

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young.
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.
It is coming, old earth, it is coming to-night!
On the snowflakes that covered thy sod
The feet of the Christ-Child fall gently and white,
And the voice of the Christ-Child tells out
That mankind are the children of God.
On the sad, and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
The voice of the Christ-Child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer open the door
Of a hope that he dared not dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.
The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the Holiest have trod,
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed
That mankind are the children of God.

THE COMING OF THE CHILD GUEST.

The room was very cold. Little Jo drew the scant bedclothes close around him, and tried not to shiver. His mother would be coming to him soon, and he knew it distressed her to see his body quivering under the light covering. She spoke of it often. "Jo," she would say, "you are cold. In two or three days I will have some money and can buy you a nice warm quilt." And Jo would answer, "You must buy something to eat with the money, mother, and Stella, you say needs some new shoes. The weather, it will be warmer soon. The big doctor says it will."

It was snowing thickly and Jo soon forgot the cold, watching the big flakes drifting past the window. They made him think of tiny, white, bird-feathers, so pure and light they seemed. He never tired of watching them. Christmas was two weeks off, and Jo was hoping that the snow would not pass from the streets before that day of days, for in the land from which he came there was a tradition that the Christ-Child visited the homes of the poor on Christmas eve, and Jo's mind could not conceive a Christmas day without snow.

It was not every home to which the Christ-Child came, Jo knew. One home only in each city and town was blessed by His presence. And that home must be prepared to receive Him. The family must watch for Him, the supper must be spread on the table, and there must be a gift, however small, for the Child.

Jo had heard the legend many times, but never till this year had he dared to hope that the Christ-Child would visit him. But now something within him seemed to say that on Christmas eve he would see the blessed babe whom the princes of the East had come so far to worship on that starry Judean night. Something within him seemed to whisper, "Jo, you must be ready; you must watch. The Christ-Child comes only to those that expect Him." And Jo resolved not to sleep, not to close his eyes even, all Christmas eve, lest the Child should come to the door and, finding him asleep, go to some other home.

Jo had been sick a long time. His poor body ached from lying on the hard bed so many days and nights. But he did not complain. He would soon be well, he said over and over to his mother. But this assurance of returning health was only the happy optimism which comes to those whom the White Death has already laid his remorseless hand. Jo would never be well again in this world. Elsewhere? Had you put that question to the burly doctor who made daily visits to Jo's bedside, he would have laughed cynically. The doctor was a materialist, and cared not who knew it. Jo's sufferings would soon be over, he knew, not because Jo's soul would pass to some elysium where suffering could not be, but because Jo's body would be at rest in the grave. That was the doctor's creed.

Jo was still watching the flying snowflakes when there was a loud rap at the outer door, and the big doctor entered. "Well, my little man, how do you feel this fine day?" he called cheerily.

Jo smiled. He liked the doctor. He had always feared doctors till he knew this one. But there was nothing to fear from Doctor Cummings. His voice was gruff, it was true, but his hands were gentle. Even the medicines he left for Jo were pleasant to the taste.

Today the doctor had a great surprise for Jo. He said, "Jo, you are going to have a visitor tomorrow. My sister wants to see you. I have told her all about you, you know."

Jo did not know. He did not think that such busy men as doctors had time to discuss charity patients with their sisters. He was vaguely pleased, and not a little frightened, at the thought of having a strange lady visit him.

The doctor divined something of this, and said, "She is a very nice lady, Jo. You will like her. And you must tell her all about yourself, and what you think about while you lie here. Will you do that?"

"Yes sir. I'll try, try to."

For the rest of the day Jo thought of little save the impending visit of the doctor's lady. He had promised to tell her what he thought about, and he wondered if it would be proper to tell her about the Christ-Child and how he hoped to see Him on Christmas Eve. He decided that he would wait and see what the lady was like. Maybe she would not want to hear about such things.

