

The Angels' Song

O little babe, O gentle babe,
That in a manger lies,
A-listening to the choral sweet
Which floats a-down the skies;
We, through the year, who only hear
The world's harsh thundering,
Listen that we, dear babe, with thee,
May hear the angels sing.

O little babe, O gentle babe,
Who lookest toward the star,
And seeest when they bear their gifts,
Those wise men from afar;
From wandering wide, back to thy side,
Weary and worn we flee;
But hearts that bleed and hands that need,
Are all we have for thee.

O little babe, O gentle babe,
Our hearts were hard and cold;
The star we loved, the star of fame,
The song, the song of gold,
At the manger's side this Christmastide,
We listen and we long
To see that star shine from afar
And hear the angels' song.

—Richard F. Souter.

NO STAR TO GUIDE

THE POSSIBILITY THAT ESCAPED THE WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM.

Some Name Might Have Rang Through All Ages Had She But Known the Spirit of Christmas Hospitality.



Bethlehem of the wonder which was happening in their town that night.

Suppose some gentle woman had met Joseph and Mary on that Wonderful Day, as they entered the town, and had said to them: "Our streets are full of homeless strangers. Come you and bide with me!" By that simple act of hospitality, her name would have been written high, high among the names of earth's happiest folk. "Blessed is she," we should have cried, "to whose home the Christmas joy first came!" But the women of the Judean town did not know to throw wide their doors and bring in the world's gratitude and love, says the Youth's Companion. So the Child was laid in a manger, and oblivion holds the names of all the women in Bethlehem who slept that night beneath the wings of wondering angels. Had they but known!

Year by year, for 19 centuries the story of the night at Bethlehem has been told and retold. To-day no household in Christendom, in town or village or on distant prairie can plead the ignorance in which Bethlehem then lay. If the door is shut on the Christ-child to-day, it is not from lack of knowledge, but from churlishness or indifference.

The Christmas spirit speaks in many voices. The sprig of holly or the plum pudding, the tree laden with gifts or the cheer for the lonely—these are all the world's way of saying to the Mother and the Holy Child, "Abide with us!"

Barred out alike from cottage and palace and inn in Palestine, the Hope of the World renews his appeal each Christmas-tide to our modern Christian world. By the very paths of the first Christmas, the heart is softened and prepared to give him welcome. To-day there is no heralding angel or guiding star.

No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
Where music souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

Santa Claus Abroad.
It is strange to contemplate the great variety of forms the Santa Claus custom assumes in different countries. In Belgium the little ones fill their shoes with carrots and oats and hay for the white horse St. Nicholas is supposed to drive. Very early in the morning they run to the room in which their shoes have been left and find that the provender has gone and in its place candles and presents are found.

Among the Carpathian mountains it is St. Peter, who, dressed as a bishop, and accompanied by the dreadful Ruprecht, is expected by the children on Christmas eve. The visitor first delivers a short sermon, lays on the table a rod whitened with chalk, and takes his departure with his tinkling bells, while Ruprecht follows close behind. The children now hasten to pull off their shoes, polish them and tie them together; and, as soon as the last notes of Niklo's bells have become lost in the distance they run into the garden and secrete their shoes beneath a bush. They spend the time until 10 o'clock in relating stories, then go to their shoes, to find them filled with apples, nuts and goddies.

Christmas Carol

By Phillips Brooks

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 bursts forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.

It is coming, Old Earth, it is coming tonight!
On the snow-flakes which cover thy sod
The feet of the Christ-child fall gentle and white,
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out with delight
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 hope that he dared not to 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 trod,
This, then, is the marvel to mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed,
That mankind are the children of God.

THE ROAD TO CHRISTMAS

In Retrospect Grandfather Pictures Yuletide Journeys of Many Years Ago.

All the year long we have been traveling toward Christmas—I and my old wife, our children and our grandchildren—not all by the same road, not all with the same expectations, but all looking out alike for the first glimpse of its smoke rising above the wintry landscape of the year. Now we can almost fancy that we hear the chiming of the famous bells—all Christmas towns are famous for their bells—and we know that we shall soon be at our inn.

If life be a journey, and each year a stage upon the road, I do not know where else a sensible man would stop for the recruiting of his health than the fine old Christmas towns. There, if anywhere, men are to be found living together merrily; the inns are warm, the cheer is good, the amusements are of the heartiest, and the society is of the best. I have been through many a Christmas town—for I have traveled far—and have rested thoroughly in each. I never found two of them alike. Of late they have been much grayer and quieter than they used formerly to be; but I do not think that I have been less happy of the quiet towns at which I have of late years resided. Let me confess so much. As for these about me who declare them to be not quiet by any means, but perfectly uproarious with jollity, I do not interfere with their opinion. Children so easily deceive themselves; it is enough for me that I am old enough to see things as they are.

