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Poetry

CHRISTMAS CAROL

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But Christmas it always is young,
For heart of the jewel bursts lustrous and fair,
And the soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.
It is coming, old earth, it is coming to-night,
The voice of the Christ child falls on the snowflakes—
which cover thy soul,
The feet of the Christ child fall gentle and white,
And the voice of the Christ child fills out with delight,
That mingles at the children of God,
On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
The voice of the Christ child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer up on the floor
Of hope that he dared not dream of before
With a sunshine of welcome for all,
The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the Holiest have trod,
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed,
When the silver trumpets of Christmas have pealed,
That mankind are the children of God.
—Phillips Brooks.

Select Family Reading

How Christmas May Bring Greater Joy

By Harriet Lumsden Smith

Tired, Jennie!

The father and daughter sat facing each other at opposite sides of the round table. At a casual glance the relationship was apparent, the man's strong features softened in the girl, without losing their pronounced characteristics. To-night her face betrayed a weariness almost suggestive of desolation.

Jennie looked up with a start at her father's question. "Tired? Oh, don't you know?" she asked, to refute, impatiently on the subject. "I suppose I am, though I can't imagine why. I took the motor car, of course, and I didn't go but to two or three of the best places where there never is a crowd. Still at best, Christmas shopping is hard work."

Mr. George King played with his fork. "Jennie!" he said suddenly, "what's the matter with Christmas? Why isn't there more enjoyment in it?"

His daughter's eyes met his in a startled glance that was like a protest. Apparently he was not in a hurry to hear her opinion, for he went on, speaking rather dreamily, as if talking to himself.

"It was always this way, Jennie. When I was a boy there was a zest about Christmas. It doesn't seem to have nowadays. I'd think perhaps it was because I was growing old, if I didn't see the same lack of enthusiasm in you. Let's see! How old are you, Jennie?"

"Nineteen in February, father."

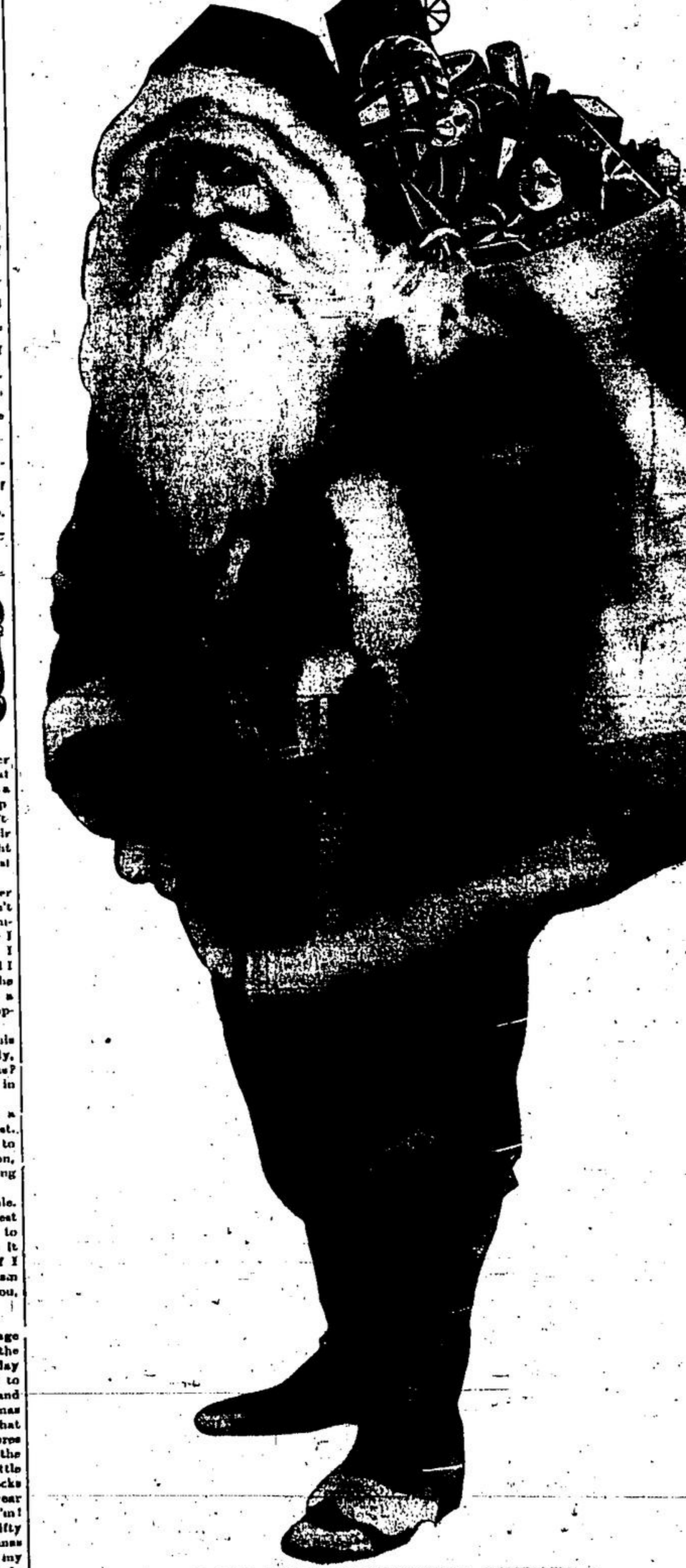
"Nineteen. When I was your age I'd left the farm and moved to the city, but Christmas was great, day after day. Sometimes I could get away to my home for my Christmas dinner and sometimes I couldn't, but Christmas was Christmas just the same. What hours I spent hunting up the stores where my few dollars would make the biggest showing. There was a little bookshop who had a stand two blocks from my boarding house, and one year I bought him a pair of shoes. But I gave Mrs. Jones a check for fifty dollars yesterday, toward a Christmas dinner distribution, but though my judgment commended the charity as in every way worthy of support, there's no particular heart-pleasure in it. What's the matter with Christmas, Jennie?"

