

those children! Hear the children!"

"Nothing the matter with you now," said the doctor. I can cure any man when he gets so he can hear children laugh in other houses besides his own."

"Ah! said Mr. Van Gelt, 'this is great treatment of yours. Dr. Santa Claus—'

But the room was just then too full of the voices of children for anything else to be heard, excepting part of the doctor's reply.

Christmas Cheer.

Hang up the children's stockings,
And ring the happy chimes,
For peace and love shall reign on earth
In merry Christmas time—
Mementos of that other morn,
In Bethlehem where Christ was born.
Some homes in every nation,
In city or in town,
Still keep the dear old customs
The past has handed down,
And celebrate them year by year,
As Christmas crowns the world with cheer.

In English homes, 'neath mistletoe,
They sing the Christmas song,
While o'er the yule-log's rugged side
The bright flames creep along,
And scarlet Holly berries glow
Among the green boughs bending low.
We decorate the branches
Of Christmas trees with cheer.
An emblem of thanksgiving
For all the fruitful year.
And Santa Claus brings dolls and drums,
To glad expectant little ones.
Oh, day the best and dearest
Of all the seasons bring,
The hope of every Christian's heart,
The birthday of our King;
The one glad day of joy and mirth,
When God's best gift was sent to earth.
—Waif.

The First Christmas Tree.

Faith, Hope and Love Lighted it.

(Jacob A. Riis's 'Yule-Tide in the Old Town' in the Christmas 'Century.')

When Ansgarius preached the White Christ to the vikings of the North, so runs the legend of the Christmas-tree, the Lord sent his three messengers, Faith, Hope, and Love, to help light the first tree. Seeking one that should be high as hope, wide as love, and that bore the sign of the cross on every bough, they chose the balsam fir, which best of all the trees in the forest met the requirements. Perhaps that is a good reason why there elings about the Christmas tree that which has preserved it from being swept along in the flood of senseless luxury that has swamped so many things in our money-mad day. Every time I see a tree studded with electric lights, garlands of tinsel gold festooning every branch, and hung with the hundred costly knickknacks the storekeepers invent year by year 'to make trade,' until the tree itself disappears entirely under its burden, I have a feeling that a fraud has been practiced on the kindly spirit of Yule.

Wax candles are the only real thing for a Christmas tree, candles of wax that mingle their perfume with that of the burning fir, not the by-product of some coal-oil or other abomination. What if the boughs do catch fire? They can be watched, and too many candles are tawdry, anyhow. Also, red apples, oranges and old-fashioned cornucopias made of colored paper, and made at home, look a hundred times better and fitter in the green; and so do drums and toy trumpets and wald-horns, and a rocking horse reined up in front that need not have cost forty dollars, or anything like it.

Gift Angels.

(Amos R. Wells, in the 'Zion's Herald.')

One 24th of December, dozing by my study fire, a wonderful change seemed suddenly to come to me, and I appeared to be walking home over a high hill. This was a very beautiful hill, right above the centre of the earth, and gift angels before setting out on their Christmas errands seemed to meet there; the hill was crowded with hosts of them.

What are gift angels? The little sprites that go along with all presents, and while

the giver carries the gift, 'they carry' the happiness! Have you never wondered how both always come together? And in my sleep it seemed that the gift angels met on this beautiful hill to be assigned to different gifts and receive the loads of happiness which were to go along with them.

As I came up on that Christmas Eve they were just dispersing on their errands—clouds of shining white angels floating swiftly off in all directions from the hill. First I met a gay group of them, all dancing and singing with joy, and asked them why they went together.

'We go with a load of coal to poor old Charity West,' said they, 'and it needs all of us to carry so much happiness!'

Then I noticed an angel who seemed to move reluctantly and with a disappointed air. He was not shining, either, or singing like the rest, and I asked him why.

'Because I must go with a diamond necklace,' answered he.

'Why, you should sparkle all over on such an errand!' I exclaimed.

'No, no! For it is sent by one rich woman to another whom she does not like, and sent only to repay an obligation!'

'Have you any happiness at all to carry with such a gift?'

'A very little,' he sighed, 'but I must make the most of it!'

Next came dancing toward me a second group, fully as large as the first—some two dozen of them.

'We all go with one little present!' they shouted gayly to me.

'What is it?' I asked.

'A penwiper, which a little girl made for her father, and no one but us knows of it! And there's happiness enough to load 'em all!'

