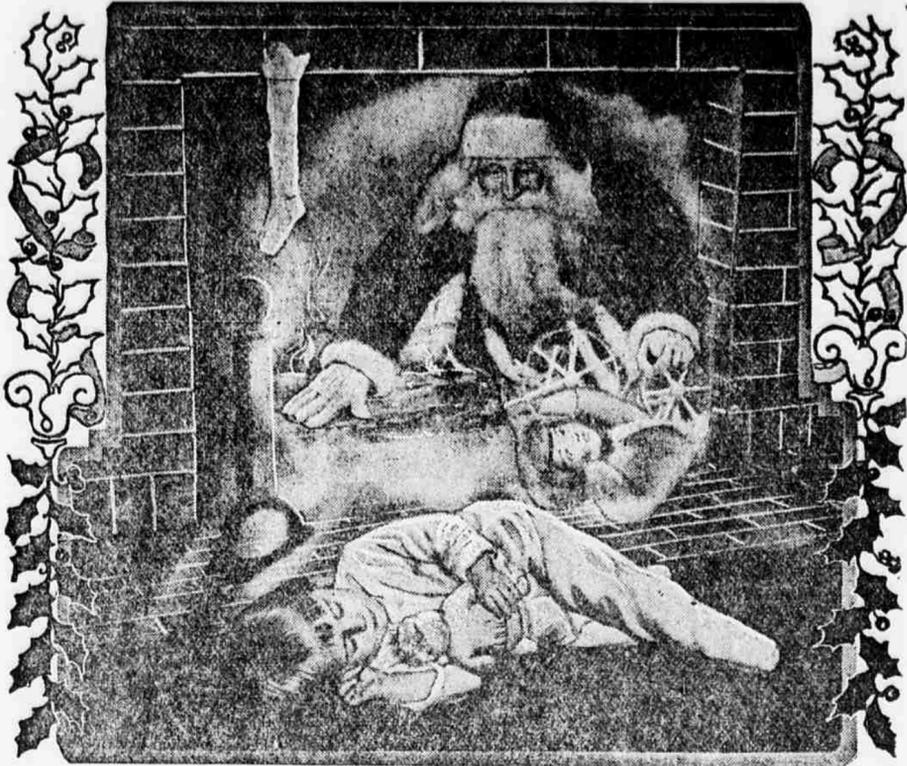


Bobby's Christmas Eve Dream



The MEANING of CHRISTMAS

BY REV. T. B. GREGORY

BUT for its great days, incarnating and flashing forth the ideal, humanity would have no more history than a flock of sheep.

Such days are the monuments of mental and spiritual achievement, the eternal reminders of the only true progress—the progress that enables us to perceive and admire the moral sublime.

Conspicuously radiant among these gala days is the Christmas, standing as it does for the nativity of One who, all theological quibbling aside, was the living embodiment of the most beautiful and, at the same time, the most helpful manhood that this world has ever seen.

The one who is foremost in our thoughts at this time was pre-eminently hopeful. From the harp over which he swept his hand there came no pessimistic strain, no note of despair.

He gave us the gospel, the "Glad Tidings." To all his word was "Be not afraid." The Supreme in whose embrace he ever rested, like the babe in mother's arms, was supreme love. Hence that other word of his, which he was so fond of repeating to the multitude, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

Religion, so-called, is responsible for a vast amount of mental misery. It has crazed many a mind, broken many a heart, driven countless thousands into the throes of despair, but let it be remembered that the Beautiful One who is commemorated in the Christmas season authorized no man, or combination of men, to speak in his name the word of gloom.

He who was born in Bethlehem, or in Nazareth, for it makes no difference where he first saw the light of earth, grew up to be the most uncompromising optimist that ever walked the ways of earth. Wherever he went, along with him went gladness, and from his radiant presence despair fled as the darkness flees before the rising sun.

He was like the wonderful river in the sea, warming and encouraging all that he touched. The Gulf Stream of humanity, he put new life and courage and joy into the cheerless, sorrowing world to which he came.

And he was able to do this because he was so gloriously hopeful, so staunchly committed to the belief in the best.

Looking up, he saw, instead of the "black, bottomless eyesocket," the living, loving glance of the "Father," whose "eternal goodness" would never do him harm.

Looking ahead, this man saw no spooks or bogies, no devils or fiends in the way. The path was clear, and over it hung no dark clouds of impending disaster.

If Jesus had written a poem we may be sure that it would have been very similar to Whittier's:

I know not where his islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm can come from him to me
On ocean or on shore.

Now it is just this sort of spirit that every one should feel within the soul at this Christmas time—the spirit of a brave trustfulness, of a rock-ribbed confidence and hope.

afraid is to be a sham, a cringing mental, a nobody; while to be able to believe in the best and to trust that, no matter what our evil genius may suggest to the contrary, the light awaits us on ahead, is to be a hero and a conqueror, a friend and helper to all mankind.

It is well, then, that in obedience to old custom we should throw about the Christmas season the parti-colored mantle of joy and wreath it with the heart's most exuberant gladness.