The First Christmas Tree.
"It's the Germans who brought the Christmas tree to America," the German said. "Didn't you know that? The duke of Hesse sold a regiment, called 'The Hessians,' after him, to fight the Americans. They got so drunk over their first Christmas tree here away from home that Washington captured them, and that started the fashion of Christmas trees in America. It's history."

Tom's Best Christmas

By Archie P. McKishnie

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Tom Lawrence shook his fist under the grocery keeper's nose.

"You try and stop me and I'll fix you," he threatened, "even if I have to do time for it. You trying to hold a fellow away from his people this way, and it Christmas Eve, too. Why, the old man and the old woman will be right glad to see their little boy again."

He laughed wheezingly and leaned weakly against the counter.

"You can't keep me from feeding on the fatted calf, Josh. I'm going to walk in on the old folks to-night, just like the wild, wayward sons you read about do. You never hear of them getting the cold hand, do you?"

A fit of coughing choked the laughter from his voice, and when he lifted his face it was gray-white beneath the lamplight.

The big grocer laid aside the package he was tying, and walked around the counter.

"Come here, Tommie," he said, opening the door of the inner room.

The young man slouched forward obediently.

"Say, Josh," he whined, "cut it out, I'm tired of being preached to. Won't you get me a little whisky, just one drink?" he pleaded. "See, I'm all broke up, and I'm going home to-night. Six years of the life I've led wears

derstand you'd got a big position out west. I'm afraid I wrote 'em a letter from you, Tommie, tellin' 'em all about it and askin' forgiveness for not biddin' 'em good-by." The other nodded his head on his breast.

"You were always a big-hearted fool, Josh," he said, hoarsely. "I can't understand why you won't get me a little whisky."

"I remember their faces when they read that letter," said the grocer, heaving a big chunk on the fire. "I remember how glad they both was. Your ma said you'd be writin' again soon and let them know how you liked it. Well, you did." "I wrote again, did I?" "Yep, you wrote every week you've been away, and that's how long—let's see?" "Six years ago, day after to-morrow, Josh."

"You sent some money home, too," continued the big man, after an interval of silence. "Quite a little bit of money. Fifty dollars once, and a ten-spot every now and again." The speaker laughed queerly, his face working. "Only last night they got a letter from you, Tommie, with \$50 in it. Christmas box, I think you called it." Something like a sob came from the bowed figure.

"Your pa most always read your letters to the neighbors. They're right glad you're doing so well. Every Christmas Eve your ma and him come over here and buy a Christmas turkey with the money you send them—I always have a laugh at your pa. 'I'll eat Tommie's share,' he says. 'Cause it's next best thing to havin' him home. We're right proud of our Tommie,' he always ends. They've been writing you, too, every week regular. I read all their letters, 'cause I have to in order to know how to answer them. They got a letter from you last night with their Christmas money in



one, Josh, wear one right down to the heart and soul, and this cough—"

He sank down on a seat before the fire, his slim fingers gripping his chest.

"Sit there and get good and warm. I'll be back in a minute." The grocer slipped out, locked the door after him, and went behind the counter. Customers had come in and were waiting to be attended to.

The grocer drew a tall young man to one side.

"Jim," he said, "I want you to help me out. Go behind and serve them customers. I don't care if you haven't never sold groceries; do your best. Don't be particular about weights. Give everybody Christmas measure. I've got to stay away for a spell, 'cause—"

He whispered something in the young man's ear. His hearer started. "Why, they think—" he commenced; but the grocer laid a big hand on his arm.

"I know what they think; and, whatever you do, keep what I've told you to yourself. I don't know what to do, but I'll find out a way. When they come, call me. I'll be in here."

Lawrence lifted his white face from his hands as the grocer entered.

"Have you got it?" he questioned eagerly. The big man sat down, facing him.

"I want to have a little chat with you, Tommie," he said, gently. "You remember when you were a youngster at home here, how we used to chat together and have a mighty good time of it, don't you?"

His hearer made a grimace. "I want a drink," he said, shortly. "You remember how you used to come down for the mail, Tommie, and I'd have you come in and help sort the letters?"

An expression that was almost a smile dawned slowly across the boy's haggard face. "I remember we used to imitate one another's handwriting, Josh," he said, slowly.

"Yes, and I got at last so's I could write just like you, Tommie. Remember you used to tell me you could almost believe it was your own writin'?"

"I remember, Josh. Go on. There's something behind all this. I'm waiting to hear it." "When you got into trouble over at Maxton's and—"

"And skipped. Yes. Well, go on, can't you?"

it, and they've answered it already. Here's their letter with your address on it. Maybe you'd like to read it?"

The young man reached out a shaking hand for the letter. The other watched his face as he read. When a tear fell with a splash on the cramped writing, the grocer spoke again.