"The girl had been knitting her straight brows, and when he paused she had her answer ready. It was not as off hand as it seemed. She had been asking herself the same question.

"As far as our friends go, the people we know, they've got so much at hand that it's hard to give them any thing they especially value. And as for the poor people, you supply the money but the pleasure of giving goes to some society. There's no more personally about it than if you put your check in a slot machine."

"That's true," agreed her father. "Seems like a sensible explanation, my dear. If you should happen upon a solution let me know."

Jennie neglected her Christmas question, touched her more deeply than he guessed. It hurt her to think that this big-hearted, generous man should not get abiding satisfaction out of his liberality. In her perplexed mind she was perhaps more often to suggest than would otherwise have been the case. It is certain that the arrival of Aunt Jocelyn's letter should have something more than a



THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

more coincidence. Aunt Jocelyn was Mr. King's aunt, a gentle, old-fashioned creature, whose visit to her nephew's city home some twenty years before was too awe-inspiring a memory to encourage her to repeat the experience. Several times a year she wrote to Jennie, and the letter arriving shortly before Christmas was a valued part of Jennie's holiday. At the same time its arrival had never meant so much as now!

MY DEAR CHILD:
I have been thinking of you ever since December began, and of the time you must be having going around to all those big stores, buying things to make people happy. I have a little package made up to send you. It's not much, but I made it myself, and loving thoughts went into every stitch.

The photographs you sent us last spring of your father and yourself are a great pleasure. They are so like-like that it's the next best thing to having them, propped up on a pile of books, so the faces would show above the tablecloth. John said I looked to him as if I was getting to my second childhood, but I don't care. It seemed real good.

Your father will be sorry to hear that our trip to the city is very poorly.

The doctor says she ought to go to British Columbia for the winter, but Mr. King's salary is only eight hundred dollars, and I guess she can't go. Nettie Hill is playing the organ in the church. She had to give up going to the conservatory because the music who was sending her did without making any provision for her, and her cousin won't do a thing for her. It's a disappointment to Nettie, for he promised her that she should have every chance, but she's the sort of a girl in make the best of things and no one to see her would guess what it meant to her.

Deacon Roberts—your father will remember him, if you don't—is going to lose his home, I'm afraid. He mortgaged it when his younger son was so sick, and they say Hanson is going to foreclose. I suppose the deacon and his wife will have to live with his other son, James, and I'm sorry for them, for James' wife is fretting about it already, and saying that they haven't a mile more room than they need for themselves.

I'm afraid this isn't a very Christmas letter, dear. It has such a lot about folk's troubles, but your father knew all these people when he was a boy, and he'll be interested to know how they're getting along. I wish you a happy Christmas.

Your loving great-aunt,
JOCELYN R. SWAN.

When Mr. King came home that

night Jennie met him in the hall. "I've solved the puzzle," she announced.

"What puzzle? Oh, you mean—?"

Mr. King handed her overcoat to the deferential servant, and followed his daughter into the library looking really interested. But when he had perused Aunt Jocelyn's letter he seemed more puzzled than ever.

