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CHRISTMAS STAR

wards the earth, feeling very proud and important. At that time three lived in the East three Wise Men, who were kings in their countries, and who made a study of the stars. All three noticed that there was a new star in the sky, shining more brightly than all her sisters, so they started to read old manuscripts to find out what this meant. They discovered that when a King should be born in Israel, a new star would shine and so without even knowing about each other, the Wise Men decided to go and visit the new King. They had studied the Jewish writings, and believed that this Child just born would bring peace and happiness to the world. So they brought presents with them, such as would be given to a king, and they set out with their servants, and guards and herds of camels and donkeys to carry their goods across the desert to Palestine.

It was a long and dangerous journey. The only guide was the little star, which moved ahead of them high up in the sky. They trusted in her, and she led them faithfully until their three caravans met and mingled. The Wise Men told each other where they were going, and why. They agreed, since all were following the star, to go on together.

THE LOST GUIDE The long weary weeks went by and they were getting near their goal. Just then, without warning, the star disappeared and left them not come back, because suddenly all alone, they waited, but she did not come back. They were so sure that she had gone back to Paradise to ask the angels to tell her again what to do.

Of course, the Wise Men were surprised at losing their guide, so they met to discuss what they should do. They knew as did everyone else, that Herod, the Jewish king, lived in Jerusalem, and they decided to go to him first. After all, he should be able to tell them where to find the Child.

Now Herod did not like all this talk of kings, as he was afraid the Jews who didn't like him might decide to throw him out if they had a new king. He asked many questions, and the Wise Men told him about the star that had guided them, then suddenly gone away as they neared the city.

"I am sorry," said Herod, "but I can't tell you where you will find the child. Go out into the streets, and look for him, but I have found him, come back and ask a favor from you. When you tell me, for I too, would like to visit him."

The Wise Men promised, not knowing that the evil king planned to have the Child killed as soon as found. They looked high and low through the town, they asked everyone they met, yet nowhere could they get news of the Child. They looked for him in Jerusalem, and started off home, feeling very sad.

Meanwhile, the angels told the little star again what she must do and sent her on her way. And she went, determined that this time she would not forget anything.

So it was that just as the Wise Men came out of town, they saw again the star which seemed to beckon them. Again they followed and saw her stop, at last, above the roof of a stable. They were very surprised, for who could imagine that a king would be born in such a place?

But they went in, to find a baby asleep in the manger between a donkey and an ox. His father and mother sat on the straw by him, and as they came in, Mary smiled at them. "Have you come to see my Son?"

Seeing the Child, it was as if a great light shone upon them, and they knew without any doubt that this was indeed the Saviour promised to the world. So they knelt humbly to adore Him, and offer their gifts of gold, myrrh and incense. As they did so, the angels came down from heaven, and set on the roof, singing loudly and joyfully: "Peace on earth to men of good will."

Others had gone flying over the whole country side, singing their songs of peace, telling the shepherds that a King had been born to them in the nearby stable. These angels guided the shepherds and their sheep so they too could adore the Child. But when they got to their right minds, they felt shy, and would not come in.

Mary spoke to them, and the Wise Men moved aside so that everyone could see the Child. And Jesus waking up just then, smiled on rich and poor alike, so that all felt happy and at ease.

SHINING BUT SAD

Then it was that one of the kings remembered the promise to Herod. "We must go back to Jerusalem and tell him we have found the Child-King." All three set out ready for the journey, but an angel stood before them. "Go back another way," he said to them. "Herod seeks only to kill the Child. Do not tell him where he can be found."

They obeyed and went home the long way round, while Herod waited in vain for them in his palace. Above the stable, the little star still shone, but she was not very proud, thinking of what her sister stars would say about her failure. "It is true that one of them would have done much better than I. How stupid the angels must think me, after taking so much pains over me. I am the most unhappy star in the whole world," so saying, she started to cry.

LIVING TREE

ST. BONIFACE There is a popular belief that the origin of the Christmas tree dates back to 724 and has to be attributed to St. Boniface, the Apostle of the Germans. Many to whom he revealed the glad tidings of the Gospel would have liked to embrace Christianity. But fear of the oak-trees Thor they had on Christmas Eve of 724, St. Boniface told them: "The Cross of Christ shall break the hammer of the great god Thor this very night." Then, with their reluctant permission, he hewed down the oak of pagan worship. Standing by a young fir tree, the missionary then proclaimed what may be called the panegyric of the Christmas evergreen:

"Here is the living tree, with no stain of blood upon it, that shall be the sign of your new worship. See how it points to

the sky. Call it the tree of the Christ Child. Take it up and carry it to the chieftain's hall. You shall go no more into the shadow of the forest to keep your feasts with secret rites of shame. You shall keep them at home, with laughter and songs and rites of love. The thicket oak, its fallen, and I think the day is coming when there shall not be a home in all the land where the children are not gathered around the green fir tree to rejoice in the birth-night of Christ."

