

When Christmas Comes



Oksheda's Christmas

by Noni C. Bailey

WHOSE oksheda washda daw? was the semi-Sioux greeting of the plump little Scotch Canadian mother as the sunny-haired young laddie came running into the kitchen, where already the porridge was cooked and the tea brewing for breakfast on this, his second Christmas. She caught him in her arms and tossed him high above her head.

"Whose very good boy?" was what she had said, partly in the language she had learned from her husband. His nurse had been one of those squaws of the picturesque type still to be seen in Manitoba. In summer they come, selling wild red raspberries or choke-cherries; in winter, trudging on snowshoes into the village to visit their customers.

Hugging the little lad to her breast, the rosy mother half sobbed as she tried to say it cheerfully. "Whose oksheda washda daw?" Even as she repeated the greeting, the door swung open and a sudden gust of wind swept the fine, dry snow, like biting dust, into her face. Before her stood one of these old Indian women, apparently exhausted from a long journey through the storm.

"Oksheda washda daw?" she gasped, then continued in her native tongue, "Wiehyenna, you speak the language of my people. You speak the cry of my heart. Last night I read it in the rainbow-hued streamers of light from the north—

"The night wind sang it—oksheda!" The wrinkled old face twisted into a pained smile as she sank in a heap by the kitchen fire. A bit of paper fluttered to the floor from her hand. "The Great Spirit calls—it is the end of the trail," she whispered as the little mother bent over her, anxiously chafing her hands. She saw the faded eyes suddenly brighten, then close suddenly—it was the end of the trail. "See, see," said the little lad, holding up the scrap of paper which had

fallen from the squaw's hand. Opening it reverently, the Canadian woman exclaimed, "My cert! It's an ill wind that blows nobody good, sure enough! Her oksheda!"

She rushed into the living room, where her "oksheda wechasta" (married boy) was lighting the candles on the scantily decorated Christmas tree. "Look, Robert, on Christmas Day it has come. The mystery and all—see! It is the oksheda's Christmas!" she exclaimed, as she gave him the crumpled paper to read.

Robert had been found when a baby by a band of Indians. Only the old squaw who had come to the end of the trail this Christmas morning knew the paper existed. All night long in the blinding snow storm she had traveled on her snowshoes—traveled that she might find some one to whom she could tell the story.

All these years she had guarded the paper, which she could not read, feeling that in some way it would bring good fortune to the oksheda who had seemed her very own little white baby. She had loved him so. She was afraid to show the paper to her people—the paper she had found hidden in his clothing. She was afraid she might lose him if they knew. Then one day he wandered out of her sight and the M. P. had found him by the lake alone.

No white man was found to claim him. The Indians were afraid to. Their white brothers would ask them to explain and often their white brothers did not believe. His foster mother loved him; but she, too, was afraid. So she hugged the bit of paper to her heart and kept silent vigil.

The M. P. took the lad home and hired an Indian nurse from the settlement to care for him. Every summer the old squaw came with her pail of red raspberries, only to grunt her thanks and look furtively about her to assure herself that all was well with the boy, then chuckle to herself as she patted her breast where the precious paper lay. In winter she would sometimes look through the open spaces in the frost-covered windows to see the candles on the Christmas tree and see her oksheda dancing with joy.

Then came the wedding, and for three years she had not known where to find the "oksheda wechasta."

The paper—ah, yes. It told who Robert was. His father had been a

A Christmas Prayer

By AMY BARRON LEONARD
in Kansas Farmer

O God, I ask no worldly gifts,
But give I pray, memories of happiness
That I have known;
And to this add forgetfulness
Of sorrows, lies and darkened paths.
Let me alone
For any selfish grief, for joyfulness
And smiling see, this Christmas Day,
The star that shone,
To guide the Wise Men on their way.

second son from Devonshire, who had sought his fortune in the great Northwest. It told how the young wife could not stand the hardships; how the father, too, had surrendered to the storm-king's fury one Christmas Eve; how he had cached his rich find under the rock that resembled the owl near the source of the river; how he had wrapped his greatcoat about wee Robert and prayed the Great Spirit to save him.

"A great Christmas for us all, Robert; but it is the oksheda I'm thinking of most. With the war come and the business gone, there wasn't to be much Christmas—but now! See, lassie, the storm is breaking; the sun is beginning to shine. My cert! My cert!"

"There, there, lassie, here comes the little shaver. Mind you don't let him in here till I go to the store again. There are toys and things to be put on the tree. The way it's come to us on Christmas, I know we'll find the gold."

When the snows melted they made the journey together. This year, as usual, the oksheda with the golden curls and the oksheda wechasta with the black mustache are trimming the gorgeous tree that stands in the bay window of the beautiful farmhouse near the river's source. The sleigh bells jingle merrily as the cutter stops outside with a load of little Indian boys from the settlement, who are brought each year to share the festival of the "Oksheda's Christmas." And down by the brink of the river is the rock that resembles an owl.

