

**CHRISTMAS CAROL.**

Hosanna! Hosanna!  
 'e nations hear the story—  
 Today ye are redeemed,  
 Made heirs with Christ in glory!  
 Bring out the silent harps  
 And tune them all anew,  
 Then sing till angels stand amazed—  
 A Saviour's born to you.

Hosanna! Hosanna!  
 'Twas shepherds told the story—  
 The star had led the way  
 To a manger filled with glory.  
 Ring out, ye Christmas bells!  
 Death's power hath passed away,  
 And heaven rings with this glad theme—  
 Man is redeemed today.

Hosanna! Hosanna!  
 Let heaven and earth repent.  
 Join asaphim and cherub  
 In homage at his feet.  
 Let song of saving grace,  
 With angel's anthem vie,  
 For unto God the sweetest sound  
 Is a redeemed one's cry.

Bring roses, sweet roses!  
 For unto you is given  
 A ransom from the grave,  
 A passport into heaven.  
 Swing wide, ye pearly gates!  
 Let anthems have full sway,  
 The King of Glory left his throne  
 Upon that Christmas day.  
 —William E. Sheffield in Brooklyn Eagle.

**UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS.**

It was about 4 o'clock on Christmas eve and business was over as I closed my desk and rose with a weary yawn. There was little in my surroundings to remind me of the day, no frost on the windows, no snow on the ground outside and no sharp bracing cold in the air. The windows were as wide open as they could be, and the steady swinging of the "punkah" overhead was all that kept the room from being stiflingly hot and close, for the office was situated somewhere about latitude 14 north, in the faraway Philippine islands, where the great, beautiful flowers have no perfume and the wonderful birds never sing, where the southern cross glitters over the land at night and the great dipper is upside down and the sun sets within two minutes of a quarter after 6 all the year around.

So I had before me about two hours and a half of daylight, and I was trying to decide whether to utilize it by riding out to the tennis club and having afternoon tea, or walking to the park to hear the band play and see the Spanish dignitaries. The native clerks in the outer room had dusted up and now came gliding in with bare, splay foot t. e. t. like black headed ghosts in their white clothes, to bid me "buenas noches" and a happy Christmas, and incidentally to receive each his holiday gift of one or perhaps five big silver dollars, according to his station, from Jose, the half breed chief clerk, who on the strength of his dignity and of his speaking a little English kept his shirt tucked inside his trousers and wore embroidered sandals, down to little Nito, the errand boy, hardly more than a savage of the wilderness. They had the "Christmas feeling" anyway, and associated it with the mercury's ranging from 80 to 105 degrees, as we New Englanders do its rambling from zero to freezing.

The last "muchas gracias, senior," had been said, and the last clerk glided out, and the gray headed old "punkah cooly" was stealthily watching to see me take up my jacket, the signal for his departure, when the tramping of unmistakable and evidently stout boots sounded without, and with a prodigious crash of the screen door there entered into my sanctum stalwart Captain Hale of the good ship Monhegan, arrayed in snowy linen and crowned with a broad pith helmet, accompanied by stout and jolly Mrs. Hale, carrying a big basket and a brown gingham umbrella, with her cheerful face beaming from the depths of a real old fashioned sunbonnet.

"Good evening, sir," they both called out, and Mrs. Hale added: "Wish you a merry Christmas, Mr. B. My ain't it hot!" subsiding into the bamboo chair which I had placed for her under the punkah, with a "pica, hombre" (faster, man), to old Pedro, the cooly, who redoubled his efforts with a disapproving grunt.

"Good gracious, Mr. B.," exclaimed Mrs. Hale, "don't, for pity's sake, make that poor old feller work so this hot day on my 'count. Stop it," shaking her um-

brella vigorously at Pedro, who took this for a signal to go faster still, and the big fan flapping madly back and forth till I called, "Despacio" (gently).

The Monhegan had been in the bay for a month past under charter to me for Boston, and was now cleared and ready to sail the next day. I had spent many a pleasant hour on board with the captain and his wife, rejoicing in the homelike feeling it gave me to hear their good old Yankee forms of speech. The very sight of their healthy faces, browned by the sun in many seas, did me good in my weary exile, and their presence seemed to diffuse an atmosphere of the breezy pines and wind swept shores of Maine. And how good their primitive, shipboard food was after months of awful Spanish cooked dinners on shore!

