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Christmas Edition

and Worshipped Him

"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and they fell, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—*Matthew 2: 11.*

CHRISTMAS---"Peace on Earth"---a thought sent through mortal flesh---gave to man a vision which has survived through more than nineteen hundred years of strife, ever advancing until to-day, nations know and have turned to a discussion of outlawing war. It was not nor is not a false promise from creative power. Instead only a rule of life, so simple that man has found it difficult to believe and follow its tenets. It is this: "A Little Child Shall Lead." With that understanding, true humility and simple faith, the wonders of "Peace on Earth" unfold. Not by might, not by power; but by the Spirit of God born in the life of man. Hail Christmas 1927.

BILLY---AND CHRISTMAS

BILLY lost at the window of the little sun parlor looking down from a height of three stories upon rooftops, cold and glistening in the moonlight.

Looks like a regular Christmas eve, he reflected pensively, with a cheerfulness that was plainly forced.

The mother glanced up from the book she was reading, but said nothing. She was thin and dark, with heavy black hair that hung in limp, unstyled strands about her face, and was knotted carelessly at the back. Her sallow skin took on an added yellow tinge from the unrelieved black of the blouse she wore turned back negligently from her throat. Joy and becoming clothes might have made Isabel Beresford almost beautiful but in mourning garb that conceded nothing to the fashion she was frankly indifferent as to its effect upon the wearer. She was merely an ugly, tragic, somber figure. Her face did not lighten even when the boy at the window turned toward her, though he was the kind of a boy who seemed made for welcoming smiles. He was stocky of build, with an upturned nose plainly destined for successive crops of summer freckles, his eyes were deep blue and steadfast and he had the kind of mouth that belongs to a nature without malice or guile.

These two look quiet like Christmas Eves the snow on their shoulders, we conjured again.

Put down the shade, Billy, his mother said sharply. How can you bear to speak of Christmas when—she's gone and she put a black-bordered handkerchief to her eyes.

The boy looked embarrassed but he made no effort to comfort his mother with the air of one to whom her tears were a familiar thing. He waited a moment and then shrugged his sturdy manchild shoulders.

Guess I'll go to bed, he said and came from his mother's side presenting a cheek to be kissed. The caress was given and received mechanically without apparent feeling on either side. But Billy still lingered plainly unsatisfied. Surely this is no way to go to bed on Christmas eve even if its usual observances were forbidden. But his mother had picked up her book and he turned away.

Good night, he faltered.

Good night, echoed his mother listlessly, without starting from her chair.

Not did he stir for a long time afterwards. In the restricted limits of the tiny apartment she could not help but hear Billy moving about in his little bedroom. She never had been able to break him of that habit and she never heard the double thump without remembering that it had been one of the things about John to which she had objected. Sure he'd jump from bed to turn on the water for his bath and she knew that he was going to bed clean and sweet as she had taught him to do, but when he had gone back to his room and she heard him open the window and turn off the electric light she did not go to him to hear his prayers and tuck him up as small boys want their mothers to do.

Instead she sat there under the amber glow of the shaded lamp, staring out straight before her. Something had died within her, something of the maternal and protecting. Some day, perhaps, she might be Billy's mother again, but now loving under a grief that had brought no ennobling touch to her and a sort she was only John Beresford's widow a stricken, helpless, hopeless creature, living only for her memories of other days. The room in which she sat was the pleasantest part of the small, expensive and extremely modern apartment to which she had fled. It was so compact of space and its service was so efficient that its care did not take up her days but left her with idle hours that she could fill with grieving. It might have been home to a busy woman coming in at night glad of its pleasant comfort but it was no place for a boy, used to a house with its open books for and space big enough for noise and movement. Billy's mother liked the apartment because it was so different from the home she had closed. Bills hated it for exactly the same reason.

