

The Prince of Peace.

Once more he comes!
Unheralded by cymbals or loud drums,
Nor panoplied with wealth and earthly power,
But quietly as comes the twilight hour
That folds in sleep the weary winter's day.
Naught doth He say—
He is but newly come on life's highway,
Yet tiny, out-stretched hands
To the war-racked, bleeding lands,
Brim high with promise of world-soothing peace.
Look on His face,
Ye warring nations of the market-place!
Kneel to this little Child,
Who came to save a world with sin defiled,
And pray He make this maddened war to cease.
"Love one another,
"Be kind to him, thy brother,"
This was His pleading cry.
Yet century on century sweeps by,
And in black hatred men fight on and die.
Through North and South, through East and West,
Hate festers in the human breast.
Sin holds men's hearts in thrall,
And Greed and Shame rule over all.
Give ear tonight to the soft Christmas-chime,
'Tis now the time
For men, good-willed and strong,
To ring from off the earth,
In memory of the Christ, the Saviour's birth,
Greed, Hate and Lust—yea, every scarlet crime,
The Prince of Peace is here,
With message of good cheer,
He is calling, calling, calling,
While humanity is falling:
"Come to Me, ye who labor in the night,
"Come to Me, who are blind, for I give sight!"
Hark! the Christmas-bells are ringing!
Hark! the angel-choirs are singing!
As they sang that distant morn
On the hills where He was born:
"Glory to God in the Highest,
Peace on Earth!
Peace on Earth!
To men of good will!"

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

Translated for St. Peter's Bote by
FATHER CHRYSOSTOM, O.S.B.

It was late in the evening, and not a star shone in the sky. The cold December wind whirled large flakes of snow through the air. Deep silence reigned in the deserted streets for all had retired to their dwellings in order to celebrate in the cosy home circle, the most beautiful and significant of all family-feasts—the distribution of Christmas-gifts. For this was Christmas-Eve.

The clock in the church tower had just ceased striking seven when the large first-story windows in one of the elegant mansions at the upper end of the street were lit up so brilliantly that they flooded the entire street with their light—the Christmas-tree was lit. Now were heard the soft accents of a piano, joined almost immediately by the sweet voices of children who sang a song to the dear Christ-child. The singing was followed by loud and joyful exclamations—the Christmas presents were being inspected and distributed.

Not so joyful were things outside in front of the house. There stood a child of about six or seven years, shivering with the cold, scantily dressed and her head covered with only a very thin rag, from beneath which there looked forth a pale, emaciated face. The benumbed hands of the child were hid beneath a miserable looking apron. The child, however, forgot its poverty, its suffering, in beholding the brilliantly lit Christmas-tree, visible through the window, and in hearing the sweet singing of the children. Now she was frightened away by the approach of two men. Quickly she hid behind one of the pillars of the arched door-way, and listened with increasing fear to the talk of these men who had stopped right close to her hiding place, and were attentively inspecting the house.

When they had gone away, the little one left her hiding place and ran again to the window in order to admire anew the wonderful things in the room. But the longer she looked, the sadder did she feel. "Oh, dear Christ-child!" she said to herself, "how good you are to those children; how many beautiful things you have brought them! But poor Peppi you've entirely forgotten, although she also loves you very much and prays to you every day!" And now she began to weep loudly.

It did not take long before a window was opened and a lady leaned out, holding a bright light in her hand, who called in a sweet voice:

"Who's crying out there?"

"Poor Peppi," was the answer of the sobbing child.

Quickly the window was shut again and in a few minutes the lady came out on the porch and asked: "Where is the poor Peppi?" And as she saw the child, she exclaimed in surprise: "For God's sake, you poor child, come in quickly, you'll freeze to death on the street in such a night!" With happy haste Peppi responded to the invitation and entered the brilliantly lit room in which stood the beautiful Christmas-tree, loaded with rich gifts, surrounded by the father and three children, a boy and two girls.

"Children!" said the mother, leading in Peppi by the hand, "greetings from the Christ-child, and here he sends you a little guest!" The father, however, said with gentle earnestness: "My dear child, how could you go out in such weather and in such insufficient clothing? Why are you not at home with your parents?"

"Because I am afraid of mother," replied Peppi in a tearful voice. "What, afraid of your mother? You perhaps did something wicked for which you fear just punishment?"

"Oh no! I didn't do anything bad. I had a very good, lovable mother, but God took her with him to

heaven, and there came another mother into the house who is real bad. Every day she sends me out to beg, and if in the evening I do not bring home at least half a dollar, I get nothing to eat; and instead—plenty of hard blows. Today I got only three pennies and I bought bread with them, for I was very hungry; if I come home now with no money—Oh!" she could not continue on account of her tears, and covered her face with her poor little apron. All, especially the children, were moved to tears. "Oh, your poor child!" was heard on all sides.

"Children," said the mother, "the dear Christ-child has given you so richly, although you did not suffer the least want, and here is this little one in such great need; how the Christ-child would be pleased, if you would give to this poor child a part of your Christmas presents!"

