

# The Christian Messenger.

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## Poetry.

### A Christmas Vision.

BY ROSE TERRY.

Sadly before the window  
The floating snow-flakes fell,  
Along the air all cold and fair,  
And on my heart as well.

The dreary weary Winter,  
Held up his mighty spear,  
My blood ran chill with winter cold  
And slow with winter's fear.

But suddenly a sun-beam  
Across the snow-storm shone,  
And strange to tell, like any spell,  
The snow-flakes all were flown!

They vanished like a vision  
Before the sunny flame,  
And in their place a sudden crowd  
Of smiling angels came.

A million little angels  
With faces dazzling fair,  
And eyes as bright as starry light  
Beneath their shining hair:

And through the moaning tempest  
As suddenly there fell  
A tiny, tinkling, laughing sound,  
Like some sweet silver bell:

Another, and another,  
Till all the frosty sky  
With soft repeat was ringing sweet,  
And words came wandering by.

"We are Love's little angels;  
When earth is bare and brown  
We cover all her wounds and scars  
With mantles soft as down.

"The rock that hid their faces  
In summer, green and deep,  
But frown to-day severe and grey,  
We cover up to sleep.

"The long and lonely meadows  
That lose their blossoms bright,  
And weep for all their loveliness,  
We veil with glittering white:

"The forest boughs that shudder  
All noded, black, and bare,  
We hang with flowers like bridal bowers,  
The blossom-bells of air.

"The dreary and silent solitudes  
We veil with tender grace,  
There is no blight ye do not hide,  
On all the sad earth's face.

"Above the sleeping roses,  
Above the wild-wood flowers,  
We spread our warm and shining robes  
Through all the winter hours.

"We are Love's little angels,  
But mortal eyes are dim;  
Men cannot see how fair we be,  
Nor hear our joyful hymn:

"We are Love's shrouded angels,  
But birds and blossoms know,  
When God's dear love falls from above,  
Though men may call it Snow!"

For the Christian Messenger.  
The Triumph.

'Tis done; and loving hands convey.  
The sacred body to the tomb,  
But angels roll the stone away,  
And heavenly radiance lights the gloom.

Where is the Dead? He is not here,  
But living forms are full in view;  
O trusting hearts, why should ye fear?  
God's greatest deeds are wrought for you.

Now open wide, ye Heavenly Gates,  
A mighty conqueror cometh in:  
For Love hath won; and glory waits  
For Him who vanquished death and sin.

And loving still, He reigneth there,  
The royal Friend of sinful men;  
Let's serve Him, and thus prepare  
To meet Him when He comes again.

When our people are brought to remove  
gin shops and gin cellars for the  
same reason that they would stagnant  
pools or unclean sewers, then there will  
be a chance of ridding our jails and  
almshouses of half their tenants.—N. Y.  
Tribune.

What trees are those which when  
burnt up, are exactly what they were  
before? Ashes.

## Religious.

### Christmas Chimes.

Baptists have no superstitious regard for times and seasons, for fast days or feast days either; and certainly they have no overweening regard for the special sanctity of that creation of ecclesiastics, called Christmas. Many of them, indeed, even dislike the name, because they do not believe in the mass at all, whether it be said, or sung in Latin or in English; not a few of them disapprove of what it is meant to represent, because they find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the anniversary of the Saviour's birth. They are satisfied that the time of the Nativity cannot be ascertained. Fabricius gives a catalogue of one hundred and thirty six learned but different opinions on the subject, and various divines have invented weighty arguments in support of a date in every month of the year. Believing that the so-called "holy" day was arranged as a substitute for a heathen festival, and believing that its observance is grounded in superstition, our denomination has steadfastly refused to countenance its ecclesiastical authority.

Nevertheless, the recognition of our Lord's incarnation, and the purpose for which He came to dwell on earth, with the homage displayed by millions of disciples to His sacred person, naturally overwhelm many abstract objections, and draw those who love His name into a kind of sympathy with some of the customs of the season. Sermons, in not a few instances, now borrow their tone and colour from its return, and glad reunions, festive celebrations, and generous gifts, distinguished it in a very marked degree; while advantages to the world must accrue from a spontaneous, unappointed celebration of Christ's advent. It reminds the race that God Himself has entered into alliance with it, that its highest interests might be promoted. Manhood He has taken into union with Godhead, that the first might be exalted, and the second be revealed. The separation which sin had made between the creature and the Creator has been bridged by the incarnation. All that is involved in Fatherhood, Providence, and in redemption, follows in its train, and can be traced in the infant form and face of Jesus. To be confronted by this great mystery, cannot but deepen our impressions regarding both the need of man, and the resources of God. Therefore, if Christmas can be made to actualise it to the masses of the people, in even a faint degree, as a commemorative institution it is not wholly useless.