In the stillness Isabel lived over again the Christmas eve of a year ago. John and she had had such fun trimming the house with holly and pine. She remembered that they had put the largest and loveliest of the wreaths outside the door because she had wanted all the earth to know that within the Christmas spirit held sway. Billy had insisted upon the whole family hanging up its stockings and she could see them now in a row above the fireplace. Bills of the stout, unmended toe, no doubt out. John, dear, boy, was making up a selection of Santa Claus from colored comic sheets that Billy had cut to use because it was so pretty. She remembered how that she had worn a coral shoe bows because with the big man and little man there at the table she felt so lost in it. She could see the tree, bright from a box and the floor of the candle-lit sanctuary at the house where [illegible] and John and she had knelt hand in hand to thank God for the warmth of love which would like a fixed star set up ready for use in whether he would not like most to put it in the hands of John and John had kissed her for the fairy method. For the one single boy could choose. And she had the silver after-dinner coffee service and Table had loaned and Romain calls Bunco time, God bless John, and he had to buy because it went with the handle of the little coffee pot, and she had given John a pair of great fur gauntlets for the car and the set of Kipling he had coveted bound in limp red leather. Ah! one could not think of that other Christmas but in terms of roses and scarlet and crimson.

She threw down her book and started to pace the floor as she so often did of late after Billy had gone to bed. She saw that he had forgotten to pull the shade as she had asked him to do and stepping into the sun parlor she raised her hand to the cord. All the world below lay white and sparkling under the moonlit heavens. Across the garden below, where the spruce trees and shrubs thrust dark branches through their snowy coats the light streamed from the cheerful windows of the doctor's house next door. There were the holly wreaths tied with scarlet ribbon hanging against the glass, and as Isabel looked a woman came to a window with her baby in her arms.

How can she bear it, when last year she had two instead of one? cried Isabel.

As she turned someone tapped at the door. She opened it to let in Mignon Woodman, fluffy, yellow-haired, all dimpling smiles, and laughing eyes, all eagerness and joy. In her arms she held a huge stocking made of white paper cambric with a sandy red toe and a turned-down, red top from which dangled little tinkling bells, an absurd, foolish thing, bulging in queer places and full of Christmas mysteries.

If Billy is in bed? she whispered.

Yes, said Isabel.

Good! cried Mignon, holding out the enormous hose. See what I've made for him. Of course he'll have his own stocking but these are such fun to open in these awful early hours, other people mustn't be disturbed when one is just aching to see what else there is. I know, the girl shook her head wisely. And Billy is the kind of boy who can stand any number of stockings. So will you please hang this at the foot of his bed where he will have it first thing when he wakes up?

Isabel took it hesitatingly.

I—

Oh, don't thank me, cried Mignon, thank Billy! It's such fun to do anything for him He's such joy.

But—Isabel half extended the hand which held the foolish thing, as if she would thrust it from her. We aren't—

But Mignon interrupted again. She came a little closer to the black-clad figure with its incongruous burden.

There never was such a Christmas for me, she said softly. You see—oh, Mrs. Beresford Won't you wish me luck? See, and the girl held out her left hand to show a sparkling ring. We have loved each other so long and now he is coming home very soon. Next year, Frank will be again. But it won't make any difference to us Christmas is always Christmas.

No, said the older woman sharply. It is only Christmas when we have our love—we women who need it so. It is not Christmas after love has gone.

A frightened look came into the girl's eyes and her face clouded momentarily.

Forgive me, she spoke gently. I did not think, it must be hard for you. But you still have Billy. And Billy—why Billy just means Christmas to look at him.

And she was gone. Isabel heard the door of the apartment close and the automatic elevator descend to the first floor where Mignon lived with a girl artist in a tiny suite of rooms. She was left standing with the gay red and white thing in her hand. She held it out at arm's length and regarded it—sandy bells and foolish bulging, its crown of holly through which a peppermint cane had been thrust. Before she realized it she was smiling at the ridiculous object. How Billy would love it! She tiptoed quietly into his room to place it on his bed. He lay asleep—only a nine-year-old on a travel in his sleep. His cheeks were flushed and in one fist he crumpled a lump handkerchief. Without waking he turned on his pillow and put his cheek in the sleep. His mother stood looking.

Santa's all right, dad, he sighed. She doesn't understand. Next Christmas—the [illegible] trailed off into a murmur.

Isabel dropped to her knees. The stillness of the room seemed [illegible] with the vivid presence of Billy's father. Had he and Santa schemed, seeking comfort and understanding, to reach out across the abyss at the brink of which she could cry, "I need you strongly"? Was Santa keeping Christmas eve with his little son? And she, who had struggled so desperately for some little sign that would show her that love still endured, had cried out from the darkness. Ye, he knelt the chimes in old Grace Church, two blocks away, rang out. She followed the refrain:

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song old.

The sound seemed to reach Billy in his deep. Mood mother, he muttered. Of course it can't be merry Christmas for her, dad, but never mind.

Isabel sprang to her feet. For the first time in all the weary months since John went away, she felt a call to decisive action. Was it too late? Getting her fur coat and hat as she went, she opened the door and sped down the stairs not waiting for the lift. At Mignon's door she knocked sharply. The girl answered it.

Why Mrs. Beresford, she said wonderingly.

I haven't a minute to spare, Isabel was fairly panting for breath. Please, please, go up and dress with Billy until I get back. I have to go out my self. I must hurry. Please be quick. The shops will close in a few minutes.

An hour later, at the sound of footsteps in the hall, Mignon opened the door and Isabel fairly framed within it.

The cold air had put color into her cheeks and even her hair seemed freshly crisp. Against the black fur her face seemed whiter and her eyes shrinked with a new light. Over all she wore some several inches wreaths and behind her stood a blue-suited messenger boy with boxes and parcels. She turned to him briskly.

Put them down on that table. Thank you very much and a merry Christmas to you, she ended.

Now, cried Billy's mother, let's get to work.

Mignon gave her one searching glance. Then she took the holly wreaths.

We'll hang these first, she said with quick intuition of the moment's significance.

Up into the windows of the little sun-parlor, which looked down into the garden of the doctor's wife who could keep Christmas with the baby that was left went the wreaths with their bows of red ribbon and below them Isabel set the candles and asked them that the doctor's wife, might look up and understand.

I couldn't carry enough for all the windows, and besides there were none left. But I have holly and pine for Billy's room, explained Isabel, breathless working hastily. Didn't he look at it?

Here it is, Mignon pounced upon it triumphantly. Where does it go?

Across the mantle and over the picture of the Madonna and the Child. Isabel crossed the room with a firm step, a long spray of holly in her hand. I have saved the most beautiful piece for John's picture.

Her hands did not tremble as she placed it over the frame for the first time in many months as the fine, proud face smiled down at her from somewhere, came somehow to smile into Her eyes. Mignon watching gave her no time for reflection.

What perfectly delicious-looking packages! she cried. Hurry Mrs. Beresford I can't wait another moment to open them.

You won't have to, laughed Isabel her voice as eager as Billy's. See this, and she tore off the paper wrapping. This is the very latest model in ice skates. I'm going to mind up my shaky ankles in them and go out with Billy while the ice is smooth. That space bundle is a new model for his electric railway and a new mill that can be run with the motor. Billy just loves motor. And, oh yes I almost forgot there's a drill. It makes more noise than the Seventh.

Isabel paused breathless to pick the hair out of her eyes. Her cheeks were still flushed and she looked ten years younger. Mignon laughed.

What in the world are you going to do with all that stuff in this tiny place? she demanded. I could probably be asked to make of Billy that term all ends at once.

Why, Isabel straightened up from the floor where she was sitting surrounded by her packages. I had not thought of that. Of course there is no room here. That's why we had to rush away the electric railway Billy already has. There was not one place here for it. There is none now.

Now, mind, consoled Mignon. There are plenty of other ones, for sure.

And I shall mind, started Isabel, [illegible] to be for.

What will you do with the things? What have I got Billy for, I'd like to know. This is no place for him. He needs a place where he can expand and mock a noise when he wants to, where he can have a workshop in the basement and a bobsled on the front porch. That's the kind of home he used to. Why, Isabel came over and grasped Mignon by the arm. That's half what's the matter.

THE NIGHT 'FORE CHRISTMAS

Most generally at eight o'clock
I go upstairs to bed,
An' jes' undress an' say my
prayers an' cover up my
head.
An' shut my eyes up good'n tight
an' go to sleep, an' then
First thing I know it's mornin',
an' time to git up again.

Some nights, of course, don't
seem so very short, ye know,
Like 'fore a feller's birthday or
the night jes' 'fore you go
To visit grandpa—oh, my yes!
they're kinder long, but gee!
The night that comes 'fore
Christmas is a million years
to me.

You hear the old hall clock
tick tock," an' hear the
wind, so low
An' kinder soft an' lonesome like,
jes' if 'twas goin' to snow;
An then we wonder if it will,
so we can slide next day,
An' then you think 'bout Santy
an' his reindeer an' his
sleigh.

You wonder what he'll bring yer,
an your wonder how he
guessed
You wanaed skates last Christmas,
an' a blowgun an' the
rest.
An then you try to git to sleep,
an' then, of course, you don't,
An' then you say, "Well, you
jes' wait," an' then, of course,
you won't.

