

POOR COPY

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Christmas Edition



Christmas

THE season has arrived, when once again we have, come, in the wisdom of Providence, to the celebration of a Christmas which will seem to many to be the greatest anomaly, the cruellest irony of the age, when, as we sing of "Peace on Earth, good will to men," the familiar Christmas picture is veiled in the smoke of battle, the Christmas bells are drowned in the crash and thunder of the guns, and the snow is reddened with the blood of the slain. The world once more celebrates the birth of Him whose name has come down through the ages as the symbol of eternal peace, in a welter of misery, destruction, hate and death.

The end of the year finds scarcely one of us who is not the poorer for the loss of some one near and dear; to many, a day which is past has brought the irreparable loss of some one life more precious than all else beside, and to all of us the time which stretches ahead is dark with anxiety for the fate of those in the midst of the maelstrom, standing in the very shadow of death. So that among the blood and carnage and confusion the image of the Babe of Bethlehem may seem to have been dimmed, the spirit of His work to have grown very far away. More particularly must it seem so to those upon whom the mailed hand of war has fallen the most heavily.

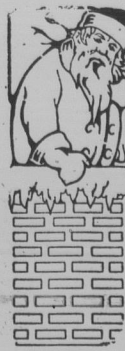
Yet there is no disagreement, rather there is there an essential accord between the spirit which made so gloriously vivid the work of the Great Peacemaker and that far other work or war on which we are straining every nerve and fibre of our being today. We know that the spirit of the Peacemaker could flame into a burning indignation which found its vent in swift action in defence of the weak and the oppressed. We know that the spirit found a deep and true fulfilment in a sublime crusade, against organized tyranny and aggression, and that though the Divine Crusader suffered all that armed wrong could inflict upon Him, yet part of the legacy He left mankind is the impulse to champion the oppressed and to give all for the right as God gives us to see the right.

And surely never in the history of humanity upon the earth has a fight been waged more in accord with this belief and this teaching than this fight in which we are today engaged in which so many of ours have offered their last and most glorious sacrifices. They have fought for all that is worth living for—and dying for as well.

Three years and a half ago a choice lay open before us. Had we chosen one course there probably would have been no war for us, and precious treasure and infinitely more precious lives would have been spared. We could have had peace, but a peace more deadly than any war. We chose the other

path, we chose to maintain the sacred principles which is of the very essence of Christianity, which inspires the strong to hazard their strength in defence of the weak; we chose the awful hazard of a world war to keep alive the flame of liberty for which the Founder of our faith gave up His own. It has cost us much and it will cost us more, but is there one of us who would have it otherwise.

Though the end is not yet in sight and we may be called on for yet greater sacrifices, we know that nothing save the final triumph of our cause will be worthy of those who have so joyously laid down their lives for us. Being dead, they yet triumph, for "they never fall who die in a great cause." It is for those of us who remain, the more particularly at this time, to keep alive the Christ-spirit here as they are doing yonder in the trenches, not swerved aside by good or ill report, not disheartened—and this is infinitely harder—by blows which seem impossible to bear, never losing sight of the goal before us, never confused nor discouraged by what seem contradictions. And if we do this there can only be one end to the trial by fire through which we are passing—the coming of what the whole world longs and prays for, a final, a holy and a lasting peace.



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