

EDITORIAL

A Christmas Message

THE BELLS

THE Christmas bells are pealing once again, but their music abounds in minor effects and in rebellious discords. There is no longer the hearty ringing which suggests careless joy and the laughter of children, but a ceaseless tolling which speaks of tears and heart-aches, of empty chairs and lonely hearths. Yet to him who listens with the heart rather than the ear, there is something heavenly in the music. There are harmonies of peace that nothing but the hardships and terrors of war could have produced; there are suggestions of joy and goodwill that could have been prompted only by co-operation and sacrifice.

LONELY BUT COMFORTED

IN one of the rural communities of Manitoba there may be found to-night an elderly pair. They are alone in the body, but in soul they are surrounded by their family of boys — their boys, but now their Country's and their King's. Two years ago that home was gay with laughter and rich in the joy of exuberant young life. Now the rooms are silent and a gloomy sadness seems to have settled over all. Yet look closer and you may read in the two lovely faces something of pride and joy and devotion that was never known before. You may read that these two are glorying that they have been privileged to give to their Country and their God four sons who will not have lived in vain. They realize that the joy they took out of their four sturdy baby lads may have been more or less a selfish joy; that their pride in their four young stalwarts may have been, perhaps, a selfish pride; but now they know that there is nothing selfish in the joy and pride and devotion which fill their hearts when they learn that in the trenches four young men — their very own — are sacrificing health and life that right may be upheld and tyranny overthrown. The very best wish of The Western Home Monthly is that all parents who have given their sons in this glorious cause may know this higher joy.

A man may amass wealth, may build up a great business, may leave a fortune to his children, and because of this may enjoy satisfaction and distend with pride. By his country and his God he will be measured by what he has given through himself and his children to forward the cause of truth and freedom. The men and women who can hold up their heads to-day, who can smile through their tears, are those who have some one to love in the fields of Belgium or on the plains of France.

BEREFT BUT CONSOLED

WHO are these with eyes so lonely and with faces so unutterably sad. What do they hear in this chiming of the Christmas bells? It is a mother

whose son is lying in a soldier's grave; it is a wife whose life-companion lies by his side. Yet such is woman's devotion at this hour that the air is charged for these two with celestial harmonies. They who have come through death have reached the higher life, and they alone of all the human throng can understand the shepherds' song; they alone get comfort from the words: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The wish of the Monthly is that all who have made the great sacrifice may know something of the great joy and experience fully of the great consolation!

READY, AYE READY

THEY are crowded together in the barracks. They are inured to hardship and strain. They walk and drill and walk again. They are eager for active duty, but must hold themselves in patience, for their hour has not yet come. This daily round of duty is monotonous. It is hard for the body; it is harder for the mind. But the boys in khaki will see it through. They know what the outcome of this war means for their country, the Empire and the race. And so they build themselves strong in resolution and fit themselves in every way for the life that is ahead. Gradually they begin to get the real message of the bells. The deep cadences were always there, but they were never heard by these men until now. It is a strange thing this about the Christmas chimes, that listeners always determine the music that will be heard. A young man, gay and debonair a year ago, heard nothing then but empty tinkling; the earnest patriotic soul of to-day hears the bugle call to higher service, the trumpet call to victories over self and sin and wrong. The Monthly can wish for every young man who has enlisted nothing better than this: that he may realize to the full the opportunity that awaits him; that he may attain to true manhood through the highest sacrifice; that the song of peace may ever sing in his own soul, and that he may have a foretaste of the peace which the world is to enjoy through the sacrifice of many.

HEROES ALL

COLD and cheerless it is in the trenches. We who are not there cannot picture the dangers nor imagine the horrors. Surely, however, we can realize that those who are holding an enemy at bay, now gaining a trench, now winning a stronghold, now pressing forward to occupy new ground, now retiring to accept the faithful ministrations of the Red Cross workers; surely we can realize that these heroes have reached through their zeal and their devotion a height to which we cannot hope to attain. It is idle to send these men a greeting. It is more meet that we should sit by and worship. Yet there are lonely hearts on the firing

line, and in the whitewashed halls there is great suffering, and if it would do any good to these our soldiers to know that our hearts are with them every hour and every minute then let them know it. The Monthly can send no wish but this: that all may live up to the standard of bravery, kindness and purity already established; that all may know the highest peace — the peace during commotion — the highest joy — the joy of service — the highest goodwill — kindness to one's enemies; and that all may return home unscathed, with blushing honors thick upon them, to lead here as they have led there, honored by their fellows and favored by their God.

MINISTERING ANGELS

A BAND of women workers — knitting and sewing — putting thought and heart and good wishes into all they so cheerfully perform — what can we wish for them but that their kindness may return upon themselves? May they have the reward promised to those who give a cup of cold water in the name of the Master! No higher commendation was ever accorded any one than that contained in these simple words: "She hath done what she could." There are some all through this land of whom it would be no extravagance to say this much. May all such have a new vision this Christmas Day. May their hearts give a deeper meaning to the music of the Bells! May they hear the songs and melodies that are unknown to the selfish and the vain! And above all may they soon experience the joys of reunion — the battle ended, peace for a thousand years.

THEY ALSO SERVE

TO have the will but not the power; to have the courage but not the opportunity — this seems the hardest lot of all. Men beyond the age limit, boys yet in their teens, fathers and helpless little children — all these must stay behind. 'Tis hard to only stand and wait. Workers in factories, toilers in the fields — gladly would many of you join the colors, but the way is not yet open for you. Contain your souls in patience. Those who watch the stores are yielding as noble a service as the men who are bearing arms, provided only that the service is for the common good. This is a time of sacrifice. No sacrifice is too great for such a cause as this. So while our brothers are offering their lives at the front, we who remain behind must lay on the altar our time, our wealth, our all. All is at stake, and all must be risked. Good old Reginald Heber has taught us all the song the bells should ring:

"They climbed the steep ascent to heaven,

Through peril, toil and pain,
God grant to us that grace be given
To follow in their train."