

THE CONTINENT

NOLAN R. BEST, EDITOR. OLIVER R. WILLIAMSON, PUBLISHER. THE McCORMICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, PROPRIETORS.
156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK. 509 SOUTH WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO.

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 50

DECEMBER 14, 1916

WHOLE NUMBER 2429

“And on Earth—Peace!”

ANGELS SAID it first over the Bethlehem field. The point of view and the far vision of the angels are required to make it seem credible today. Already the time when the earth was at peace seems so far in the past that the Christmas song jangles on our ears. Do we forget a Seven Years War, a Thirty Years War, a War of a Hundred Years? Ah, no; but three years is a longer life for a dreadful war today than multiples of that period represented in an earlier day. And the fearful thing came when it seemed that surely the Christmas song had got itself sung into the life of the world.

And in a rich sense, in spite of the awfulness of these days, that song is in the life of the world. One needs to stand somewhere above the din and rush of things—above them in heart—to see how forces are at work in the midst of tumult to bring peace. It is as though one stood on an elevation and watched the skillful maneuvering of a concourse of children, and could see the gradual emergence of a plan whereby their varicolored garments worked into a gigantic flag. The individuals themselves play only their little parts, catching no vision of the complete exhibition, but the view from above reveals the working of an inner force guiding them to the pleasing achievement. While we remain limited to the minor things that confuse, failing to disengage our hearts for the higher vision, the Bethlehem song will seem only weird dreaming, but it is a blessed possibility that we can renew our Christmas assurance in the midst of the bewildering conditions that so sadly belie it.

On earth—Peace! Yet not to everybody of every sort. “I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword.” The peace which angels sing is not quiescence, not inane “getting along” with just anything that happens. Nor is it a peace of the high hand that suppresses swiftly and sharply whatever displeases it. The Bethlehem word of peace is to men of good will, men in whom God has pleasure. Bad will cannot have peace in a moral universe. Christ is the inspirer of good will among men, not a teacher of moral indifference. He set going in the world forces of life, principles of character, which are restless until they conquer. He stirred feelings which must be fought or yielded to. Into a houseful of tenants growing slovenly and unkempt came a woman on errands of mercy, never obtrusive, never assertive, but always her finest self, always womanly and right. In the homes of some of the tenants came no change; their soddenness was complete. But in other homes the presence of cleanliness and order came as a stinging challenge, demanding change. Dust that had not been disturbed for months was cleared away, broken furniture, rags, meretricious ornament, were laid aside. Something in the old life seemed impossible, unendurable. So long as the best is in the world, the bad and the merely good enough will be subject to disturbance. While the ideal and the forces that make for good exist in this world, the forces of peace are in the field and from the high place, the angels’ view, one may see their power.

IN WORLD RELATIONS the forces of peace are available because of Christ. They are not the forces most visible on the sad fields of Europe this Christmas season. The good will there operating on both sides is theoretically Christian. Each side denies an original wish to do harm to the other, insists that its purpose has been and is altruistic, claims to be fighting for the right kind of world for everybody. Such declarations are sincerely meant, no doubt, but only a miraculous grace can enable a man to help work out that theory by use of largest guns and deadliest aim. The rank and file of warring men cannot spend this season in true Christmas spirit while they plot new devices for destruction, yet Christ walks in their midst, offering the force that makes for peace—a saving good will that can never go with the use of bullets. Two men truly loyal to the same Christ shall be loyal to each other. The cut-throat theory of national relationships cannot be worded so that it sounds Christian at this Christmas season. And with the theory of brotherhood among the nations, at work in the world putting wars and schemes of destruction on the defensive, such mortal conflict seems out of place where once it seemed logical and necessary.

IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS the forces of peace are available because of Christ. That the interests of the several factors in industrial progress are antagonistic is an old thought, long accepted as matter of course. While laboring men were feeble, there was little strife. As they grew strong, strife became natural on the old theory of antagonism. Oppression, exploitation of the weak, manipulation of natural forces for personal advantage and all such methods lie wrapped up in that old way of thinking. But the spirit the old way suggests is partly a narrow good will, partly bad will. Peace cannot come until a broad good will comes. Christ is already forming that in men. That the interests of all men in the industrial order are identical is not much to have learned, for it leaves us still on the selfish basis, employers caring for employes for their own advantage. Rather men who serve a common Master serve each other. When men in all the industrial field care for others in the interest of a common cause there will be a new day.

IN THE TROUBLED PERSONAL LIFE, the forces of peace are available because of Christ. Whatever the ground of the trouble, Christ has its cure. If it is intellectual, he comes to furnish a key to the troublesome problems of life and duty. If it is trouble that roots in family life or business life or wider social relations, he comes with word of a Father who is also Lord and calls the heart to be steady and quiet in trust. Earth becomes different with the heavens in sight above it. Life becomes finer when God can be seen for what he is. Duty becomes greater when it is seen as part of a kingdom plan. Always hearts must be restless till they find rest in him.

C. B. M.

Three Ways of Celebrating Christmas

BY JAMES G. K. McCLURE



THE DIFFERENT ways in which the first Christmas word was received are illuminating. The multitude "wondered," the shepherds "praised," but Mary "kept."

To the people at Bethlehem who heard a description of the angel host breaking the silence of the night and singing the message of "Glory to God in the highest," the whole matter was intensely interesting—but no more. It appealed only to their eyes. They listened with "open-eyed wonder." Theirs was a "seven-days wonder." Then, inasmuch as the message never got beyond their eyes, its effect was evanescent.

To the shepherds the occasion which revealed the open heaven and gave them the assurance of a Saviour's birth was more stirring. They caught the spirit of the angels. The music in the air laid hold of them. They went to Bethlehem, beheld the child, and they "praised." It was indeed a marvelous occasion, and their life responded to it. Yes, their life should speak God's glory in the Christmas birth—and their life did speak it. But that birth never got beyond their lips; its effect was transitory.

But to Mary all that she saw and heard was more than a mere matter of evanescent wonder, or even of transitory praise; it was a matter that should go beyond the eyes, beyond the lips, and should affect the heart. Mary, therefore, "kept" all the message of Christmas, never letting it slip away, for she continued "pondering" it in her "heart," until with her the effect of Christmas was permanent.

Mary Marvelous Through Pondering of Message

And what an effect that permanent effect was! How patient she became, how faithfully she discharged the duties of her life, how humble-minded she always was, how strong she showed herself in quiet hours and in hours of emergency to do and to bear! We do not need to bow down in supplicating worship of her to realize her worthiness. We may be chary of every influence that would give her undue exaltation; and still we cannot be true to facts without seeing in Mary a marvelous woman, the presentation of whom to the heathen tribes of Europe gave a new sense of the beauty and nobility of womanhood and the enthronement of whom in art has made and will make many a Christian man and woman wish to bless the world with traits similar to her own. And she became what she was because she "kept" the Christmas message; and she succeeded in keeping it because she "pondered" it in her "heart."

Herein is the philosophy of the preservation and of the transformation of character. We must "keep" the great messages of life as constituent parts of our being, so that they become permanent influences in us and through us; and we do this only as we put them into our very heart and there brood over them, "pondering" them. For it is thought, continued, quiet, prized thought, that makes character and that determines life.

Is there not special reason why in this our age the three methods of greeting Christmas should be in mind? What an appeal is today being made to our eyes! The streets are full of bright lights and dazzling attractions. The automobiles flash by, and sight is constantly called into requisition. The moving picture shows are putting before multitudes in every part of the land what appeals quickly and rapidly to the eyes.

Much to See but Must Also Think

What an appeal is being made to the lips! There is so much to talk about! The newspapers and periodicals and books are pouring material before us. There are so many people whom we know, there are so many events in one place or another throughout the globe for us to discuss. In a word, time is so rushing, we are so busy, hours for labor are so long, that when we are free our natural wish is to "see"—or to "talk." Eyes and lips have the field.

