

The Christian Life.

CHRISTMAS.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

He who came to Bethlehem,
Comes to us this Christmas morn,
Once again in love and joy,
Unto us a Child is born.

Born to give us full release
From the tyranny of sin;
Born that we to peace and hope
May with courage enter in.

Just as in that elder day
Long by prophet lips foretold,
They who to the manger fared,
Brought their gifts of spice and gold.

So may we to Bethlehem,
House of bread for all the earth;
Bring our votive homage now,
Singing our Redeemer's birth.

Born to set the captives free,
Born to dry the mourner's tear,
Born to right the ancient wrongs,
Once again the Child is here!

Wars and tumults rave around,
Blows the gale in fury wild;
Falls the night with bitter storm;
But the kingdom of the Child,

Yet shall bring the blessedness,
Of a gladness all unknown,
Come, dear Prince, to Bethlehem,
Come, and make our hearts Thy throne.



The World's Debt to Christmas Day.

The world owes to Christmas Day the greatest name in all the history of men.

Conquerors, like Cæsar, Alexander and Charlemagne, won world-wide renown, but have faded out of the active forces of mankind, and their very names are barely remembered. The world owes something to Homer, the immortal poet of ancient Greece, and to Herodotus, the "father of history;" to Phidias, the creator of all that is beautiful in statuary; and to Socrates, the moral pagan moralist; to Demosthenes, the idol of Oriental oratory; and to Zeno, Xenophon and Aesop, who have contributed largely to the intellectual wealth of the world. The world owes much to the great Jewish fathers: Abraham, the founder of a famous race; Moses, the law-giver for all time; David, the singer whose songs will never die; Isaiah, the prophet of hope; and Paul, the peerless preacher of the ages. But the first Christmas Day brings forth in that Bethlehem stable a name that increases in luster with the lapse of centuries—the name of Jesus, patriot, preacher, philanthropist, healer, reformer and friend. "His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

The next debt the world owes to Christmas Day is the re-opening of the closed communion between earth and heaven.

Long the aggrieved heavens had been silent to the sinning earth. Now and then a solitary celestial visitor appeared upon life's shores, but the common fellowship was broken. But on that first Christmas Day, as if weary of the long silence, the angels rushed to earth

to tell the blessed tidings that the tabernacle of God had come to dwell with men, and to chant the inaugural hallelujah anthem of redemption in which the whole multitude of the heavenly host engaged. And those angels have never wholly left the earth. Those imperial gates have never since been closed. The air has never been without a seraph song. Every returning Christmas Day reminds us of these ministering spirits and their joyful songs.

Another thing that we owe to the first Christmas Day is the important announcement of God's good-will toward men.

It seemed otherwise. He had marched along the ages as a God in vengeance. His judgments in the earth made the wisest tremble. Prophets said that he was "angry with the wicked every day," and that he did well to be angry. But that first Christmas Day disclosed the heart of God, and there was written on it the anger turned away, and on his face good-will to men. It is something to know that God is disposed to be well pleased, that he takes no delight in punishing, that judgment is his strange work, and that his nature and his name is Love.

The world owes to the first Christmas Day the prophecy of peace.

This was a new truth among men. The world had been long at war. Everywhere were confused noise and "garments rolled in blood," and where God had planted an Eden man had made a desert. No one seemed to dream of a brighter dawn. Indeed, the day of universal peace seems distant yet. But there is a silver lining in every cloud. Amid the clash of arms and shock of battle and shriek of death, the angel of peace is moving on. The darkness is the precursor of the day when wars shall cease and men shall brothers be. It is written on the earth's destiny—angels wrote it there on that early Christmas morning—"Peace on earth."

The world owes to Christmas Day the coming among us of the spirit of humanity.