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Singing Christmas Carols

The old custom of singing carols in the streets was revived in 1917. In 1918 thirty cities co-operated. It is expected that carols will be sung this Christmas eve on the streets, in the parks, as well as in the churches, schools and public institutions of communities.

The Christmas Proposal

by Katherine Edelman

AURA WORTHLEY had passed her thirtieth birthday some years since, and although she was possessed of more than ordinary good looks, coupled with a good disposition and an inherent ability for home making, she had never had a proposal of marriage. Once, some one had almost spoken the words—Laura often thought of that wonderful evening since—but just as it seemed that the fateful moment had arrived Aunt Mabel had come seeking her for something or another. Next day Robert Barrett had left Lindenfield and Laura had never heard from him since.

The passing of time had eased the pain in her heart and she had managed to go about and show a smiling face to the world, but often she felt



very, very lonely. But she told herself that she had no right to think of Robert; he was probably married and settled down long before now in that far-off land where his company had sent him.

But, always as Christmas approached she found herself thinking of him and picturing the home that might have been theirs together. Aunt Mabel had been dead two years now, and since her death Laura had felt very much alone in the world, in spite of many friends.

But every year at Christmas time her cousin Vera, a widow of limited means, came to spend the holidays with her, and always at this time she gave a party for the young people. And lest any of them might be thwarted of love and a proposal, as she had been, she saw to it that plenty of mistletoe was in evidence.

She looked very beautiful now as she welcomed her guests to her annual party. She was one whom years give new and added charm in recompense for the rosy flush of youth that they steal, and as she walked to the door to answer a new peal of the bell, she would have attracted attention anywhere.

Opening the heavy door she looked without. A little cry sprang to her lips, for there she saw Robert Barrett. A rush of joy, of wonder, of delight, flooded her whole being. He had come—he still loved her—else, why would he be here?

Steading herself by the doorway she bade him welcome, and as she recovered from the sudden rush of joy at seeing him again, her voice grew cool and composed as she assured herself that his coming meant nothing more than a friendly visit—that even should he be still unwed, it would be some one younger, fairer than she that he would now seek.

He seemed rather ill at ease, and he blundered and stammered so when he spoke, that his voice was almost drowned in the sounds of gay laughter and music that came from beyond. Then, suddenly, without warning, his arms reached out and he clasped Laura close and she felt his kisses upon her lips. He was asking



the question that she wanted most to bear, and he was telling her that she meant all the world to him. When they both came back to earth he showed her the spray of mistletoe above them: "It gave me the courage I lacked long ago," he whispered.

Later he told her why he had never written. Aunt Mabel had spoken to him the evening before he left, and had told him that it would not be fair to tie Laura with a promise; also she had hinted of another man who was more favored. The company had just brought him back to Lindenfield, and as soon as he got in, learning that Laura was still free, he had come.

And because it was Christmas time, and also because the years that were coming held a wonderful promise for them, and they could afford to be generous, there was no resentment in their hearts for the thing Aunt Mabel had tried to do.

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Christmas

by Mary Graham Bonner

THREE words meaning more to more people than almost any other greeting or salutation or phrase. Three words fraught with significance.

There are the happy people. Families where affection, cheer, joy in one another, unselfishness toward one another, love and sympathetic understanding flourish.

They know the full meaning of A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

There are the almost-happy people. People who sometimes bicker and quarrel, make speeches only half-meant which sound twice as harsh. Christmas comes and they rouse themselves. After all, there is happiness for them. The wives with loving styness make little sacrifices and buy the husbands gifts they know will be acceptable. The husbands rush at the last minute into gaily decorated shops, purchasing those gifts they know will be acceptable. They have paid more attention of late. They have noticed what was missing, what was wanted. Arriving home a little late the very sound of their steps has a new crispness, their voices joviality and affection.



They jog themselves up. They have A Merry Christmas.

There are the poor families, buying what toys they can for their children who have the same eyes as all children. Eyes which see dolls' carriages, trains of cars, dolls, mechanical toys, books. Eyes which look deeply into the windows of shops. Perhaps those more financially fortunate will lead them into shops and let them realize some of their dreams.

There are the charity children, children who receive dinners given by charitable organizations, being photographed so that those who are independent may feel undisturbed by all that they possess. Children whose pictures reveal at times a little shame, a little shyness that they must be photographed when eating a regular meal. And yet they know the meaning of Christmas, too. This, for them, is good luck. Perhaps it can be made better.

A Merry Christmas.

Three words—but synonymous with those three words are many others—children, children's gay, excited, happy voices, parents with home-coming sons and daughters, gifts and generosity. Christmas trees, appealingly empty stockings left by the trusting on Christmas Eve, cordiality, true humanity.

A Merry Christmas.
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HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS CANDIES

by Margaret Bruce

NEITHER of the ceremonies that make home such a likeable place at Christmas time is the making of the pretty, colorful candies to decorate the table, or fill small boxes and baskets for neighbors and friends to whom one wishes to give a little something more than a card.

