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WHOLE No 3369

Church Bells Call You

HOW many of us attend church on Christmas day. And why not? Of all the days in all the year Christmas is the most appropriate for one to go to church and unite with his neighbors and friends in giving thanks and praise unto him who died that you and I should live. Christmas is his birthday, and above all things one should hear a short sermon and offer a prayer of thanks for the fortunes that the past has showered on him and ask forgiveness of all sins. One should go to church feeling that it is a pleasure and a privilege and not consider it a duty. It will furnish inspiration that will make one capable of better enjoying the day and at nightfall be a great deal happier.

The Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse: The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there; The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar-plums danced through their heads, And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap, When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash, The moon, on the breast of the new-fallen snow, Gave a lustre of mid-day to objects below; When what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer, With a little old driver, so lively and quick I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name— "Now Dasher! now Dancer! now Prancer! now Vixen! On Comet! on Cupid! on Dunder and Blitzen! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!" As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky, So up to the housetops the coursers they flew, With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too, And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof The prancing and pawing of each little hoof. As I drew in my head and was turning around, Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot, and his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot; A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack. His eyes how they twinkled, his cheeks like the roses, his nose like a cherry, His droll little mouth drawn up like a bow,

And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow; He had a broad face, and a little round belly That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly. He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf, And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself. A wink of his eye and a twist of his head Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread. He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk And, laying his finger aside his nose And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose. He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down on a thistle; But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

A graceful finish is one of the most essential touches of any successful venture. The pianist does not drop his hands abruptly from the keys as soon as he has played the last note, but holds them there a moment longer until the music dies away. Diners out would be indignant if the table were whisked clean the moment the last mouthful was swallowed. They find the lingering on a little while over the coffee and nuts most delightful. Christmas is too beautiful and too solemn a festival to drop in this hasty fashion the moment the clock strikes midnight, for any occasion which needs special preparation also needs an adequate closing, and particularly is this true of those things whose value lies in sentiment. There are many things to be done after Christmas. There are letters to be written, houses to be put in order, gifts to be arranged, and every one of the countless details may be done either with grace or without it. In the theater the final curtain falls with fitting dignity or appropriate gaudy. It has all been a play; but, even so, the actors do not walk off after the last word is said and allow the stage hands to rush on. That would offend the mood of the audience. How much truer this is of something which is not a play, but a very real part of life! The days after Christmas should be as mystical in their way as were the days before Christmas. The ornaments that decked the tree should be put away with the same care and pleasure with which they were brought out, the greens taken down with the same reverence that accompanied their going up. The afterglow is sometimes the most beautiful part of the sunset, and sometimes it is even more beautiful than the sunset itself.



YOUR CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

The spirit of Christmas, as the idealists have it, is not recognition by the real thing, according to modern methods. Theoretically everything is bright and gay, full of peace and merriment and good wishes for the rest of the world. Actually Christmas may mean anything like this: Grudging giving and discontented receiving. Spurning on one's rich friends and standing where it is not easy to count.

Overgenerosity to the point of extravagance. Rushing until you detest Christmas and everything connected with it. Overworked nerves and overwrought tempers from a false conception of Christmas giving. A generous spirit for your own immediate circle and utter indifference to whether any one else has a happy day. Gorging oneself in the interest of Christmas cheer with no thought of a tortured digestion and rockiness of the day after.

A Christmas with not one thought to the real meaning of the day and what the world would have been had there been no "birthday of a king" to celebrate.

CHRISTMAS.

THE world his cradle is, The stars his worshippers, His "peace on earth" the mother's kiss On lips new pressed to hers. For she alone to him In perfect light appears, The one horizon never dim With penitential tears. —John B. Tabb.

The Giving of Gifts

IF one is going to give a Christmas present it should be with a cheerful heart. If you can't give in this spirit do not give at all. We give presents to our friends at Christmas because they are our friends and because we derive pleasure from such giving. In the giving of Christmas presents there should be none of that spirit which suggests commercialism. There should never be any expectation of reciprocity. The giving of a Christmas present should be from the heart. The present itself counts for little. The spirit and motive which prompt the giving are all important.

An Unorthodox Christmas

I WENT to spend the day with Rose, and then A Christmas greeting passed between us two. But 'twas not "Peace on earth, good will to men." We only said: "Good morning!" "How d'ye do?"

AND then to her I offered smilingly The present she expected me to bring. There were no hanging hosi, no Christmas tree. The box was tied in paper with a string.

