

THE DEACON'S CALL.

THE stars were bright, the air was crisp, when from his ample farm Good Deacon Jones walked down the road, a basket on his arm.

While on his shoulder carelessly a cedar bush he bore, and thus equipped he made his way to Widow Nelson's door.

"I've come," he said, "—thank you, no chair, it's gettin' pretty late— To bring a little truck to help the children celebrate;

For Christmas comes but once a year, and somethin' should be done To make for every livin' child the day a happy one.

"An' lately I've been thinkin', an' the thought has come to me, When Christmas should come round again how things down here might be;

Of course, I don't pretend to say that you can't do enough, An' still I felt I'd like to just bring down this little stuff.

"So here's a pair o' skates for John, a doll for Mary Jane; For toddlin' Tim, to help him walk, a big striped candy cane; Here's nuts an' raisins, pictur' books, an' I can't tell the rest, But take 'em all and fix 'em up just as you seems best.

"An' then to make the Christmas day seem like it used to be, Along here with this other truck I've brought a Christmas tree;

The children had one every year, for which their father planned. But now he's gone—an' they're so young they might not understand.

"For Santa Claus is real to them, an' they don't know that we Provide the toys an' other things that load the Christmas tree; To them the reindeer team is real that speeds from town to town, An' real the fatry saint who climbs the chimneys up an' down.

"An' that's the reason why I've come; My gifts is nothin' great, But just a little truck to help the children celebrate; Tut, tut, no thanks, don't mention it, nor tell 'em it was me, But let 'em think 'twas Santa Claus that brought the Christmas tree." —G. B. Torrey, in Springfield (Mass.) Republican.

MR GENNISTERS CHRISTMAS.

The Conversion of a Dry Old Bachelor.

"WISH you a pleasant journey," Mr. Gennister, and a merry Christmas!" Mr. Gennister turned slowly toward his new clerk—a fair, sunny-faced young fellow—with a cold and stony stare. "I do not expect to have a pleasant journey," he said. "And I do not believe in Christmas."

Young Mortimer, the new clerk, looked blankly at his employer and said no more. When the door closed behind Mr. Gennister's departing figure, Tom, the office boy, laughed. "Say, Mr. Mortimer, when you've been with him as long as I have, you won't be wishing him a pleasant journey—or a merry Christmas, either!"

"I'll wish him both!" young Mortimer said, sturdily. "And I hope he'll have a merry Christmas, in spite of himself."

Mr. Gennister's journey from the city to the suburbs of that small New England town was no more pleasant than he had foreseen. It was a long and tiresome journey, followed by a cold drive through the darkness, for it was nearly eight o'clock before he reached the lonely, old-fashioned house which once had been his home. For some reason, Mr. Gennister had never cared to part with this house, which through the entire year was left in charge of an old servant, who kept it always ready for his immediate return, though every year he went back to it for shorter periods and at longer intervals. But he had chosen to come to it now on the night before Christmas, to get away from the annoyance of the holiday fuss and the air of general festivity which he disliked so much, and which for some days would pervade the entire city. It was a nuisance, a foolishness, an interruption to business, and he would have none of it! And the sooner that Young Mortimer learned his opinions about such things, the better!

As Mr. Gennister approached his old home he noted with satisfaction the flare on the window panes, which told of a blazing log fire in his particular den. But his satisfaction was marred when he was greeted in the hallway by his old servant, all cloaked and bonneted and with a tearful face.

"How are ye, Mr. Gennister, it's well ye are lookin', sir. But to think of yer havin' come home just when me duty is callin' me two ways I don't know what ye'll say to me, sir,—but me daughter over to Westley has been took ill suddenly an' Lem has drove over to fetch me, an' is waitin' at the back door this minute, sir—so I must be goin' at once. I've set out yer supper, sir, an' yer breakfast, too—all but the coffee—if ye'll just be good enough to make that for yerself! An' me niece, Ellen, will be over in the mornin', sir, for I've sent her a postcard in the mail, an' she'll take care of ye an' the house, sir, till I return."

"Very well, then, go," said Mr. Gennister. "I'll get along. Well, what else is the matter, Jane?" as he saw the tearful woman was not yet ready to depart.

"I'm very sorry, sir, but there's the

bye! I wouldn't a had it happen for a good deal, for ye don't like childer, I know. But yer telegraph was delayed, an' I didn't know ye was comin' till—with all I had to do to get ready for ye, sir, it was too late to get the bye home. An' ye'd never a knowed that he was here, sir, if I hadn't been called so sudden away. An' I can't take him along wid me, sir, for over to Westley all the childers is down with the measles—"

"Who and what is he?" Mr. Gennister demanded, sternly.

