

Buds and Blossoms

AND

Friendly Greetings.

"Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the world with fruit."

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Christmas and Friendly Greeting.



CHRISTMAS comes but once a year. This is an old adage, often repeated at the festive board by those who neither keep feast nor fast in sacred memory of the King whose name is so slightly made a plea for their unhallowed rejoicing. Whilst we have no fellowship with much of the so-called religious observance of these times and seasons, yet Christmas does seem to possess, in the very music of the word, a time for hallowed joy. If the chronicles of time do not accord just when Christ was born, we enter not into their disputes, or champion in opposition claims of the old and new Christmas day; but rather rejoice in the granted certified fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that the angels did sing and rejoice over the plains where shepherds watched their flocks. They sang because in the city of David was born the child, long promised, the wonderful Prince of Peace. The chorus of their song still echoes through the ages, 'glory to God in the highest,' 'on earth peace,' 'good will to men.' They left no ground for ignorance as to the cause of their song, or the meaning of their joy. For unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Of Christ's grand and gracious life and of the fact of life on earth Theodore Parker wrote:—"Shall we measure Jesus by the shadow He has cast into the world—no, by the light He has shed upon it. Shall we be told such a man never lived?—the whole story is a lie! Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived; but who did their works, and thought their thought? it takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus."

To some Christ's Cross and Calvary are a stumbling block and shame, the shadow thereof hides the glory of the King who died thereon. They despise a Saviour who could not save himself, and will not have such to be their deliverer. Alas, they know not the reason of his inability, the cause, why, he spared not himself. But to many now among the angels, the joy of Christmas-tide is engulfed in the more hallowed, sacred memories of Gethsemane and Golgotha. It was in the shadow of the cross they learned not only the truth which the Centurion uttered, this is the Son of God, but also the meaning of the gracious words 'he gave himself a ransom,' 'by His stripes we are healed.' So that saints below, with saints to glory gone, can now in concert sing; "It is done, the great transaction is done, peace on earth, good will to men. Glory to God in the highest, unto Him who hath loved us and

washed us from our sins in His own blood. We do well when we keep the feast at Xmas-tide to consider Him who said, the poor ye have with you always, and in doing, do heartily as unto the Lord.

"O brother man! fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other—
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

"Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was 'doing good,'
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude."

To spend our time in the folly of the world is like the crackling of thorns under the pot. Such laughter and pleasure, is energy quickly spent, and to no profit withal. Let us when we make a feast remember the guests Christ would have us invite, and whose entertainment hath hope and promise of eternal reward. For such were his guests, and all Lazarus-like beggars will find that God's estimate of worth differs from the carnal standard. With Him standards differ, and many of the last stand first, and the first last. Some who would thrust themselves in shall be bound hand and foot, because they rejected the covering of righteousness, without which none can sit at the King's table. Want, rags, sores, and death of starvation are no hindrances to prominence in the hereafter and heaven prepared for those who love Jesus and keep his commandments. The come and go of Christmas-tide should teach us that:

"Our life is over on the wing;
And death is ever nigh;
The moment when our lives begin
We all begin to die."

The day of one's birth and death are closely joined. The quick repetition of Christmas greetings should call for serious considerations.

The rolling seasons seem to gather increasing speed with our passing years, and Christmas comes apace, compared with the wearing expectancy of our childhood days. Would not our joy be less boisterous and more hallowed if we considered aright the flight of time, and its importance in the light of eternity. Sorrowless riches would be more the goal of our ambition. For us to live would be Christ:

"The voice of God are on me;
And I may not stop to play with shadows, or pluck earthly flowers,
Till I my work have done, and rendered up account.....
I only pray, God make me holy, and my spirit nerve for the stern hour of strife."

One by one the moments pass, some are coming, whilst others are quickly going, all are to us tokens of Divine love, opportunities to be seized and utilized. Work whilst it is called to-day. To-morrow will bring fresh supplies of grace for the trials and duties in life's conflict.