



A Christmas Message

O Bethlehem, a slumber amidst thy starlit hills,
Those fair Judaeen pastures, whose ancient lore fulfils
The prayer of Priest and Prophet, the hope of Heaven and Earth—
Dost hear, in dreams ecstatic, the anthem of Love's birth?
Dost see in wondrous vision, the aureole-crowned King,
The star-led Magi, speeding, their precious gifts to bring?
Dost see the Mother bending with yearning heart and eyes
O'er that incarnate Saviour—the Lord of earth and skies?

O heart, dost hear the story; or art thou too, asleep,
So weary with the vigil that human hearts must keep?
Dost know that thou dost shelter, like Bethlehem of old,
The Son of God incarnate, and gifts of grace untold?
And as the star illumined The Way, that holy night,
Thy life may guide all wanderers, with Love's eternal light,
O Bethlehem, awaken! O Heart, arise and sing!
(This is the Advent Glorious, the Birthday of thy King!)

(Elizabeth Ruggles)



THE OLD BOOKKEEPER'S CHRISTMAS

JADDED was the bookkeeper, for it had been a wearisome day in the office. An almost constant hum, hum of voices, and footsteps going in and out, and accustomed as he was to it, noise grated on the bookkeeper's nerves, for it was near the close of the month's business, when the trial balance would be on, and the balance of the year expected.

He was tired, brain tired, nerve tired and soul tired, and the long rows of figures seemed instinct with life, little dancing imps trying to dodge and hide from his memory, luring him on to errors which would afterwards cause endless search and trouble to discover.

The manager had gone home, and the other employes, having finished their work, were at liberty to go also. "Going home, Mr. Smith?" asked the clerk, a fresh cheeked young man, whose voice fell pleasantly on the bookkeeper's ear. He had been young, care free and sanguine himself once, and he had a tender feeling for young men.

"Not just now, Charlie. About an hour's work here yet." He looked after the jaunty, elastic figure, with a slight sigh for his own lost youth. He was old; he felt it in every nerve, joint and brain cell, and he wondered how many years of rest it would take to obliterate the impress of life's toil.

There must be figures imprinted on his brain, he thought, and figures danced before his eyes at night when he would sleep, in never ending procession.

"It's going to be cold to-night, Mr. Smith," said the janitor, when at last the safe was locked and the bookkeeper struggled into his overcoat far too thin for the weather, old and worn in the battle of life, like himself.

"Yes. Light the fires a little early, Johnson, please, for I shall be on hand before the others."

"All right, sir." The janitor looked after him with a pitying smile. "Poor old duffer. I expect he knows he's got to put in his best licks if he holds his job. It's a hard world, that's what it is."

It was a small cottage home where the weary footsteps at last halted, and there was a female figure on the little porch in front.

"Is that you, papa?"

"Yes, Mattie. How is my dear to-night?"

"How is my dear? Your dear is all right," she answered, with brisk pleasantry, as she locked her arm in his, and swung the door wide open. "I know you are tired. I can feel your muscles quiver."

"Yes, Mattie. How warm and savory you smell in here," he said, inhaling the pleasant odor and warmth gratefully. It was such a cheerful little sitting room, with pictures tastefully hung, draped windows, and restful easy chairs invitingly placed. In one corner stood an organ and in the warmest corner a couch, where the father could stretch his weary limbs at night and listen to the old songs, which, better than the finest opera music, rested his fagged brain and lifted him out of his present into a happier past or into the swift coming future, where the books will be

opened, and credit given to a poor, weary, old bookkeeper who has done his best.

Just beyond, the little tea table with its snowy cloth and glimmer of modest silver and glassware, beckoned temptingly, but Mattie shook her finger in warning. "You are not even to look toward the dining room until I call you, papa," she said, laughingly. "I should have had supper all on if you were not such an unpunctual party. Sit down now and get warm while I am gone."

He sank into the red covered rocker with the slippers standing suggestively before it, with a smile. It is so good to be at home, and Mattie was such a cheery little homekeeper that his mantle of care slipped off for the moment, and his weary eyes drooped dreamily in the warm firelight.

"I do believe you have been napping, papa," Mattie said, as she came in ten minutes later. She did not tell him that she had dropped a tear, and a kiss as light and soft as a downy snowflake on his tired eyes to awaken him, as she stood beside him, her heart swelling with a great pity and love.

"Come, dear, waffles and tea will rest you, I know, and Aunt Dean has sent in a platter of fried chicken and some of her fine, white clover honey."

"Quite a feast, my child," said the father, smilingly, as he took his seat before the plate of steaming waffles. "Aren't you afraid I shall develop gout if we live so high?"

It was their little joke, and each laughed merrily as Mattie poured the tea. "How is it to-day, papa?" she asked, wistfully, as the meal progressed. She dreaded, too, to bring in any of the day's worry or grievance, but she had been so anxious.