And now the sound of their hearty voices seemed to give the earthquake rent, dingy walls of the old office building a pleasanter aspect. "You see, Mr. B.," said the captain, "we kinder thought we'd drop in and give ye the good wishes of the season 'fore goin' round to do our Christmasin. Fact is," he added, smiling, "the old lady can't get on without celebratin' Christmas, no matter where she is, and she's always bound to give some presents to folks. If we're at sea, she gives 'em to my crew, and if we're in port like this she hunts up poor folks and gives 'em to 'em, heathens and all. Ain't that so, mother?"

Mrs. Hale nodded. "That's a fact, father," she said. "Why, 'twouldn't seem the least m-e like Christmas if I couldn't give presents, whether I be home in Boothbay or not. As for heathens, that don't make a bit of difference. It's Christmas jest the same, whether they know it or not, and it tickles 'em jest as much to get presents, and me to give 'em. And you're jest the same, John. You know you be."

"Well, I don't know but what I be, Maria," acknowledged the captain, and they went on to tell of their queer experiences while "Christmasin" in out of the way Chinese and African ports with chuckles and peals of laughter that set Pedro grinning by force of example, though he couldn't understand a word.

"And speakin' of that, Mr. B.," said Mrs. Hale, "I thought maybe I could make it a little more like Christmas to you and them other young men here away from their own folks, so I made you this." And with that she extracted from her basket the very grandfather of all Christmas plum puddings—the first one I had seen for three years. "Maybe 'tain't jest what you'd get at home," she said, holding it out with both hands while the captain towered beside her, six feet of genuine delight at my surprise. "Cause I didn't have jest the right fixin's, but I guess it'll go down pretty well. There, take it and don't bother to say one word." And I knew the kind old soul saw that for the moment I could as easily have flown as uttered the thanks I felt.

"Trust the old lady to know what boys like," said the captain. "We had a boy once ourselves. He'd be jest about your age now," he added in a lower tone, glancing at his wife.

"We've got him now, John, as I've always said and always will," said Mrs. Hale quietly, rearranging her basket.

The captain went on in answer to my wondering look: "You see, our boy run off when he wa'n't more'n 15. He'd been kind of wild, as boys be, and I'm afraid I was a little harsh to him. Anyway he went off without a word, and we ain't never heard of him since. I feel pretty sure he's dead, but mother here sticks to it he ain't."

"And I'm goin' to stick to it, John, till I know for sure." And then with a cheery smile at me: "It kind of does me good to keep lookin' forward to seein' Rufe again some day. Now, come along, John; it's gettin' late."

I slipped on my jacket, whereupon Pedro vanished, and accompanied the worthy couple down to the door of the building. On the stairs Mrs. Hale turned and whispered to me: "John talks as if he didn't care much about Rufe's goin' off, but now he really does, Mr. B. If he could find our boy, 'twould take ten years off his age and mine too."

I did not doubt it, and I refrained from saying that I thought it would probably add ten years to Rufe's if he could realize the sort of mother and father he had left so many years ago.

So I bade them good night, promising

to see them in the morning and with hearty thanks for their thoughtful kindness, and watched them as they trudged away toward the native quarters, their sturdy figures towering above the motley crowd of natives and Chinamen who thronged the narrow street and filled the air with their uncouth gabble.

I sent my cooly home with the precious pudding, and, mounting my pony, threaded my way around to the English club. There I found McGregor, the old Scotch doctor, standing in the doorway and amusing himself by tossing coppers one at a time to a crowd of lame, halt and blind beggars, who as each coin fell instantly became an appalling tangle of skinny arms and legs.

"Hello!" said he as I drew up. "I was just coming round after you. 'Sulu!' (get away) to the beggars, who were plucking at various portions of his raiment, and, like metamorphosed Oliver Twists, asking for more. "Aren't you actin' American consul just now?" he inquired.

During the temporary absence of the consul I had undertaken his not very arduous duties, being the only other American resident in the place.

"Well," continued the "medico," "I have a fellow countryman of yours very bad with fever down in Malacanan (native quarter), a sailorman, only just out of the Spanish jail for thumping a guardia (policeman) last year. I have my doubts of his lasting long, and you'd better come down if you will."

Of course I would come, consul or not. In these hidden corners of the world any one in trouble, vagabond sailor, "beach comber" or unlucky clerk out of employment, is as sure of help from more fortunate fellow countrymen as if he were in his native land—surely perhaps, unless he happen to be a Chinaman, in which case his friends let him die unreluctant and then pay the expenses of burying him in China, a backhanded sort of philanthropy, very characteristic in John Chinaman.