The next morning there was a gen-

tle knock on the hall door, so gentle that Jo and his mother waited to hear it repeated. It was not the doctor, they knew. He rapped noisily, and then pushed open the door without waiting. This knock was repeated and Jo's mother hastened to open the door. A lady stepped into the room, smiling, and put out her hand to Jo's mother. Jo knew she was the doctor's sister. But she had such a soft voice! Jo loved her at once. She carried a large bundle which did not seem to be at all heavy. Jo wondered what it could be that was so big and yet so light.

"So this is little Jo," the lady said, coming close to the bed. "I am Doctor Cummings' sister, Jo. I have brought you something to keep you warm."

As eager as Joe was to see what was in the bundle, his eyes scarcely moved from the lady's face. Her face may have been beautiful, and her not have been, to others, but to Jo it was the criterion of everything beautiful and good.

The lady opened the bundle and Jo saw a great padded bedquilt, as soft, he thought, as the little white bird-feathers that floated down through the cold air. It was the color of pink roses, with a pale green border, the grandest quilt he had ever seen. The lady spread it over him and asked, "Do you like it? Do you think it will keep you warm?"

"I know it will. Are you really going to leave it here?"

"It is yours. You may call it a Christmas present, if you want to. Of course, Christmas is not here yet, but that will not matter, so it keeps you nice and warm. Now tell me about yourself. Tell me what you think about."

"I always like to know what sick people say to themselves."

Jo had no further doubts about the lady's interest in the Christ-Child's coming, so he told her everything. When he had finished she asked, "And what are you going to give Him, Jo?"

"I don't know yet. Mother says he takes care of little lambs."

"Yes?"

"In my country the herders have long sticks with a hook in the end. Maybe he would like one."

"I am sure He would Jo. I know He would like anything you gave Him. And have you got the stick for Him yet?"

"No, ma'am. I—I don't know if they have any in this country, and maybe they cost too much."

"I am sure we have them here. Will you let me get one for you?"

Jo hesitated. He had already accepted the beautiful quilt. He must not expect too much from the lady.

"Of course," Jo. He wants anything we give Him. It doesn't matter what we give, you know, as long as we give it from the heart. He is just as glad when you give Him a penny as He is when a rich man gives Him a hundred dollars. The little Christ-Child was very poor himself, and spent most of his time visiting the poor people."

The lady rose. "I will talk with your mother about the supper, Jo. And I'll get that herder's stick at once, so you can look at it a long while before Christmas Eve."

When the doctor came that afternoon he said, "So my sister was here, was she, Jo? And what did you talk about?"

"I told her about the Christ-Child. I think He will come here on Christmas Eve."

"And what makes you think that?"

"I don't know, but I think I shall see Him. I—I am almost sure of it."

The doctor was silent, looking off through the high window across the chimneys to the great bridge that hung in midair in the distance. It always annoyed him to hear people talk about the Christ as though He was some sort of a superior being. What was the Christ anyway? A good man, a mystic, a dreamer, who suffered an ignominious death because he tried to upset the philosophical dogmas of his day. The doctor had met him in his own time just as mystical and dreamy, but the world was more tolerant now. Had the Christ lived today He would not have become a martyr. Instead of killing Him, the philosopher would have ridiculed Him gently and disproved His theories.

"Did He ever come to your house?"

The doctor started. "No, Jo. The Christ—"

He paused. Skeptic, though he professed to be, he was ashamed to shake the boy's faith in his ideal.

"It must be because you are rich," Jo continued. "They say the Christ-Child comes only to see poor people."

The doctor turned curious eyes on the sick lad, eyes that had lost their impatience and seemed to hold a great question.

"I am not rich, Jo, not rich like some men. Once I was very poor and could not get enough to eat sometimes. Well," rising and drawing on his gauntlets, "we will hope that He comes to see you. Would it make you very happy if He came?"

"I would get well if I could see Him."

When the doctor reached his motor car at the curb he stood for a moment kicking at the piled snow with a frown on his broad face. "I would get well if I could see Him," he repeated slowly. What if little Jo was right after all? They called Him the great Physician, and brought their sick to Him. One touch of His garment made them whole. If He healed their bodies without conscious effort, was it true that He healed their souls?