SIGN OF FAITH

Another legend of the fir tree deserves to be told. One December 24th the Christ Child knocked at the door of a forester's cottage. Cold, hungry, exhausted, the small traveler was taken in for the night by the kind couple. The next morning he revealed His Divine identity to them. Radiant and thankful, He told them: "There is nothing I can give you beyond what you already have, except one thing. From a fir tree I broke off a branch and planted it by the doorway, where it promptly blossomed."

"Behold," continued the Child of Bethlehem, "My gift to you. Henceforth it shall always bear its fruits at Christmastide, when all a world is empty and dead. To you it shall be a sign of faith that does not die."

In some parts of Germany the Christmas tree is still made to typify the Stem of Jesse—the human genealogy of the Son of God. Small figurines of Adam and Eve stand at the foot, while the serpent, also a figurine, is twisted around the trunk of the tree. At the top is a star representing the Light of the World, the Seed of the Woman destined to bruise the head of the wily serpent.

How the legend came to the tree is not known. But a quaint little legend tells us that long, long ago the mother of a large family trimmed a Christmas tree with all sorts of shining things. During the night the spiders visited the room and left their webs on every branch. All this the Christ Child saw, and His heart was moved with compassion for the mother who had labored long and lovingly over the tree. To reward her selfless charity He blessed the tree and suddenly all the glistening webs turned to silver. And that, says the legend, was the first tinsel.

THE CUSTOM SPREAD

Gradually the tree custom spread across Europe. Finland adopted it in 1500. Fifteen years later a prince of Nassau-Weilburg lighted a Christmas evergreen at the court of Vienna and urged Kaiser Franz I to adopt it. About the same time it crossed the eastern frontier into Poland. From there the custom branched out into Britain, France, Holland, Denmark, and Norway.

Just when the tree became acclimatized to America is not known for sure. Some say it was brought over by Germans who emigrated to the United States in the early 1830's. But there is also a story told that the 30,000 German conscripts who were hired by England at 25 cents a day to fight the American colonists celebrated Christmas with a tree. George Washington and his Continentals were wintering at Valley Forge in 1777-78.

Christmas trees are believed to have been first sold in New York City in 1851 by Mark Carr, a farmer in the Catskills. This suggests that well over a hundred years ago the tree was so connected with the festivity that an enterprising American could make a profit by staffing a Christmas tree lot.

MANGER'S FOOT

might not be too late to hear the angels sing. Before he left he told the lamb that he was not going far, which was true. But he did not say that he was going to Bethlehem, for that sounded much farther away, and he wanted the lamb to think that he was near. And the lamb knew why.

So, with all made clear, he was halfway down the hillside before he realized that it was he who was really going to Bethlehem to see a King.

By the time he reached Bethlehem the little shepherd, who had been so confident, began to wonder where he would find the King, for he knew that there were no palaces in Bethlehem. And when he passed all the dark houses he felt certain that he was too late—until he happened to remember what the shepherds had said, and looked up, and saw that the Star was over a stable.

A WONDERFUL SIGHT

At the moment the Star was lar-

ger, and even more brilliant than before as it cast its golden light down on the stable roof.

The little shepherd went quietly up to the stable door, and opened it as quietly—and peeped in.

No one can say how long he stood there, breathless with all he saw. There were Three Kings who had come bearing gifts for the greatest King on earth, and there was a holy light above the manger, where a Babe lay fast asleep. There was a Woman with a beautiful face and white hands, and with her was a Man of kindness. They were at that side of the manger, and the Three Kings were at this, and above were angels, and even a small grey donkey was looking over the headboards of the crib. All were there to adore the newborn King—but no one was at the foot of the manger!

The little shepherd, startled at his discovery, continued to stare at the empty place and wished with all his heart that he could be there, and fill the small empty place at the foot of the manger. He was so startled as he thought about it that he stepped backward and very nearly stumbled, but this time for his own clumsiness, which had been heard even by angels! To be caught when he felt he did not belong was exactly what the little shepherd did not want to happen, but was exactly the very thing that did happen. Because he was quest-

ing to hurry away, and stumbled again—just as a small angel with freckles tapped him on the shoulder.