"You can send me to jail for doin' what I've done, Tommie. In one way it was wrong, very wrong. I've been guilty of openin' letters."

The other held up a thin hand as though to ward off a blow. Then he rose weakly and came over to the big man.

"Josh, old Josh," he spoke tremblingly. "You've been—you—are—Oh, I'll make it all up to you some day," he broke out, lifting his head. "I'm going to be a man. I know I'm not fit to go to them now. I've been drunk for days! But promise me you will take me to them soon, Josh."

"Day after to-morrow night is the anniversary of your goin' away. We'll go then," promised the grocer with a big smile. He took the boy's hand. "I'm goin' now. You just lie down on the sofa here. You'll stay at my place until after Christmas. He moved toward the door. Then he turned. "Shall I fetch you anythin'?" he asked gently.

"Nothing," answered the young man, smiling. "I'm perfectly satisfied, Josh."

An hour later the grocer carried an armful of groceries and threw them into the back of the sleigh. "Merry Christmas to you both, Mrs. Lawrence," he cried, tucking the robes about the old couple. The old man chuckled, and the old lady, glancing about her fearfully, bent forward, hesitated, bent forward again, and kissed the big man on his broad forehead.

"God bless you," she said, gladly. "God bless you for sendin' for our Tommie. I'm right glad you think him so smart." The grocer laughed awkwardly.

"Yep, Tommie's goin' to work for me," he called. And with his heart in harmony with the jingling bells, he passed into his store.

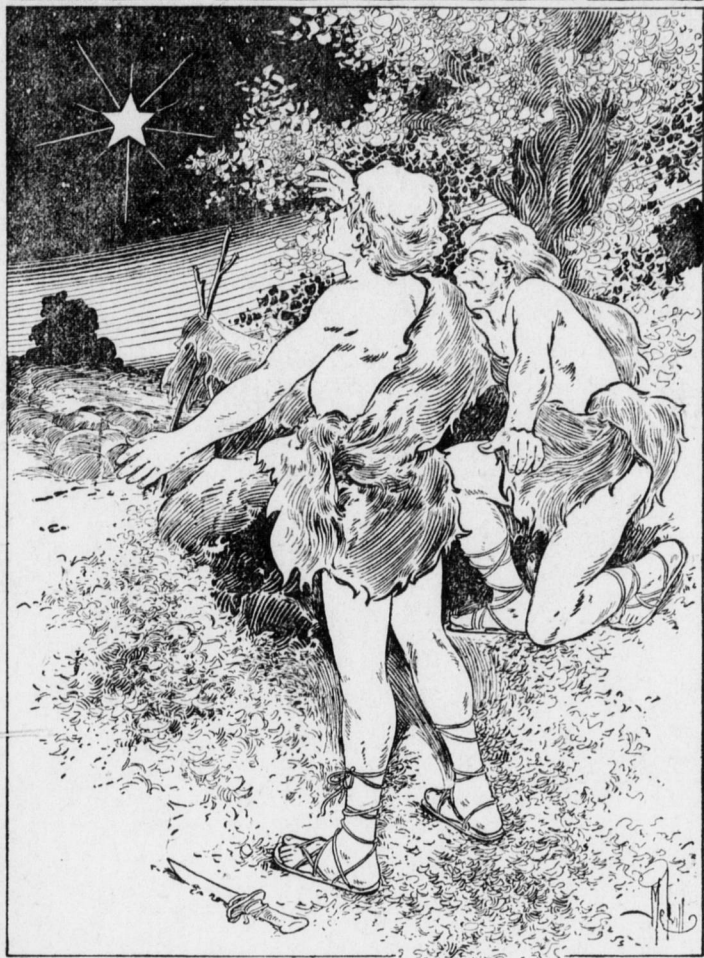
A Christmas Cynic.

A woman's idea of doing charity work is to get somebody else to give the money for it.

It's very annoying to a girl to meet a man she likes when the color of the feathers on her hat doesn't harmonize with his cravat.—New York Press.

THE MIRACLE

By HARRY IRVING GREENE



Far to the eastward there shone a new star.....

