

Don Ramon's Revenge

By MRS. W. DAVENPORT HUDNALL

A WAY down in Old Mexico, Senor Ramon gloated over his vast possessions. Day by day he became more and more discontented and morose, as he looked upon his broad acres, fields of coffee, sugar and hemp, and as far as the eye could reach, and as far as the ear could hear, and beyond, he could call the land and all who dwelt thereon his. But Don Ramon was a widower, because all the pretty señoritas and the widowed señoras looked upon him with fear.

It had been whispered abroad that somewhere away back in his life there had been a young and pretty Donna Ramon, who had mysteriously disappeared, after she had gone with him to the far away land of the Gringos.

Be that as it may, only he knew, and when he courted pretty Senorita Inez Santora, just fresh from the convent and devoted care of the good sisters of Santa Coeuvr, he never could fathom the evident fear, he never could fathom the only daughter of a noble Mexican family, consisting of three brothers and her widowed mother.

All wanted her to marry Don Ramon because of his broad lands and great wealth, and upon her shoulders rested the responsibility of recouping the lost fortunes of the noble Santora family.

The boys either would not or could not work, and as soon as they found Senor Don Ramon had fallen in love with gentle Inez, their future seemed assured.

Surely no girl in her right mind would refuse such an offer, much less Inez, who was simply a penniless girl, with naught but a sweet, gentle disposition and a beautiful face. Inez kept her own counsel, and almost broke her heart over the turn affairs had taken.

She loved her mother, and brothers, too, as she had been to mass at the great cathedral on some of the sacred feast days of the church, and her lovely eyes had wandered around many times when she should have been saying her prayers, and they encountered the admiring glances of Don Pedro Garcia, the son of the powerful form and graceful carriage.

Inez always looked for him every time she went to the cathedral, and he was always in the same place, no matter at what hour she was there. She wondered how it could be that he knew when to find her.

After she left the care of the sisters and went to live with her family, no matter when she attended the mass, he was always there. Heart answered heart, and her eyes returned his loving glances, and some day she knew she should meet him. Surely, the Blessed Mother Mary would bring all around right. So Inez continued her work among her flowers and sang the Ave, long day, as she nursed her secret love for Don Pedro. She knew who was under her window at night, singing the old love songs to the twanging of his guitar, and the stray notes she found in the early morning, as she strolled in the garden, surely could only come from one source.

But alas! one day as she came home from a visit in the country to an old schoolmate, imagine her astonishment upon entering the room to see Don Ramon chatting familiarly with her mother and brothers, and her mother addressing her, saying: "Inez, dear, Senor Don Ramon has conferred the great honor upon us of asking your hand in marriage, and we have accepted him for you. Come here, dear, and let us congratulate you upon your good fortune."

Inez looked from one to the other, and great tears welled up in her eyes. "Oh, mother mia, I don't love Don Ramon. I—I—oh! don't ask me to marry him. I cannot—I cannot."

She ran out of the room, and up to her little shrine, and poured out her heart to the Mother of Sorrows.

Senora Santora made the best of the situation, and laughingly excused her by saying it would all be right by tomorrow; it was because the proposal was so unexpected, so sudden.

After Don Ramon had gone, Senora Santora went in quest of her willful Inez.

"What do you mean?" she said. "Don't you know we are as poor as we can be, and it only remains for you to wed the Don to keep us from beggary poverty, and the Don has promised to help your brothers, and me, also. You must and shall marry him. I had pledged my word."

Poor Inez! Her life became one long torture, and at last she gave her unwilling consent, and then the Santora household became one vast workshop of preparation.

All the girls and widows sought their heads and prophesied dire disaster to follow the marriage. But Don Ramon showed his passive bride-elect with costly jewels and richest fabrics for her apparel.

Alas! one evening as Inez was sitting in the garden, as she thought alone, she heard the love songs she knew so well, and some one else heard it also, and watched her as she listened. The next day he had never been able to bring forth, no matter how magnificent the gifts or how sweet his compliments and love-making might be, and he resolved to see who it was that brought that love light in her eyes. He climbed over the hedge, but just in time to see Don Pedro vanish round the corner. His jealousy was aroused, and he determined to take her far away, when she was his bride, far away to the land of the Gringos, and then he would keep her shut up so no one could see her.

He kept his own secret, and Inez knew not that he had spied Don Pedro. After the wedding, which was the most brilliant affair that had ever been known in that part of old Mexico, he hurried his bride away to the solitude of a new home in a comparatively new country.