THE FRECKLED ANGEL

The little shepherd, not afraid, but quite worried that he had behaved so, felt somewhat reassured when he saw that the freckled angel was smiling and had a finger to his lips. He motioned the little shepherd to follow, and led him away from the stable and whispered in his ear. "A—lamb!" said the little shepherd.

And the freckled angel grinned again and nodded.

So there was no doubt that even a small lamb might be a gift for a King.

The little shepherd was excited, for the freckled angel said that he would accompany him to the fold and perhaps help him select his gift, seeing that it was fit to be chosen.

On the way they talked of it but because they had to glance at one another now and then the better to hear, the little shepherd turned his attention to freckles. The angel had quite as many as he. And he asked the small angel how it could be that he brought freckles from Heaven.

And the freckled angel told him that once he came upon a child who was so unhappy because of freckles he felt sorry for him, and asked if he might have them instead of the other. And this was done.

JESUS' BIRTH

all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jesus' solemn year at the feast of the Passover.

And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast.

And when they had fulfilled ten days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and mother knew not of it.

But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and they sought Him among their kith and acquaintance.

And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

And when they saw Him, they were amazed, and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou dealt with us? behold, the father and I have sought thee sorrowing, and He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom

and stature, and in favor with God and man.

ESTEBAN'S GIFT

THE REWARD

As he passed the house of the mine superintendent, the man called "Esteban, come in."

"You've done good work for us, Esteban. Here's your reward." The superintendent gave him a bag of money.

"I didn't do it alone. I only helped Father Ernesto."

"We gave his share to the Church. This is yours," replied the superintendent. "Until your father can drive again, you can take his place for the same money. When we need first aid you'll be handy."

Esteban breathed, "Thank you I'll try."

Starting up the path Esteban remembered Luis. What would the priest, mine superintendent and his parents think if he ran away now? But how could he keep from going with the fully Luis?

Esteban thought he had heard someone talking. The path was dark. He shivered. No one trying, he thought. I couldn't be a doctor. There's not enough money for that.

Suddenly a shower of stones clattered but Esteban saw no one. Something heavy hit him. Esteban fought, clutching the money bag. Then all went black.

Esteban did not know how long he lay on the lonely path. When he came to the moon was bright. Esteban groaned. His money was gone and with it all his hopes.

"Help!" the cry came from below. Esteban felt dizzy. Maybe the robber fell into the canyon! He struggled to his feet. Again the cry came, "Help!"

"I'm weak! Why should I go?" But turning, Esteban followed the sound of the voice. "I'm coming," he cried. "Keep calling, so I can find you!"

Finally he stumbled over Luis. "You got my money bag?" "Help me, please," whined Luis.

Esteban felt like running. "I can't walk!" cursed Luis. Tearing a limb from a shrub, Esteban bound it to Luis' leg with his poncho. "Lean on me," he urged, staggering. "It's not far to Father Ernesto's." Luis faintly pushing and pulling Esteban reached the yard and called.

A DREAM COME TRUE Dr. Manuel was there. He helped the priest set Luis into bed. Luis opened his eyes, staring around.

"Esteban saved your life," said the doctor.

"I'm sorry I took your money, Esteban. Father, I must confess, whispered Luis.

Esteban felt like a weight was lifted.

Dr. Manuel smiled. "With this money as a start, you can go to school."

"But how?" asked Esteban. "After your father's better," the doctor replied, "you can stay with me and help for your board. When you're a doctor you can take care of the village and mining camp and I won't have to drag my old bones up there anymore."

"But Doctor, why should you help me?" "You've earned it. You can't refuse to take a Christmas gift for you, your family and me," the Doctor chuckled.

"I must be dreaming," said Esteban smiling at last.

"No, Dr. Esteban," said Father Ernesto. "I told you the Lord would provide."

"He has," sighed Esteban blissfully, "and given me my best Christmas gift!"

And that was all, all he had possessed for the past two years—two years to this day. In fairness, that was not quite all. Kathy had left him with the Faith that she had brought to him, but this religious faith, since she had none, burned low and flickered like the candle he was holding.

Suddenly there was a sharp rap on the door, and he could hear the muffled sound of a voice.

"Open up, open up!" A moment later Jack Russell was in the room.

"Hello, Jack. Come in."

"I saw the light. On my way down town for some last-minute shopping before the stores close. You know how it is. Didn't know you were back. I thought maybe somebody was camping out here or something."

"I came back today."

"Say, this place sure looks gloomy. You too. Like a ghost in that accident."

