

# Christmas Promises.

**F**AIR morn in whose far sky is firmly set  
The steadfast star of Faith our feet to guide;  
Sweet day wherein are Love and Scrow met  
To challenge Hatred and to level Pride:  
We welcome you with palms upturned in praise  
Of Him whose gift has gladdened all our days.

**N**OW manifold His works to-day appear,  
How multiplied His blessings everywhere;  
All we have seen and known throughout the year  
Comes back to prove His tenderness and care;  
And clearer visioned in all signs we see  
The purpose of the Man of Galilee.

**E**ACH perfect snowflake, trustful of His power,  
That finds its way down the trackless air,  
Brings its glad message in this glad some hour,  
"I shall return," it sings, "no matter where  
I chance to fall; within my crystal shell  
Is that which triumphs over death and hell."

**H**IS this pure blossom of the upper air,  
So chants the soul of man upon this day,  
What though the year has been a round of care,  
The hidden wings will find the upward way  
As surely as the flake to mist shall run,  
And so return all joys to the sun.

**E**ACH gracious flower that made the Summer sweet  
Has gone alone into the house of Death;  
But somewhere hidden 'neath the Winter's sheet,  
Itself lies waiting for the south wind's breath,  
So He who bore the cross for all men lay  
Till angels came to roll the stone away.

**B**LESSED promise of that blessed birth!  
O sweet fulfillment of that promise made!  
What is there sprung from air-enclosed earth  
But proves the Lord who in the grave they laid?  
Go, winged winds, to rouse the voiceless sea  
To sing the praise of Him of Galilee!

CHARLES EUGENE BANKS.

not on the bills—he approached the fairy, and in the same rough voice exclaimed: "You are to go with me on my travels to-night. Come."

For a moment she stood irresolute, not knowing if this were part of the programme. Then, thinking it must be, she took the heavily-gloved hand, and, with a bow to the audience, stepped back and back, until both were swallowed up in the vast depth of the chimney.

But they did not go upward. Santa Claus opened a door in the rear, and they were outside the noisy hall and in the dressing-room.

Suddenly Santa Claus stripped off the heavy wings and crown from the fairy, and handed her her furs. "Come with me," he said, masterfully.

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"This," and he threw down the mask and wig, the fur coat and heavy gloves—before



THE SANTA CLAUS OF THEIR DREAMS.

her stood Frank Marvin. "I asked you to come with me on my travels, and you consented, as you did once before—but this time it is for life."

Alice Reisen laughed a little hysterically. "But you know what happened before, Frank." The last word was a caress, so tenderly was it spoken.

"Yes, I know from what you said a little while ago—you thought my sister was another girl in whom I was interested. There was and can be no other girl but you." And then they talked it all over, for good.

The candy and toys were distributed from the green-paper-wrapped tree when they returned to the hall. They did not remain long, but went out under the stars and to the little parsonage across the way. Frank had sent a friend for a license, and in a trice they were married.

A team and carriage were at the door, and away they were whirled through the beautiful but crisp prairie night.

"To the ranch," ordered Frank, and then added: "It was a miracle that the train stopped right here in my own town. The big ranch-house is ablaze with light out there, and all is ready for you."

So the train went on toward the mountains without two of its passengers.

"Do you know," whispered Frank, as the team drew up to the ranch-house, almost a mansion out there on the plains, "that I received the best Christmas present of all to-night?"

"But you had to be your own Santa Claus to get it," laughed Alice.

THE POLITIC MAIDEN.



"I hear that you and George have quarreled."

"Well, I guess not. It's altogether too near Christmas."

An Eye for the Present.

Miss Smoothie—No, I cannot give you my answer until the first of next year.

Mr. Softleigh—But, why? You say you love me, and—

Miss Smoothie—Why, you silly thing! If our engagement were announced now, none of the other men would send me a single Christmas gift.—Baltimore American.

Christmas Forestry.