Inez was all alone, and saw no one except her old nurse, and the servants abroad the house, all of whom were brought from his home, and had been his subject slaves, ruled by fear for years. He built the most peculiar house for their home.

It was shaped like a hexagon, with windows everywhere, and a cupola on top, so he could scan the country around.

The house was situated on a lonely road, far away from the settlements, and approached through a long lane of eucalyptus trees, running north, south, east and west.

The house at the apex of the trees upon the knoll was so peculiar, and altogether so queer and uncanny that the straggling settlers gave it a wide berth, and it was whispered around that there were many dark deeds done under its roof. There was a large cistern some 25 feet deep, near the house, and that tapped a living spring which supplied water for the house, and large domain around it, orchard and garden blossomed and grew under the careful care of the servants, and Donna Ramon should be happy with such a home, but she was a prisoner and never was seen on the roads driving except with the Don.

One day he left her, saying he should not be back until the following evening, as he was going to town to attend to some business affairs, and Donna Inez, being left alone, ascended the stair to the cupola, to watch the moon rise over the far-distant water. Oh, how unhappy she was, ever since her marriage, and for six months she had heard nothing from her family.

Could it be that Don Ramon destroyed the letters? She sat there she knew not how long, and it seemed to her the most peaceful time she had spent since leaving her own sunny land.

She heard a sound that made her heart beat faster, and faster, and she leaped far out on the window sill, and there stood—could it be possible? Oh, blessed Mother! Yes! it was none other than her beloved Pedro, singing the old love song, and looking up toward her.

What should she do—she must see him, but how—how? The old watch dogs, the servants, were not all in bed, and what if they should hear? She would write him a note, and fling it down from the window.

He must go until later. She flew downstairs, and penned the note, and put it through a ring she took from her finger, and flung it far down in the grass. Then she watched, and knew that Pedro knew and would be still and wait—and what joy!

She could see him in the garden and Don Ramon would not be there to interfere. Would the hours never pass? At last she stole down, and out to Pedro, her lost love. She told him of her misery, and Don Ramon's jealousy; how she was a prisoner, could go nowhere, or see anyone, and how she had heard of his hard name among the settlers, and all her troubles.

How nice to have sympathy and love from an old friend from home!

road, far away from the settlements, and approached through a long lane of eucalyptus trees, running north, south, east and west.

The house at the apex of the trees upon the knoll was so peculiar, and altogether so queer and uncanny that the straggling settlers gave it a wide berth, and it was whispered around that there were many dark deeds done under its roof. There was a large cistern some 25 feet deep, near the house, and that tapped a living spring which supplied water for the house, and large domain around it, orchard and garden blossomed and grew under the careful care of the servants, and Donna Ramon should be happy with such a home, but she was a prisoner and never was seen on the roads driving except with the Don.

One day he left her, saying he should not be back until the following evening, as he was going to town to attend to some business affairs, and Donna Inez, being left alone, ascended the stair to the cupola, to watch the moon rise over the far-distant water. Oh, how unhappy she was, ever since her marriage, and for six months she had heard nothing from her family.

Could it be that Don Ramon destroyed the letters? She sat there she knew not how long, and it seemed to her the most peaceful time she had spent since leaving her own sunny land.

She heard a sound that made her heart beat faster, and faster, and she leaped far out on the window sill, and there stood—could it be possible? Oh, blessed Mother! Yes! it was none other than her beloved Pedro, singing the old love song, and looking up toward her.

What should she do—she must see him, but how—how? The old watch dogs, the servants, were not all in bed, and what if they should hear? She would write him a note, and fling it down from the window.

He must go until later. She flew downstairs, and penned the note, and put it through a ring she took from her finger, and flung it far down in the grass. Then she watched, and knew that Pedro knew and would be still and wait—and what joy!

She could see him in the garden and Don Ramon would not be there to interfere. Would the hours never pass? At last she stole down, and out to Pedro, her lost love. She told him of her misery, and Don Ramon's jealousy; how she was a prisoner, could go nowhere, or see anyone, and how she had heard of his hard name among the settlers, and all her troubles.

How nice to have sympathy and love from an old friend from home!