I guess it might be right, but
oh' sometimes it does seem
wrong
That this one night boys wants
so short should be so extra
long.
I've tried to think out why it is,
but all the excuse I found
is that its long as Santy hell
have time to git around.
But I know this, I'm mighty glad
I ain't in Eskimo
An' has to live away up north
among all the ice and snow,
I really don't see what they do,
the boys, I mean oh, dear!
I'm afraid of a storm though a
night that lasts a half a
year.

[illegible] with us with Billy and me. He's got no room for his man's soul to grow in and I haven't a full-sized woman's job."

It would never do for Frank and me, said Mignon, softly, and even not even in the beginning. We'd want a real home even if it was only a shack on the prairie.

Isabel held out her arms and Mignon came to her. It would be a home with you anywhere, dear child, she whispered. You are proof of that, nothing, not even death, can take love away. And you've given me back Christmas Christmas and Billy.

Mignon broke the tension of the moment with a laugh. There must be no suggestion of tears on happy ones. It's a blessed thing Frank comes tomorrow, she said. He's only a civil engineer but probably he can set those things going. We'd never know, we silly women.

A few minutes later she went and Isabel was again alone in the little apartment, now so suddenly and strangely transformed. There were candles burning in the windows to welcome the coming of the Christ Child and light the Wise Men on their way.

And under the crown of holly smiled the face of Billy's father. Isabel looked at it and threw back her head, proud in her heritage of blessed memories, no longer sad. Pausing swiftly to her bedroom she tore off the black blouse and skirt and threw them into a corner. From out the closet she drew forth a lovely rose colored negligee which by some strange chance, had not been given away with the rest of her colored things. She shook out its soft silken folds and contemplated its wrinkles worfully. Then she threw it around her and went back into the gay little room. Again she smiled into her husband's eyes and going to the window threw it open and listened. The clock was striking midnight and from somewhere in the old gray tower came the triumphant notes of the old carol, sung by clear, boyish voices:

Christians awake! Salute the happy morn
Whereon the Saviour of mankind was born
Rise to adore the mystery of love
Which hosts of angels chant from above
With them the joyful tidings first begun
Of God Incarnate and the Virgin's Son.

With the last note Isabel closed the window softly as if the new joy that had been ushered in was too precious to disturb rudely. Love was not dead and life was still sweet.

Religion

—By Dr. Frank Crane

DR. ROBERT A. MILLIKAN, world famous scientist, in an address on the subject of Evolution, declared that religion was one of the most striking examples of evolution. This was not in the way of controversy or heresy, but was merely emphasizing what was already taught in every important theological school of importance in the country.

Scholars have been pointing out that there was a progression of doctrine in the Bible, the God of the Old Testament not having the ideals presented in the new.

There is no doubt but that religion has advanced greatly from the days of Moses until the days of Christ.

Christ Jesus is said to have come "in the fullness of time;" that is, He came when the development of mankind and its stage of progress warranted Him.

Since His day there has been a great progress made. Formerly, religious denominations were cruel. It was common to have heresy hunting among sects and both Protestants and Catholics were guilty of things of which they would not nowadays be guilty. The idea of God has undergone considerable variations. God may be the same "yesterday, to day and forever," but our understanding and apprehension of Him progress.

We have rejected the old tribal gods, the God of wrath and vengeance and have substituted the God of Love.

As the process of men's minds has broadened as their understanding and sympathy have deepened, their conception of God has improved, and no one can look at the activities of churches to day and compare them with those of yesterday and not see that there has been a great advance.

The missionaries in foreign countries are not so much interested in making converts to their beliefs as they are in doing good to the people.

The recent activities of the churches have all been in the line of helping humanity rather than of fighting certain beliefs.

In other words there has been a definite evolution of religion from merely belief in certain tenets to practical helpfulness of mankind. Religion means nothing more than a devotion to the general good. Whatever there is of God nowadays is a God who inhabits all of the people and whatever makes for the welfare of all mankind is pleasing to Him.

Religion, like everything else, must be tested by its results. Its triumph is not due to its wanting all people to believe in certain things so much as it is in improving our well being.

Christ whose birthday we now observe knew all of this and to practice "Peace on Earth."

What to Give?

?

This is the season of the year when almost everybody asks the oft repeated question "what to give" this year for Christmas.

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