

THE ENDEAVOR HERALD

FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Vol. XI]

Toronto, December, 1899

[No. 11

O Little Town of Bethlehem.

O LITTLE town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O Morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His Heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels,
The great, glad tidings tell—
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel! — *Phillips Brooks.*

“On Earth Peace.”

NEARLY nineteen centuries have passed since the angels sang their song of peace and good-will over the cradle of the Christ-child. Through all these years the faithful have prayed and striven for the growth of the Christmas spirit; and yet, in the closing days of this latest century, how far off seems the angelic prophecy from its fulfilment. “On earth peace”—the words appear almost ironical as we look abroad over the world, as we think of the bickerings and strifes among men, as we consider the conflicts and self-seeking of the commercial world, as we see the great nations, armed to the teeth, watching each other for an advantage, as we view the most civilized nations of the earth observing the anniversary of the advent of the Prince of Peace under the shadow of war.

Is the Christmas spirit growing in the world? we ask. As we think of the vast standing armies of Europe, the battle ships and enginery of war, the prevalence of the spirit of militarism, it would seem as if the era of universal peace was as far off as ever. Yet such a conclusion would be wholly erroneous. We need to look at the centuries as a whole; and after doing so we can only have one answer. Notwithstanding all that is unjust and oppressive in our social life, notwithstanding the greed of soulless corporations, notwithstanding the gigantic evils that foster crime and grind the faces of the poor, notwithstanding the wars and rumors of war, the Christmas spirit was never more dominant in the affairs of men and nations than in the twilight of this nineteenth century. There never was an age in which so many were seeking to live out the Christ life. Slavery has been abolished, children are cared for, women are emancipated, the poor and the infirm are provided for. Even war has lost many of its ancient horrors. When Jesus Christ was born there was not a nation upon the earth that would have apologised for slaughtering wounded combatants and defenceless enemies. Now, if war can ever be said to have its humane aspects, the barbarities of the earlier centuries are abolished.

Yet there are present conditions that cannot but be alarming and disheartening to all who long for the coming of the kingdom of peace. The growth of militarism has its ebbs and flows, but not for years has it been greater among English-speaking peoples than now. Still through all the tumults of war and storms of passion, the cause of God goes on. Slowly it seems to us sometimes, but certainly, the Christmas spirit is filling the world.

“I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.

But in despair I bowed my head.
‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said,
‘For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.’

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
‘God is not dead, nor doth He sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.’”