

Canadian Churchman

Vol. 44

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13th, 1917.

No. 50.

The Christian Year

The Fourth Sunday in Advent, Dec. 23, 1917.

REJOICE.

The keynote of joy is struck in the Epistle on the Sunday before Christmas—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." Although Advent is not over, the gladness of Christmas is already upon us. It is indeed a true Christmas rejoicing that St. Paul is thinking of in that portion of his Epistle which the Church asks us to think of as we are preparing for Christmas.

There is a great deal of natural joy in the world; wherever there is youth, and love, and hope, there is joy. But the true joy of Christmas is not of the natural order. "Rejoice," says St. Paul on this Sunday of special preparation for our great Christian Day of rejoicing, but "rejoice," not in the world which comes to nought, neither in the things of man which are as unstable as water, but "rejoice in the Lord." Yes, it is God Who is the source of our joy, even the God Who as at this time came down to us to live our life and share our joys and sorrows.

But St. Paul says more than that, not only "rejoice in the Lord," but "rejoice in the Lord always." This is a specially seasonable lesson for us in these days. The true rejoicing of Christmas time is not only different from natural rejoicing in that its source and object are entirely different, but because it endures through all things. It is easy enough to rejoice sometimes, but we are to rejoice, according to St. Paul, *always*. This Christmas time finds thousands of our people in great distress. The shadow of sorrow is upon the whole land. It is no part of the Christian profession to minimize sorrow, or to refuse to face the facts of life; rather we are to face them, understanding fully their reality and greatness, but we are to face them unafraid. "Rejoice in the Lord always." It is this quality of joy in the little Christian Church which surprised the Pagan world of old. They could not understand a people who in the face of bitter persecution and the loss of everything that was the natural cause of rejoicing, nevertheless maintained their joyful spirit. It has been said that it was the joy of the early Christians in the midst of outward distress, that more than anything else about them, convinced men that there was something in the Christian religion of which the world knew nothing.

St. Paul in the closing words of the Epistle gives us a clue to this calm and joyful spirit which ought to characterize those who name the Name of Christ. "Be careful for nothing," that is, "in nothing be anxious." How can we avoid this in the midst of this anxious world? He tells us, "but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Now, what is the result of such praying? God sends a sentinel who stands at the door of heart and mind and, when anxious thoughts seek entrance, he turns them back. The name of this sentinel is "the Peace of God." For what does St. Paul say is the result of such praying? "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Editorial

CHRISTMAS.

Once more we wish our readers a very Happy Christmas. To some, such a wish at such a time may sound somewhat inconsistent, but even in the midst of war with its train of sorrow and suffering, there is such a thing as happiness. We can at least feel happy in the consciousness of duty done and happy in the faith that He whose birthday we commemorate can bring good out of evil, peace and harmony out of discord and joy out of sorrow. And it is particularly necessary in this time of carnage and strife, when men's lower passions are so prone to get the upperhand, that the Christmas message should be emphasized. The story of the Christ-Child has lost none of its power. The collecting of taxes, the journey to Bethlehem, the crowded inn, the manger, the swaddling clothes, the shepherds, and the heavenly host are all pictured in direct and simple language. The most marvellous event in the world's history is ushered in, in the humblest possible manner in a small Eastern village, and yet there is no story told by human lips to man or child, among all races and in all tongues, that calls forth the same response. The whole of that wonderful series of books that we call the Bible have that life as their central theme, and to that figure the world of sorrowing, struggling humanity looks as its one sure and certain hope. Very man of very man, and very God of very God, He combines with the physical frailties and needs of man the sinlessness and love and power of God. The existence of a war such as the present, reveals what humanity led astray can be guilty of, and it likewise reveals what humanity in its effort to be loyal to the teaching and example of Christ is willing to suffer. May God lead us through war to a clearer conception of the message of Christ for the world, and to a greater determination to follow Him whithersoever He leads.

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these . . . ye did it unto me." Did you ever think of giving a Christmas present to Jesus? And yet there should not seem to be anything strange or unusual or irreverent about such a question. Even a cup of cold water in His name will bring its reward. We should not, of course, do such deeds for the purpose of winning rewards, else we shall defeat our own ends. There is one reason and one only that is sufficient, namely, love. We love Him and that love compels us to do kind acts for others and these in turn bring blessings upon us. In our giving, therefore, when it springs from love for the Saviour, in giving to others we are in reality giving to Him.

We have no desire to say anything that would disparage giving simple Christmas presents to children. We have no hesitation, however, in saying that the habit of giving expensive presents to adults, other than soldiers, sick persons and aged people, should be dispensed with during the war. Even in times of peace it is doubtful if such a habit can be justified, and we feel certain that the money could be spent to much greater advantage among the sick and needy.

Speaking recently with a man about Christmas we were somewhat surprised to hear him say that it was a dull day for him. We thought for a moment and then suggested to him that this was probably due to the fact that he had no home, and he acknowledged that this was the reason. Christmas and home and family are words that go together. The family gathering, the Christmas dinner where the members of the family gather from far and near, are unique in Christian lands and are peculiar to this season of the year. The man referred to above is one of a large class whose only home life is that found in a boarding house. And the older they are the more they feel the loneliness of such a Christmas. However humble the home, and however simple the gifts, there is a place there for the Christmas spirit.

The terrible calamity at Halifax has cast a gloom over the whole of Canada and has called forth deep and practical sympathy on all sides. It will be a sad Christmas for many a homeless one in that shattered city and the utmost that one can do to restore the desolate and ruined homes and to care for the afflicted is little compared with the suffering and sorrow that have without a moment's warning fallen upon them. The origin of it all will not be known for some time and it is premature to charge anyone with the blame. The important thing to do now is send help to those who have been spared. As yet few details have come to hand regarding the loss suffered by the Church. St. Mark's Church has been destroyed as well as the rectory. The rector, the Rev. N. Lemoine, is living in the cellar of the Sunday School. It is stated that half the members of his parish have perished, all his vestry men and all but two of his choir. Of the other Churches in and near the ruined district, St. Matthias, Trinity, St. George and St. Paul, no details have been received. The calamity is beyond description and the quicker relief is sent the better.

The death of the late Mr. Creighton made a break in the list of those who had kindly consented to act as judges in our essay competition. We are very pleased to be able to announce that the Right Rev. W. D. Reeve, Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto, has kindly agreed to fill the vacancy. It was, moreover, decided at the last meeting of our Executive to extend the time for the close of the competition to the end of January, owing to the fact that the Advent, Christmas and New Year seasons are particularly heavy ones for the clergy and might prevent some from taking part.

As we go to press, we learn that Jerusalem has been taken by the British forces. This victory is particularly gratifying at this season of the year. The city over which our Saviour wept has passed through many vicissitudes, but it has never fallen into the hands of better friends than the present conquerors.

It is through the kindness of the Missionary Education Movement that we have been able to secure the use of the picture that appears on the front cover of this issue. Copies of this in colours, or sepia, in sheet form or on post cards can be obtained from the M.S.C.C. offices, Toronto.