The necessity of being on our guard so that we "keep" is apparent, if we really desire to be strong characters and take a helpful part in society. Luther made people ponder: otherwise there could not have been the reformation. The Pilgrim movement gathered momentum from profound thinking in the cabin of the Mayflower. The great revival of 1857-1859 had such lasting effects

upon America because it sprang from and was based on "keeping" God's word in the heart.

The most important message ever announced to earth was that of the first Christmas. The more important a message the more need to "keep" it. Christmas was designed for great thinking. We may let it be merely something for "eyes" and "lips"; Christmas trees and wreaths and ribbons to be seen, Christmas carols and Christmas greetings and Christmas good wishes to be on the lips. But oh, if Christmas does not get beyond the eyes and the lips, how soon the sights fade away and the songs die out! Then because we have not kept it in the heart as a matter of reverent and continuous thought, have we not failed to stay in line with Mary and failed to reap its true and permanent value?

Christmas the Time for Worry to Go

Christmas is designed to be the time of soul enrichment and of the creation of largemindedness. It gives thoughts that if cherished will not merely thrill but will also transfigure the life. Christmas is the authoritative announcement that the great God of the heavens finds his highest glory in loving us and in providing for us everything we need. To ponder that announcement is to realize our value in the sight of God and to know that each of his providences toward us is wise and kind. No human being can think Christmas out without being comforted and cheered—without feeling that his life is full of meaning and that he should be brave and do the best he can in his place to be worthy of the care of such a God. Nor can any one think Christmas out without loving God's world and wishing every human being to have the gladness of trusting and obeying this wonderful and beautiful God. Christmas is the time for worry to go and peace to come, for enmities to give way to loves, for selfishness to ebb out and unselfishness to fill the heart, for every thing hurtful to betake itself into outer darkness while the blessed enters with a flood of light. Every Christmas should be the supreme occasion in the year when the soul enlarges its bounds and moves forward into new development. It should be the festival of the whole Christian world, when all souls espouse afresh the pursuit of God and the accomplishment of his satisfying will.

Mary was what we call "a peasant woman"—only that. Her home was small, her surroundings meager, her opportunities limited. But she "kept" Christmas, "pondering it in her heart"—and lo, her life and character have enriched our earth. Great thoughts throbbing within her made her what she became. Great thoughts throbbing in our souls likewise may magnify and irradiate us. Some may wonder with their eyes at Christmas time, and that will be all. Some may praise with their lips, and that will be all. We hear naught more of the multitude or of the shepherds. But if we keep within our heart the message of the angels, that will not be all with us—for we ourselves shall be changed from glory into glory and ours will be the power of an endless life. Then shall we have treated the Christmas message as God would have us.

He Designed the New Dime

Adolph Alexander Weinman, sculptor, and designer of the new dime just put into circulation in the United States, comes from Baden, Germany. Arriving in New York city in his youth, he studied art at Cooper Institute, and then entered the studios of men like Martini, Saint-Gaudens, Olin Warner and Daniel Chester French. Since 1891 he has been practicing his profession, winning prizes at the many expositions that have been held, and executing important commissions for communities and individuals. The McComb statue at Detroit; the Lincoln Memorial at Hodgenville, Kentucky, and at Madison, Wisconsin; the Lincoln statue in the state capitol at Frankfort, Kentucky; the pediment of the senate wing of the state capitol at Madison, Wisconsin, and much of the sculpture on the municipal building, New York city, are by him.

Short Cut to Music

A sailor fell off his ship on to the wharf one night, and injured his hand. A week or so afterwards, when he was getting better, he asked the doctor anxiously:

"Say, doc, when this hand of mine gets well, will I be able to play the banjo?"

"Certainly you will—certainly," said the doctor.

"Thanks, doc. You're certainly a wonder," said the sailor. "I never could before."