Merry Christmas

We Must Fight The Good Fight

Our Fourth Wartime Christmas Without "Peace On Earth"

When Christmas Day dawns this year, one thousand one hundred and eighty-nine days of this war will have run their course. It is not a happy record; it is not a total upon which we can look with pride at this season of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

During that stretch of more than three years, we have witnessed the fall and occupation of many nations, the battering into submission of others. We have seen our young men and women go forth by the thousands for battle fronts the world over. Later, we received stunning reports of casualties. We have come to see, pray God not too late, that world domination is the one thought that spurs on our enemies, world domination that you and I shall live as slaves, without those precious freedoms.

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That is the unhappy side of the picture. But let us not forget —indeed, let us make it a point to remember this Christmas — that there is a brighter side.

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It cannot be a merry Christmas in the old sense. To be merry, the dictionary says, is to be full of mirth and good humor, gay, sportive, jovial, pleasant. The gay light-heartedness with which we have been accustomed to greet the Christmas season is scarcely fitted to a country fighting a war for its very life, its institutions, its future. But that light-hearted Christmas revelry is not, after all the essential thing about Christmas.

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Since that night in Bethlehem a thousand wars have mangled and crucified humanity. Yet is Christmas forgotten? A thousand times ill-will has obtained the temporary mastery over that ancient promise of good will toward men, yet in the hearts of millions of men the flame of good will burns uninterrupted. It is as inextinguishable as man himself, as eternal as God. It will come again to the surface to light the world once more, just as when the glory of the Lord shone down on the shivering shepherds in old Judea.

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That flame reflects other blessings too. Standing out boldly in its cleansing heat is the brave, indomitable spirit of our sailors, our soldiers, our airmen; the spirit of Victory at any cost. There, too, we see the noble endeavors of our brave allies, the skilled hands of our workers turning our munitions of war in ever-increasing quantities, and every Canadian — man, woman, and child, young and old —taking the significance of this brutal, callous war to his or her heart.

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No, we cannot today have peace on earth. Perhaps, one day again, we shall be able to speak those hallowed words. It depends on us. We must fight the good fight—for keeps!

Decorate House With Evergreens

The house may be decorated inside and out to make a fitting background for the tree. With a few greens, the place may be made over and the results will be most gratifying. For outside, make wreaths of evergreens and tie them with red oilcloth bows. Prunings from the Christmas tree often may be used for the wreaths and some of the homemade decorations used for a touch of color.

When you are trimming your own Christmas tree, don't forget the birds. The old custom of trimming an outdoor tree for the birds and squirrels is a charming one. Popcorn, cranberries, or crackers strung together and pieces of suet tied to the tree, and an extra pound of nuts scattered on the ground for the squirrels will make you feel very close kin to Santa Claus.

(15th Century "Nativity" by Francesco di Pietra Santa, Rome)

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David): to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

"Fear not: 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, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Fateful Meeting

In the graying dusk of a December afternoon the slowly moving figure seemed almost a part of the landscape. Half a dozen cars whizzed by but not one stopped to offer him a lift or ask where he was going. If the Spirit of Christmas, of kindness, was abroad, it was surely passing him up.

Ten minutes more of plodding through the chill, darkening air, and another car came roaring down the road, passing him by as the others had done. The grim lines around his mouth grew deeper, then he heard a loud grinding of brakes.

"Almost passed you up," a gay voice cried.

"Pretty fine of you to stop for an old man." He shuffled into the vacant seat as he spoke.

"Oh, that's nothing," the gay voice was a bit embarrassed. "But I did almost pass you up. With this Christmas business, and the rush and hurry, one could pass up their own mother."

"I like to hear you say that. It's what I've always believed. The fact is, I was making a bit of a test today—had a bet with a friend about it. What's your name?"

"The name is Tod Jenkins. I'm headed for St. Louis—going home to spend Christmas with mother. I graduated in engineering last June."

"An interesting story." Tod turned to look at the old man as he spoke. He almost swung the car off the slab. "Why—why you look years and years younger than I thought!"

A hearty laugh sounded against the sharply rising wind. The man was speaking again. "I'm not so old, Tod," he said slowly; "I'm a long way from the old fellow you were kind enough to pick up. Yesterday we had an argument at the club. I made a bet with a fellow that I wouldn't have to walk an hour before I would find the Spirit of Christmas. It was rather a crazy thing to do, but I happen to be rather an eccentric scientist. My name is Perry Birch."

"Perry Birch!" Tod's eyes widened in astonishment, and his foot went off the accelerator, bringing the car almost to a standstill before he went on. "Why—why," he stammered, "I've been wanting to meet you all my life. I've read everything you've written—studied your methods and work for years. In fact," his voice grew more embarrassed, "I've been hoping that some day I might follow in your footsteps. The biggest wish of my life is to become a scientist like you!"

Do Not Encourage Witches and Sprites

Evergreens are synonymous with Christmas, but if you would comply with tradition you should not put them in place before Christmas Eve. It should be a part of the children's Christmas duties to bring them in and hang them in the designated places. They should be left in place until January 6 (Twelfth Night,) when every leaf must be burned. Tradition maintains that even one leaf left to wither will encourage witches and sprites.

