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EDITORIAL

DECEMBER, 1917

Recall The Old Time Christmas Spirit



IN the days, the long past days, when Santa Claus sped of a Christmas Eve, through snowy clouds, over snowy roofs, to bring gifts to snowy little hearts, the tinkling of the bells on his reindeer and the deft swift movements of his Brownies were part and parcel of a merry Christmas. The young folks lay awake full of anticipation and their elders slept in dreams of past realization.

But to-day, we are led to believe that Santa Claus is equipped in a more modern style. His trusty reindeer and sled have been exchanged mayhap for a dirigible or an aeroplane, and the tinkling of the bells has been replaced by the whirr of the machine. Less romantic? Aye, but swifter. Less in keeping with the season? Probably, but certainly more practicable. So at least would think many a modern girl and boy when listening to the happy Christmas legend.

And therein lies the change in the Christmas spirit. Very little of the old romance is left. To a very great number its spiritual significance has become a thing of the past and materialism has taken a strong hold—too strong a hold—upon the hearts and minds of the multitude. There is even an attitude of scorn toward the old legends, the quaint customs and the simplicity of the past. Even the children have taken upon themselves what many have been pleased to call a great modern wisdom.

LONG years ago when a certain group of kings—three in number—travelled far with presents, with offerings of love for a new born King, what did they receive in return? The benediction, the heavenly love of the Infant—surely nothing material at least, nothing tangible. Yet they returned filled with a great joy, that "peace of God that passeth all understanding."

But we!—how far are we removed! What a long way have the nineteen hundred and seventeen years carried us, from the spirit of that first blessed Christmas!

To-day it is a question of giving and taking.

If Mrs. Jones' gift to Mrs. Brown is worth five dollars, then Mrs. Brown worries if her gift to Mrs. Jones may not be valued at five dollars and a half.

And yet how much ranting there is done about the "spirit of giving."

The custom has come to be an obligation in a great many cases, and obligations are seldom agreeable. What a farce, then, is a "Merry" Christmas under these circumstances!

Many of us, this year, will have little to give; some few may have much. If our resources are great, let us give with a free hand

but let the *incentive* be a free heart. If we have little, then, indeed, should the love and goodwill be great to make up the deficit that the most optimistic of us will feel is there.

SCROOGE"—Dickens' characteristic miser—marked Christmas as a forbidding milestone on his road to the grave, a day on which his ire was aroused by the fact that he was a year older.

But Scrooge became transformed.

What a good old world is this, and what room there is in it for transformation!

Many of us have heretofore eaten our Christmas turkey with a grouch—which proved a not altogether palatable relish. The plum pudding may have stuck in our throats, because of our inability to digest the preparations of the days preceding.

Well, it isn't the turkey's fault, nor the pudding's, nor the family's, nor our neighbors'. Neither must the blame be attributed to Christmas. The "blueness," the "general grouch" is but a reflection of our own attitude. It corroborates the old saying, "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone."

But there is no need to weep—there is too much sorrow abroad. On the battlefields our brothers will be making a mighty effort to keep cheerful. They will be expecting our co-operation. They will look to us for a message of hope and inspiration. They will want to think that over here, at least, there will be the same old Christmas spirit, the same wishes of joy and love and happiness.

THERE is no reason why the Christmas spirit should be as materialistic as the age. The beautiful old legends that made the festival so glorious still exist. They lack but the interpretation or, rather, the application. The back-ground, the setting, may not be the same. We have not the old fashioned yule log; modern kitchens may not permit of the huge copper wherein the pudding boiled; and, as we have said, old Santa likely uses an aeroplane instead of reindeer, but the hearts of the many, the good hearts and the glad hearts, must have the same capacity for radiating cheer.

Then let us go back to the old romanticism, for our Christmas spirit. Let us this year forget, if only for one day, the materialism of the age. On this Christmas morn, may there be one grand echo of "Tiny Tim's" Yuletide wish—"God bless us every one."



O Little Town Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven;
No ear may hear His coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him,
The dear Christ enters in.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Decend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in;
Be born in us today.
We hear the heavenly angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel.

—Phillips Brooks.