All trees man should love, but his life's dearest joys  
Should circle that tree which blooms  
Candles and toys.  
—Chicago Record.

An Afterthought.

"John," asked Mrs. Torkins, tearfully, "do you remember the present Mrs. Page gave me last Christmas?"

"Yes," replied her husband; "what of it?"

"I am almost sure I have sent it to her this year."—Brooklyn Life.

Aftermath.

We learn to know at Christmas  
Life still is full of bliss;  
To-day we get the presents,  
Next week we get the bills.  
—Judge.

One Token Barred.

"Dearie, what do you want me to give you for Christmas?"

"Well, precious, I've got 11 framed photographs of you now."—Detroit Free Press.

Mail from the Old Boy.

Don't offer costly gifts with which  
That Christmas tree is hung;  
Just give me back the appetite  
I had when I was young.  
—Chicago Record.

Incredulous.

Mamma—Santa Claus only comes to good boys.  
Johnny—Huh! If he did he wouldn't have to hustle much to get around.—Puck.

## MR. DAVIDSON'S COAT.

A CHRISTMAS EPISODE WITH AN UNEXPECTEDLY DISMAL ENDING.

### THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

WHAT is tenderest and best in the heart of man is evoked when the keys of memory are touched and the song of the Christ-day is sounded. It is the music of the home and the loved, a glad, subdued, melody recalling the earliest days of recollection—an eager rush for well-filled pendant stockings, for the laden Christmas tree, with its gifts for all of the household. Aye, and the eager rushing about the house with merry shout and joyous greeting for all. Then, the home-coming of the absent and the gathering of all about the family board.

Whether the corridors of our memory mansions be long or short—our lives be many or few, the harmonies ring along them just the same, telling of the presence in the heart of that which is old as immortality, and which shall never die—love. There, then, this Christmas day, that Christmas day, and every Christmas day, is present in the heart this love for the home, with its inmates, for friends and for humanity.

The Christ-day practice of opening the heart to unselfish influences is born of the teachings of Him whose birth the day commemorates. His life beautiful, his life rounded, the only completely perfect life. He taught the lessons of love, gentleness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, benevolence, chastity and self-denial. What is higher and best in humanity is of His teaching, and from the latter has come the Christian home, the best development of unselfish affection and contentment to be found among men.

The Christ-day is attuned to melody that ever shall thrill the soul and cause it to bring forth what is best in it. The herald song of the angels to the shepherds on the plain is fresher, stronger, closer, more harmonious than ever, in the light of the newer blessings which have come from the Gospel of His peace. The lesson of real humanity, refined, divine altruism, and not the coarser sort sometimes called by this



ON THE PLAINS OF BETHLEHEM.

name, was unheard of until from His peace on the Mount of Beatitudes He gave it forth, music sweeter than angels ever sang, that higher song that man lives not unto himself alone, and that the greatest happiness is that which comes of doing good unto others.

Peace on earth! good will to men! That higher song which lifts man above himself and makes him but little lower than the angels.

The Christ theme will never die. First heard on the plains of Bethlehem, with the frowning Herod-temple but three miles away, within whose walls were heard the teachings of the law of revenge and love of self, heard there for the first time, it has been sounding ever since, spreading wider and wider, until now it compasses the whole earth. In Christ's day Rome had waxed to its noon of majesty, yet Rome passed and was not. On that kingdom rose other kingdoms, which perished in their turn. Since He lived one system after another system of philosophy has been built up, only to be torn down again. But the words of the Christ be and abide, and they shall stand forever, influencing men to nobler lives and higher results in living. His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and of its duration there shall be no end.

Meet and right is it, then, that the Christ-day shall be one of gladness in the human heart; that the children shall take part in it, since He loved them and blessed them, and that gifts shall be exchanged in token of that love for one another, which He bore for all humanity.

WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.

Shattered Her Ideals.

Miss Askit—Why is Miss Wunder so pessimistic about Christmas?