It would be a shame not to be glad, and not to try to make everybody else glad, on Christmas day!

On Christmas day to be a cynic and to curl the lip of scorn at sight of the rosy festivities about us, would be an unpardonable crime, the very abyss of the mean and contemptible.

It is a part of the unwritten law of every healthful heart that when Christmas comes we are to "put our best foot forward," cast all care to the winds and be as full of gladness and good will as an egg is of meat.

And right here in this unconquerable optimism we find the only true and genuine Christianity. The one whose birth the Christmas signposts came to replace tears by smiles, sorrow by happiness, worry by confidence and despair by the "hope that maketh not ashamed," and in his name I wish you all a "Merry Christmas!"—not merely an abundance of turkey and plum pudding, but an extra abundance of "good will to men," with no lack of the disposition and resolve to make everything else as happy as yourselves.



To Dolly



Tomorrow's Christmas, Dolly, dear,
So off to bed we'll go.
We'll hang our socks upon the shelf
For Father Christmas, though!
Don't try to keep awake, my dear,
But shut your eyes up tight.
If we're awake, he is so shy,
He's sure to take to flight.

A Christmas Toast

THERE'S gladness to every one—open your hearts to it all year round—don't keep them closed until you are shamed into prying them open with a jimmy on Christmas—make every day a Christmas Day—get rid of your grouch—throw it overboard and don't throw out a lifeline if it cries to be saved—let it drown—it will do the poor thing good.

Some Legends of Christmas Celebrations

THE original "halcyon days" were at Christmas, and were so-called because the halcyon, an ancient name for the kingfisher, was said to build its nest upon the waters at this time of year. It was generally supposed that this bird, through the influence of the holy season, had the power to still the waves and winds, so that the weather was peaceful and calm, and enabled the halcyon to lay her eggs in her floating nest and brood upon them with perfect safety.

In olden times it was believed that all nature testified in various ways to a recognition of the great event commemorated in the celebration of Christmas. The winds and seas, as well as the animals and plants and all other living things, gave evidence of knowledge of the approaching glorious anniversary and became imbued with the prevalent spirit of adoration, joy and peace.

Tradition tells us that at the moment of the Savior's birth a universal peace reigned throughout the earth, that a deep silence rested upon the world, the birds stopped in their flight, the cattle ceased to feed, men became motionless with sudden awe in the midst of their labors, and the stars glittered with added luster. From this tradition came the superstitions of the middle ages relating to the miraculous phenomena supposed to occur annually at Christmas, many of which still survive.

Bells, too, have their legends. In a village near Raleigh, in Nottinghamshire, England, there is now a valley where once there was a picturesque and prosperous village, but an earthquake swallowed it up; yet every Christmas since, the bells of the buried church are heard chiming.

Similar tales are told of Preston, in Lancashire, and Been, in the Netherlands. This latter city was famed for its beauty and magnificence, and also for the sins and avarice of its inhabitants. On the anniversary of his birth, the Saviour came as a beggar and went from door to door; but, although Christmas festivities were being kept up, nobody would give him alms. Sin was abundant on all sides, but there were no Christmas goodwill and charity, and he called to the sea and it came and completely covered the unholy city of Been. But at Christmas time even now comes the joyous pealing of bells from under the water.

The skulls of the three Wise Men, each encircled with a crown of jeweled gold, are among the relics in Cologne cathedral.

Christmas the Glad Day for All the World

EVERY country and every people have their own special holidays, both national and religious, but Christmas is a day for all countries and all people. It is the world's holiday.

It is a day of gladness, as it should be, for it commemorates the birth of him who brought to the world the greatest gladness it has ever known or will ever know, though it were to last for countless aeons to come.

So universal is the application of the celebration of Christmas that all men are included in it, whether they be of high or lowly station, rich or poor in the goods of the world.

It is a time for kindly deeds, for charity, for gifts and all that goes to make life gentler and sweeter. The hardest heart can scarcely escape its softening influence, the most sordid miser must struggle to resist its promptings to generosity.

At first the day was a day observed by professed Christians only; now it is observed by both those who profess themselves Christians and those who make no such professions. Its warmth envelops all.

This being true—and no one will dispute it—the meaning of Christmas grows ever clearer to us. Its meaning is beyond all that we have already said of it. Christmas means that, ultimately, the whole world will become one vast brotherhood.

And it is entirely logical that this should be the real meaning of Christmas, because that was the reason Christ came upon the earth whose birth is celebrated by Christmas. It was to make all men brothers that he lived and taught and toiled; it was to accomplish this that he gave himself up voluntarily to a cruel death on the cross.

It is a wonderful thing that he was born in a stable, that he was son of a carpenter, that he never had a dollar to his name, that he had no home after he left Nazareth, that he was a wanderer on the face of the earth with no place whereon to lay his head, and that now, 2,000 years after his death, his power is over the world as the power of the Roman empire never was.

It is a marvelous thing about Christ that as the years and centuries increase since his death, the more real he becomes in the thoughts of men and the better he is understood.

There have been attempts to prove that he was a myth. But there never was an attempt at anything that failed so dismally. There have been attempts to dispute the miracles he performed, but these attempts have also failed.