He, in turn, told her of his wanderings and loneliness without her, and it was almost maddening ere he started to depart. But what was that step she heard over there by those rose-bushes; surely no, servant could be around now. She was bidding Don Pedro a long farewell, when an angry face, black with passion, and the gleam of an uplifted knife, was all—Don Ramon's sorrows were over, and Don Pedro and Don Ramon were in deadly combat, struggling over her dead body in the moonlight. One gained the mastery, and Don Ramon was left, but not dead, beside poor Inez.

When the morning dew roused him, Don Ramon's first thought was how to get rid of the gruesome thing there on the grass. Surely there must be some way; he had done the deed before and still was free.

What could he do now? Something must be planned before the servants were stirring, and he must not be seen until to-morrow eve, when he was expected, and then he would join in the search for Donna Inez. Ah! there was the cistern.

He dragged her lifeless body toward it, and lifting a board, plunged the poor creature down headlong into the water.

Then it was the work of a few moments to rid his hands and clothes of the evidences of his crime, as water was plentiful, and he would go away, perhaps never to return.

Which he did, and the queer house and its occupants still remained on the knoll on the hill for many years.

No one asked any questions; if they did, all they got for their trouble was: "Quien sabe?" and one by one the servants dropped out, and the old house and grounds went to ruin.

But belated farmers, passing by there at night, say the air is rent with a woman's screams, and the voices of two men in deadly combat, then a silence, a splash, and all is dark as before.

Does Donna Ramon come back from the great beyond, and is the tragedy all enacted over again?

The taxes on the grounds are always paid by some one unknown, to this day, although no one knows who. If they do, silence is golden.

There had been some talk of dragging the cistern, and one night a light was seen near; the next day disclosed evidences of some one having been there. What did they do? What did they find?

Echo answers—what!—Overland Monthly.

SPANKED BY HAND.

When everything goes snarly and you're feelin' sour and grim, An' you've bin the least bit nasty to the folks at shop and hum, As you wonder if your spirit from its heavenly course has yanked,

How good 'twould seem to run right hum to mother

That certain panacea for all sorts of sin and shame, What a balm for troubled conscience was the music of that same; The patterin' of that slipper and my shrid!

Made a homelike combination that made ma-and-me—rejoice.

Her arm went up so fiercely that it weakened cummin' down, Though my voice assured the neighbors 'twas the wickedest in town; So when ma had 'dilt her dotty' and her pard'nin' kiss was won, There were no spots on her conscience and but few upon her son.

If she could only boss creation as she used to long ago (There was nothin' known or unknown that my mother didn't know), Things 'ud be runnin' mighty diff'rent and 'I'd surely top the heap.

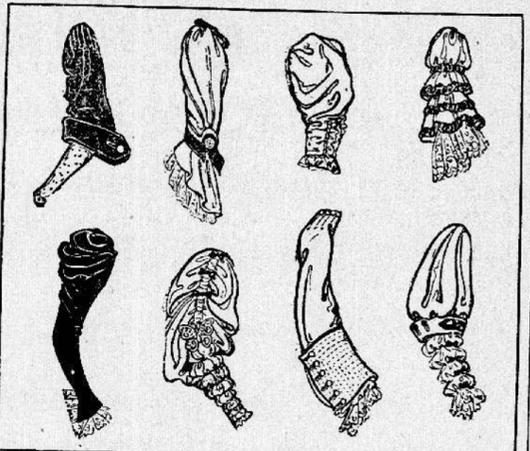
'Stead 'o tryin' hard to kick myself and feelin' mean and cheap,

—John H. Davis, in Lippincott's Magazine.

Need for His Skill.

A Paris doctor claims he has discovered a cure for the "sleeping sickness." The Chicago Journal remarks that he ought to move to Philadelphia.

The Fashion for Sleeves



PAST year's skirt can be worn all right, likewise last year's girdle, and also the bodice—if only the sleeves are changed. Just take them out and turn them upside down; give them fullness at the top at all odds. Not that they need be very voluminous, but what fullness there is must come above. This fact borne in mind, there is infinite variety obtainable by the infinite number of people that are desirous of following the fashions but want chance for individual preferences. The mutton-leg sleeve, periodically revived, has some admirers, but it is considered the best taste not to exaggerate the width at the top. Especially for velvet coats is this mode liked, although it is seen on waists, on shirt waists and bodices for dressy occasions; if employed for the latter, add to the dressy look by a frill of lace at the wrist.