Miss Tellit—She hung up a \$12 pair of silk hose last year, and some one stole them.—Baltimore American.

CHRISTMAS was a great time in the Davidson family, an event prepared for in secrecy for months. It was the desire of Mr. Davidson's heart to succeed in surprising his wife in the matter of his selection of a Christmas gift for her, and it was his wife's pride that in all the 20 years of their married life he had never yet gained his wish.

In consequence of this, it was somewhat exasperating that the clock had struck



"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY A JOKE?"

eight on this particular Christmas eve and she had not yet discovered the hiding-place of to-morrow's gift.

"He must know that I want diamonds this time," she mused. "Why, I have criticized the vulgar display Mrs. Jones makes of them, and talked of the waste of money their purchase implies until he must have been impelled to buy me some out of sheer contrariety. But where did he hide them? That—"

A knock at the door interrupted her train of thought, and a particularly uninviting chap asked for old clothes in a robust whine. The influence of the season was upon Mrs. Davidson, however, and she gave him an old overcoat which her husband thought he might sometime wear when he went hunting. He never did go hunting, but he lived as if he always expected to start early the next morning.

"No, I just can't think where he has put that gift," she said, returning to her chair and her thoughts. "Well, one comfort, he hasn't seen the cuff links and the meerschaum pipe I have for him. I've moved their hiding-place twice a week, so he has had no chance to find them while rummaging in the waste paper basket for his clean collars or searching in the china closet for his necktie, which are always kept in the upper left-hand bureau drawer. What's that!"

The front door had opened cautiously and a stealthy step went up the stairs and stole across the floor of the room above. Mrs. Davidson turned pale, then softly clapped her hands. "It's Tom going to take a peep at my present! I'll keep quiet and find out where it is."

She heard the steps about the room, and held her breath until they paused before the chiffonier.

"Ah, it is in the drawer that Tom said had stuck and would not open. Why did I never think of that before?"

She listened until the cautious footsteps came down the stairs and the front door softly opened and shut. Thenceforward in her triumph.

"Aha, he has slipped out to come in a few moments later, thinking that I did not hear him. I'll slip up now, have a peep at my diamonds and a good joke on him in the morning!"

She went upstairs and lit the gas; it flared up and a scream burst from her. The room was in confusion; drawers were upset and their contents scattered on the floor. As she screamed, the front door opened and her husband came running upstairs.

"Well, Tom Davidson, if you think this is a joke, I don't!" she cried. "To slip in this way and play a trick on your wife is—"

"What on earth do you mean by a joke?"

"Tom Davidson, you don't mean to say that I didn't hear you come upstairs 15 minutes ago to look at my present and—"

"You certainly did not. Hello!" He strode across the room and lifted a drawer of the chiffonier which was upside down on the bed. "As I came up the block, I met the ugliest tramp I ever saw, and I could have sworn that he wore my old coat. You simply sat there while he rifled the place and carried off the diamond pin I had gotten for your Christmas gift!"

When she had quieted down a little and Mr. Davidson was telephoning for the police, his wife suddenly remembered that the last hiding-place for the cuff links and the meerschaum pipe was the breast pocket of that old coat.

ELISA ARMSTRONG BENGOUGH.



A CHRISTMAS ACCIDENT.

IT PROVES THAT VANITY SOMETIMES IS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

"HONESTY is the best policy," sighed Florence, "especially when Christmas is near," she added.

"Which means?" queried her dearest friend, eagerly.

"Which means that my vanity is too near the tip of my tongue for my own good. Luckily that is a common complaint, however, else I'd never mention it."

"Oh, I understand, you expected somebody to give you a handsome present, and sent an equally handsome one on the chance. Oh, well, comfort yourself; perhaps she really believed the price you had marked upon it."

"That wasn't it at all. You remember that Dick went abroad early in the fall, don't you?"

"I do—he has told me every incident of his trip over-time I have met him since his return."

"Of course—what else did he go abroad for! Well, he came to see me the day that he went away. He told me what a pretty little hand I have."

