

THE CIVILIAN

VOL. IX.

DECEMBER 22, 1916.

No. 18

A Crimson Christmas

From Riga southward to the Horn, fierce beats the iron hail;
Beneath the Pole Star and the Cross, war's Vampire rides the gale.
Across earth's shaken palisades, the red sirocco blows,
From sand of Suez in the south to Yukon's northern snows.

And who are these who sally forth,—these million doomed to die,
Where, scarred between embattled hordes, the scalped hills bloody lie,
Sons of the mothers of the world, each sworn to overwhelm
Legions of men of many climes, from city, farm and realm.

Sons of the mothers of the Earth, who out of love were born,
Go forth in majesty of health and come back maimed and torn.
Caught in the whirlpool of the war, all raging, battle-swirled,
Rolling and reeling, bloody-foamed, labours the frenzied world.

Who dare cry peace where all is strife; Who bid the conflict cease?
Who dares to kneel beside the crib which thrones the Prince of Peace?
Behold! it is the Christmas time, the feast of Him divine;
How shall we stand with stained hands, and worship at His shrine?

From Verdun's hero-hallowed heights to Belgium's sea-swept dunes,
The land with shell-ripped bosom, lifts His temples, heaped in ruins.
What gory harvests here are reaped, of human flesh and bone,
Christ, in thy Christmas time, forgive! Who shall for these atone?

The Serbian hills lie bleak and bare, their people fled or slain;
And through the Iron Gate the storm sweeps the Wallachian plain;
And twice ten thousand thundering guns hurl forth their screaming shells
Till Europe seems a place accurst with all its flaming hells.

There is no respite on the land,—no safety on the deep,
Where like a school of famished sharks the gaunt subs vigil keep;
While overhead, like vultures huge, the pinioned airships fly,
Wheeling their courses, seeking prey across the glowering sky.

The sky where once His herald glowed, that ushered in His reign,
The earth which hushed to hear of Peace in sweet, seraphic strain,
The water which in olden days, storm-tossed, obeyed His will,
The earth, the waters, and the sky—His—now men mould to kill.