"Not much better, daughter. Mr. Rollins was coolly civil, that was all, and the manager fretted over a mistake which was more his fault than mine. It is of no use to disguise the truth, dear. I can feel it in the air that there will soon be a younger bookkeeper at the desk, and the old man will have to take what he can get. I can see they put their heads together and speak low, and are careful to close doors when I am about. They mean to let me down easy, I suppose, and not hurt my feelings; as if anything would hurt worse than to know one has outlived his usefulness." And all the pain and trouble of the weeks past seemed concentrated in the trembling bitterness of his tone. "There, love, I have made you cry—forgive me, dear. It will be all right, Mattie. The Lord will never leave nor forsake me—we have His promise," and his fingers threaded her brown hair gently, and with a smile of trust, though the tears were starting, as she clung around his neck, patting his withered cheek and telling him how she loved him, and how too dear and good he was to be the slave of heartless men who only cared for business and money, and could not appreciate the honest, conscientious service he had given them.

It was her foolish woman's way of looking on the one side when her love throbbled so freely that her heart seemed bursting and breaking with its weight. The tears seemed to clarify the mental air, as an electric

storm takes out the malaria of the material atmosphere, and both could smile again as they went back to the sitting room.

The world was big enough for all, and surely there must be ample room somewhere for a tired father whose lifelong record of faithfulness and integrity had been his capital. She sang for him, tender, quaint songs which cheered and soothed him, and played soft, restful melodies which smoothed the knotted, care worn brow into tranquillity, and filled her heart with serene peace.

After all, what did it matter? Only a few short years, and then rest—the rest which remains, and whose deep mysteries none come back to tell. What would it matter there whether he finished his life work with one or the other, so that it was finished honestly and faithfully.

He went to bed early and stretched his tired limbs with deep thankfulness for home and the home love which so took the sting out of life's contest. Mattie was so like her mother, dear girl. God had been very good to give him the devotion of two such loving, faithful souls—and thinking so of her, he fell asleep.

It was the day before Christmas, and struggle against it as he would, the bookkeeper's heart was still heavy. The first of the year would doubtless see the new incumbent, whoever it might be, installed in his place, and he watched every suspicious arrival with a feverish anxiety.

There was more than ever the air of mystery in the office to-day, and the manager whispered to the clerk, and the clerk directed off-hand inquiry, which might mean everything or nothing to the cashier, and so it went until his heart was like lead, and his hands trembled so with nervous chill that he could scarcely make his figures.

"The manager would like to see you, sir, in his private office," said Tom, the office boy, in his ear, and he arose, trembling.

"Well, Mr. Smith," said the manager, in his easy, prosperous tones:

entered our employ," pursued the manager as he cut the string and unrolled a handsome fur lined coat, the very odor of which suggested luxurious warmth, "and that you hover over the fire a little more, consequently, than when your young blood kept you warm, and as we wish to keep you with us for another ten years, if you desire it, we thought our most appropriate gift would be something like our regard and esteem for you, something warm and lasting—hang it, Smith, I told the boys I couldn't make a speech—stand up here and try on this coat, for the tailor is waiting to exchange it if it doesn't fit."

The dazed bookkeeper stepped forward like one in a dream, and held out his arms mechanically, and the manager patted and smoothed the luxurious garment across the thin shoulders, which had lost their upright, sturdy carriage by long stooping over the books.

"Such a time, sir, as we have had getting your measure," remarked the cashier, with a genial smile. "You were sure to look around if we had a word to say to each other."

"If the rest are through with the floor, perhaps I can get in a word," added Mr. Rollins. "I am authorized, sir, to give you an assistant after January, and with that help your hours will be shorter, and the work less confining."

"I don't mind the work, indeed I don't," cried the bookkeeper, laughing like a boy, though the great tears were rolling down his cheeks unheeded.

"I've never been afraid of work, sir, but I have felt that I no longer gave you satisfaction. I cannot tell you all this means to me," holding out his trembling hands to Mr. Rollins and the manager. "I think it is the happiest day of my life, sirs."

"What we meant it should be, a merry Christmas, and may there be many happy returns of the day to you, sir," replied the manager cordially.

Mattie was listening with the anxious heart which she always carried

CHRIST AND THE CHILDREN.



BY OTTILIE ROEDERSTEIN.
From "The Christ Face in Art."

he had his thousands invested, besides his position, and had no need to worry over the price of coal or breadstuffs. "You have worked for us about ten years now, I believe." The bookkeeper lifted up a haggard face, in which there was not a trace of color. It had come, then, and he must carry the news to Mattie on Christmas Eve. "Yes, sir, ten years come January," he managed to stammer out. If he had looked behind him he would have seen the door filled with smiling faces, but he was too miserable to care who saw his misery.

"And all these years you have served us faithfully."

"I have tried to, sir."

"We are not much given to sentiment, Mr. Smith, but it occurs to us that it is only just, sir, that we celebrate this holiday occasion with a little token of our appreciation. Tom, you beggar, come along here with that package."

The office boy came grinning, with a great bundle which he laid in the manager's arms. "We have noticed, sir, that you are growing old, as well as the rest of us, and that your step is not as elastic as when you first

of late when her father stayed later than usual, for the first sound of his familiar step. The kettle was singing a merry invitation to tea in the kitchen, and a pair of fine, new slippers stood waiting before the fire for a pair of weary feet, Mattie's Christmas gift to her father.