One thousand nine hundred and nine years ago, in the days of the mighty Herod, there lay upon a hillside not far from Bethlehem, one Ben Joseph, the shepherd, son of Joseph of Jeffa. Ben Joseph was almost 18 now, and had been a shepherd nearly as long as he could remember. Practically all his life he had strolled over the hillsides with his charges throughout the days, and when night had come had laid himself down to sleep among them with a sheepskin for his couch and a sheepskin for his mantle. And in those long years of loneliness he had grown strong of body and wild of spirit, knowing little of faith, hope or charity and caring less; believing only in the law of recompense and that an eye was fair exchange for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Now while Ben Joseph was silent and rather surly of face, he was only inclined to be wicked when aroused. At those times, however, he was apt to be as savage and merciless as a wolf, for it was then that the blood lust burned hot in his throat. And it happened that upon the day of which we are speaking he was nursing a great rage, for while he had been sleeping a few nights before some enemy had crept into his flock and cut the throats of three of his finest ewes. And this deed meant that very bad times were in store for Ben Joseph indeed, for when his master came to count the sheep and found the three missing, Ben Joseph knew that he would be beaten with a staff until he could scarcely hobble, and even worse than that, he would be charged with their value; a sum which it would take him months of watching to repay. And, furthermore, he knew who had committed the dastardly crime. It was none other than Ben Hadad, who herded his flock in the hills to the westward and with whom Ben Joseph had quarreled and fought a year before, and who now had come prowling across hill and valley in the dark of the moon for his revenge, and that Ben Joseph might be soundly beaten in payment for the whipping which he himself had received. In his haste the marauder had dropped the red stone which he always wore as a charm, and Ben Joseph picking it up among the dead sheep had instantly known to whom it belonged. Muttering he had sworn to himself that he should have his revenge.

And on this night he was formulating his plans. If Ben Hadad could creep upon him in the middle of the night and kill his sheep, then certainly he could creep upon Ben Hadad and kill him. Clearly he felt that it was the only thing to do, and arising in the early darkness he felt of the edge of his knife and finding it plenty keen enough he seized his crook and went loping off among the hills towards where he knew his enemy could be found. It was a long journey, but he traveled fast, and when midnight had come he had marked the fold, while near by it in his rough shelter of skins he could hear the steady breathing of the unsuspecting man whom he sought. And at that token of the other's helplessness his eyes took on the glitter of a wild beast's, and with his knife held firmly he crept onward to where the sleeping one lay behind his screen.

Beneath the starlight he saw the recumbent form lying still and defenseless, and with a last wriggle and leap he landed fairly upon it, the fingers of one hand fastened in the throat and his blade held high.

"I have come to kill you, Ben Ha-

dad," he said coldly. The man beneath him shook like a wind-thrumped reed.

"Why should you wish to kill me? I have never done you wrong and you once whipped me," he pleaded. His captor laughed sharply.

"You lie, and for lying I shall let you feel the tooth of my knife before you feel its full bite," he returned as he pricked his captive until the latter squirmed again. "And now," he went on, "you shall die as my sheep died and be of less value afterwards than they were. For at least their skins are worth something and their flesh was wholesome, while you dead will be even more worthless than living." Ben Hadad made a final appeal.

"At least you will let me pray to the stars before I die," he pleaded, and Ben Joseph smiled grimly and said that he might spend one minute in that useless way. And as Ben Hadad, beginning to mutter his last words, turned his despairing gaze towards the eastern heavens, the one who sat upon his breast and watched him closely in his hate, suddenly saw the eyes below him grow great with wonder while the distorted face smoothed and became soft as a child's. Greatly amazed at the wonderful transformation he turned his eyes upward as the other had done, and as he did so he gave a great gasp, his fingers loosened and he sat staring up into the night. For far to the eastward there shone a new star in the firmament, such a star as the world had never before seen; lustrous, pure white, shining with a soft brilliancy beyond compare; the star of Bethlehem in all its glory as it hung over the manger of the new born Christ, the redeemer of the soul of man.

And as he gazed transfixed by this miracle a wonderful and subtle change came over the hard heart of Ben Joseph. From out of it his wrath fled like a scoured evil thing; the coils of hate that had burned therein turned to ashes and into their place stole a softness such as he had never felt before. He shuddered, threw his knife into the night and getting upon his feet held out his hand. "Arise, Ben Hadad. I leave you in peace," he said gently.

Full of wonderment the released one arose and together the two stood staring at the glowing marvel, all fear and hate vanished. Then Ben Hadad spoke:

"I murdered your sheep because I hated you, and in return you spared my life. Why did you do so?" Ben Joseph shook his head as much puzzled as was the other.

"That I do not know. I only know that I hate you no longer. I even seem to care for you." Ben Hadad laid his hand upon the other's shoulder.

"Also my heart has grown soft. You shall take three of my best sheep in the place of the slain ones and we will be friends from this night on." His companion nodded.

"We will be as brothers throughout our lives. I will come for the sheep another day, bringing you a present. Until then peace be with you." Into the darkness he passed, his eyes still fastened upon the eastern miracle, a song of happiness arising from his heart. For though Ben Joseph knew it not, the son of God had come to earth and already the influence of his gentle spirit was wafting like the night breeze throughout the land, soothing the breast of man as the night breeze soothed his cheeks. For such was the coming and spread of the holy spirit of the Master; the spirit of peace on earth and good will to man.