So the doctor jumped into a public carriage and rattled away toward Malacanan, while I followed on my pony, leaving the beggars to philosophically squat down around the club doorway and resume their everlasting wail of "Charity, for love of heaven, charity!"

Poor old McGregor's story was a sad one. Long years before, as a young man,

he had come to the Philippines on a pleasure trip with his wife, and here she died suddenly of cholera, that terrible scourge of the east, which then was claiming its victims by thousands, and for 20 years the doctor had never left the island where she lay, among the tall palms in the little English cemetery on Santa Ana hill. But many others had reason to bless the cause that kept Dr. McGregor among them. From the proudest Spanish official in his palace to the humblest savage in his bamboo hut the doctor's time and skill were always at their service. And many a youngster fresh from home had been saved from going wrong in that land of wild and lawless life by his kindly words of counsel and advice.

We stopped at last before a miserable hut on the outskirts of the town, and giving the pony in charge of a passing native I followed the doctor in. The interior was dark and comparatively cool. An old native woman, like a grotesque image, was squatting on the bamboo floor beside a heap of "nipa" leaves and pieces of matting, on which lay a white man, tossing, turning and babbling with delirium, in the full grip of the jungle fever—a young man evidently, his once powerful frame, fearfully reduced by illness and confinement, covered by the ragged and grimy shirt and trousers of a sailor. He became quieter as McGregor raised his head and drank the medicine given him, but began muttering again as the doctor laid him down.

"He was a wee bit more rational this afternoon," said McGregor, "and told me a bit of his story, but he couldn't or wouldn't tell his name. I found him just outside on the grass and brought him in here for want of a better place."

"Was there nothing in his pockets?" I asked.

"Nought but these," showing a few centimes, at which the old woman glared greedily. "He may come to his senses a bit soon. Ye'd better bide awhile."

"Is he past hope, Mac?" I asked.

"Can't we do anything—take him to a better house, I mean?"

The doctor shook his head. "If we could get him up north now, I'd say he'd get well with the constitution he has. It's the best of the place that keeps

him down. The poor lad's made like one of our ain collie dogs—strong and well in the cold, but when taken by fever in this climate—whish! burns up like gunpowder."

It was terrible to see one of my own race dying thus in the lowest degradation, like a wretched savage, nursed by an ignorant old barbarian only for the sake of the money she knew we would give her, more terrible as time went on, and the poor parched lips never ceased their childish, unintelligible chatter. Oh, for a bit of ice or anything to cool that burning forehead! But nothing is cool there, nothing but death.

So we sat in silence, I with my helmet fanning the flushed face, so drawn and haggard, which must have been strong and handsome in health, and the doctor ever and anon raised the heavy head with the gentleness of a woman and gave medicine, while the old hag crouched in a corner and mumbled to herself, wondering if when the man was dead she would get a whole silver peso or not. Outside the brown people chattered and laughed in their freedom from care, now and then peering in with curious faces and running away with fresh shouts. Their turn might come next, but little they cared. The present was theirs for enjoyment of life. Never mind tomorrow.

Suddenly the tumult seemed to increase and concentrate farther down the road. Then it began to approach, the screams and happy laughter of children mingled with the clearer tones of a foreigner's tongue, and as the crowd reached the hut I suddenly heard a familiar voice saying: "There, little boy, don't you be so greedy. Let that little girl have some. Ain't it nice, John, to see how they enjoy it?"

McGregor looked up in wonder, and I rose and went to the door. There I found Captain Hale and his wife, surrounded by a perfect horde of delighted children, he tossing coppers about from a canvas bag and she distributing candy, penny whistles and numerous odds and ends from her huge basket, both their faces perfect pictures of the honest pleasure which changed to such profound amazement at the sight of me that for a moment a combined assault by the native infantry on their basis of supplies was almost successful, only prevented by a vigorous use of the captain's bamboo stick and Mrs. Hale's gingham umbrella.