"Ah, well, you mustn't expect people to always mean what they say."

"I am glad that some people do not, dear. I just mentioned the fact that I always wore a No. 6 glove—Oh, if you are going to take it in that way—I am sure that I always did until I was 16 years old!"

"Oh, but that—"

"I am glad that you have the grace to apologize, dear. Well, Dick failed to bring me a present when he came back, but I was just as sweet and nice as ever, because Christmas was so near that—"

"There wasn't time to quarrel and make up, especially, with a man who is as popular as Dick."

"No. When Christmas eve arrived he came to call, with a box in his pocket, which bulged so plainly that I could see it with my back turned. He drew it out at last—just as my patience was exhausted, and, Oh, Anne, it was two dozen pairs of gloves that he had brought me from Paris!"

"Oh, how perfectly lovely of him!"

"It would have been, but for the fact that they were number sixes, and each pair had my monogram embroidered on it, so that I could not exchange them!"

"Oh, dreadful! What could be worse?"

"That he insisted upon seeing me put a pair of them on!"

SEASONABLE ECONOMY.



"Heavens, man, how do you happen to patronize a free lunch counter?"

"Case of necessity, old boy. My wife and the girls have been out Christmas shopping."

Up Boston Way.

"And what," asked the caller in his most ingratiating tones, "what did Santa Claus put in your stocking, my little girl?"

For a moment she looked at him through her diminutive spectacles; then, in a voice of mingled pity and indignation, she said: "We no longer put credence in obsolete tradition; nor was it delicate of you to mention that article of feminine apparel."

Gathering up her copy of Ibsen, she hurriedly left the room.—New Liverpoolist.

A Menu Trick.

O the doctor he was sad  
And the doctor he was mad,  
And the doctor ripped and tore and roared,  
Alack!  
Some rogue had gone and stuck  
In the doctor's sock a duck  
That every time you touched it murmured:  
"Quack! Quack! Quack!"  
—Chicago Times-Herald.

Giving Him a Chance.

"Harriet, you ought to give me my choice of a Christmas present once in awhile."

"Well, Harry, I'm willing; do you want a lamp-shade, a sofa pillow or new lace curtains?"—Chicago Record.

Inevitable.

The seasons come, the seasons go—  
Christmas is here before we know it.  
When we must take our hard-earned cash  
And indiscriminately blow it.  
—Puck.

# Christmas Morning

**SANTA CLAUS**  
.....BY.....  
**PROXY**

...A...  
**Christmas Love Story**

By  
**CHARLES MOREAU HARGER**

**F**IFTY miles, sixty miles, seventy miles—seventy-three miles! The indicator in the roadmaster's car attached to the overland flyer showed that the train was making swift time across the level plains. Ahead, in the Pullman, passengers scarcely noticed the speed. They were wishing the long winter night were over and were thinking of cozy firesides back east.

Frank Martin left the indicator without a word to the roadmaster, whose guest he was for the trip to his ranch, went forward for the tenth time that evening. He looked anxiously up the aisle of the Pullman. There she was—petite, dark-haired, pensive, alone.

After a moment of indecision he approached her. "May I bring you something from the dining car?"

"Nothing, thank you; I am doing very well."

What was the use? She had only nodded when he encountered her on the train.



"MAY I BRING YOU SOMETHING?"

It was quite an accident that they met thus after their intimacy at the seashore. He did not know that she was going to a new home with her uncle in California. She would not let him explain the past. It was almost time for him to get off at his ranch—for the train was making 73 miles an hour! How he wished it would slow up!

Hardly had the thought passed through his mind, when there was a jolt—a crunching, grinding sensation, a lurch—and then suddenly stopping. No one who has been in a wreck will ever forget it. The Pullman tipped sidewise, and that was the end.

Marvin was at Alice's side when it was over. He took her arm, and, looking into her white face, calmed her fears: "It is all right now—off the track—no more danger."