There had been a time when the doctor believed in the Christ-Child. That was long, long ago, when he was struggling for a bare existence for himself and his sister Gertrude. Was his wealth and prosperity that had wrought such a change in him? Was Jo right again? Did the Christ come only to the poor and to the humble in spirit? With all his success the doc-

Modern Kriss Kringle.

By Harold Barnes, in the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Kriss Kringle laughs with a merry glee; "I'll fool the children this year," says he; "They think I am coming with deer and sleigh, And jingle of bells, in the same old way. But why should I flounder through cold and snow And catch influenza, when I can go With a lightning speed through the nipping air And while I am here, be almost there. 'Tis time that my reindeer were given a rest, And my sleigh is old and not at its best; And the boys and girls—there are millions more Than there used to be in the days of yore. I must have more room to carry the toys And must fly like the wind to the girls and boys; From house to house I must speed with might To finish my work in a single night."

"But I'll do it," he says, with a knowing wink, As he opens his hangar—and what do you think? There stands in its shed like a waiting train The finest brand of an aeroplane. Shining and gleaming and new and spick— Just made to order by Old St. Nick. It is roomy and strong and it holds with ease The thousand and one pretty things that please The good little children throughout the land, From the Arctic zone to the coral strand;

Dollies and dishes and buggies and blocks And pretty tin soldiers and Jacks-in-the-box; And trumpets and drums and tables and chairs And fairy-tale stories and big Teddy bears. There are red sleds and skates, for the snow and the ice, And mufflers and mittens and everything nice! With oranges, golden and juicy and sweet, And the perfume of roses our noses does greet. Every inch of this storehouse is filled with the toys And dainties and gifts for the girls and the boys. St. Nick rubs his hands and chuckles with glee As he thinks of the pleasure and joy there will be.

Then he looks at his watch and he looks at the moon, And he says to himself, "I must start pretty soon." So he puts on his headgear, his goggles and coat; Tucks in his white beard from his breast to his throat, Then springs to his place in the big aeroplane As nimbly as though he were twenty again, He straps himself in very tight and secure, "In order," he says, "that I'll be very sure Not to slip from my seat and go whirling through space— For a fall from such heights might disfigure my face."

He turns on the motor; anon comes the whirr Of spinning propeller, and then the glad stir Of the wheels as they move o'er the hard frozen snow. Now lightly they creep, then more swiftly they go, Till, spurning the earth in its effort to fly, The aeroplane rapidly mounts to the sky. As swift as the eagle, it circles and climbs The far dizzy heights of the air; and he times St. Nicholas guides to the south as he speeds On his mission of love; for he knows of the needs And the wishes of all. "There's no chance to be late," He chuckles, then cries out, "Oh, b-o-y, this is great!"

O'er ice-covered fields where the Eskimos ramble, Where blizzards are born and where polar bears scramble; O'er bare, frozen tundras, o'er bramble and brake, O'er mountain and river, he sweeps and he takes— And speeds like the wind till, his quick journey ending, "Tis time," mutters Santa, "that I were descending." Then pointing the aeroplane downward, he flies In large sweeping circles, till, dimly, he spies The outline of houses appearing in sight. "And now," murmurs Santa, "'tis time to alight."

He knows how to do it—his skill is the proof, As he says with ease on the top of the roof. He turns off the motor—unbuckles the straps That keep him secure, then briskly he snaps The lock from the storehouse, selects all the things He marked for the children—then upward he springs To the top of the chimney with light, airy grace, And downward he glides to the big fireplace. The stockings he fills with a genuine joy, And pours out a blessing on each girl and boy. Then listening a moment, he turns on his toes And quick as a flash up the chimney he goes. He springs to his seat, sets the motor to purring, Calls out "M-e-r-r-y Christmas!" to any one stirring; Then off to the next house he speeds on his way— And so through the night to the break of the day He scatters behind him full many a treasure And fills all the hearts of the children with pleasure. At last with the dawn all his journey is done. "Ah, ha," shouts St. Nicholas, "now for some fun!" "My storehouse is empty, my burden is light— Just a few fancy stunts with my plane yet tonight!"