A cold wintry evening is just the time to indulge in this festivity, and if a neighbor or two should be invited in to help, so much the jollier. The bright checkered aprons on the men and make them do the preparatory work, such as cracking the nuts and getting the meats out whole, chopping citron, squeezing lemons, cutting angelica into strips, and halving red candied cherries.

Meanwhile at one side-table sits the lady with the fondant—that base of all the cream candies—stirring the confectioner's sugar, moistening it to the right consistency so that it will make round soft balls, and then either dipping it in boiling chocolate or stuffing it with nuts, cherries, citron, or bits of fig paste. It can be used to stuff dates, taking the place of the stone, the dates then being rolled in granulated sugar. Oh, there is no end to the decorative, luscious goodies that can be made from this cream foundation.

To make these candies look like Christmas, the liberal use of green and red is advised, either in the fondant itself or in the trimming. A box of coloring matter can be obtained at any grocery, the colors being green, pink, violet and orange. You can put a bunch of holly on a white cream by cutting wee leaves of green angelica and tiny bits of candied cherries, pressing them into the cream before it hardens. A tiny green pine tree can be cut and pressed into the top of a cream.



When these pretty Christmas candies are packed into little gay baskets or painted tin boxes, they make the most attractive sort of gift to send around the neighborhood to nearby friends, or to give the Christmas caller. In addition, the fun of making them in the company of a kitchenful of family or neighbors makes a preliminary Christmas party that is nearly as delightful as the day itself.

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For Wrapping Gifts

Fascinating hand-blocked papers from various lands are used as wrappings for Christmas gifts and in place of the usual ribbons there are thin paper ribbons in gay and festive colors.

A Christmas Story

by Robert Stead

ANDRE SANDERSEN stroked the lean barrel of his rifle as he sat in the window of the little shanty on his prairie homestead. The full moon of a Christmas Eve poured its white light on limitless wastes of snow. A shaft of that same light fell through the window, gleamed along the rifle on Andre's knees, played about the great hands that fondled its barrel.

But Andre was not conscious of the moonlight, except as it served to accentuate his loneliness. Across the prairie, half a mile to the southward, lay the shanty of his brother, Axel, and his brother's wife, Olga. A point of yellow light shone from Axel's window like a star on the horizon. Half a mile! Andre's rifle would carry two thousand yards, but it would need a rare marksman to hit that point of light half a mile away.

For exactly three years the Sandersen brothers had lived as strangers, although their homesteads adjoined each other. It was three years ago this very Christmas Eve that Axel



had brought Olga, his bride, to share his shanty and his life—Olga, who, in far-off Scandinavia, had pledged herself to Andre! Axel had met her at the railway station, thirty miles away, while Andre lay at home, burning with fever. Then, when she came, it was as Axel's wife!

Andre never had asked, and never learned, what had happened at the little prairie town when the fair-haired, lonely, tired girl rushed to the arms of Axel, his brother. The three had been playmates together, but Andre never had guessed that his brother loved her, too. If, in that moment, Axel had taken advantage of her loneliness and her delight at meeting an old friend to force his suit to instant decision, Andre saw in their action nothing but treachery and deceit. Never since had he stepped on his brother's farm, and he had given Axel to understand that if either he or Olga crossed the dividing line the rifle would bark and bite to kill.

During the short but busy summers Andre managed to drown his anger in work, but in winter the pangs of loneliness were upon him. They always were worse on moonlit nights. Then he would sit in his window, fondling his rifle. Especially on Christmas Eve, the anniversary of the blighting of his life, his loneliness and rage were unbearable.

Andre sighted his rifle again, but it was against all reason that he could find a target so small, so far. Very well—he could go to the target. It was a plan that long had simmered in the back of his mind; tonight he would put it into effect. He drew on his heavy coat, his cap; he drove a bright brass cartridge into the barrel



and saw that there were others in the magazine, and set out across the snow, silent save for the crunching of his heavy boots and the strange clamor of his heart.

At first he walked hurriedly, but as he neared the window he reduced his pace. Silently he crept up, in the shadow, along the wall. Three years ago this very night.

Presently he was at the window. Stealthily he raised his head until he could see within.

In a corner of the little room was a small spruce tree, which Axel, no doubt, had cut somewhere by the river. And Axel and Olga, very happy, it seemed, were knotting it with bits of colored paper. On a table, full in Andre's sight, a yellow-haired baby clapped her hands with glee.

Andre watched the scene, spell-bound, for a moment; then slumped to the ground. For a long while he lay there, oblivious to the cold; fighting, wrestling. Then, leaving his rifle on the snow, he made his way to the door, and knocked.

"Why, Andre!" they exclaimed, as he stood on their threshold.

"Peace!" said Andre. "It is the Night of Peace. I bring you peace—and forgiveness."

The Christmas sun was shining when Andre retraced his steps across the snow, to feed his stock.

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