded village inn; the necessity for some quiet spot where the Child could be born; the stable, with its manger; and the Incarnation of the God-man—every detail, so far as we are privileged to witness this mighty fact, is familiar to us.

We need not be troubled by the criticisms and cavillings of unbelievers. It is enough for the disciple of Jesus to take the truths of Revelation, and offer up a tribute of thankful praise for the privilege of knowing this—the essence of our salvation. At the manger-throne of the infant Jesus, peasant and prince, young and old, ignorant and learned, all kneel together in homage to the Saviour of the world.

Christmas! How much the term conveys to those who are on the threshold of life, full of brightness and of hope, undeterred as yet by the failures and disappointments which so soon overtake us as we attain to manhood and womanhood. Christmas is the time, above all others, for family reunions. The absent members of the family; those who have already embarked on the voyage of independent work; those who are scattered far and wide; all, unless absolutely prevented, return to the old home for the joyous Christmas gathering.

At Christmas, too, more than at any other season, the sympathies of those who are blessed with some measure of this world's goods go out to those in poverty and distress. In the midst of their innocent mirth, surrounded by all that can make them bright and free from care, they must, if they do not shut out from the gaze the picture of the

manger at Bethlehem, think of those who are suffering from poverty and privation, and gladly, joyfully, give of their abundance to their suffering fellow-creatures. Every Christmas there are thousands upon thousands of men, women and children, half dead with cold, scantily clothed, and without sufficient bread to sustain their poor, emaciated forms. Many of these might be relieved if the attention of their more favored brethren were directed to their claims.

There is another class, too, who need special consideration and sympathy at this festive season. These are the men and women who are travelling down, on the last stages of the journey of life, alone. They can remember the time when their hearts were full of joy and gladness, when they were the merriest of the happy home circle. But one by one the companions of their earlier days have fallen out of the ranks. As Christmas comes round, another and another empty chair stands waiting for one who will never return; and at last they are left to brood over the past. They live in the days that are gone, until the present, with its aching voids, shows them the loneliness of the evening of their life.

To the young and innocent, happy in the enjoyment of the present; to the poor and suffering, for whom grinding poverty or wasting disease darkens with cruel shadows the very fact of existence; to the desolate and bereaved, whose lot is dark indeed; to one and all the arms of the infant Christ are stretching forth, beckoning them to take refuge in the brightness of His infinite Love. Love—the attribute of Divinity—can check the boisterous mirth, can bring a smile to the pain-drawn face, can call up the soothing tears of remembrance. Love can draw out the generosity and sympathy of the weak to the strong, of the happy to the sorrowing, of the rich to the poor. The God of love proclaims His message to the world—'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.'



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PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE.

The Rev. S. Macmorine and his people are arranging for the occupancy of their new church. The finishing touches are now being put on the interior, and it is hoped that the seats will arrive in a few days. It has been decid-