

DEVOTIONS

compiled by Anne Jones

Keats saw autumn as the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness".

Lilias Rider Haggard in her "Country Scrapbook", compiled from writings in the '30s and '40s, wrote that -

"People are apt to dislike the 'fall of the leaf', not for its unromantic complaints of rheumatism and colds in the head, but because the steady drift and patter reminds them of the end of many things, which, as the Bible puts it, 'fade as the leaf that the wind has taken away'. It brings a sense of the end, of the passing of the last breath of warmth from the earth, and the hint of frost to come casts a shadow on the radiance of the quiet and wistful beauty of the mild days we call St. Luke's or Indian summer. Nature, who is a more persistent preacher of the gospel of hope than any man who mounts a pulpit, will give you a better thought if you pull down the nearest branch of a chestnut tree. Behind the base of the leaf stalk a fat brown bud, already covered with its sticky coat, is swelling, and the pressure of its growth forces the old leaf from its hold. It is an easy way to tell if a tree you have transplanted while still in leaf is going to survive. The leaves will always wither. But if they hang, the tree is dead; if they fall the sap is stirring the buds and the tree is alive."

Washington Irving wrote that "There is something in the very season of the year that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas". Dickens insisted that "Whatever else be lost among the years, let us keep Christmas; its meaning never ends".

In John Storey's poem STAR—LED we reach the climax of Christmas Past as well as Christmas Present:

Star—led

Did the Lord of heaven and earth
Move a star across the skies
To announce the holy birth,
Guide the footsteps of the wise?



Greater wonder would it be
If God moved the stubborn heart
Till we bend a reverent knee
and from foolish 'Ways depart.

Hallowed myths and treasured tales
Wisely used still have their place
But their inner purpose fails
If we fail to grow in grace.

from *The Common Quest*, selected writings of John Andrew Storey.

Prayer (Taken from Unitarian Orders of Worship)

O Thou who hast mercifully led us through the busy year,
enriching our lives with countless gifts; give us at this
Christmas time the grace which was in Jesus. Let the spirit of
the little child, as it knocks today at all hearts, enter our life
and bless it.

Let duty become touched with delight, and justice be
forgotten in love. May every selfish thought be driven from our
minds. Let our ears hear the cry of the needy, and our hearts
be stirred to sympathy for the lonely and neglected. Give our
hands strength, not to do great things, but rather to do small
things graciously. Heal the wounds of misunderstanding,
jealousy or regret, and let the gentler breath of the Christmas
spirit touch our Lives. AMEN

May you all enjoy a peaceful Christmas.
Nadolig Llawen.

Anne is happy to use any favourite pieces or prayers which may original or otherwise. Modern published works are unlikely to be used in their entirety for copyright reasons. Please send either to 14 Clifton St., ABERDARE CF44 7PB or by e mail "eric.anne.jones@gmail.com"

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PRESIDENTIAL VISITS for Joy Foster

3 June 2015	Aberdare outing to Llanwnnen
26 June	Bristol Women's League
19 September	Bank Street Bolton Women's League
14 October	Cardiff Women's League
21-22 October	League Rally at Whalley Abbey
March 2016	Padiham Women's League
March 2016	Ceredigion, West Wales League
12 March 2016	N&E Lancs Women's League, Bolton

Barbara & John Clifford thank all who contributed articles for this issue. We also apologise that pressure of activities has delayed this issue and wish all readers a Good Christmas and Happy New Year. Deadline for Jan/Feb 2016 Letter: 28 December