So saying, he noses his plane to the sky, And swiftly and gracefully clambers on high; Remains in the air for a moment quite brief, Then suddenly drops like a falling leaf, But righting himself with a dextrous turn That any professional one might yearn To imitate—"Ah," he remarks with a grin, "That's glorious; now for a good tail spin!" He spins him around like a sinking sloop; He volplanes down and he "loops-the-loop"; Right side up and then upside down, High in the air and then skimming the ground. Then near to the earth you could hear him call, "Kriss Kringle is here! M-e-r-r-y Christmas to all!" Then he clambers again to the sky-blue dome And hurries his aeroplane straight toward home.

tor was not happy. He asked himself if his mental unrest was due to his shattered faith, and answered the question in the negative. How could faith in a great mistake bring happiness?

The snow ceased falling. Jo was disappointed when he saw the blue sky the following morning. He loved to look up in the unspotted blue, but if it had only snowed a day or two longer, there might have been enough little white bird-feathers on the ground to last till Christmas. He knew how snow disappeared in the big city. If it was not carted away, it melted rapidly. However, Christmas was still some days off. There might be more snow.

While Jo was pondering on this weighty matter he heard a gentle knock. He turned expectantly as his mother opened the door, and then the soft-voiced lady stood beside the bed again. She held a long slender package in her gloved hand.

"Jo, I have brought the herder's stick," she said. "Shall I show it to you now?"

Jo reached out his hand eagerly and then withdrew it. If this was his present for the Christ-Child ought he to touch it?

"Please," he said, "will you let me see it?"

The doctor's sister unwrapped the many foldings of paper, and Jo saw the evolution of the most wonderful shepherd's crook in the world. It was as tall as the tall lady herself, with the most beautiful curve in the end. It was the color of gold, and around the middle was a great bow of ribbon, as white and soft as the little white bird-feathers that entranced Jo as they floated through the air.

"Take it, Jo, dear. It is yours. You must look after it till Christmas Eve. Then we will stand it by the door where He will see it. And how are you feeling today?"

"Better, ma'am," Jo answered,

touching the crook timidly. "Maybe I'll get up in a few days. If I could sit in a chair when He comes—"

"We'll ask the doctor about that. Is there anything you want?"

"No, ma'am, only do you think it will snow some more?"

"Probably. So you want a white Christmas, do you? I think maybe we'll have one. It is very cold outside."

For many days Jo forgot his aching body. He almost forgot to watch the sky for signs of snow, so wonderfully interested was he in the beautiful night and day on the soft pink quilt, while he gazed on it with awesome eyes. His mother, too, often came to look at it, and touch it now and then with reverent fingers. Whatever she may have thought of the Christ-Child legend, the crook seemed to be visual evidence that the Blessed Baby did visit the homes of the poor. For who else would be entitled to such a beautiful shepherd's staff?

Day by day Jo grew weaker, but he never lost confidence. "I'll be better in a few days," he said continually to his mother. "No, I am not strong today, but tomorrow, or the next day, maybe, I can sit up."

Doctor Cummings on his daily visits talked as cheerfully and boisterously as ever with little Jo, but when he left the room his brows drew together in a frown, and he shook his head. One morning he said to his sister at the breakfast table, "Our little Jo—"

"Jo?" Gertrude asked quickly, looking into his face. "Oh, not that—not that! Morton, with all your skill, can't you—can't you just tide him along for a few days more?"

"I can't understand you, Gertrude," the doctor said a little testily. "If your philosophy is right, isn't it better for him to die now? If death is oblivion, then, perhaps it is worth our while to struggle on as long as we

may. But if death, as you believe, is a glorious transformation, why delay it?"

"But, Morton dear!" Suddenly she realized the futility of argument, and turned to her plate with troubled face. The doctor detected unshed tears glistening under the lowered lids.

"I'll do my level best, sis," he said with forced gruffness. "Let me see—four days to Christmas Eve. I'll have to resort to artificial methods. If you think it best—"

"Please, Morton, unless—you think it would be cruel. But I cannot think it would be that."

"My level best, sis," the doctor repeated. "I suppose you'll be there?"

"Certainly. Will you come with me?"