The music of humanity was unkindness, until taught by the sweet spirit of the Nazarene! How brutally men treated their prisoners taken in war! How cruelly criminals were punished for crime. How men were made to fight naked with wild beasts in the amphitheater, to make a holiday! How masters maltreated their slaves! How people were persecuted for their religious opinions and their faith in Christ! Life was worth very little then. But the spirit of Jesus melted the popular heart. He smote the rock, and streams of sympathy and charity began to flow, and they will continue to flow until this mortal desert becomes as the garden of the Lord.

The world owes to Christmas Day emancipation of man.

Christianity found a universe enslaved. The poor had no rights, the rich no security, the sufferer no friend, religion no home. The groans of bondage echoed from shore to shore. Mind was enthralled. Men spoke in whispers. The many toiled, the few reaped, and all men groaned for deliverance.

Rome, it is said, had 60,000,000 slaves. Some were slaves by birth, some were taken captives in war, some were in slavery for crime, and some for debt. Jesus came, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He was the first great emancipator of the human race. He said: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Do we rejoice in our liberal constitution, our unrestricted press, our elevated woman, our religious liberties? The truth has set us free.

To the first Christmas Day we owe the dawn of all great reforms.

Life was inert and unprogressive, as China is to-day, when Jesus came. There was no progress; no civilization worthy of the name; no science; no literature; no hospital for the sick; no asylum for the insane; no home for the aged; no shelter for the unfortunate. The Son of God created a new civilization. He kindled the fires of enterprise. He struck the light of a new literature. He set progress on its feet. He gave us a new world. He became the life of all reforms and the spirit of all social comfort. He told all men that they were brothers, and that the secret of universal amelioration was in living out the law of love.

But the most glorious gift from heaven of Christmas-tide is the advent of a Saviour.

"Fear not," said the angel, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Not merely a reformer, a teacher, or a leader, but a Saviour. Not all the gifts that heaven could send to the sons of men would approach in appropriateness or in value this gift of a Saviour. Tell it to the heart-broken and sin-laden everywhere. Tell it to the ends of the earth. Tell it to all people—it belongs to all people, the glad tidings of great joy—"Unto us is born a Saviour."

But when he came, on that first Christmas Day, there was no room for him in any house in Bethlehem, nor in Nazareth, nor in Capernaum, nor in Jerusalem. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." He comes again. He comes to us. Shall we receive him into our thoughts and hearts and homes? With him come pardon and immortality and heaven. When he comes into the soul there will spring up a feeling of goodwill to all men and the priceless consciousness of acceptance with God, through the Son of his love. The heavens will grow brighter and all the paths of life will be peace and pleasure, and we shall feel that no gift that we can lay at the Redeemer's feet will be good enough in blessed memory of that old and ever dear first Christmas Day.—*Journal and Messenger.*

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Forget mistakes; organize victory out of mistakes.—F. W. Robertson.

The Bitter End of the Broad Way.

Those who enter into the ways of sin seldom think of the end. They do not look ahead. They are content to know that the present is according to their desire. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is a law never considered by the wicked. They do not believe it. They hope to do evil and reap good. They flatter themselves that they can wrong others and benefit themselves. Had the prodigal known when he left his father's house that the way he had chosen would end in a far country where he would be forsaken by his companions and surrounded by swine and tormented by hunger, would he have yielded to the temptation? If the young man taking his first glass of strong drink believed that the path in which he is planting his erring feet will surely end in the wreck of his body, mind and life, would he not dash the sparkling beverage from his lips and say to the tempter, "Get thee behind me?" Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and whoso is deceived thereby is not wise. "I die like a fool," said a great statesman who lay dying of a wound received in a duel. The broad way always ends in shame. It may not be the end of the drunkard or the duelist, but it is bitter, nevertheless. There is no peace, no hope, no joy, no comfort in the end of this way. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

The Man Who Works Hard.

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God does not ask us to comprehend; he simply asks us to believe. He desires more than promises; He demands obedience.—*Rev. N. N. Harter.*

SCALD HAND.—Some years ago I scalded my hand very badly, then took cold in the burn, my hand swelled and was very painful, but half a bottle of Haygard's Yellow Oil cured it completely. Mrs. Wannamaker, Frankford, Ont.

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