Another old fashion that has come to the fore once more is the elbow and three-quarter length that allows of an under-sleeve. This is a quaint and very pretty fashion and bids fair to become more and more popular, but probably not tiresomely common. The under-sleeves can be recommended also for almost any bit of material left over, just so it is dainty and fluffy looking. A desirable but expensive material used for these is chiffon, a shaded kind that

matches the dress in one of its tones. Point d'esprit is a suitable and lovely material, as is also that fine, plain, yellowish net seen nowadays on the high-priced waists shown at the stores. But, perhaps best of all is very sheer muslin or lawn, finished with a little tracery of hand-work. Whatever is selected, remember these white affairs will need frequent laundering, as all their beauty depends on their giving an exquisite finish to the toilet, for this cannot be done when they are in the least soiled.

Trimmed sleeves as well as full sleeves are favored, but be careful not to have these so elaborate that they will be fussy and detract from elegance. One shown in the illustration is comparatively simple and yet adapted to the caprice of the moment. The velvet band and lace frill, as well as the design of the sleeve, make it appropriate only for afternoon or evening wear.

Short sleeves are very much the thing, but generally are an expensive luxury, requiring long gloves. Still, the under-sleeve fashion may help out here the woman who wants to economize, and by its addition one can have a waist do double duty; appear with the under-sleeves as suitable for street wear; with the sleeves serve for elaborate occasions. The three-quarter sleeve is making its way, and is especially pretty when finished at the hand with a double frill of deep white ruching.

Charm of Modern Lingerie

MOST of us by this time have purchased our winter wardrobe, but a desire for change is always rife among the community of self-respecting women, so let us for a moment turn our attention to the garments that are more or less unseen, and discuss the virtues of lingerie as well as such very important items as a winter dressing-gown, the bed-jacket of utility, and the lounge gown, or saut-de-lit of beauty. Let us be thankful that we live in modern times, and are no longer obliged to look hideous in our bedrooms. To be useful, a garment need not necessarily be ugly, and the wise woman will certainly not sacrifice her comfort

for a pretty and becoming hood which can be placed over a disheveled coiffure with excellent results. Such a gown is ideal for traveling purposes. For such garments as the saut-de-lit and the dressing-gown, there is a cashmere-back washing satin, which is really cozy. This can be lined with flannel for extra warmth if the wearer is a chilly person. Here again lace is the only trimming required. The smart woman at the moment loves these washing satins, especially for night-gowns. Silk, satin and finest linens are sparingly trimmed with lace—in many cases, indeed, no lace at all is used, the trimming taking the shape of fine hand work and broad hemstitchings. There has been an extraordinary change made of late in underwear; everything is now very simple, and white reigns supreme. Parisians and the best-dressed Englishwomen are particularly addicted to the batiste, linen, French lawn and cambrie. Here, too, beautiful hand sachery is the chief trimming, although occasionally entire deus of very fine Valenciennes lace are used. Then I am told that, in their love of simplicity, a few Parisians are even wearing pyjamas. Of course, such garments are practical, but they can never be pretty, and do not seriously deserve a place among the lingerie of the really chic woman. Three or four seasons ago colored underwear was all the rage—pale yellows, mauves, pinks and blues, and even black being worn in preference to white; but now the craze is for the simplest of white lingerie, and this seems to me the acme of daintiness.

With many women the combination is a necessary garment, either of silk, silk and wool, or woolen mixtures, but this need no longer be ugly because it is warm and comfortable. This women underwear to-day is well shaped and nicely finished, and is obtainable at all the leading drapery establishments.

For ordinary day wear, it is a good idea to line your brocade petticoat with a thin pongee, which adds greatly to its warmth. The chic dresser is wearing with her morning, tailor-made costume, petticoats to harmonize with her dress instead of the bright contrasts of last season. This is a matter in which every woman can exercise her individual taste, though quaintness of detail in this respect is more or less characteristic of the well-dressed woman.

Then we have recently witnessed a return to the flannel petticoat. Needless to say, it is very different from the old-fashioned red flannel garment worn by our grandmothers, being now a day beautifully cut and shaped and trimmed with button-hole stitching, fine embroidery or coarse Torchon lace. It is mostly made in white, pale pink or blue.

ELLEN OSMONDE.

ROMANCE OF SUMATRA LEAF

The story of Sumatra leaf tobacco, as grown under cheese-cloth in Connecticut, is one of the romantic episodes of agriculture, says a writer in Country Life in America. A Florida fruit grower had some tobacco plants that got into his pineapple shed by accident, and he noticed that they were taller and of finer texture, under the lath shade. The bureau of soils, while surveying the Connecticut valley, found a soil that was practically the same as that of Sumatra, on which the famous tobacco is grown. (The bureau has samples of soil from almost every important agricultural region of the world.) The government got an expert to start an industry, and the first two years some of the growers made over 100 per cent. profit.

