

SUNSHINE

PUBLISHED BY THE
SUN LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY OF CANADA
AT HEAD OFFICE, MONTREAL.

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The Christmas Spirit.

MORE than nineteen centuries have intervened since the sleeping hills of Bethlehem awoke to the strains of the celestial chorus, "and on earth Peace, Goodwill to men." For nineteen hundred Yuletides the Christian world has commemorated in gift and in song the Advent of the Prince of Peace, until with the passing of the years the principles of His gospel have become embodied in the spirit of Christmas. For it is a spirit of peace, joy, love and forbearance.

Of all the days of the calendar year, Christmas is the day universally set apart for grateful veneration of the Deity, and from worship of the Supreme Being flow charity, mercy and goodwill to man. It is the day when hearts are freely opened in helpfulness and in joyous benevolence.

But through the anthems of Christmas, 1914, there will run a serious note. For War, red-handed and ruthless, stalks through half a stricken world, and hard upon his trail follow Death, Famine and Devastation. For the moment, the peace-song of the angels chanted from the star-studded skies of Judæa is lost in the rattle of musketry and the crash of cannon on the battlefields of unhappy Europe.

As we gather about the festive Christmas board, let us not forget the millions of our fellowmen who, far from home and loved ones, are hourly facing death by bullet, shell and bayonet. Christmas Eve will find vacant chairs by many a fireside. Christmas Morning will dawn comfortless for many a mother, many a wife and many a sister. And in all too many cases to deathless grief or sickening suspense will be added the burden of poverty. Millions of little children in Europe, and even in the United States and in Canada, will spend a stockingless Christmas.

Never was there greater opportunity for the exercise of the Christmas spirit of sympathy and sacrifice. The Star of Bethlehem led the gift-laden Men of the East to the feet of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. May it not guide each of us to at least one poor home to bear comfort and cheer to the unfortunate?

Above all, let us not fail in our full duty to our immediate family circles, for Death lurks elsewhere than upon the battlefield. Let us see to it that, should our chairs be vacant next Christmas, full and sure provision shall have been made for those dependent on us.