He left her, to help the passengers in the smoker who were imprisoned and somewhat injured, then returned.

He gathered her baggage, and, without permission, told her to follow. With the remainder of the passengers they took up a cold and sorrowful tramp along the track across the bleak prairies to the little town, three miles away, where lights twinkled a friendly greeting.

Frank tried to be sociable. "It was a narrow escape," he ventured.

"Yes." Nothing more. She would not

even turn her face toward his in the moonlight. They trudged on in silence.

The town was glad to see them. It gave them the best it had, and none suffered. But its heart was not wholly in the work. One long-gaited citizen, evidently originally from the south, explained it:

"Yeh see, we 's a-goin' ter hev' the Christmas doin's t'night at th' hall."

"What? I'd forgot that it was Christmas eve," broke in Marvin. "Let's all go over. The passengers from the Pullman car, finding that they could not continue their journey until the following day, as well as many of the others, agreed. Well bundled up, they took their walk through the chilly streets, where blew the bitter north wind of the plain.

The hall was nothing more than the upper room over a store. It was filled to the aisles, but the exercises had not yet begun. The southerner, who was master of ceremonies, tipped back to Marvin:

"We need two more to help in the doin's," he whispered. "Won't you un's come?"

Frank laughingly arose, and the dainty Miss Reisen, having no other choice, followed him.

Behind the curtain, what a sight met their gaze! A Christmas tree it was, to be sure. There were no evergreens nearer than the mountains, and to make up for the deficiency the plainsmen had secured a dry cottonwood and wound its straggling branches with green paper. The appearance would have been ludicrous had it not been a little pathetic.

"Not much like the pines of the beach where we used to rest last summer," whispered Frank to his companion.

"You and the other—I presume you mean," was the withering response.

"Alice—Miss Reisen, what do you mean?" but the gaunt captain interrupted.

"You, young lady, I'd like you to be the fairy. Our leadin' lady is sick, an' you look like her."

Entering into the spirit of the occasion, Miss Reisen accepted the task.

"You'll have to wear some wings, and there will be a little scene, but nothin' fer you to do but look pretty—you don't need no coachin'," he added, gallantly.

"Great admirer of yours," suggested Frank, as the functionary moved away. Alice did not reply.

The wings were brought, and they seemed almost large enough for the wearer to soar with. She put on the costume and danced a two-step across the rude stage.

"Yeh musn't do that, lady; this is fer th' benefit of th' churches, an' th' folks wouldn't like it," said the manager, with a grin.

Then came up one of the women of the town, who seemed to have a part of the management. She gave some instructions as to what would happen, and Miss Reisen listened intently. Another listened, but she did not know it.

The programme of the evening opened with a number of songs and recitations, to which the passengers from the train gave the most earnest attention and hearty applause. Marvin seemed wonderfully at home, Miss Reisen thought, and was calling men by their first names as if he knew them. He was behind the scenes a good deal; too much, she thought, also, and it worried her, for he was the only one in all the house that she counted on as a friend—no, was he a friend? She wished she knew if the story her chum told her were false or true.

Then came the time for the Christmas tree "doin's," as the manager called the exercises. The big curtain was dropped, and the children of the prairie farms and ranches gave an audible "Oh!" as the beautiful green-paper-wrapped cottonwood, lighted with candles and glistening with tinsel, all brought from the city 400 miles away, burst on their eyes. Many of them had never seen an evergreen, and this was a fulfillment of all their anticipations.

Before the tree stood a fairy, her wings and robe making her almost ethereal in the sight of the little ones. Behind was the open mouth of a chimney, and far off rang the horn of Saint Nicholas as he approached over the housetops on his sleigh. It was cold enough outside for his biggest furs, and when he came laboriously down the chimney and stood amid the group on the stage he was the very picture of the Santa Claus of their dreams.

Swiftly he made the rounds of the tree, and in guttural tones told the little folks to help themselves. Then he did what was