

## THE PRESENT MONTH.

December is a dark and chilly month in this part of the world; but in every Christian land it is one of warmth and light and joy to the human soul, the inner man, which is not moved in any great degree by external aspects of nature.

“From Greenland's icy mountain  
To India's coral strand,”

the Christian heart is glad in this month of Holy Festivities. The keynote of summons to joyful contemplation is given by the herald of the cross from “the House of God, the gate of Heaven” on Advent Sunday, when we are reminded that the season has again returned in which “Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility.” A period of calm expectation pervades the Christian world in the four weeks of Advent season, and our forefathers were wont to term the fourteen days before Christmas Halcyon Days. On the 21st we commemorate St. Thomas the Apostle, and devoutly rejoice for that we have a risen Lord, who is also our God. Then comes Christmas Day, which every where in Christendom is a gloriously bright spot whereon even the poorest of our race do rest in gladness; childhood is mirthful, and age rejoices with sober delight. The glad morn brings to view, through the Church's appointments and ministrations, the wondrous spectacle of the Heavenly Host rejoicing in the advent of the Son of God to earth, and singing “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth Peace, good will towards men.” Love begets love; and the simplicity of the announcements made at Bethlehem, with the ardent love of God thus shown in the condescending advent of His Blessed Son in such humble form and helpless innocency, moves even the most

obtuse of the children of men. Antagonism is disarmed when we recognize the child of promise as He was seen by wondering angels and shepherds, and as He lay in the bosom of His Virgin Mother. He came among the poor of earth, and the poor, who are the many, are never turned aside from His presence by any expressions or features of His, even though he be the King of kings.

The sound of rejoicing is yet in our ears when the Church introduces us to St. Stephen, who when surrounded by persecutors and expecting death, “saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God;” thus connecting in our minds the Advent with its great result in the exaltation of Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour. St. John the Evangelist is next made to appear, who amid persecutions saw the Eternal Glory in its fulness, of which Stephen had but a glimpse; and then we are called as it were from heaven to earth to witness the sufferings of the Holy Innocents, who glorified God by their death. “Joy is in the dwelling of the righteous” at this Advent season; for the display of Divine Love, as brought to notice in the Church's appointments, enables us to contemplate the humiliation and sufferings of our Lord and His loved ones as necessary things whereby we may be influenced to follow Him and them; so as to receive the everlasting reward, and to have visions of glory while here, as many of the saints have enjoyed in the ages that have passed.

Thus this month and this year come to end, and mingled in the tide of time; but happy we, if in their passing, we reach after the fruits of salvation which hang depending from the Tree of Life, along the spiritual highway by which we travel, utilizing them for the best results. The