"Me son John's littlest bye, sir, goin' on four year old—an' come over afore I knowed ye was comin' home, to spend Christmas day wid his granny. An', poor little soul, I've been that hurried an' upset that I've niver a thing to put in his stockin'—which he'll break his heart over in



"OH, SANTA CLAUS, FILL UP MY STOCKING."

the mornin' whin he wakes up an' finds it impty!"

"Stop rambling and tell me what you expect me to do," Mr. Gennister said, grimly.

"Nothin' in the world, sir, for he's abed an' asleep, till in the mornin' he wakes an' finds stockin' impty an' his granny gone! Then he may cry a bit, but not for long. He can dress hisself—he's a smart little bye—an' if ye'll give him just a little of bread an' sup o' milk, he'll be all right till Ellen gets over, an' then she'll know what to do, an' ye'll niver dream, sir, there's a little bye in yer house. An' I humbly hope, sir, ye'll pardon me, an'—"

"Yes, yes, good-night," said Mr. Gennister, impatiently, cutting her short and turning on his heel.

He went up to his room to remove the stains of travel. And before he came down again he had heard the back door shut and a wagon drive away, and he knew he was alone in his house—alone, with the exception of a strange child!

Certainly Mr. Gennister was much annoyed, yet he was just enough to see that Jane was really not to blame. She could no more have foreseen being called away by her daughter's sudden illness than that he would telegraph her at the last moment before starting, instead of on the day before, as hitherto he had done.

He put on his comfortable lounging robe and went downstairs to find a bountiful supper spread out on a neat table before the open fire. Short as her time had been Jane had provided amply for his comfort. She had not neglected one thing which she knew he liked, although she had found no time to run to the village store for a top for her grandchild's stocking!

By the way, where was the boy? It might be as well to know in what part of the house he was sleeping in case anything should happen in the night.

So when Mr. Gennister had finished his supper he arose, a feeling of annoyance again coming over him, and because the back part of the house was usually cold, he put on a cap before he took up the lamp and started upon his quest.

He had poked his head into three empty bedrooms before he came to Jane's, in the middle of whose ample featherbed a wee figure was curled up, fast asleep. At the bed's foot a limp little stocking hung empty and forlorn.

While Mr. Gennister was looking at it the little figure squirmed and suddenly sat up. Two little fists rubbed open two sleepy eyes and then the small boy crept rapidly on all fours to the foot of the bed and felt the stocking—empty!

There was a surprised and pitiful quiver on the lip. Then the child raised his head and caught sight of Mr. Gennister's short, stout figure, clad in long lounging robe and cap, and the boy no longer felt either grief or doubt.

"O Santa Claus, fill up my 'tockin'!" he cried, tossing up his arms. "Willie be good boy!"

Instantly—for some unknown reason—Mr. Gennister blew out the lamp. The silence was broken by a sleepy chuckle from the bed as the child snuggled back among the warm coverings. Then there was a mixed-up murmur of "Santa Claus—'tockin'—good boy," followed by a contented, sleepy sigh, after which, with noiseless step, Mr. Gennister withdrew.

Back again in his warm sitting-room he sat staring at the fire. He—him of all men on earth—had been mistaken for Santa Claus! He laughed grimly—it was so strange a job! Queer that even a child could believe such nonsense. What fools grown people were to teach them such rubbish—or to countenance it! How many children would be disappointed in the morning, how many heartaches

would be caused by that ridiculous myth—that cruel deceit of "Santa Claus." Now, there was that little chap upstairs—

And Mr. Gennister felt sorry, felt positively uncomfortable as he thought of the bitter grief which would come to that child on his awakening.

At last he got up and put on his coat and overcoat. It was not a long walk to the village and he felt, since he had given Jane such short notice of his coming, that he owed it to her to get a few toys for the youngster—who was really in no way to blame for being there. But Mr. Gennister did wish that Jane had been less conscientious and had attended to providing for the little chap's Christmas—even if she had been obliged to leave those fragrant mince pies unmade!

She was amazed, of course, and aghast that Mr. Gennister should have been so bothered by "the bye." And she immediately carried the child away to her own domain—the kitchen. But Willie had no mind to give up his new-found playmate, and watching his opportunity he slipped away from Ellen and reappeared at "Mitter Dennitter's" side.

Mr. Gennister put down his book and looked with some amusement at the persistent child. But Ellen had missed him, and quickly arrived upon the scene, whereupon Willie set up a howl and clung to Mr. Gennister with all his force.

"There, there—leave him with me, Ellen. He'll be good in here, and you go get the dinner," said the master. And the maid departed, marveling.

Oh, but Willie had a royal time that day, and Mr. Gennister had some good exercise—and some new sensations, too! They dined together as they had breakfasted, with Noah and his family. And then, after Ellen had everything washed up and put away, she appeared, all cloaked and ready to take Master Willie home.

It was difficult to persuade him to "be good bye" and go; he evidently was well content to stay where he was. But finally the idea of showing all the beautiful toys which Santa Claus had brought him, to "mommer, popper an' the chiller" prevailed, and Willie consented reluctantly to have them packed up and to go.