She threw the door open wide as he came quickly up the snowy steps, and she hardly knew him when he stepped in, so wrapped in warmth and loaded with bundles that he looked like a veritable Santa Claus, his face radiant with joy.

"Is it merry Christmas, papa?" she asked, looking up in his face with surprise and hope.

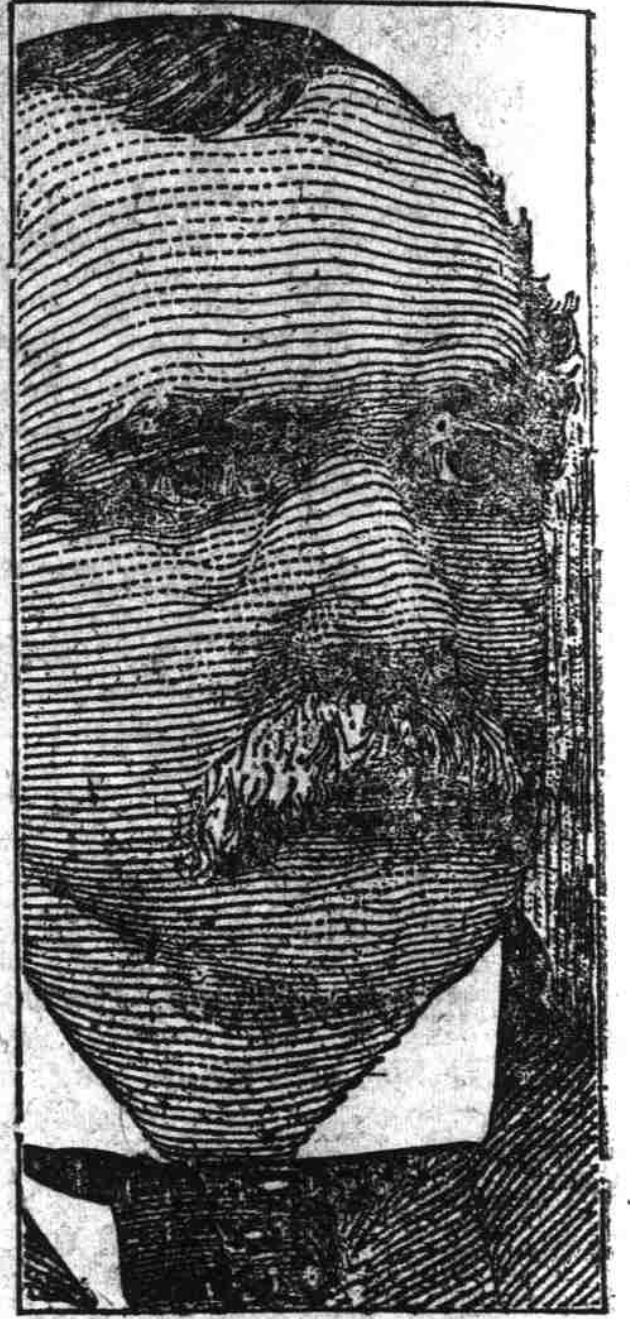
"A merry Christmas, dear," he answered, lifting her expectant face for a kiss. "It was all a mistake, my darling, and I will tell you all about it as we take tea."—Mrs. F. M. Howard, in *The Bookkeeper*.

Two French army dogs have drawn light ambulances, the invention of a lieutenant, with a load of 160 pounds each, for some 375 miles, without a breakdown, showing how they can be used in war.

Love to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will
toward men.



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Pert Paragraphs.

When will is right, law is banished.—Danish.

A dog's friendship is better than his hate.—Welsh.

The squirrel slaughter of Russia amounts to 25,000,000 a year.

Corruption wins not more than honesty.—Shakespeare.

Envy sets the stronger seal on desert.—Ben Jonson.

Experience purchased by suffering teaches wisdom.—Latin.

A handful of might is better than a sackful of right.—German.

Good counsel is better than a thousand hands.—German.

Commit a sin twice and you will think it allowable.—Hebrew.

A wise man changes his mind; a fool never.—Spanish.

The ash borrows poison from the viper.—Latin.

A beginner is always a good man.—Martial.

Kindness and courtesy need elbow room and are smothered to death in a crowd.

Women don't have to swear to show how mad they are. There are other ways.

A new broom sweeps clean, but, alas, it stays a new broom such a little while.

Industry is the parent to success, and the success belongs to the man who wins the industry.

Most women are fond of men, but so many of them are so particular as to what men.

It is extremely trying to be obliged to associate with people who always and invariably would rather not.

There may be some way of falling in love and escaping dire results, but if so, the average man has never found it out.

The clocks in some households suffer so much from congestion of the face that it seems impossible for any members of the household ever to be on time.

Some people are so proud of their humility that they are constantly committing indiscretions in order that they may gracefully apologize for them.