Moreover, when this season returns, it naturally recalls the fact that there was "no room found for Him in the inn," and that He was compelled to find a birth-place among the beasts of the stall. So must the thoughtful mind discover in this a type of the world's treatment of Him ever since. The heart of the race has not been opened to him. No room has been found there for its chief Guest, but, instead, it has been crowded with secular passions and ambitions or with an unholy thirst for pleasure. A place has been assigned to Christ in the outermost circle, not in the inner, and the result has been that only in a nominal sense does He sway His sceptre over the earth. Some have enshrined Him in their soul, some like the shepherds, or the magi, render Him sincerest homage; but multitudes have no room for Him, and are satisfied with the most distant recognition of His presence.

A commemoration of our Saviour's birth cannot fail to suggest to Christians our duty towards those whose needs are greater than our own. He was cradled in a manger. In after years He had nowhere to lay His head. The lives of the poor and the sorrowful reproduce most literally conditions of His history. If, as has been said, He became a child to sanctify childhood, did He not become poor and grief-stricken that these classes might be per-

petually remembered by His Church? Is it possible that we can honour the homeless, infant Saviour, and have no heart of sympathy for the wretched of every degree? Rather should it inspire us to minister to their necessities, to do all that we can to elevate the oppressed, and to banish sorrow and care from the habitations of the humble.

Again, as the birth of Jesus is the central fact of history, for which all that preceded was a preparation, and from which all that followed proceeds, so the incarnation of Christ is the central truth of Christian theology, from which the whole system of Christian doctrine radiates. For there are in truth, but two schools of theology to-day: the natural and the supernatural. The sacerdotal is already dead; it is an imposing corpse; but without life.

The theology of natural religion accepts a very considerable part of the Christian religion. It honours Jesus of Nazareth as a sage and a heroic sufferer; it accepts the Bible as an excellent magazine of moral aphorisms; it regards the stories of the miracles as unapproachable in their moral beauty. But the essential article of its creed is that man is quite competent to deal himself with the problems of life, both present and future. On the other hand, the fundamental article of Christian theology is that the human race is lost; that it needs more than teacher or prince—it needs a divine Saviour; that in Christ it finds more than sage or heroic sufferer—it finds a true Redeemer; that on the day we celebrate, the infinite Love stretched out an almighty arm to lift up the fallen son and put him on his feet again; that all history is the story of one perpetually repeated and continuous intervention by the pitiful Father to save His children from their own undoing. Granted the great truth of the incarnation, and all else follows, as the singing of the birds and the fragrance of flowers follow the coming of the spring: a Bible that is the voice of a loving Father to His children; a Christ that is the robing of the Divine Spirit in human flesh; miracles that are the sign and seal of the Father's will whereby we are made heirs of God; immortality not an unknown continent towards which, like another Columbus, we set sail over an unknown sea, but a haven and home where our coming is awaited by expectant friends; and God no longer the Unknown, but "our Father which art in Heaven."

Thus Christmas, in a sense, epitomises Christian theology. That its celebration is every year taking a wider range is one of the hopeful signs of the times. Every Christmas widens and quickens, or should widen and quicken, Christian faith. And every recurring year gives to the pastor, the teacher, and the parent, a golden opportunity to teach anew the glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, that unto us "is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

If such impressions as these can be deepened by the commemoration of the nativity, then, indeed, are we justified in appropriately marking its return, and then may we expect Christmas, in the highest Scripture sense, to be "merry," and the approaching year a "happy" one.

Welcome Christmas! In the name of ten thousand times ten thousand we hail thee; hail thee as the nation hails the day that celebrates its enfranchisement; as the storm-wrecked mariner hails the anniversary of his rescue; as the happy bride hails the wedding day from which her new life dates; yea, rather as only the Christian can hail the anniversary of that day in which enfolded, as the fruit-tree with all its fragrant blossoms and golden fruit is enfolded in the seed, lay dormant but germinant all the possibilities of life, and peace, and joy, for the this life, and for the life to come.—London paper.

There are many people who not only believe that this would revolve on its axis, but they believe that they are the axis.

## Peace on Earth.

Peace on earth. Luke ii. 14

These words form the keystone of angels' arch of triumph. Glory supports it on the one side and love on the other; and here they meet and find the bond which fastens them in one—glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

PEACE LEFT THE EARTH IN THE FALL.

Is there? Has there been, peace on earth? Observe the facts of the world's history. Adam and Eve before at peace, now wrangled, which is the guiltiest? The first death upon this earth is a fratricide. The whole world at enmity with God, perishes in one vast engulfing flood. The earliest building upon record ends in a confusion, and is stamped Babel. Abraham and Lot have to part. Isaac quarrels with Ishmael, and Jacob with Esau, and Joseph has no peace with his brethren. Moses the meekest man, is wrathful even to the point of wicked speaking, and the whole history of God's chosen people is one continuous record of wars, the bloodiest. The very disciples of Jesus contend for the primacy, and the Prince of Peace has no peace at the hands of those He came to save. And what is every page of the narrative of nations. Much of the world's history is written not with ink, but with tears and blood.

