

Editorial Comment

The Meaning of Christmas

The first Christmas Day not only gave a new date to the world's history but a new principle to the world's life. Song of angel, gleam of star, radiant face of the infant Messiah, revealed to men the heart of God. They had seen His lightning and heard His thunder; they had numbered His stars and caught the secret of the mighty law which held them all in its leash; His name was unspeakable, the very thought of Him was terrible.

Suddenly in song and star and divinely-human form a new truth breaks upon the world—"God is love and the heart of divinity is sacrifice." Many a Christmas Day has come and gone since the truth began to go abroad among men; many another will come and go before men understand that God is God not because He has infinite power but because He has infinite love.

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Christmas Giving

Real love always gives. This is its nature. It cannot be restrained. There is a fragrance in the gifts of love far sweeter than in frankincense and myrrh. Let it break forth freely. All possible expressions of it are worship. Gifts to the old, the middle-aged, the young; to the rich and to the poor; to those in sorrow and those in joy—all are needed. Therefore, let us give generously, joyfully. Let us give trinkets and treasures, the useful or the ornamental, the cheap or the costly, the homely or the beautiful. Love's work is harmony. Christmas gifts are a hymn of praise to the Great Giver.

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Giving This Year

Never before in the history of Canada has there been such a feeling of brotherhood as just now. The family consists not of those living under one roof but of those living in one land. "We are brithers a'." Giving to the patriotic fund has become a mania. Let us be thankful that the giving was permitted to be largely voluntary. It is voluntary rather than enforced contribution which enriches the soul and promotes true brotherhood. The voluntary contributions of the day workers in our towns and cities have amounted to five per cent of their earnings, which was often more than fifty per cent of their savings. This is a great sacrifice. Even if it is small in comparison with that of those who have willingly offered their lives. There remains one other little sacrifice. Christmas time is first of all for the children. This year there will be many disappointed unless kind friends come to their assistance. It will be a little thing for some families to lessen their offerings to their own, and to remember the children of the unfortunate. "Brithers a'!"—yes, and not a brother's child forgotten.

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A War Christmas

It seems almost sacrilegious to mention the two words in one breath, and yet we find in our hearts nothing to condemn us, if on the same day that we glory in the success of our soldiers on the fields of France and Poland, we take time to honor that little Bethlehem babe who came to proclaim good-will and peace to all mankind. Even the most serious-minded Christian feels that in this particular war, it is not only right but necessary to take up arms; that the slaughter of men and

nations of men is comparatively insignificant if only justice, truth, right, and peace are guaranteed to the race. In other words, this is a Holy War and only as such can it be justified. Viewed in that light, it may be considered not as in opposition to the angel's message but as its fulfilment.

The first note of that message was "Glory to God in the Highest." How can one better glorify God than by using all his powers to make the good, the true and the merciful prevail. It may be that the triumph of the highest will necessitate the destruction of human life. It has always been so. In a great cause one cannot be too earnest. When Joash shot his arrows and smote the ground thrice, the prophet rebuked him, saying: "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." The great end is not primarily that of saving human life, but that of glorifying God. If we are in this war for any other reason it will be hard to reconcile our action with the doctrines of the Master whose sovereignty we acknowledge.

But it will be urged by some that even defensive warfare is inconsistent with the second note of the angel's song—Peace! Here we must not deceive ourselves by giving a wrong interpretation to a word. Looking at the world as it was six months ago, we know well that there was only seeming peace. It was war potential all the time. And war potential must in the sight of God, who judges motives as well as actions, be just as monstrous as war actual. The only way to enduring peace seems to be through war, and we must feel that we are God's ministers in this matter to put an end for all time to the reign of militarism. We are to bring about a new condition of things under which there will be no need of armaments and conscription. If the world, after the war, is to settle down in its old way of living, in order to prepare for another war—one hundred or a thousand years hence—we are little better off. We must have as our ideal, the deal set forth on that first Christmas night—Peace.

The third note of the midnight song was "Good-will." Then must our attitude all through be one of sorrow for those we have to punish. Indeed there has been not the slightest variation in the sentiment expressed by the press and people of our land. There is nothing but good-will for the German people. There is not a Canadian heart which does not sympathize with the sufferings of the wives and children of the fallen soldiers. There is on the other hand complete detestation of the principle which the ruling class in Germany would make triumphant.

Therefore, whether we think of God's Glory, or Peace, or Good-will among men, we can but feel that the only thing for us to do is in the strength of Him who rules the destinies of mankind to press on to victory—not our victory but His, and for His glory.

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A Christmas Parable

On Christmas Day, many years ago, when there was more forest than corn land on the earth, a woodman was hastening to his home. The trees were bare of leaves, but snow was falling and only one who knew could have found his way in the gloom. This was a poor man with rough hands and coarse, home-spun clothing. Many a sad hour he had spent at his lonely toil in the

woods. But on this particular day there is neither sadness nor look of poverty on his face. The joyful thought is in his heart, "It is a half-holiday, and I am going to spend it eating a Christmas dinner with my wife and little ones."

As he made his way through the blinding snow he heard the moaning of some one in distress. He stopped. He followed the sound, and at the foot of a tree, shivering with cold and hunger, and all white with flakes of snow, he found a strayed child. The sight went to his heart. The innocent grief, the tears, the wet clothes, the pinched face, made the tears come into his own eyes. He thought of his own children sitting beside the warm log fire, and of the joy awaiting them that afternoon. His thoughts went back to the time when he was a child himself, and to the times without number, when like this child, he had lost his way in this very wood. Then he imagined himself, or one of his children, in the place of the child before him. What would his wish be if he, or a child of his, were in this child's place? It was the work of a moment to think all this. In less time than I have taken to tell it, he had lifted the child in his arms and was hastening on as before. And by-and-by he came to the little hut which was his home. The mother and children were peering out through the half-open door for the first sight of him, and waiting to give him a Christmas welcome home. But the child was a surprise. What was this in father's arms, so pinched, so cold, so thinly clad? The story of finding him was told at once. And at once also both mother and children welcomed the little stranger to their home. Very soon the wet clothes had given place to dry, and the warmest corner at the fireside was given up to him.

How happy they all were in that hut that afternoon! Never had Christmas Day been more joyfully spent! The humble cottage seemed to grow larger. The fire burned more brightly than ever they had known. And when they gathered around the table and stood up, after the manner of the wood folk, to sing a Christmas carol by way of grace, it seemed as if every child had learned to sing more sweetly than before. And the poor, pinched, thin-looking stranger sang louder and happier than them all, and with a voice that seemed to belong to heaven, it was so sweet.

Then they sat down to their Christmas dinner. Everything tasted sweet. The black bread seemed not so black as its wont. And in the mouth it tasted like wheaten bread. The children noticed also that the pinched look left the face of the stranger; the very clothes seemed to change and brighten, and when he spoke it was like listening to an angel.

Not on all the earth that day was there a happier Christmas party. And when at last it was over and the children had to go to bed, it some way did not surprise them that the strange child prayed for all in the house who had been so kind to him. Then he kissed them all around.

In the morning he was gone. But the black bread was changed to white bread. The brass money in the mother's pocket was changed to gold. Then the pious hearts in the humble cottage knew that it was the Christ Child Himself who had been their guest; but they did not know, they could not at once understand that these things and the happy memory of his visit were the blessing with which he repaid them for obeying the Golden Rule.