

Once a Year.

Christmas comes but once a year.
Wafting memories holy.
Of the blessed One who here
Walked so meek and lowly;
Shepherds watching on the plain,
Angels' wondrous story,
Silver moon and starry train,
Hail the King of Glory!

Christmas comes but once a year.
Give it songs for greeting;
Let your hearts be full of cheer,
Smiles adorn the meeting;
Wreath the holly, twine the flowers,
Let the hearth be glowing,
Banish all the sadder hours
That your hearts are knowing.

The Joy of Christmas Day.

"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."—Isa. ix. 6.

With what awe and wonder, with what rapture and strange delight, must the chant of the heavenly host have burst upon the ears of the shepherds of Bethlehem! They knew its meaning. They could understand the "glory," and the "peace," and the "good-will." For the angel of the Lord had but just ended his message of "good tidings of great joy,"—had just told them the blessed news,—"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." It was *this* that awaked the song of the Cherubim. It was *this* brought down the strains of heaven to thrill through human ears. It was *this* that filled all heaven with joy. It was for *this* the angelic host gave "glory to God in the highest." It was through *this* they sang of "peace on earth, and good-will toward men." We read in Job that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

And lo! a new creation now! A new age—a new birth—for the world; the foundation of a new heaven and a new earth! Shall not the morning stars once more sing together? Shall not all the sons of God once more shout for joy? Oh! that our lips were fit to sing with them! Oh! that our hearts were able thus to shout for joy! If it were not for sin, and worldliness, and deadness, and sloth, and ignorance, surely it would be so. But for these, which put their deadening finger, as it were, upon our very heartstrings, how would those heartstrings thrill, and tremble, and ring out with music, to the angels' wondrous message, to echo the exultant chorus of the heavenly host, on every Christmas morning! For what is the event of this glorious day? Is it some new blessing bestowed upon the angels in heaven that prompts their song? Nay, is it not, "for us men and for our salvation" that, as on this morning, the holy Babe lay in the manger at Bethlehem? Yea "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Is it not we who ought

more than all others to rejoice? Is it not *our* welfare,—*our* deliverance,—*our* mercies,—which filled the very heavens with such songs of praise?

We all talk of a happy Christmas. We all think of it and speak of it as a happy time. It is the world's fashion to do so. We wish each other joy at this blessed season. And to many a home it is truly a joyous and happy season, with its glad some gatherings of the scattered family circle, with its bright memories, and its innocent mirth. But is this *all*? Is Christmas a glad and happy season to us in no higher way than this? Oh! if not, then little do we know of true Christmas joy. True Christmas joy must be joy in Christ,—joy in the glorious news which this day tells,—joy in the birth-day of a "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." If *our* joy spring not from this,—if this brightens not its gladness, and brightens not its light,—if, mid all our pleasures, and mid all our mirth, there be no thought of Him who came to shed a glory on all the bright things of this world, and to shine with calm radiance over all its woes,—if, mid all our gatherings and all

and pain and weakness where last year were health and strength; there may be poverty and anxious care where once there was enough and to spare;—still Christmas joy will find room to enter in; and many, who can rejoice in no other way, will this day be able to "rejoice in the Lord." Yea, and may it not be that some, who when in the fullness of health and vigour, knew but little of this holy and happy rejoicing, may through sorrow and affliction have learnt to look for their joy in a surer place, and so may now see, even though it be through clouds and mists, a light shining upon them from blessed Christmastide, which makes them love it better than ever?

All other sources of joy must fail. And when they fail, oh! what a blank is left behind! But true Christmas joy—joy in Christ—can never fail; for it is founded on One who changes not, but who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

All of us should try to make this a truly happy Christmas.

Merry Christmas.

This is our Christmas number. Elsewhere may be found articles appropriate to the day. We wish all of our readers the merriest and happiest Christmas they have ever known. May their highest expectations of the day be more than fulfilled. May the day itself be bright with love and joy.

What a wonderful time Christmas has grown to be. Two hundred years ago in a considerable part of this country the keeping of Christmas was frowned upon as a relic of popery, and men refrained conscientiously from paying it the least attention. Now, how different! Everywhere throughout the land the day is looked forward to and made the greatest in the year. And this is

done, not on the old ground that the day is specially holy. It has simply been made the home day, the day given to childhood and family life. By a sort of universal consent, it has been felt wise and good to connect the coming into the world of the Christ-child with home. The fact is the two are connected, naturally and necessarily and nothing can dis sever them. Home is what it is, and childhood is different from what it used to be, because Christ was born in Bethlehem. It is wise and well that we take the day which the Christian world accepts as the anniversary of the birth of our Lord and give it to home and gratitude and love. Each present we give or receive may thus remind us of that "unspeakable gift" which our Heavenly Father has bestowed upon a lost world.

With these convictions we do not hesitate to congratulate our readers on the return of another holiday season, and to wish them once more A Merry Christmas.

Try this Christmas to do *one* act of kindness.



EARLY CHRISTMAS MORNING.

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!

Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

our friends, one Guest be absent, who cannot dim or sadden any pure and guileless joy,—if we rejoice, as this day's Epistle bids us, but without any thought of rejoicing "in the Lord,"—then alas! ours is not true Christmas rejoicing. We have no right to the joy of this season. We cannot understand it. We have no part nor share in it.

But oh! for those who know the happiness of keeping in a thankful spirit the birth-day of their Saviour,—for those who know what it is to hear with ever new delight the "good tidings of great joy,"—for those, whose happy gatherings, or bright home fire-sides, are warmed not alone with the glow of earthly love,—for those whose hearts are full this day of the secret sense of a great boon, and a mighty mercy, lifting them up to heaven in praise and adoration;—for such how differently comes happy Christmastide! There may be a vacant chair in the dear circle, which tells them they have had to grieve since last they met together; there may be sickness in the once cheerful home,