Experience.

"Let's see," said Mr. Shiverston, "last year we gave the children a drum and a lot of other musical instruments as Christmas gifts."

"Yes."

"Well, this year let us try to give them something on Christmas that we won't feel like taking away from them the next day."—Washington Star.

METEORIC MONTANA MAN.

Spectacular Individual Who Introduced the Spiketail Coat in His Town.

"I reckon when the lamentations are over and we come to our own, you'll hear something more about Joe Toole, who had a landslide of his own, all by himself, out in Montana," said a man in from Butte, to a New York Sun man. "Joe was always a winner. He came by it honestly."

"He was one of three as likely boys as ever went west. His father was a big gun in his day, and when he was a candidate for justice of the peace in his town his three boys, Joe, Bruce and Ben, the handsome trio that ever hit the pike, went out and held meetings on the vacant lots of the town and made speeches for their dad."

"The old man didn't have to do a thing but stay at home. The boys went to the polls on election day, and whenever a voter showed they preached the Toole gospel until the voter was landed. Whenever there was another candidate on the hustings and he saw one of the Toole boys show up, he took to his heels."

"Besides their political influence, the Toole boys were the great social cards in the town where they lived. They were the first boys in the town to wear swallow-tail coats."

"In those days a man didn't have to wait until after dark to put on a spiketail. Joe Toole, especially, was built for that sort of harness."

"He was a law student in the town where he lived, and he used to wear his society togs by day. He used to be called Apollo Belvedere Toole by the men in the town who knew what that meant, and the people who didn't know took it for granted that it was all right."

"The brothers Toole were members of a literary society in the town. The society used to have ladies' nights once a month. No fashion plate was ever in it with the turnouts seen at the old Philomathean society on ladies' nights."

"When the Toole boys entered the room, each one in his clamorous coat, the audience rose from the benches and stood until the trio were seated. Joe Toole was always selected as the chief orator of the evening, and when he went to the forum it was a sight worth seeing."

"In the Pike's Peak fever the Toole family left the town where they had been the political and social rage for so many years and went west, overland. Joe landed in Montana. This is the third time he has been elected governor. He has never been defeated, to my knowledge."

"You never can tell what's going to happen, but I am telling you that in 1908 if Joe Toole wants to get in the game he will cry 'keno' before anybody else. In the cataclysm which recently made a record in this country it may have been overlooked that Joe Toole is a democrat."

NEVER DISPLAY EMOTION.

Amusing Instances of the Undemonstrative Nature of the British.

We Anglo-Saxons are apt to pride ourselves upon being undemonstrative. Max Adler tells a tale of a boy who was sent out by his father to fetch in some wood. The boy took the opportunity of disappearing and did not show his face again beneath the parental roof for over 20 years, says M. A. F. Then one evening a smiling, well-dressed stranger entered to the old couple and announced himself as their long-lost son.

"Well, you haven't hurried yourself," grumbled the old man, "and blame me if now you haven't forgotten the wood."

I was lunching with an Englishman in a London restaurant one day at a table near by, and, glancing round and meeting my friend's eye, smiled and nodded.

"Excuse me a minute," said my friend; "I must just speak to my brother, haven't seen him for over five years."

He finished his soup and leisurely wiped his mustache before strolling across and shaking hands. They talked for awhile, then my friend returned to me.

"Never thought to see him again," observed my friend; "he was one of the garrison at that place in Africa—what's the name of it—that the mah-did attacked. Only three or four men escaped. Always was a lucky beggar, Jim."

"But wouldn't you like to talk to him some more?" I suggested; "I can see you any time about this little business of ours."

"Oh, that's all right," he answered; "we have just fixed it up—shall be dining with him to-morrow."

A Little Assistance.

While a drove of bullocks were being driven through an Irish village, one of them suddenly stopped, and, notwithstanding all the efforts of the drover, would not move. A chemist who happened to see the affair went up to the bullock and injected a drug down its throat, which made the animal career down the street like greased lightning. A few minutes after the drover entered the chemist's shop, and asked him if he gave the bullock the medicine. "I did," replied the chemist. "Well," said Pat, "I'll take a pennorth of it, as I've got to follow the baste."—Smith's Weekly.