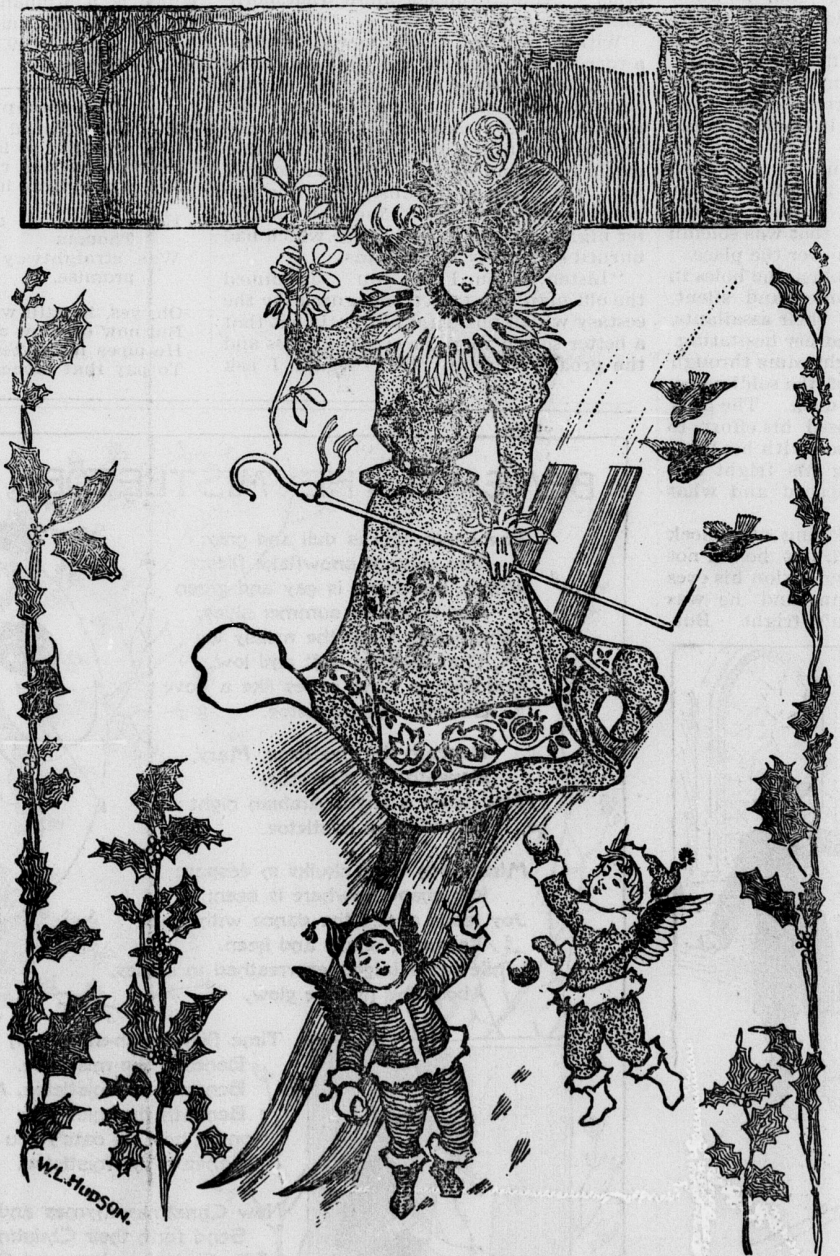
I started to explain why I was there, but before I finished Mrs. Hale, with an exclamation of, "Why, the poor fellow!" gave her basket a whirl which sent its contents flying in every direction, thereby creating a scene of riot which those peaceful tropic shades had never witnessed the like of, and then trotted straight into the hut, followed by her husband, who bent his tall form nearly double to enter the door.

The doctor rose and bowed with courtesy of 50 years ago as the motherly old lady bent down by the sufferer's side, crying: "Oh, the poor, poor fellow! Just see him, John!"

I moved in from the doorway, and the light of the setting sun fell on the invalid's face, and suddenly a cry went up that rang through the tiny hovel and far above the noisy clamor outside—a cry from the depths of a mother's heart: "John! Father! It's our Rufe, our own boy! Oh, Rufe, Rufe, after all these years!"

Step out softly, kind old doctor. Come with me and watch the sun going down in all its tropical glory behind the great volcanic range, if you can see it, for I cannot. It is all a blur to me. But I can see this—a noble ship at anchor in the bay with all sails bent, ready to sail tomorrow and bear away from this burning land one fever stricken to the cool breezes of the open sea and sure recovery under his own mother's care.

And hark to the bells of vespers this Christmas eve as they ring the warning from church and gray cathedral, of the glorious word they will tell tomorrow to men of every faith and creed. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"—Charles Bryant Howard in Short Stories.



"CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR."