WE didn't sit beside the Yule log's blaze. We just turned on the radiator's steam. And dinner, unlike those of storied days, Gave no plum pudding, but some blisque ice cream.

WE didn't hear the church bells' solemn toll. And when we had our Christmas evening lunch We didn't have a steaming wassail bowl. But just a jug of simple claret punch.

WE trampled on traditions, I suppose, Yet one rite we observed with care— but, no: Although I well remember kissing Rose, It wasn't under the mistletoe. —Life.

A WONDERFUL TREE.

HERE'S a wonderful tree, a wonderful tree, The happy children rejoice to see, Spreading its branches year by year. It comes from the forest to flourish here. Oh, this wonderful tree, with its branches wide, Is always, is always blooming at Christmas-tide!

But not for us children did this tree grow. With its strange, sweet fruit on each laden bough. For those we love we have made with care Each pretty thing you see hanging there. May this wonderful tree, with its branches wide, Bring joy to our friends at Christmas-tide!

For a voice is telling its boughs among Of the shepherds' watch and the angels' song. Of a holy babe in the manger low— The beautiful story of long ago. When a radiant star threw its beams so wide To herald the blessed first Christmas-tide. Then spread thy branches, wonderful tree, And bring the pleasant thought to me Of him who came from his home above, The richest gift of his Father's love. He came to show us how to spread far and wide The joys of the holy, sweet Christmas-tide. —"Songs and Games For Little Ones."

A GIFT.

WHAT shall I send you for Christmas, dear? What can a penniless rimester send But the wish that when skies are filled with gloom And that every throb of the heart of you May whisper of days when the skies were blue? What shall I send you for Christmas, sweet? What can a friendless minstrel send But the prayer that when days drag drear and long Your heart will sing snatches of sweetest song And that every flake of the Yuletide's snow May speak of the dreams of the long ago? What shall I send you for Christmas, my own? What can a lonely bardling send But the wish that when life grows dark and chill The roses of summer may bloom for you still And in moods when the fond old dreams still cling to you That the birds may return, my sweet, and sing to you? —Irving Dillon in Life.

A REAL SANTA CLAUS.

SANTA CLAUS, I hang for you By the mantel stockings two— One for me and one to go To another boy I know.

There's a chimney in the town You have never traveled down. Should you chance to enter there You would find a room all care; Not a stocking could you spy. Matter not how you might try. And the shoes you'd find are such As no boy would care for much.

In a broken bed you'd see Some one just about like me Dreaming of the pretty toys Which you bring to other boys. And to him a Christmas seems Merry only in his dreams.

All he dreams, then, Santa Claus, Stuff the stockings with, because When it's time up to the trim I'll be Santa Claus to him! —Frank Dempster Sherman.

A QUESTION.

IF there isn't any Santa Claus, who is it turns your feet Toward the store where gifts are smiling as you walk along the street? Who is it sets you thinking, though you're busy as can be, About the songs and laughter round the children's Christmas tree? Though you vow "this Christmas business is a nuisance anyhow," There's an influence at work that clears the frowning from your brow. The small tin trumpet sounds a blast that wakes your soul serene To homage for the doll who is a lady and a queen. And the once prosaic world where it has been your lot to dwell Is a realm of fascinations 'neath some mystic fairy spell. If there isn't any Santa Claus, who is it, day by day, That turns our thoughts to Christmas, strive to shun it as we may? Who comes at this bleak season armed with telegraphic arts And by generous suggestion dominates our minds and hearts?

Primarily, of course, Christmas is a religious festival. In the Christian, with a sincere belief in the Christ, who is the foundation rock of his religion, the words of priest and pastor, exhorting his flock to observe the day with ceremonial observances, find a fervent response. From every pulpit is told anew each year the story of him without whom Christmas had never been.

But Christmas appeals also to the nonbeliever in Christ, to the men and women who cannot subscribe conscientiously to the doctrine of his divinity. It is true, perhaps, to say that as Christmas approaches the Christmas spirit is "in the air," but it is true none the less, "Peace and good will" pervade the air that is breathed alike by churchgoer and nonattendant. In the big cities Christmas is celebrated by Christian and Jew and Mohammedan as well as by those with no religion. In the outermost corners of the earth, wherever men of Christian faith have borne the standard of civilization, the native heathen in intimate contact with them feel the coming of the spirit and rejoice.

It is well that this should be so, for the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of belief not only in Christ, but in one's fellow men. Every one may share in it if he will. Every one may find in the story of the life that was lived in Palestine nineteen centuries ago, of the death that was met on the cross and of the resurrection that followed, something of personal application, something of uplift.