"As certainly not," said the practitioner shortly. The day before Christmas dark clouds gathered over the city, and when Jo woke the following morning the air was white with little fluffy bird-feathers. Jo was transported. It would snow all day surely, and the ground would be hidden under its white covering. The doctor came in just before noon and stayed longer than usual. For the first time he gave Jo bitter medicine, but Jo was too extravagantly happy to heed it long.

"Take things easy, little man," the doctor cautioned. "You are excited and feverish. You must rest quietly all day if you want to see the Christ-Child tonight. You didn't sleep much, did you?"

"No doctor. I couldn't sleep. I was listening to it snowing."

"And could you hear the snowflakes patter down?" the doctor laughed.

"Oh, yes," Jo answered gravely. "It sounded like rain, only it was not nearly so loud. It was like this, and silk drew his hand lightly over the pink silk quilt, making a soft seething sound almost inaudible to the doctor's trained ear."

"Humph!" said the doctor, "You have most remarkable ears, youngster. And what are you going to have on the supper table tonight?"

"I don't know. Miss Cummings said I mustn't ask."

"Humph!" said the doctor again. At nine o'clock that evening Miss Cummings tapped at Jo's hall door and was admitted quickly. This time she removed her hat and coat and laid aside her muff as if she intended to remain some hours.

"Jo dear," she said we are going to bring the table in here. Then you can look at it all the time." She opened a suit-case and took from it many bundles wrapped in colored tissue paper. One by one she undid the packages and arranged their contents on the table, while Jo and his mother and Stella looked on in silent wonderment. She had just completed her task when there was a hearty rap on the outer door and in an instant later Dr. Cummings strode into the room. Gertrude turned in surprise.

"Jo, Morton!" she exclaimed. "I am glad."

"Humph! I promised to spin out the thread, didn't I?" her brother asked truculently. Gertrude said nothing. She understood her brother quite well.

"And what is this?" Cummings demanded reaching for her hand.

"Sh!" Gertrude whispered. It's a watch for Jo."

"And what do you suppose he is going to do with that?"

"Don't Morton. I simply had to give him something."

The doctor turned his attention to the table. It was not exactly what he had expected to see. Gertrude always did things on a grand scale, but the table looked meager to him. Had he known the attention and thought his sister had given to the furnishing of that table, he would have realized that the seeming meagerness was not due to negligence. Gertrude's judgment was unerring. At first she had planned to load the table with all the delicacies and delights of the holiday season. Then she had reconsidered. The Christ-Child was coming to a humble home. Was a richly laden board in keeping with such an occasion? A crust and a cup of cold water—that was all the Master had asked for in his own day.

So she had curtailed her plans. There was a small white frosted cake in the center of the table, surrounded by little red candles. Outside the circle of lights was strewn a few holly leaves, with sprays of red and white berries; a few olives and figs, which, Cummings explained to Jo, were what the Christ-Child had eaten in his own country so many years ago; and lastly a little loaf of bread, a jar of honey and a jug of water.

When the doctor grasped the symbolic meaning of it all, he nodded his head approvingly. He turned to watch Jo, and suddenly rose and picked up the boy's hand. Jo roused and looked up at him wonderingly. "Is it still snowing?" he asked.

"Still snowing, little man."

"And it is almost time for the Christ-Child to come?"

"Almost time. See Jo, the table is ready, and here is the herder's crook. Sis, put that pillow under him. He can't see the top of the table."

Propped up higher, Jo feasted his eyes for a minute on the table and let his hand fall lovingly on the gilded crook. His eyes sparkled with excitement, but soon dulled. He looked up at Miss Cummings.

"Do you think I will see him soon?"

Miss Cummings looked across at her brother. The latter nodded.

"Yes, Jo dear. You will see him very, very soon. Are you happy, little Jo?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'll begin to get well soon."

He turned his head once more to look toward the table. Slowly the tired lids descended, a smile spread over the wan face, and the head nestled back on the pillow. For a moment there was absolute silence.

Miss Cummings reached out and took the woman's hand. The woman turned her eyes suddenly to the bed and began to cry softly.

"Jo didn't see Him," she sobbed.

The doctor scraped back his chair and placed a hand on the woman's shoulder.