Japan's Commercial Schools.

As early as 1875 the first commercial institute was established in Tokio. Since that time similar schools have been established in various parts of the Japanese empire. In 1884 the commercial schools were regulated by ministerial decree, and in 1899 a general law was passed concerning commercial educational institutions.

A Curious Custom.

A curious custom obtains among the Coorgs of India. When one of them kills a tiger or a panther he is married to the dead animal, regardless of its sex. Propped upon a framework of wood or bamboo the animal is carried in procession, and the marriage ritual is strictly observed, while lavish hospitality is dispensed.

Base Slander.

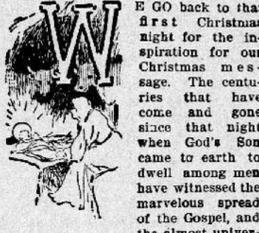
A girl seldom talks in her sleep, because she has told everything she knows before she goes to bed.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

The Stable or the Inn?

Christmas Sermon by the "Highway and Byway" Preacher.

(Copyright, 1904, by J. M. Edson.)

Chicago, Sunday, Dec. 18, 1904. Text: "And she brought forth her first-born son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."—Luke 2:7.



WE GO back to that first Christmas night for the inspiration for our Christmas message. The centuries that have come and gone since that night when God's Son came to earth to dwell among men have witnessed the marvelous spread of the Gospel, and the almost universal recognition among the progressive and enlightened nations of the earth of the fact of Jesus' advent into the world and His vicarious mission. We speak of the Christian nations, and mean those nations which have been dominated by the enlightened spirit of righteousness and truth of which Jesus was the expression and exponent. The mustard seed has grown to be the great tree, spreading its branches everywhere, and the nations—the birds of the air—have found lodgment therein. To-day the Christmas bells ring round the earth, and peal forth their message of joy and good cheer, even though the notes of its truest message often are not heard. A large part of the world to-day has its Christmas, but has it the Christ? It celebrates the crowning event of the ages, but does it appreciate all that that celebration should mean? Is it the stable where the Christ has been given place and welcome? Or is it the inn crowded and busy, and resting in ease and comfort with no place or provision made for the Christ? Our text suggests contrasts so sharp and painful that we cannot but be impressed by them as we meditate thereon. The stable and the inn. The one poor and cheerless and comfortless, the other fitted at least with the common comforts and conveniences which could minister to the needs of man. The one the only place where the Son of God could find shelter, the other the place which was so crowded and filled that it shut out the Christ.

BUT there is a brighter side to the contrast. The stable, though poor and bare of comforts, shone with the holy light of God's presence, and welcomed the new-born King to the best it could provide, while the inn had only the feeble light of man's providing and missed the glory of the Divine presence. The stable became marked on the chart of God's purposes, while the inn was indelibly stamped with the stigma of inhospitality. The stable became the center of interest for the angelic hosts as they sang of the Saviour born, and told the wondering shepherds where the Babe was to be found, while the inn passes into the obscurity of oblivion. The stable passes down into history glorified and dignified by the distinction of being the birthplace of the Lord and King, while the inn has no place of honor on history's page, but stands out as the monument of missed opportunity, in having turned the expectant mother from its unfeeling doorway. Such were the contrasts upon that first Christmas night. Do the same contrasts exist to-day? Have we still the stable and the inn—the place that makes room for the Saviour, and the place that crowds Him out? Every place to-day we hear the song of the angels caught up by man, we see the gladness and joy of the Christmas celebration, and amidst all the festivities may we not well ask ourselves: Is it the stable or the inn?

THE fact that Christmas, the anniversary of the birth of Christ, is celebrated is not enough. One may share in all the activities and pleasures of the day, and still be an inmate of the inn, and a stranger to the true significance of the birth in the stable. One may hear the wonderful Divine mystery whereby the Son of God left Heaven and became flesh through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and still be blind to the Divine light that filled the stable recesses. Think you not that the inn was astir next day with the news of the events which had transpired in the stable? Think you not that every one of the story of the shepherds and their visit in the early morning? Ere the morning sun had climbed the Bethlehem hills and gilded the distant mountain heights with its golden splendor, I feel sure that the mighty secret of that stable became known not only to all in the inn, but to all in the little village of Bethlehem. And so to-day the story of the birth of the Christ is known and rehearsed among men, they celebrate the event with eagerness and joy, and still the Christ is absent, kept out by the crowded condition of the inn. The news of the birth of Jesus has reached the inn and it freely joins in the celebration of the event, but the stable where room is found for Jesus is the place where the true celebration is held. You may be content with the festivities of the inn, and never care to enter into the deeper joys of the stable where Jesus is. As of old, it is the question of the stable or the inn. Where are you content to celebrate the Christmas festival? I verily believe the saddest day in Heaven is Christmas day, because as the angelic hosts look upon earth they behold all manner of revelry and festivities in the name of Jesus, while the One Whose birthday it is shut out. No place for Him in the inn. There is too much going on. There are too many friends to be entertained. And so it is the inn instead of the stable. The Christ is shut out!

