

Canadian Churchman

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The Christian Year

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

IN the original of this Collect the address was made directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Revisers of 1661 addressed the prayer to God the Father and pleaded its acceptance "through the satisfaction of Thy Son, our Lord, etc." Our present revision brings the Collect back to nearly its original form by having us address our Lord directly.

This is a prayer to the ascended Glorified Christ—one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. At Christmas time we think of His coming among men. Silently, quietly, "in great humility" God came to the world in the form and fashion of the Babe of Bethlehem. He came close to human life—close in his own Incarnate experience. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." "He learned obedience through the things which he suffered. He was tempted in all points like as we are. He came close to men and women and children with His power to regenerate, heal and bless. We pray to Him who thus came, but who now reigns in the glory of His ascended life with all power and authority to come among us—to make his power to heal and help manifest in our lives. O Lord, raise up Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us."

It is the presence and power of Christ we need and seek now. The din, cruelty and sorrow of the past four years have made us feel the need of God. The problems that lie on the horizon stagger the bravest heart and stoutest mind. To begin the new era we need God's help, just as God's power and presence among men at the Incarnation and Birth of our Lord began the new era for the world.

We urgently call upon Him. Come! is the cry of the Church. Come among us! Close to our lives and interests, and help us! His power and His presence are not willingly withheld. As of old He came to "as many as received Him" so now He awaits our readiness to receive Him. Life is hindered and kept from its true objective by sin. "We are sore let and hindered through our sins and wickedness." This is one fact of life—sin keeps men from gaining the prize of life.

Over against sin and wickedness is the mercy of God revealed in Christ which delivers from sin, and grace which helps men to run the race set before them.

We pray for a speedy and immediate answer. Have we to wait for evolving years to bring us the light and relief we desire? "Before they call, I will answer." Even in the wreck and ruin of the years the Power and Presence of the ascended Lord is with those who devoutly call upon Him. May our penitence and our prayer be such that we may say on Christmas Day out of our own experience, Emanuel! God with us!

Are we so better, then, than they
Who failed the new-born Christ to see?
To them a helpless babe—to us
He shines a Saviour glorious,
Our Lord, our Friend, our All—yet we
Are half asleep this Christmas Day.

—Susan Coolidge.

Editorial

TO all our readers, far and near, young and old, we send hearty Christmas Greetings. For the sake of the children it must be a Merry Christmas, but merriness is not uppermost in our thoughts this Yuletide.

We cannot keep from our minds the thought of homes where the father and mother will sit gazing into the fire with thoughts of long ago. Barely a Christmas ago it seems they listened to the blithesome chatter of the little folk and the merry shouts which made the old house ring. The unfeigned joy in the wonderland of Christmastide was the reward of the unrealized sacrifices that made the day. Through the portals of the glowing embers the mother slips back into the by-gone days and feels again the warm cheek and clinging arms of childhood.

Now all is changed. The boy went to France three years ago and a year later the girl followed as a nurse. He was killed in action last summer.

She is to spend Christmas on duty in an English hospital. He will spend Christmas in the Palace of the King, where every day alike is of perfect service and good will.

"What is peace?" asked the little four year old with wonder in her sad eyes. "Will it bring brother home again?" "No, dear heart, but we shall go to brother some day bye and bye. He is in heaven." As the years went by, she learned that her big brother had given his life to bring back Christmas to the little children once more.

So we will speak softly in homes that have given of their love to bring peace and good will this Christmastide. They have no heart for the dark green fir and flaming red. Their lives are in the past with the "might have been." May the strong tide of mankind's deep joy of peace flow on to the sands where their lives have been cast ashore and lift them and bear them on the ocean fulness of the new day when the Prince of Peace shall enter into His Kingdom in the hearts of men.

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NOEL! NOEL! NOEL! NOEL!

G. C. MARY WHITE

OUR Christmas has returned to us! Not perhaps the Christmas of those latter years of deadened sensibilities that men called peace, when there was merry-making that was not gay and gift-giving that carried little of the spirit of love; when we had almost lost sight of the real reason why we brought "the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together to beautify the place of the sanctuary," and cared little for that which lay behind the universal salutation, "A Merry Christmas to you."

This Christmas which has come upon us with such a glad surprise, because, through the long Advent season of the war we have forgotten Bethlehem and remembered only Calvary, has come with all the reality of those dear days of childhood, when, the four long weeks of Advent past, we searched the starry stillness of the Holy Night, hoping to see the shining of the glory of the Lord and strained our ears to catch in the silver silence, the choring of the angels as they sang the Heavenly Birth.

Once again our hearts and minds are filled with the old childish mingling of the seen and the unseen, and as we bind the cedar and the hemlock boughs together into wreathing for the pillars of the House of God, our thoughts wander from past memories to the living present, from earth to Paradise and back to earth again and neither seems distant from the other any more.

At one moment we are in a group of laughing lads who have dragged in the snow-covered branches from the out-of-doors, and are helping us with the cutting, but as we smile down at them the scene fades, then reappears, only now they are men with boyish faces, and they are smiling down at us, and the little crosses on the hemlock

boughs have become palms of victory in their hands.

Again memory sends us back across the years to an old school room and our ears are filled with the music of "Good King Wenceslaus," pouring from the throats of choristers pushing closer, closer to the old piano whose wiry notes are lost as the boy voices rise and fall in glorious melody. On and on the carol goes with its story of Christmas charity till one full alto takes up the strain alone and the picture is blotted out by blinding tears as we hear again the well-known words:

"Mark My footsteps well My page,
Tread thou in them boldly."

But the tears also pass, for suddenly the doors of Paradise burst open, flung wide by eager hands, and the voice of the boy who himself trod all the way in the footsteps of the King, leads the eager chorus which breaks in, unafraid, upon the Angels' song and to the "Glory to God in the Highest" of the seraphic host they cry, responsive, looking tenderly out over the world they loved and left so soon

"Peace to the earth: good-will to men of love."

And not the least beautiful part of this glad Christmastide is the way in which it will be prolonged to us in all its dearest features, in the home coming and the gift-giving. For months the Christmas candles will burn to light our men back from the land of the shadow of death. For months we shall be making Christmas for the saddened mothers and for the poor and hungry little ones across the sea, for this Christmas which has again brought to us the certainty that "Christ is born of Mary free," brings also the message:

Wherefore Christian men be sure,
Health and wealth possessing,
He who now doth bless the poor
Shall himself find blessing."