"I guess I am a kind of ghost, Jack. Everything's dead here."

"Say, fella, I didn't mean to put you in mind of Kathy—I mean, this is no time to be gloomy. It's Christmas Eve. I know what. We're having a party over at Pete's house tonight. Come over and hang on a few."

"I might just do that, Jack."

"Sure, fella. Well, I'll see you later. Stay here and you'll get pneumonia like—I mean, you come on over to that party. Well, I'd better be going now."

THE UNFINISHED STATUE He went to Pete's live up with that university crowd. They always had a business like Jack Russell along, for laughs. They could have an artist for laughs.

But he had not come back for that. What was it? he wondered. What pulled him across the ocean back to this house, and on this day of all days?

He set his candle down on a rough table, the one he used to mix his paints on. As he did he remembered the table's short leg, and the ingenious suggestions Kathy used to have for fixing it. He looked around in the semi-darkness

for something to slip under the leg. He'd get a fire going and eat out here, not in the cold kitchen.

In the corner he stumbled over a carved figure, a foot high—unfinished. He examined the statue—a bearded man, in robes, his hand outstretched, bearing a gift.

A half-formed memory nagged at him, then broke on him like a flood. It was his last promise to Kathy. He had been working on a group of figures for the new creche for their parish church. He had carved them all except for one of the Three Kings. After Kathy's death he had simply packed up what he had finished and dumped the figures at the rectory door. He had forgotten until this moment that he had never completed the job.

Moving the figure closer to the candle, he appraised it with a professional eye. Just as he had or two more of work and this young gentleman who wanted so long to complete his journey...

That's me, he thought, the missing king, following something, following a promise.

It was nearer three hours when he got up from his work satisfied. He looked out the front window. People were passing by, hurrying along to Midnight Mass in a light snowfall.

He put on his coat and hat, blew out the candle, and stepped out into the snow to join them. Under his arm he carried a gift.

are flabby of soul where strength really counts. Every little wind of a temptation that comes along blows them over. Yet they try to pretend that this weakness is manly.

St. Joseph was a real man, big within and without. He numbers among the giants of soul because he stood up to temptation and fought because he knew strong character is more important than a strong body. As Tenyson said: "My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure."

A JUST MAN

St. Joseph was obedient. There is a virtue for our day, especially

for young people, Joseph was told to do something and he obeyed. He did not back talk or make excuses or try to wiggle out of an assignment. He accepted; he obeyed.

Finally, in the Bible it tells us that Joseph was a just man. It is hard to think of a virtue needed more now, from the highest political figure to the lowliest shoe-shine boy. Let this forgotten saint teach us justice above all. Let him tell us that nothing is more important than to be honest with God and with self and with one's fellowman.

The star-and-snow scene of the cave at Bethlehem is viewed on every side during the festive Christmas season: the Child, His Mother, and Joseph. It is right and proper, of course, that the Christ Child should be the central figure in this dramatic setting. And Mary surely should have her place beside the Babe, for what is a child without his mother and Jesus was her little Boy.

But this Christmas let us not forget St. Joseph, the protector, young, strong, virtuous, a saint for every youth and for us all, the greatest saint in heaven besides the Virgin Mary.

DRIVE SAFELY!



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR! BAKER'S SHOE SHOP 110 E. Hargett St.

FORGOTTEN SAINT

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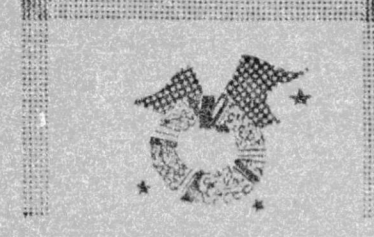
Merry Christmas advertisement for Dunn's Esso Service. Includes text: "Merry Christmas", "DUNN'S ESSO SERVICE", "to all of our many friends we wish Season's Greetings with the hope that our friendship will increase during the coming year."

Advertisement for Wood's 5-10-25c Store. Includes text: "Merry Christmas", "AND BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR", "WOOD'S 5-10-25c STORE", "Martin Street, Raleigh, N. C."



Best Wishes

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Advertisement for Sir Walter Chevrolet. Includes text: "With best wishes for the Holiday Season", "To all our friends...", "May this Christmas bring added pleasures of true health and happiness to each and every one of you.", "SIR WALTER CHEVROLET", "Raleigh, N. C."

Advertisement for Rawls Motor Co. Includes text: "Christmas Joy", "Happiness and good will are the order of the day.", "RAWLS MOTOR CO.", "Your EDESEL Dealer"