"There, there, mother," he said. "Little Jo is all well again. He said he would be well soon."

"But He didn't come," the woman moaned.

"Oh, yes, He did. He came and took Jo away with him. Jo has seen the little Christ-Child."—Advocate and Family Guardian.

THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S GOOSE.

The goose has the right of way for the New Year's feast, where it is usually garnished with onions, roast raisins and parsley. Hot orange juice is poured over it just before taking to the table.

The secret of success with this fowl lies both in its selection and preparation. The goose is at its best at this season, later becoming insipid. Choose one having a yellow bill, the red being a sign of age. See that the breast-bone will easily bend beneath the pressure of the finger, that the fat is usually three-quarter hours, but you will make no mistake if you allow twenty minutes for each pound.

Any of the following dressings will prove toothsome and each housewife may select the one which appeals to her: Boil three white potatoes, skin and mash them; chop three onions very fine, throw them into cold water; stir into the potatoes a spoonful of butter, some salt and pepper, a tablespoonful of finely rubbed sage leaves; drain off the onion and mix with the potato, sage and other ingredients. Mix this well and stuff the fowl with it.

A choice dressing is made as follows: Take equal quantities of bread crumbs and mashed potatoes, season with butter, onion and herbs, salt and pepper, add two chopped hard-boiled eggs, two tablespoonfuls of minced walnuts and bind with the yolk of an egg.

The German housewives fill the goose with sliced tart apples and bake. The following French chestnut stuffing is proverbial: Three pints of Italian chestnuts, boiled till tender, then peeled and mixed smooth with two tablespoonfuls of butter, some parsley, shallots, pepper and herbs. Cover with stock and cook till thick; mix with a cupful of raisins and use.

Chestnuts and prunes, seasoned with cinnamon and mixed with rice, furnish another pleasing combination. The best gravy to serve with roast goose is one in which the giblets are used. Boil until tender, chop fine and return to their liquor, season with salt and pepper, thicken with flour and serve hot.

An old-fashioned white sauce for goose is made by putting some scraps of mutton or veal in a saucepan with two blades of mace, several black peppercorns, an anchovy, a head of celery, a bunch of sweet herbs and a thick slice of lemon. Cover with a quart of water and let boil until reduced to half a pint; strain and thicken with four teaspoonfuls of flour, boil five minutes, add two spoonfuls of pickled mushrooms; mix the yolks of three eggs with half a pint of thick cream and a little nutmeg, put in the sauce, and shake over the fire, but do not let it boil. This is very nice.

Concerning Mistletoe.

The mistletoe was a sign of hospitality and good fellowship. In later times it was gathered in with some ceremony by the servants of the lord of the manor for prominent place in the decorations of the great hall for the Christmas feast, and, with holly and other greenery, was left hanging until Twelfth Night. These decorations, to avert ill-luck, were never thrown away when taken down, but removed with great care and burned.

Numerous curious and ridiculous superstitions as to methods of preventing disease were believed in years ago, and are not altogether extinct even today. It is said that much ancient faith clung to the mandrake root, which was carved in the form of a doll, dressed in fine clothes, and kept in a box or coffin concealed in some corner of the house. Each month it was washed in wine and water and freshly garbed.

Another universal cure was to carry a piece of mistletoe which had been cut from a tree by a golden sickle and caught in a white vessel as it ran. Shakespeare referred to the plant as the mischievous mistletoe. But let us rather quote Sir Walter Scott, who wrote:

"Forth to the woods did merry men go To gather in the mistletoe."

Pecks of Diamonds.

During the year 1919 South Africa exported 1124 pounds of diamonds. This quantity represented just about 125 quarts.

This vast quantity of precious stones reduced to terms of bushels would equal a trifle less than four, or what would be two ordinary grain bags full of them. Naturally the stones included a great number of very large ones as well as many medium sized and small ones.

He Almost Believed—

"Sometimes I almost think that girl intends to be really rude and discouraging."

"What now?"

"Why, I met her out walking, and asked if I might see her home, and she said, 'Certainly, any one passing along our street may—or you can go up to the roof of this office building and see it without having to go any nearer.'"