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## Editorial.

### The Spirit of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR ! Are there any of us who are tempted to say, rather wistfully, "and thank goodness too, the sooner it's over, the better I'll like it!"? Christmas in hospital can be a time of great strain and stress, and perhaps we are a little too serious in our efforts to give our patients and staff a really good time. Sometimes one is tempted to think that the true spirit of Christmas is swamped beneath the artificiality of Denison's crepe paper, parties, dinners, dances and bottles !

We who are alive today are living out our mortal existence in strange and fearful times. Our sense of true values is still out of focus and we do not yet seem able to sort out for ourselves those spiritual and fragile things that really matter, from the tawdry and worldly things that do not. Before we have been able to shake off the ill effects of the last world catastrophe, the grim shadow of total war once more lies across the pathway of the sun, chilling the earth and sterilising real attempts to make the world a better place in which to live.

Homes are no longer the shelters of love and affection, where young children are taught, guided and protected. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers go out to work whilst the young ones are left to scramble through their childhood years as well as they can. No longer is the home the unit of the nation, and when there are no homes and no loved ones to protect and cherish, a malicious enemy will have little resistance to dreams of conquest. Even now, tired and puzzled men and women are being stimulated by pep talks and striking posters to join in some form of national defence, and to forfeit their meagre free time to become proficient in some defence corps or other. Thus more time is spent away from the family, and ties of affection become loosened and strained.

Sweetly and gently into this period of watchfulness and uneasy waiting, the advent of Christmas, the Festival of the Family brings a fleeting glimpse of happiness and abandon. Joyful reunions are being planned, and children are filled with the happy anticipation of Mother and Father at home again. Holly and mistletoe, Christmas trees and presents, and good things to eat are being stored in readiness for this Day of days, and may it be a happy and blessed one for all of us.

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How can we recapture the true Spirit of Christmas and spread it around us? By phantasy perhaps—mingling with the true events of a winter's tale of long, long ago? Draw your chairs up round the fire, put out the bright lights and let us recapitulate the story for ourselves.

The time is almost midnight of the twenty-fourth day of December in the first year A.D., in the reign of King Herod. It is a quiet night of wondrous and unearthly beauty, starry, crisp and clear. Virgin snows carpet the sleeping earth and only the gentlest breezes stir the leafless trees. Far away cross the deserts, the camel-trains of three great Kings move slowly and noiselessly over the undulating sands. A radiant star guides them over the rough and dangerous places. They follow the star in faith and tranquility knowing it will guide them infallibly to a place where a new King is born, a King whose power is infinite and whose Kingdom is eternal.

In the lone valleys and the scattered hamlets faithful shepherds keep a quiet vigil. They sense the strangeness and watchfulness of that lovely night, and they are afraid and apprehensive. Something unearthly yet utterly beautiful is abroad in the cool atmosphere and they wait patiently, wondering! The peace is profound and the quietness penetrating.

Softly at first, and then in swelling volume glorious music falls upon the frosty air. Liquid, golden notes delight the ear, enchanting and ravishing; such as were never before heard, nor since, for the quality was not of this world. A trembling fear possessed the shepherds, and then, as the glory and sweetness of the music could be borne no longer, an Angelic voice spoke and said gently, "Fear not, for behold I bring tidings of great joy to men of good-will, for this day is born a Saviour. . . . And you shall find the Babe with His Mother, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. *Gloria in excelsis Deo.*" Then the fear left the shepherds—they were elated and excited and they too followed the Star and found a new born Babe.

What manner of Babe was this? Surely no ordinary Child? Miraculous events did not normally attend the birth of a child of man! Why did Nature produce her most lovely night, her most lustrous and brilliant Star, her virgin snows and a most profound and penetrating peace? Why the heavenly music and the Angelic visitation, and why the accurate prophecies in ancient scripts? Even the Mother was a prodigy. Young, peerlessly beautiful, noble and gentle and most virtuous and virgin! What is the meaning of this historic occurrence, and what should it mean to each of us? Surely the event did not occur in order to give us a week of strain at parties, dances and dinners! There must be something more than just these?

Those three wise Kings had learned the secret. For long years before they had patiently studied their Scriptures; unravelled strange symbols; translated ancient prophecies and learned to read signs in nature. So that when all was fulfilled in time, they unhesitatingly set out on a long and hazardous journey and with priceless jewels and gifts, went forth to meet their King.

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