SOME one has told the story of a lady who, one Christmas eve, was walking in the beautiful city of Berlin. She stopped to look at the large store window, where was laid out an elaborate

display of the scene of the lovely stable at Bethlehem. Before the window stood two little girls, their faces beaming with pleasure, while they talked to another little girl between them, and around whom they had their arms. This dear child was quite blind, and to her poor sightless eyes the pretty window told no story. But the loving little friends told the blind child of the rude stable, the hay, the cows and the sheep, the sweet mother beside the manger, in which the Christ-child was sleeping, the open door through which the wondering shepherds were coming and the bright star above which shed a soft light over all. The little blind girl listened with absorbed interest, drinking in every detail of the window decoration as it was described, and reproducing it in her mind's eye, until her face lit up with a joyful smile, and, clasping her hands together in rapture, she exclaimed, again and again: "Ah! that is beautiful!" And ah! how many there are who, like the little blind girl before the show window in Berlin, where the scene of Jesus' birth was depicted, stand beholding the Christmas celebration and yet because of blindness of heart they do not see and realize its hidden beauty and meaning! Ah! how we would love to throw our arms about such and try to tell them all the wonderful story of God's love and God's gift! How we long to bring such to open the heart and make room for the Christ Who has come into the world to seek and to save the lost! Why stay in the inn, away from the Christ, when we may enter into His very presence and realize, as did the shepherds that night, that "unto us is born in the city of David, a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord?" Between the experience of the inn and the stable there is the same difference as that which marked the blind girl and her little friends. God grant that you may be as willing and as eager to hear the message as the blind child was!

WHAT is the message of the stable? One stands for cooperation with God, His other rejection and indifference to His claims. One becomes the recipient of blessing, and the medium of exalted service, while the other, in narrow selfishness loses both blessing and privilege of service. The characteristics of the stable and the inn are still to be marked in the world to-day. There are those who are willing to receive the Christ, and who thus become instruments in God's hands of great service and blessing. On the other hand, there are those who typify the inn and refuse the Christ admittance, and maintain an attitude of supreme indifference to His claims upon them. At the glad Christmas time what more fitting occasion which to consider this supreme question? With you and me it is either the stable or the inn. There is no neutral ground. The Christ, the Christmas gift of God to men, comes to every heart and seeks for admittance. Shall the rejection of the inn, or the welcome of the stable, mark our attitude?

THE stable typifies open-hearted reception of the Christ, willing surrender of the heart we have to the Christ, and acceptable service rendered for the Christ. The first essential need in the making room for Jesus. The crowded condition of the inn may find its counterpart in our lives where the cares and activities of this life would crowd out the claims of God upon us, and make us prone to turn the Christ away with the excuse that there is no room, that we are busy providing for the present guests who have found lodgment with us. To reject Christ does not require that we show open enmity and hatred towards Him. Christ was not driven from the door of that inn at Bethlehem in cruel hatred. It was enough that Mary and Joseph should be told, perhaps ever so politely and regretfully, that there was no room. It served the same purpose of shutting out the Christ, and so with us and me. We may know of no bitter opposition or hatred ruling in the heart which keeps the Christ out. All that is necessary is to be so filled and crowded with other things as to lead us to turn Him politely away, and say: "Some day, when we are not so pressed for room and time, we will be glad to welcome you." But Jesus does not wait on such invitation. The opportunity of sheltering the Christ came to the inn but once, and that opportunity lost was lost forever, and so it may be with you. Jesus comes to the Christ-renderer for room and shelter in your heart. Will you not make place for Him there at once, even though every other thing has to be turned out and given up? Better have the Christ than all else that the world can give.

AND once within, let the Saviour have the best place for His manger. The manger was not much. It was rude, rough place, and yet as