"Goo'-by, Mitter Dennitter; Willie come soon aden!" was his shrill farewell. Then silence settled on the bachelor's home, and with a sigh of relief Mr. Gennister picked up his book and settled himself before the fire.

But somehow he could not fix his mind on what he read, and his eyes would wander from the printed page.

"Hello! there's poor old Noah or one of his family! I wonder if you feel lonely, too?" he said as he picked up the forlorn little figure and set it before him on the mantelpiece.

"Welcome back, Mr. Gennister, and I hope you've had a merry Christmas!" was young Mortimer's greeting to his employer upon Mr. Gennister's return.

Tom, the office boy, laughed silently and looked up to see young Mortimer "annihilated;" but to his amazement Mr. Gennister, after his first habitual frown, smiled and actually seemed amused.

"Well, most unexpectedly, I did have, rather!" was the enigmatical reply.

Later in the day he said to young Mortimer: "You have children in your family, I imagine?"

Young Mortimer laughed.

"Well, sir, there are nine of us, and I'm the eldest of the lot!"

"Ah," Mr. Gennister said, thoughtfully, "that explains it. That makes the difference. I see now why you think so much of Christmas. I never had brother or sister—I grew up without having any young companions. And I see now that I have missed something out of my life."—Judith Spencer, in Springfield (Mass.) Republican.

JOY OF CHRISTMAS.

Spirit That Accompanies the Little Gifts That Bring Gladness to the Heart.

A good part of the joy of Christmas consists in the thoughtfulness and self-sacrifice that go into the preparation of the gifts for that happy day. If you could look into hundreds of thousands of homes this week you would see fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters planning how to make the gifts that will gladden the hearts of those dear to them, says the Boston Watchman. More often than not the expenditures that parents make for these purposes involve self-denial on their part. They have to give up something they would like to have in order to make the children happy. And how the little ones who have managed to save a trifle during the year calculate upon spending it to the best advantage. "Oh, dear!" they often think to themselves, "how many presents I should like to make, but how hard it is to make the dollar go around." Some of the gifts, however, that bring the utmost gladness to a parent's heart are the little things wrought with love by the hands of the children—the book-mark, or the crochet work, that the girls work on in secret, or the toolbox or shelf that the boys make in their spare moments. Such gifts frequently have a quality that the most costly presents lack. The aroma of some gifts cannot be bought with gold.

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A TRAP FOR ST. NICK.



Young Mechanic—"Yer see, it's a trap. It jes' fits our chimbley, an' Sandy Claus kin git down all right; but when he climbs back he can't git out, an' I gits all his pack."

Big Siberian River. The Irish river, in Siberia, is 2,200 miles in length, and drains 600,000 miles of territory.

BETHLEHEM A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Words by FRANK B. WELCH, Author of "An Easter Anthem," Etc. Music by PAUL P. ARMSTRONG, Composer of "Salvation," "Light of My Life," Etc.



Some Memorable Christmas Seasons in American History

CHRISTMAS, the birthday of our independence, and it came at an appropriate time, at a time when the thoughts of the world turn naturally to peace. Significant and impressive as was the simple ceremony in which the great soldier and patriot figured as the central figure, it was made the more so because of the time of the year at which it was enacted. Peace came as a blessing to the nation, and it came virtually upon the birthday of the Prince of Peace.

In the following year, in the same state of Maryland, but at Baltimore instead of Annapolis, came another incident in the peace history of America when on Christmas day was formed the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States. Previous to that time the church had been represented by ministers of the Gospel scattered throughout the different colonies, but they had no central organization. It was this organization, an organization that has since carried the message of "peace and good will" to nearly all the nations of the world, which was perfected December 25, 1814. It was an appropriate day for such an event, and it was an appropriate event for the day.

As the surrender by Washington of his commission was practically the last incident of the revolutionary war, so did the signing of the peace treaty at Ghent, Belgium, mark the close of our second war with England. The second, like the first, came at an appropriate time, December 24, 1814. Thus two of our great wars closed just as the Christmas bells were proclaiming to the world.

Practically the final act of our great civil war was the announcement of amnesty to all those who had waged war against the government. President Lincoln had issued two proclamations of amnesty that restored but certain portions of the members of the southern armies and the southern governments to citizenship, and the final, and general one, came from the hand of President Johnson on December 25, 1865. It was an appropriate observation of the day, and an epoch marking event in American history.

And so it is that Christmas has been to us as a nation a day of peace as it should be for all time, and to all the world.

Another memorable Christmas season in American history that proclaimed "peace on earth, good will to men," was that of 1783, when on December 23 Gen. Washington reported to congress at Annapolis the completion of the task assigned him, and surrendered his commission as general in chief of the American armies. It was the final act in that long struggle for

WRIGHT A. PATTERSON.