

A Merry Christmas

Why do we say a 'merry' Christmas, why a 'happy' New Year? All of these ages-old expressions have a deep significance, which custom causes us to pass over lightly. We can be 'merry' for a day—most of us. We can be 'happy' for a year—all of us. It is superfluous to say 'a happy, merry, Christmas,' because to be merry one must first be happy. 'A merry New Year' is out of the question; no one but a paid jester or a thoughtless fool could be merry for a whole year.

'Merry Christmas' has a delightful sound. Every letter in it seems to laugh to the accompaniment of tinkling bells. Merry Christmas conjures visions of resplendently decorated fir trees; of stockings bursting with gifts; of delicious viands and jesting talk; of mirthful music, glad some song and jolly games. Now, every one cannot, or will not have that sort of a Christmas. Some of us every Christmas find a vacant chair where a dearly-loved one sat last Christmas. Notwithstanding this, we can be happy, since it is sinful to be unhappy and to repine at the will of God, although for the mourner there is no 'merry' Christmas. Religious generally prefer the 'happy' Christmas greeting; their favorite form is 'a happy, holy Christmas.' A greeting suitable to everybody is 'a happy Christmas' (or 'a peaceful Christmas'), 'and many joyful' (or 'prosperous') 'returns of the New Year.' To a sufferer in one of the hospitals some years ago a friend sent an original greeting, 'The peace of Christmas be yours, and the hope of many strong and happy New Years of life!—a wish that came true.'

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