Where is the household without a jar? Who has not some one with whom he is not quite on terms of love. How many are at perfect peace with themselves? How many with God? Peace on earth, where is it? Is she in the high places? Is she in the cottage? Is she in the church? Is she in one single man that walks the earth, or is it only in the angels' song, in the vision of celestial intelligences and the womb of the future.

In Christ there is peace. The angels sang it of Him who was born this night, the babe of Bethlehem. He is the Prince of Peace. Only in Him is peace to be found. The legacy of Jesus is peace. The legacy must be paid. There shall be peace over the whole earth.

## BUT WHAT PEACE?

It is human peace the angels sang—"Peace on Earth." What is the peace of man? Let us open its foldings:

First. There must be peace with God. How long can there be peace in the soul so long as a man is not reconciled to his maker? Christ is our peace, says the apostle, and he who has Christ has peace. Some say make your peace with God. You can never make your peace with God. Accept Christ, and you accept peace. The gospel is the treaty; the angel's song on Christmas morning was its herald; that lights upon the hills was its flag of truce; the love of the Father drew the treaty; the blood of Christ sealed the treaty, and the contracting parties are an eternal God of truth, and rebel man who lays down his arms and puts his hand to the contract and professes "Jesus only."

Second. Peace made with God, with-in and part of it is peace of conscience. They talk of Christmas pleasure, can there be pleasure if there is no peace. Could the Israelites sit down to the paschal banquet with the angel of death in the air, and no blood upon the door. Can you enjoy life if you are not ready to meet with God, who may come in upon your Christmas revel. It is want of real peace of mind—that is peace with God—that lies at the root of almost everything which makes life happy. Why do all your good resolutions, and spiritual enterprises prematurely die? Because they are not laid in peace? What causes restlessness of feeling that follows you wherever you go, and which leaves you satisfaction in nothing you enjoy or do. So many pleasures, and so little comfort, your soul has not found a resting point; your spiritual allegiance is not true. You blame a thousand things, but the real culprit of more than half the vexations and disquietudes, and failures

of life, is an imperfect, that is an un-peaceful religion.

Third. To be at peace with one's own conscience, is a man's peace with man. If a man have peace at conscience, he will try to be at peace with everybody. Why are some people so irritable, so uncomfortable with everybody? They are uncomfortable in their own breasts; they are not at peace with God, therefore not at peace with themselves, and therefore they cannot be at peace with any one. But peace makes peace. Peace with God in the soul, makes peace with the world.

O that this peace, may be God's own Christmas gift, the peace of a Christ born in the low places of your poor wicked heart; a Christ known consciously your own; a Christ reflected in a life of self-sacrificing forgiveness, and love to every one.

Do you happen to know in the world any two persons, who are not at peace. Go and be a peace-maker between them and get the beatitude.

Have you yourself any one between whom and you there is a variance; a distance; take occasion at this festival of love to say the word, to write the letter, to do the act, which shall heal the wound and restore peace.

Or better still, in some secret moment, by some silent act, make the sacrifice of something which your conscience tells you to be wrong, a darling habit, which stands between you and God, which is at some better moments your burden.

O let Christ who is our peace, become more to you, more real, more dear, more trusted, more confessed among men; and then, perhaps, some angel seeing that Christ in you and you in Christ, may tune his harp and sing again—sing over you on Christmas morning that ancient note: "Peace on earth."—Clericus, in *The Sermonizer*.

For the Christian Messenger.  
Thoughts for the Season.

The present seems to be a time when God is calling upon men and women to stand face to face with their own souls, and question them of the hope they have of entering into that purer state of existence which rises beyond the portals of the grave.

Isaiah says, "When Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Surely God's judgements are abroad, in the world to-day! Pale-faced, wild-eyed, famine stalks abroad with clattering bones and hungry cry; disease with poisoning breath sweeps o'er the land thinning the group that cluster round home altars and heaping the cold clay above loved forms in the church-yard—that silent city of the dead: The Giant War, "His blood-red tresses deepening in the sun" belches solemn thunder and, mid the blinding rush of conflicting hosts, without a prayer, without a farewell word for mother, sister, wife, men "flash their souls out with their guns and take their heaven," or hell; "at once," and mingled with the voice of the tempest comes the wail of the dying, and the requiem of the lost.

A week ago one beautiful sun-bright day, I held in my arms a little lifeless form and as I smoothed the clinging sunny hair away from the pure baby brow and closed the white lids over the deep blue sightless eyes, unshadowed by a touch of sin, undimmed by that terrible awaking to the reality of bitter things. I thought how sweet, how intensely beautiful and full of rest was death; and with a deeper meaning than they had ever held before came to me these words of The Master, "Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But when we hear of strong men meeting and grappling with death in the mad revel of an ocean storm, lifting to heaven, perchance a face of palid horror, a lost despairing cry; perchance dying with heart turned away from that Loving One who upheld sinking Peter; going out alone—alone to that great unknown future, whither our