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**Chronicles of ..
 Ginger Farm**

Written Specially for
 The Acton Free Press
GWENDOLINE F. CLARKE

Happy Christmas, Everybody! Isn't that just the loveliest greeting? If it comes from the heart what more could one wish even for one's nearest and dearest? There are different ways of expressing one's Christmas wishes just as there are different ways of celebrating the Yuletide season. But if it all adds up to "A Happy Christmas" then it covers all that we could possibly wish for one another doesn't it?

Several weeks ago a friend asked me this question—"What is your first thought in connection with Christmas?" It was one of several on a questionnaire which she had been asked to have completed. The query intrigued me and I in turn put the question to several of my friends. Now I am asking you—"What is your first thought in connection with Christmas?" Give yourself an honest answer and you will know just what Christmas means to you. In the meantime perhaps you would like to know some of the answers that were given to me.

One young fellow said that to him Christmas and carols were synonymous. Carols... a lovely thought... It would be hard to think of Christmas without them, wouldn't it? Remember, as children how we loved to sing—"Away in a manger..." That lovely little carol is still the same, isn't it—but now we watch and listen as another generation carries its message in song and story.

"Joy to the World..." another lovely carol. I remember lying in bed, alert and listening, in my little room across the Atlantic, waiting for twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve. The big clock in the Church on the market square would strike the hour, then almost immediately away in the distance I would hear "the Walts" playing well-loved and familiar carols. Sometimes it would be the town band, sometimes the Salvation Army—then as the last strains from the musical instruments faded into the distance carol singers would carry on, spreading the glad tidings with their joyous and willing voices. Once again the challenge would ring out—"O Come All Ye Faithful... O come Let Us Adore Him."

Another answer to my question, this time by the father of a grown family. "My first thought in connection with Christmas is the getting together of one's family, and the remembrance of other Christmases past and gone. To me Christmas has always been a landmark in my life—I can look back now and recall every Christmas—at home with my father and mother; in France during the war; in hospital and later with my wife and children around me. Yes, Christmas to me is just that—a family circle as complete as we can make it."

Possibly that answer will be repeated many times over by those who read this column. Perhaps it is the simplicity of that Christmas so many years ago—of Joseph and Mary and the Infant Jesus—a complete family picture—perhaps it is that which seems to make a family gathering so exactly symbolic to us of what Christmas ought to be.

Looking back through the years, if we can remember Christmas in our homes as a happy time—a time of loving and giving—of consideration for the old and understanding for the young; then we can be quite sure the Christian message of Peace and Goodwill

definitely had a place in our hearts and our homes. If we have such memories then we have much for which to thank our parents.

Yes, it is surely a wonderful thing for a grown person to be able to look back to a happy childhood, symbolized by many happy Christmases, even though there might not be too much of this world's goods to do with.

But if you are young, with most of your life before you, and with little children in your home, then whatever you do, give them memories... memories of Christmas to treasure through the years. If you are in doubt as to whether you are giving your children the right kind of Christmas, ask yourself this question—"When my children are grown up what will their first thought be in connection with Christmas?" The answer depends on YOU.

And so again—"A Happy Christmas" is my wish for you—a Christmas abounding with carols, good fellowship, family gatherings... and Memories.

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