

CHRISTMAS CHIMES.

O the merry Christmas bells! let us hear their cheery chimes
 Ringing o'er a weary world, full of sorrows, sin and crimes.
 In city, town or country, in the poor or rich man's home
 Let us hear that loving kinship and bonitude have come.

O we need the joyful tidings, for this earth reels to and fro
 With want and wantful riot, deep depravity and woe;
 We want celestial comfort, for our hearts are growing cold
 For the want of human feeling and of sympathy of old;

We need the light and comfort of the heaven inspired page
 For the atheistic teaching of this unbelieving age;
 We need Divine compassion for the hatred, doubt and scorn
 That fling their gloomy shadows o'er that over blessed morn.

The air is thick with rumors, and with fears of coming ill;
 Let us hear the heralds of mercy and God's divine good will!
 Yet Christmas bells and anthems, your sacred carols roll,
 Above the desolation and the bitterness of soul!

Ring out the joyful tidings between the earth and heaven
 "To you a Child is born—to you a holy Son is given!"
 God has bowed down the heavens, has left the realms above,
 To crown His erring children with His everlasting love.

O mystery of mysteries, the God and Lord of all—
 Appears a helpless infant within that lowly stall,
 Nor angel nor archangel can sound the depths of grace,
 Of Deity incarnate to save the human race.

O man lift up your praises—the heavens are not brass;
 Praise, thanks and adoration the golden gates shall pass!
 With shepherds and with magi, O come, let us adore
 Our Sovereign and our Saviour, and our God for evermore.

REDEEMER AND RULER.

"The happy Christmas comes once more,
 The Heavenly Guest is at the door."

Christmas is a prophecy of good. It is the harbinger of beatitudes. It is the birthday not alone of a heavenly person, but of one who comes to be our guest. The hour of His advent was vocal with hallelujahs of blessing. He was heaven's benediction upon a forlorn humanity. Let our mutual congratulations, and our merry-making be wreaths of evergreen to crown this heavenly Guest. Who is this Santa Claus, this holy Benefactor, this joy-awakening Visitor? St. Peter denominates Him a "Prince and a Saviour."

The human race is in no condition to get along without a redeemer. Some of the gross sins of former ages are no longer conspicuous, but we may well doubt whether we are absolutely purer or really nobler. Social life is more refined, and so are the transgressions with which it is chargeable. We believe that the world is growing better, but it is not so much better that we can dispense with the Christmas story of a Redeemer from sin and misery. Many are like the man, who had become a slave to vice and was urged to reform. He replied: "I cannot. I try but down, down, down I go! It's no use. I am lost. I have no power of will." True! And there was a man who had the same idea about himself. But he found a source of strength in Jesus Christ. And Paul said: "I thank God through Jesus Christ" this bondage can be broken. The Christian religion does not uncover sins merely to show them up; but the better to apply the cure. Hence Christianity is the religion of expectation and hope. The golden Christmas is in the future. Slowly it draws nearer. Yet it has dawned. No man if he has the power allows himself to be defeated in his set purpose. And the decree has gone forth that the kingdoms of this world are to be Christ's. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it. So to speak Jesus Christ has set His heart on redeeming the human race. God has exalted Him for this very purpose, to be a Prince and a Saviour.

But human nature requires more than redemption, it must be ruled. And over His priestly garments, this Jesus Christ wears a kingly robe. The hand that was nailed to the cross wields the sceptre of the universe. And thus we hail the babe of Bethlehem as monarch of the world. "The government is upon His shoulders. He will order and establish it with judgment and justice." When men believe that God rules they can afford to have a conscience. A conscience would be a torment, if it were not sustained by the assurance that the Supreme is on the side of the right. Conscience urges us into lines of duty, which become paths of peril. Now if we could not believe in divine aid and protection, conscience would be a hard taskmaster. We become timid and time-serving, just to the extent that our

faith in Jesus Christ as a ruler becomes weak. "He who fears God fears nothing else," said Edmund Burke. "Courage is that heroic spirit inspired by the conviction, that our cause being just, God will protect us in its prosecution," said Addison.

Our beloved country has been saved from an awful catastrophe. And this makes our Christmas all the more gladsome. But it is not enough to escape shipwreck, we need to sail into a haven. We have been rescued, we now ought to be ruled. The last election was really on the question, how many discontented people are in our land, and how would they remove evils real or imaginary? We are startled at their number, and at the wildness of their ideas. They belong to those of whom it is written, when Jesus "saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed, and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd." To them he said: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We must show them Jesus, so that they will say, we will have this man to rule over us. But evangelistic services and Christmas gifts will not suffice for this end. All those who manage larger or smaller undertakings must exhibit the mind of Jesus, when He gave the rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." And thus all classes in our country should accept Jesus Christ as our Cæsar.

The same want remains over from Christmas to Christmas. A great multitude is found with only five loaves and a few fishes. But we can multiply these loaves and fishes. So can we dispense good-will toward men. We can ourselves become heavenly guests to make a merry Christmas. A prominent religious journal a few years ago devoted its Christmas number to the subject of philanthropy. The Christmas joy should extend farther and farther, and indeed, sanctify the entire year. For a bruised, torn, toiling humanity sighs for the protection and relief, which the good-will of Christianity should bestow on them. And that good will is the ensign of the heavenly Guest at the door.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We are often where the Ephesians were when they said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." What came to them and saved them was the Holy Ghost. What must come to us and save us is the same Holy Spirit. There they were holding certain truths about God and Jesus, holding them dearly and coldly, with no life and no spirit in their faith. God the Holy Spirit came into them, and then their old belief opened into a different belief; then they really believed. Can any day in man's life compare with that day? If it were to break forth into flames of fire and tremble with sudden and mysterious wind, would it seem strange to him—the day when he first knew how near God was, and how true truth was, and how deep Christ was? Have we known that day?

The Holy Spirit not only gives clearness to truth, but gives delight and enthusiastic impulse to duty. The work of the Spirit was to make Jesus vividly real to man. What He did for any poor Ephesian man or woman who was toiling away in obedience to the law of Christianity was to make Christ real to the toiling soul behind and in the law. I find a Christian who has really received the Holy Ghost, and what is it that strikes and delights me in him? It is the intense and intimate reality of Christ. Christ is evidently to him the dearest person in the universe. He talks to Christ. He dreads to offend Christ. He delights to please Christ. His whole life is light and elastic, with buoyant desire of doing everything for Jesus, just as Jesus would wish it done. Duty has been transfigured. The weariness, the drudgery, the whole task nature have been taken away. Love has poured like a new lifeblood along the dry veins, and the soul that used to toil and groan and struggle goes now singing along its way, "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We do not sing enough, either in our homes or in the house of God. The tongue that is singing will not be scolding, or slandering, or complaining or uttering nonsense. And in the house of God it is sheer robbery to seal the mouths of Christ's redeemed followers and to relegate the sacred joy of praise to the voices of half a dozen hired performers. Choirs have their use; it is their abuse that works spiritual mischief.