There is no question now in the mind of any historian worthy of the name that Christ performed all the miracles that are related of him in the Gospels. He undoubtedly healed the sick—the leprosy, the palsied and the others. He turned the water into wine; he fed the multitude on a few loaves and fishes. He raised the dead.

Men may differ, as indeed they do, as to whether or not Christ was the divine son of God, but even those who in the face of every proof reject this claim still regard him as the purest, the noblest and the greatest man that ever walked this earth. Every man does not worship him as God, but no man defames him. He is the vision and the hope of all men.

When, in mockery, they crowned him king with the cruel thorns, little they thought that he would rule a world at last—a world in which all races vie with one another to render him their homage.

Now comes again in the swing of the years another Christmas day. May it be a glad and a merry one for all our readers.



May high wages, high spirits, and high ideals be yours in the coming year



Peace

by Cecile Joyce Keenan

*At Bethlehem the Star shines bright above the Stable door;
By every road the Wise Men come who never came before;
The kings, with all their Caravan, keep watch upon the hill,
While Jesus sleeps on Mary's breast—and all the guns are still!*

*The plunder of the world is heaped about that manger-bed,
Behold! the gifts the Wise Men brought are stained an awful red.*

*Poor Mary's face is white and drawn, and Joseph's grim and set—
For older hearts, tho' slow to learn, are slower to forget!*

*But lo, the Star at Bethlehem above the Stable door
Shines with a glory in its light that never shone before!
The haggard hosts of shattered men out on the battle plain
Have caught the slogan of the skies, and fling it back again.*

*"Peace—Peace on Earth!" with shaken hearts, across the world they come,
No panoply of war is theirs, no flag, no rolling drum;
But all are cloaked in spotless white—the garment of His love—
And "Peace" their bursting throats now sing, and "Peace" the choirs above!*

*At Bethlehem the Star shines bright above the Stable door,
By every road the Wise Men come who never came before;
The Kings, with all their Caravan, keep watch upon the hill,
While Jesus sleeps on Mary's breast—and all the guns are still!*

For an Improved Christmas

by GRACE ARNOLD



THE woman with brown eyes was gazing meditatively out of the window at the people hurrying through the falling snow with their Christmas bundles. "You are thinking," her husband suggested. "About Christmas, that's all."

"We have left undone the things that we—" "Not this time, my dear. Merely about everybody in the world."

"No one could call you narrow minded!" "People have the right spirit about it," she explained. "They are so full of good will toward men that they try to do too much—that's the trouble! You see, most of us and our good intentions are hampered by average salaries and moderate strength."

"I've noticed it." "We want to give to everybody. We want our homes supercruculously tidy. We plan festivities which require new party clothes for the whole family, extra special cooking and preparation for guests."

"Then we set about doing these things. At first it goes well and we enthuse. The common, everyday affairs interfere and complicate matters. At the beginning of Christmas week—with many frills deleted—we find ourselves growing tired, awfully tired. But we see that it's impossible then to stop and rest. That's where the strain begins. We feel compelled to finish what we've started and to carry the program through to the last item of buying, making, packing and shipping."

"Unexpected demands interrupt. Then the strain begins to tell on our nerves. Perhaps we don't say anything for fear of spoiling Christmas for the others. But in our hearts we wish mankind had kept Christmas free from this sort of thing."

"When Christmas day comes we are too weary to bother about the true meaning of it all or to take very keen



Gazing Meditatively Out of the Window. pleasure in the results of our back-breaking work, much less to go out and hear beautiful music and uplifting sermons."

"I've always wondered why women attempt so much." "Because everybody does. And if one poor, lone, sensible woman sits down and flatly refuses to kill herself working for Christmas, her family and friends will think she is a quitter—a social slacker."

"Well," suggested her husband, "why not let the rich people have all the fuss and feathers, and let those in medium circumstances realize they can't keep up that pace?"

"You don't understand," said the woman with the brown eyes; "as long as rich folks do it, those less able will strain to do likewise. That's why the wealthy people will have to see the trend and institute a change."

"In place of so many mere 'presents' we must give such things as love, courage, kindness and generous impulses—things which our present physical and mental strain forbids. Throughout the rest of the year, if any one felt inclined to send a regular gift to a friend or relative, that could be done very easily and the recipient would know it was a voluntary, not a compulsory, remembrance."

"It's a great idea," said the brown-eyed woman's husband, cheerfully. "A bit of real affection in place of some of the monstrosities now exchanged would be a great improvement."

"You can make fun if you want to," she replied, "but when the world wakes up to the real meaning of Christmas—and the war I believe has helped to wake it up—you'll see the effect spread over the entire year. Then the first of January won't be associated with bills and pills, but with the genuine eagerness to live the next 12 months better than those preceding."

"In the meantime," sighed her husband dramatically, "I hope you haven't bought me another smoking jacket."

"That reminds me!" said the woman with the brown eyes. "I haven't time to be sitting here talking. And it won't be any of your affair until tomorrow morning, anyway." — Chicago Daily News.

A Christmas Surprise