Now life came into the youngsters, and with the cheerful cry: "Yes, mother dear!" they vied with each other in giving to poor Peppi. She received a fine toque, a scarf, stockings and many other useful things. Her apron could not contain all the apples, nuts and sweets given her by the children. Little Frankie however whispered something into papa's ear, and upon his nodding his head, he ran away to return almost immediately with his little savings-bank from which he took out a dollar and pressed it into the hand of the child saying: "Here, good little Peppi, is a dollar. Bring it to your mother so that you'll get no blows tonight."

Peppi did not know what was happening to her. Like one in a trance she stood there, her face shining with pleasure and tears running down her cheeks. At length she again found voice to speak: "No, no," she exclaimed, "the dear Christ-child did not forget poor Peppi! Oh, how good you all are to me; never had anyone been so kind to me!—And they want to kill these good children! They want to burn up all these beautiful things which the Christ-child brought them! Oh! the wicked men!"

Extremely surprised, the father asked: "Child, what are you saying? The children are to be killed, the presents burned? What do you mean by that?"

"Yes, yes, it is really so, for I heard it quite plainly."

"What did you hear? From whom did you hear it? For God's sake, child, speak quickly!"

"As I was standing out there looking in through the window at the Christmas-tree, two men came along and I quickly hid in a dark corner. They remained standing quite close to me, looked at the house for a while, and then I heard them arrange with each other to sneak into the house at midnight, kill all of you, steal all your money and then set the house on fire. One of them wanted to kill only the old ones, and let the young alive; the other however said, no, no, that wouldn't do, the children know us too well and might betray us if we leave them alive; besides it is better for them to die quickly than to burn to death slowly."

"Burned alive!" cried the frightened children. This account of the child filled them all with consternation and for a while no one moved or spoke. At last the mother raised her folded hands on high and cried: "Merciful God and Father in heaven, what terrible things awaited us! What would have become of us, if I did not take pity on this poor child and take her in out of the cold—her, Thy angel sent for our deliverance! Oh, dearest Jesus, how superabundantly Thou dost reward the smallest service we have rendered this poor child! Oh, children! let us thank our heavenly Father on our knees for his great mercy!"

All fell on their knees and sent up from their innermost hearts a thanksgiving such as they had never before in their lives offered up.

The father drew poor Peppi towards him, embraced and kissed her, saying with trembling voice: "You dear child, as a guardian angel God sent you to us, and it would be the basest ingratitude, if we would let you go from us again! You must stay with us as our daughter, and the children will love you as a sister!"

"Yes, yes, you are our dear little sister!" joyfully cried the children and crowded around Peppi, embracing and kissing her as if for a wager.

Without any further loss of time the father hastened to police-headquarters for help, and in a short time a number of officers had been secretly introduced into the house, while some others with equal secrecy took up their station outside the house.

Sure enough, a few minutes after midnight a window in the basement was opened and the robbers entered—to be at once captured, handcuffed and taken away to prison, there to await their well-deserved punishment. They were two laborers who had been employed by the family on several occasions and had received many benefits.

Peppi, the saving angel whom God had sent, stayed with this family. The stepmother gladly relinquished her for a substantial present that amounted to more than Peppi could have begged together in a quarter of a year. Besides, when saying good-bye, Peppi handed her stepmother the dollar that Frankie had given her that evening. They always called her their little guardian angel. Every Christmas-Eve in future was celebrated by a special thanksgiving service, and each member of the family selected a part of his or her Christmas presents and distributed them to poor children. Do thou, oh reader, do likewise.

IRISH WIT.

It was in the days of Daniel O'Connell, not over sixty years ago, that a certain English member of Parliament presented a bill providing for a change in the word "Christmas." In England for centuries the word "mas" was held in abomination by conscientious Protestant bigots. This man proposed that Christmas be altered to Christ-tide, so that the objectionable portion—"mas"—should no longer offend British ears. The name of this zealous member, who had never before introduced a bill, was Thomas Massey-Massey.

When the bill came up for consideration Mr. O'Connell submitted an amendment to the effect that, since the word Christmas was to be changed to Christ-tide, it would only be right, just and proper to make a similar and corresponding change in the name of the man who was the author of the bill. "This," said Mr. O'Connell, "will enable us in future to call our friend Tho-tide Tidey-Tidey." The uproar of laughter and applause which followed the Irish member's suggestion overwhelmed Mr. Massey-Massey with confusion and killed his bill so dead that it was never seriously referred to after.

"NO NEAR RIGHT."

Two inmates of a lunatic asylum decided that they wished to escape. They watched their opportunity and waited until the keeper was out of sight, and then made tracks for the nearest outer ward. "Noo, bend down, Sandy," said one, "and I'll climb up your shoulder to the top, and then I'll gae ye a bonn' up tae." Sandy accordingly bent down. Tam, mounting his back, gained the top of the wall and, dropping over into safety on the other side, shouted as he prepared to make off: "I'm thinking, Sandy, you'll be better tae bide anither fortnicht, for ye're no near richt yet."

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