Druids Considered Mistletoe Sacred

Did you know that when enemies meet under the mistletoe bough they are supposed to lay down their arms for at least a 24-hours truce? That is why a hostess tries to hang some mistletoe near the doorway of her home, thus assuring perfect harmony while her guests are under her roof. The Druids of old held the mistletoe bough sacred. It was also considered symbolic and an invitation to the spirits of the forest to come in and bring good cheer. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe dates back to ancient Britain. To bring the best type of luck to the one kissed, it is claimed the bough must be cut with a golden knife.

Novel Christmas Tree Trimmings

Popcorn strung in long strings, and delicately tinted, makes ideal trimming for a tree. We saw one last year strung with pale pink and blue popcorn. Silver tinsel, combined with Christmas ornaments, completed the picture.

Tiny packages wrapped in colored paper dotted here and there on the tree will lend special interest. Have a small parcel of some amusing trinket for each member of the family.

If cranberries are available, have the children make strings of them to give your tree a colorful touch.

Attractive Christmas decorations that can be combined with bright glass decorations, berries, and other ornaments can be made by simply crystallizing crooked twigs and branches of trees. Simply wrap some loose cotton batting around the branches and tie it with wool. Next dissolve about two pounds of alum in a quart of boiling water, and pour it over the selected twigs and branches. Allow them to remain suspended for 12 hours, and they will be found to be crystallized. Small branches and twigs can be treated without the cotton batting.

His Last Dime

Dan Driscoll was broke. Well, almost broke. He had one thin dime, niding in the dark depths of a purse that had once held bills of three figures.

He had held it for 20 years, ever since he had found it while ploughing on his father's farm. His lucky dime—that's what he had called it. Dan laughed grimly at the thought. Lucky! Had anyone ever been so unlucky as him? Here was the whole town preparing for Christmas, shopping, spending oodles of money, and he was a penniless, weary wanderer. A lucky dime!

A little place around the corner caught his eye. Dan entered, his nostrils quivering under the tantalizing odors. He looked around with greedy eyes, his mouth watering with longing. Soup, roast fowl, potatoes, luscious mince pie! But he mustn't think about such things. He had just one dime—the price of a cup of coffee and a doughnut, or a hamburger. Which would it be? The queer little man inside the counter waited while Dan weighed the important question. The hamburger won. While it was being cooked to order, Dan dug into his pocket and took the dime from the battered purse.

Hungry as he was, he handed it over before attacking the food. His voice was a bit apologetic. "It's an old timer," he said; "been in my pocket for years and years."

The old man didn't seem to be listening. He was peering through his spectacles at the coin.

"You're sure you're telling the truth about this dime?" he queried.

"The absolute truth," Dan answered. "But, if you won't believe me, you can have your coffee and hamburger."

A shrill laugh ran through the place. "It's a good thing you ran across someone who knew, and better, somebody who was honest," the little man was saying excitedly. "Do you know that you have one of the rarest dimes at large? It's — it's worth thousands."

"You mean, this thing I've held on to for years is worth money?"

"It's worth big money," the cafe owner was waving his hands in the air, the dime clasped between his thumb and first finger. "I've been looking for one of them all my life!"

"Hand me that menu!" Dan Driscoll cried commandingly. "I'm going to have a Christmas dinner right now. I'm going clear down the line, from soup to mince pie."

Christmas Legends

Why do we have Christmas trees and candles? One legend tells us that on a cold, clear Christmas Eve, Martin Luther wandered through the winter woods filled with happiness at the loveliness of the snow-laden trees, under the starry sky. He wanted to share his happiness with his children, so he cut a small fir tree and took it home. When he had set it up, he placed little glowing candles on the boughs to represent the stars of heaven.

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In Holland the children call Santa Claus St. Nicholas and believe that he travels about on a white horse. Instead of hanging up their stockings, they leave their little wooden shoes, filled with grass and hay for the white horse to eat, on the step outside the front door. And lo! when morning comes the grass and hay have disappeared and in their place are gifts for such thoughtful children.

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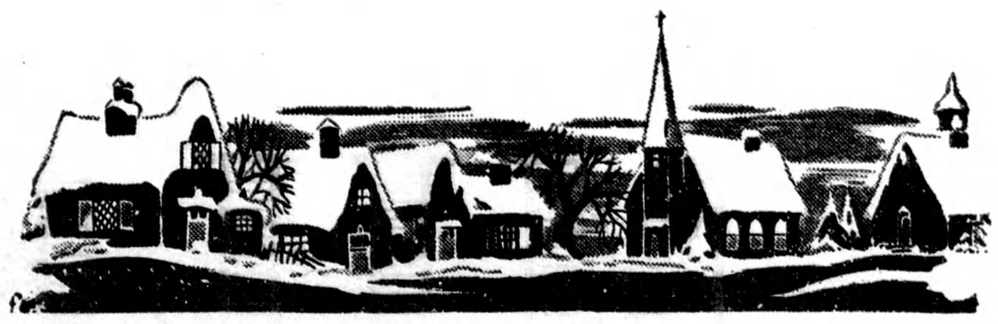
From Spain comes the gentle admonition that cows must always be treated with special kindness, for did they not stand close to the Christ Child in His manger bed and blow their warm, sweet breath on Him all through the chilly night?

Merry Christmas

Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.



Happy New Year