



The Christmas of Great Giving—By Peter McArthur.

The greatest Christmas Canada has ever known!

Two years ago, when writing of the Christmas spirit on this page, I apologized for dealing with such a subject. This year I rejoice to find that the Christmas spirit is stronger than ever before. The war, with its accumulated horrors and brutal selfishness, has strengthened, rather than destroyed our spirit of generosity and kindness. This year our Christmas giving is more lavish and more thoughtful than ever before. For months kindly hearts have been planning and busy hands devising such Christmas gifts as would not have been thought of in times of peace. And it is all because our hearts go out to the heroes who are offering their lives on the altar of humanity.

It is safe to say that in every Canadian community that has contributed its sons to the Great Cause, the people have united as never before in the work of Christmas giving. Races, creeds, parties and all causes of difference have been forgotten in this spontaneous outburst of the Christmas spirit. The movement to remember our absent boys at this season was not organized, and yet it has been nation-wide in its manifestation. Every village, town, city and community has collected funds to send boxes to the boys at the front and on their way to the front. For weeks past every steamship crossing the ocean has been carrying its freightage of good-will, and it is doubtful if any have been overlooked. If any have been overlooked it has not been because of lack of thoughtfulness on the part of those at home. Though the Christmas boxes were addressed to individuals our good-will was to all.

But Christmas giving is not and should not be confined wholly to the men at the front. Those who were dependent on the absent soldiers are being remembered with thoughtful generosity.

In past years the Christmas season was something of a nuisance to the average man and woman. The custom of giving Christmas presents had developed almost into a bad habit. Everybody had to be remembered with some trifle, and commerce, every ready to take advantage of a new tendency, crowded the stores at Christmas time with gaudy trash that had no value beyond catching the eye for a moment. Every year millions of dollars were wasted on Christmas presents that should never have been given. Christmas giving had become a senseless fashion instead of a true expression of kindness, and just because they wished to keep up with the fashion people who could not afford the expense gave many presents to people who did not need the gifts. It is good to see the Christmas spirit

Freedom.

When satiate kings were emulous of Death
And spread a banquet, heaped with carrion prey,
Forth from the deep there came a mighty breath
That swept the shrouding veils of Time away;
And lo! beyond the battle-smoke I saw
The world to be, for which our heroes die—
A new-born world, where brother love is law.
And thrones, blood-boltered—in strewn fragments lie.
I saw and trembled for the way is hard
That wins through strife to that victorious goal,
But He who leads marks every broken shard
And yields His strength to man's aspiring soul.
Fight on! Hope on! Nor deem His light withdrawn;
This is the night that ushers Freedom's dawn.

expressing itself in a different way, and one may be forgiven for hoping that the old-time Christmas, with its insensate extravagance and foolish rivalries, may never come back.

There is another phase of this wonderful Christmas that I hope will be as widespread as the movement to give presents to the soldiers. I have been told by people who are arranging for public Christmas trees that this year they are going to do something new.

Instead of having trees from which everyone will get presents they are arranging to have trees on which both children and grown-ups will put presents and contributions for the Belgian, Red Cross, Patriotic and other deserving funds, as well as for those among us who are in need. The novelty of this plan and the excellent purpose inspiring it should make it appeal to generous and right-minded people in every part of the Dominion. All things indicate that the Christmas of 1916 may go down into history as the Christmas of Great Giving.

Though the Christmas spirit has made so great an advance among individuals, the nations seem to be as far from it as ever. They have forgotten that there is such a text as "On Earth Peace, Good-will to Men." Their battles are daily becoming more bloody and cruel, and no one can foresee the end. Surely they will learn from this awful struggle that only by establishing "Peace on Earth, Good-will to Men" will it be possible for humanity to exist. If they learn this lesson the suffering of the present may prove to be the greatest safe-guard of the future. When peace is finally established it will be valued as never before and good-will to men will become a reality, for only through good-will can peace be made to endure. Possibly our Christmas of Great Giving may go down into history as the last War-time Christmas. Let us hope so.

But at this Christmas season we cannot forget that many whom we remembered last Christmas,

"The loveliest and the best
That from his vintage rolling Time has prest
Have drunk their cup a round or two before
And one by one crept silently to rest."

For them we can do nothing, and for those who mourn we can do little. But we can all bow our heads in thankfulness that the spirit of heroic sacrifice is not dead. While we take advantage of this Christmas season to draw more closely to one another and to be kinder to the living, we cannot help being sobered and saddened by remembrance of the many distant Canadian graves,

"Where glory guards with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead."