

The Free Press' Christmas Story

MOTHER REMEMBERS

GWENDOLINE P. CLARKE

LOOK at that rain, will you! exclaimed young Kenneth Mann in disgust. "If this keeps up much longer, we shall never get out for a Christmas tree at all. Imagine—rain and a thunderstorm two days before Christmas—can you beat it?"

"Perhaps we could buy a tree this year," suggested sister Kathleen, helpfully.

Their mother, Nora Mann, looked thoughtfully at her seventeen-year-old son and his sturdy sister two years his junior. Apparently the festive season without a Christmas tree would be little short of a tragedy, even though both of them were in their teens. Giving voices to her thoughts, she said to them, "Well, my dears, you are not little children any more—it wouldn't be so awful if you didn't have a tree, would it?"

"Mother—not have a tree!" chorused the youngsters in dismay. "We have always had one," added Ken, as if that were sufficient reason for their present worry. "Of course we must have one—what would Will and Nettie say if we didn't?"—referring to an older brother and sister, who were expected home next day.

"Mother, you don't really mean not to bother, do you?" asked Kathleen wisely. "Christmas wouldn't seem right without a tree. I expect you always had one in your family, didn't you, Mother?"

"No, not always—we had a tree—just once," answered Mrs. Mann, soberly, pausing with her work in her lap, and looking away—far away in space.

"One?" echoed Kathleen, and then, sensing a story behind her mother's quiet answer, the girl moved closer to where her mother was sitting.

"Tell us about it, Mother—do tell us—I am sure that you remember."

"Yes, dear," agreed Nora Mann, "I do remember."

For several minutes she sat silent again. Finally she began—

"Ever since you children have been old enough to take notice, there has always been a Christmas tree in your home. You have just proved you cannot imagine a Christmas without one. But in England, when I was a little girl, a Christmas tree was something that every child longed for but was only able to have if his or her parents could afford to buy one. I was one of those who longed, but did not have. As you know, your grandfather died when I was quite small and my mother's grandmother started dressmaking to make a living for her five children. She always gave us a wonderful Christmas but I know now that all our presents were humbly made. As I look back I realize that there was never a penny spent unnecessarily. My mother must have been a wonderful manager to clothe, feed and educate us the way she did. If anyone wanted a Christmas tree in England it had to be bought, so you can understand it was one of the things my mother felt she could not afford to give us. But oh, how I longed to have one! I used to pass by the shops in the market place where trees were shown for sale and I thought to have a tree with silver and sparkling ornaments with real candles alight, that would be the greatest joy that any child could wish for."

"When I was about six years old my eldest brother and I fell ill with a serious intestinal disorder. My brother made a fairly quick recovery but I was very ill for months. My mother nursed me night and day, looked after the rest of the family and still did her dressmaking to earn a living."

"To be near me she moved her sewing machine into my bedroom. I remember so well one dress that she was making. It was a red cashmere for a little girl about my own age. Flat on my back, in a big feather bed, I watched my mother stitching and sewing, and saw the dress take form under her skilful fingers. I thought it was a lovely dress. One day I couldn't keep quiet any more and with what I know must have been deep longing in my voice, I said 'Mummy will you make me a dress like that when I am well.'"

"My mother glanced at me and then looked quickly away and presently I saw that she was crying."

"Please Mummy don't cry, I begged. 'It's all right if you can't find it. But it's such a lovely dress. I finished with a sigh.'"

"And then my mother wiped away the tears from her eyes and said, 'Don't worry darling, you shall have a little red dress just like this when you are well.'"

"I did not know then, but my mother told me years later that she did not expect that I would ever wear a red dress, or any other kind of dress again, because the doctor had almost given up hope for my recovery."

"But I got better—slowly but surely—and I haven't a doubt it was largely due to my mother's faithful nursing. It was getting near to Christmas and to my joy I was able to be up a little while every day. I longed to go downstairs, but my mother kept putting me off and kept me all the time in my own room. But one day she said, 'I promise you, darling, if you are as well as you are

now, you shall go down stairs on Christmas Day."

"I often watch you children," continued Nora Mann, looking now especially at Kathleen, "and know what a lot of fun you have at Christmas time. I wonder sometimes if you could possibly imagine how a little girl would feel to get a promise like that, after having spent months and months in bed. I remember when my mother gave me such good news I could hardly contain myself at all, and I could tell my brothers and sisters were little less excited than I myself. Once my younger sister, trying to tease my brothers, pranced around the room and chortled with glee—I know something I won't tell!"

"And, the eldest, had his hand over her mouth in an instant. 'Stop it,' he insisted, 'stop it—cross your heart, you'll stop it.' And it was not until Millie 'crossed her heart' that he released her."

"Christmas Day dawned at last, but it was not a white Christmas, such as we in Canada always long for, and very often get. However, it was cold and frosty and as soon as it was light, mother and my brothers and sisters brought their stockings to my room, sat on my bed and unearthed the treasures from their bulging stockings, although in each case, underneath, a pair of slippers or a sweater went to help make up the 'bulge.' Presently I was dressed and held the promise that if I rested quietly I should be carried downstairs before dinner and be made comfortable on the living-room couch."

"At last the time came. My mother picked me up in her arms and the little cavalcade, moved slowly downstairs—my two brothers in front and my sisters behind. The living room door stood open. I noticed the heavy curtains were drawn to and that strange shadows flickered across the room—and I wondered why."

"Shut your eyes tight, little girl, until I get you on the couch," my mother said. "So I screwed up my eyes just as tight as could be, until I felt my little thin body touch the cushions."

"And then I opened them!

"You, of course, have guessed the end of my story long ago—you know exactly what was waiting for me. But I didn't—I had no idea what I should see until I opened my eyes. And there in the corner of the room, was the most glorious Christmas tree that any child ever had. I thought I was dreaming. Silver and gold were hanging from the branches, at least twenty colored candles were flickering in the darkened room and a lovely silver star was glistening from the topmost peak of the tree."

"I looked and looked and looked! And then I began to cry. 'Why—what's the matter, don't you like it?' asked my younger sister, sympathetically agitated at my tears."

"Yes, yes! I managed to say in a choked voice. 'It's lovely! But—but I'm so happy I can't help crying.'"

Nora Mann hesitated in her story as she thought of the little convalescent girl literally overcome with happiness. Then she continued, "You children got frightfully excited about Christmas and perhaps I have unconsciously encouraged you in the thought that a tree is one of the essentials, but I don't think any tree you ever had or will have could mean the same to you as that Christmas tree did to me."

"I learned afterwards that they were able to give me this surprise because my brothers and sisters decided not to give presents to each other but to save every penny they could earn, running errands and such like to buy a tree for the little sister God had spared to them to yet another Christmas. I never had a tree before—I never had one again."

"I had a tree just that once and the memory has stayed with me all through the years."

"And the dress, Mother—did Grandma make you a little red dress?" inquired Kathleen anxiously."

"Yes, dear," smiled her mother. "I had the little red dress too when I was well enough to wear it. There you just look outside," she added, "while we have been talking the storm has passed. You will be able to get your tree after all, Kenneth!"

"You bet, Kenneth," said Ken jumping to his feet. "In this country if you live on a farm with a bush when you want a tree all you have to do is go out and get it, and I'm getting it, hail rain or shine!"

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The Sunday School Lesson

FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15th

CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT

Golden Text.—A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.—John 13: 34.

Lesson Text.—Matthew 5: 43-48; 22: 34-40; John 13: 34, 35; 15: 12-14.

Exposition.—I. Love in the Kingdom, Matt. 5: 43-48.

The evil law of the natural man is here contrasted with the good law of the spiritual kingdom of heaven. Human nature expresses its love to those it likes while revealing hatred for those it dislikes. The love of Christ is not on so low a level. When Jesus told them to love their enemies He was uttering a revolutionary idea. He was frankly telling them to do what only the grace of God could enable them to do. In revealing their miserable helplessness he was inviting them to a new sphere of life altogether. They were not to do as other men did, but as their Father in heaven would do. They were to bless where others would curse. They were to pray for those they would naturally hate because of spite and persecution.

It is only so that they can reveal themselves to be children of their Father in heaven. It is a great love that is here set before us. It is more than that of brotherhood and higher even than earthly friendship. It is fatherly love. A son may be an enemy to the father without the father being an enemy to the son. An offspring may reveal hate to a parent, but the parent keeps on loving ceaselessly. So it is that God loves. He sends the rain on the just—his own—and the unjust—those who do despite to His grace. Why, because the quality of His love is that broad and pitying kind. He hath not dealt with us after our sin" (Ps. 103: 10). Such mercy should make us merciful (vs. 48). It is only so that we can reveal ourselves as the true children of God. Our distinction is to be the greatness of our love. We are to surpass the fraternal quality of mankind by manifesting the divinity of a Christlike love. The kingdom of heaven is not a place where limited human attitudes and emotions rule. It is the abode of "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12: 23) since that is to be our eternal state, we are to seek its quality in our spirits.

II. Love to God and Man Matt. 22: 34-40.

Jesus had silenced both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who had sought to entrap and confuse Him (vs. 15-33). A lawyer scribbled, Mark 12: 28) who had listened to the attempt was deeply impressed by the reasoning of Jesus, and he also asked a question. He did it to try or test Him (vs. 35, cf. Mark 12: 38). The question was an important one and brought forth an important and convincing answer. Man's first duty is to God. God is infinite man is finite, and a number of finite make or equal an infinity; therefore, if we should perform our affection in duty toward every fellow-man and fail to perform our duty toward the one, infinite God, the measure of our failure would be infinitely greater than the measure of our performed duty toward God can be summed up in one word love.

But there is a second law like unto the first and equal second but first, but like the first the central word of which is also love, the object of which

is our fellow-man. This second commandment requires that we have the same desire for, and delight in, the welfare of our neighbor as we have in our own. The second commandment is really involved in the first; for if we love God whom we have not seen we must love our neighbor whom we have seen (1 John 4: 20, 21). It is nonsense for a man to pretend to love God, if he does not love his neighbor, for love to God involves love to one's neighbor. The scribe who asked Jesus this question was a man of spiritual discernment; he assented to Jesus' answer (Mark 12: 32-34).

III. The New Commandment, John 13: 34, 35.

Jesus knows that His stay with the disciples is fast drawing to a close. He leaves them a law of life. That law is the law of love. Moses had said that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus goes beyond that and says we must love one another even as He loved us. We must not merely put our neighbor on a level with ourselves, but put him before ourselves, be ready to sacrifice our lives for his. That is the Christian law of life (cf. 1 John 3: 14, 16-18). It is our Lord's final and all-inclusive commandment, the one unfulfilling proof whereby all men shall know that we are His disciples.

IV. The Secret of Christian Love, John 15: 12-14.

The whole passage from the beginning of the chapter is an intimate statement of the vital union between the believer and Christ. The Christian is one who abides in Christ and in whom Christ abides. This blessed relationship is not a mere religious formula. It is a glorious fact. It can and should be revealed in the holy love that Christians are to manifest toward each other. The standard of that love is that which Jesus manifested.

How wonderful is that love. It found sinful men and transformed them into saints. It sought out the lost and set the solitary in the sacred family. It led Jesus to make "friends" of men and women with whom He had nothing in common. It was a love that went to the Calvary to pay the sinner's guilt (1 Peter 1: 18). "Now," says Jesus to His own redeemed ones, "go and love as I have loved you to the very death and beyond." Can we, as Christians, say that we love one another like that? It is evident from vs. 14 that, if we do not, we are living in open disobedience to our Saviour's command.

MAD DRIVERS SHOWN UP IN NEW SAFETY MOVIES

If you are a sloppy or "smart-Aleck" driver, a day-dreaming jay walker, a non-believer in traffic and highway signs or an erratic bicyclist you are now in the movie—or at least your prototype is. Hon. T. B. McQuesten, Ontario's Minister of Highways, has announced that a series of moving picture "shorts" demonstrating the good and bad in motor-cycling, cycling and walking will soon be released.

There will be six films in the series: "Jay Walkers," "Slugs and Pussworts," "To-morrow's Rulers," "Right or Wrong," "Holiday Drivers," and "Beware the Bikes."

The two-minute films will be shown in every one of Ontario's 225 movie theatres over a period of six months. According to Mr. McQuesten, the first picture in the series, "Jay Walkers," will be released this week, and during December will appear in nearly every moving picture house throughout the province.