"Really, my dear, I don't see—"

"The first thing," Jennie announced, balancing herself on the arm of his chair, "is that we'll spend Christmas with Aunt Jocelyn. She won't have to set our photographs on chairs. Doesn't that make you feel cozy and queer? It did me. And when we get there—" She paused dramatically. "Then we'll see what we can do for the preacher's wife and the rest."

"Play Santa Claus for the whole community," her father laughed. "That's considerable of a proposition."

"It wouldn't cost you a bit more," Jennie returned calmly, "than to put that stained glass window into the new library building at your college. Stained glass windows are very nice, but if you want my opinion, father, I think you'll find more satisfaction in these other." However we don't had

THE GIFT ALL MAY GIVE

One gave a gift not bought with gold,
For gold he seldom had,
A precious gift to one most dear,
And who received was glad.

He gave the gift to other friends,
He gave with happy heart,
To each and all it carried joy;
'Twas of himself a part.

Nor wrapped nor sealed, 'twas postage free,
Where'er the gift was sent,
And always reached without delay,
The one for whom 'twas meant.

He gave the gift to those in need,
He gave it more and more;
Yet, though full oft he gave the gift,
It but increased his store.

And many he who used the gift,
And daily for it pine;
For wealth is powerless to bestow
This precious gift divine.

How blessed to give, and blessed, too,
Are those who love to receive,
And more than gold this Poem of
"Price,"
This gift that all may give.
—Della Hart Stone.

to settle anything now, but the mere fact that she will be with Aunt Jocelyn for Christmas. I'll write her, if you say so, tonight."

It was a snowy Christmas. Jennie creeping out of bed at the first hint of daylight, scratched a hole on the frost covering her window and gazed delightedly on the glistening country landscape, so unlike a winter scene in town. Then her chattering teeth recalled her to the fact that she was far from the region of steam radiators, and she dressed in haste. Much was to be done that day. It was to be the busiest of Christmases.

Downstairs Aunt Jocelyn was going about radiant. It was not the gifts her nephew and his daughter had brought her which were responsible for the illumination of the sensitive old face. It was the fact that her "folks" had come home for Christmas. Words were unequal to expressing her satisfaction. That had taken form in flaky pine and golden brown doughnuts, in cranberry jelly and whipped cream, to say nothing of the fattest, tenderest turkey of the flock. Aunt Jocelyn's pantry shelves were an embodied hallelujah.

She had to spare them for a time that Christmas morning, and she was well content. Jennie had helped her in the kitchen the day before and though Jennie had meant well, her assistance in getting Christmas dinner was something with which Aunt Jocelyn could very well dispense. "The turkey won't be done a minute before half-past one," she called after them benignly. "No don't hurry a minute."

Their first call was at the parsonage. The minister himself was getting the dinner, and the little wife, pale, hot, her eyes, coughing apologetically behind her hand, did the lion's share of entertaining the visitors. It was a very cold winter, wasn't it, observed the fragile little woman, shivering in spite of the red hot stove a few feet from her chair. No, she hadn't been able to get out very much yet. It was so cold it seemed as if she couldn't bear it. She would be so glad when the spring came.

The minister vibrating like a pendulum between the kitchen and the living room, was perhaps not sorry when he conducted his visitors to the door. And then Mr. King said something in his ear which must have been something more than Merry Christmas, at the same time thrusting a piece of paper into his hand. The minister looked into his visitor's face, looked at the slip of paper and bowed his head and wept. Not a word of thanks was spoken; not a word was necessary. Those tears of unutterable relief were more eloquent than the finest periods. Nettie Blair was the next to be favored. Nettie was attired in a gingham apron as she greeted her callers. She was too much of a lady not to be polite, but to her heart she thought those comparative strangers very much in the way. When Jennie asked her to play for them, she hesitated and the color rose in her cheeks.

"Why, of course," she said at last with a little difficulty. "But I'm afraid my fingers are stiff. I've had a week or two to do the last two weeks." She sat down in her glubgub apron, her color high, and played the Spring Song in a fashion that made her hearers forget the wintry, outdoor world, and what was an even greater achievement, made herself forget the turkey browning in the oven.

"It's beautiful," Jennie said softly, as the music ceased. "It had been agreed between her father and herself that she should handle this delicate part of their mission. "You have a wonderful gift. My father and I were so sorry that you had to give up your music and come home."

The sympathy in her listener's tone thawed a little of Nettie's constraint. "Nobody could have been so sorry as I," she said in a low voice. "But I don't hope to talk about it with you, but we've got to talk about it in order to help." Jennie explained with a rather nervous laugh. "You see, Miss Blair, my father thinks your future is too promising for you. He wants to see you back to the conservatory."

(Continued on page four)