Said Mr. McQuesten: "We have not tried to make these films into the proverbial 'stupendous, colossal, gigantic, super-extra' productions of Hollywood fame. We have just tried to show how the ordinary every-day mistakes of drivers and pedestrians create accident hazards and often result in injuries and death. The films demonstrate the common, simple rules of safe driving and safe walking; how keeping them keeps people safe and healthy and how breaking them lands careless people in a hospital and sometimes in a morgue."

Mr. McQuesten praised Ontario's theatre managers for co-operating with the Department of Highways in its safety campaign.

"Live and healthy motorists and pedestrians are the only ones who can go to movies," he remarked. "Injured and dead people are mighty poor movie theatre patrons."

Provincial police officers, the highway's minister stated, were used throughout the filming of the shorts to drive the automobiles which participated in the staged episodes of good and bad highway conduct illustrated in the films. This was done, he commented, because no one knows better how to drive a car better than a motorcycle officer, since he sees it happen dozens of times every day.

Highway officers, Mr. McQuesten pointed out, are stationed on the roads not to trap unwary motorists, but to make the highways safe. The officer that has the fewest accidents on his "beat," he said, is far more important to the province than the officer who can hand out the most "tickets."

When the films have been shown in all Ontario theatres, it was stated, they will be available for use by schools, service clubs and other interested organizations.

RAILS DEBT UP BILLION IN TWENTY YEARS TO 36

At the dates on which the Dominion Government took over the various railways now comprising the Canadian National Railways, outstanding liabilities totalled \$925,528,318, of which \$115,697,457 was money lent to the railways by the government.

From date of the first big government acquisition of the Canada Northern in 1917 the total liabilities to government and public grew from \$925,528,318 to \$1,905,696,274 as at December 31st, 1938. The C.N.R. Capital Revision Act, passed by Parliament in 1937, would \$427,088,578 out of the railway books so that at December 31st, 1937, the outstanding railway liabilities were shown at \$1,301,249,946. The \$627,088,578 became a part of the general debt of the Dominion.

AN OBSERVER

Professor What is the outstanding contribution that chemistry has given to the world? Student Blondie—

Which is also love, the object of which

STILL AT IT

Bookman (at riding academy)—I wish to rent a horse. Groom—How long? Bookman—The longest you've got; there be five of us going.

NO TROUBLE AT ALL

"You remember that used car salesman who's been pestering me 'No death for the last six weeks? Well, I finally got rid of him."

"How did you manage it?" "Easily enough. I bought the car."

MISINTERPRETED

"That man Smith must read a lot," "Oh, how is that?" "Well, I'm always getting letters from him beginning: 'On going through my books...'"

POOR IN PERFORMANCE

"Yes—yes; this crisis should teach us all to support our own industries. Every man should insist on Empire goods and accept no other." —waiter—Pll—have Swiss cheese, Russian salad and Italian vermouth."

TELEPHONE TALKS IN THE WATSON FAMILY



"MY DAD can talk farther than YOURS!"

When Donnie Watson's father greeted him over the telephone from 500 miles away, Donnie was impressed no end. He couldn't resist boasting a bit to his next-door neighbour and playmate.

Whenever you're called out of town, do as Bob Watson does—telephone home. It brings peace of mind at a trifling cost.

Reductions in telephone rates—local and long distance—in 1935, '36 and '37 have effected savings to telephone users in Ontario and Quebec of nearly one million dollars yearly.

Advertisement for Carroll's Food Guide, featuring various food products like shortcakes, mincemeat, wagstaffe's jam, and various fruits and vegetables. Includes a list of products and prices.

Advertisement for Carroll's produce, listing items like Turnips, Onions, Parsnips, Carrots, Oranges, Tangerines, Cranberries, and Butter. Includes prices and contact information for Carroll's Limited.

ACCIDENTS AND COMPENSATION. During the month of November, there were 3,282 accidents reported to The Workmen's Compensation Board, as compared with 5,008 during October, and 6,629 during November a year ago. There was awarded in benefits, \$581,814.33, of which \$437,901.03 was for compensation and \$93,913.30 for medical aid.

This year's record to date shows a total of 55,374 accidents reported, as compared with 64,854 during the same period last year, and the benefits awarded to date this year amount to \$5,850,306.31, as compared with \$6,557,463.90 to the end of November last year.