'What can such a very wee angel as this be doing?' thought I, as an exceedingly small sprite came toward me, and so I asked him.

'I go with a piano,' the little one answered.

'Surely you can't carry it!' I cried in surprise.

'Hardly, the piano!' he laughed, 'but all the happiness makes a light load, for a rich father is giving it carelessly to his daughter, and she will be angry because it is not as good as the one her friend has.'

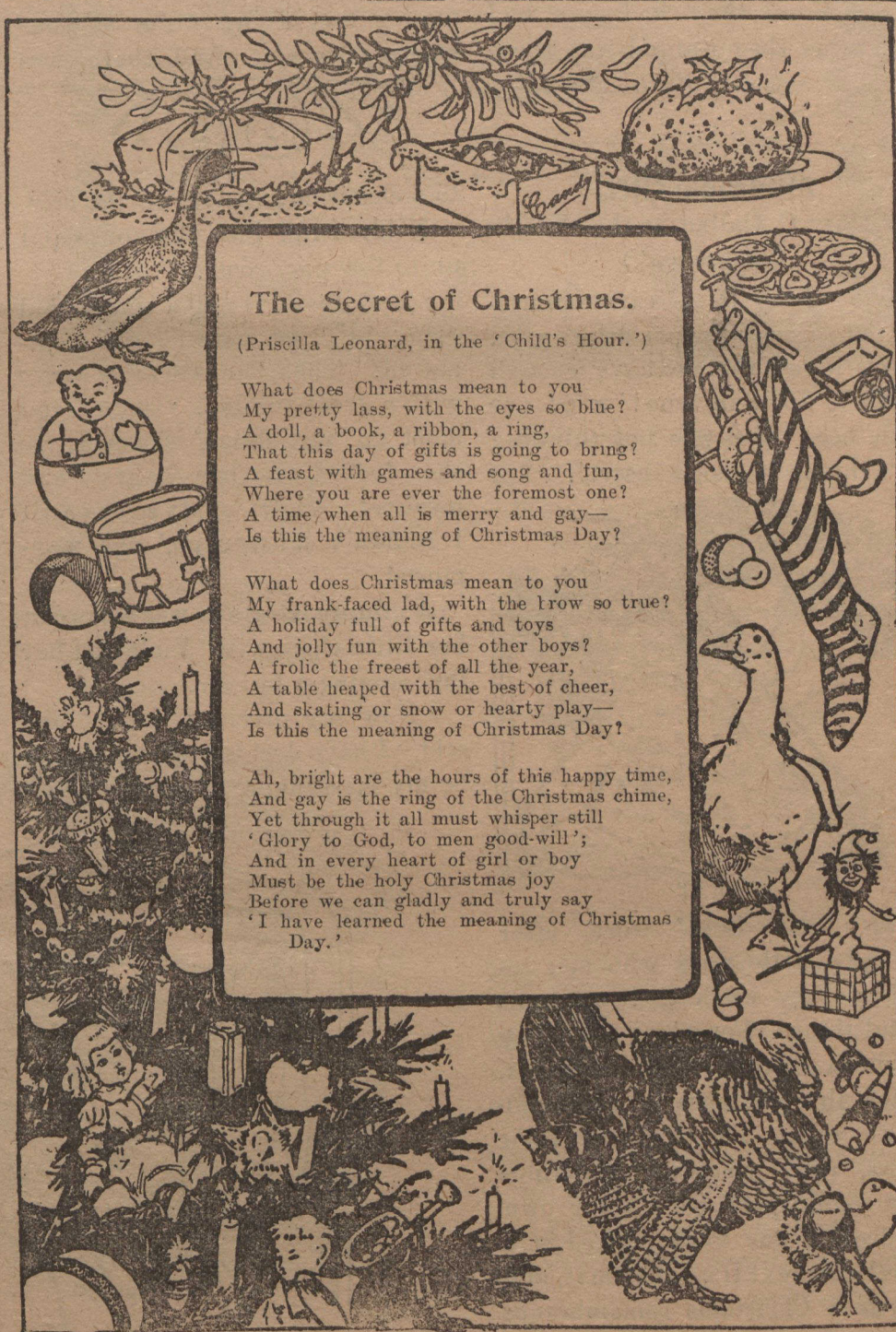
I admired especially a very dainty being whom I saw approaching, by far the most exquisite of all in form and face. Wondering for what errand he was selected, I inquired.

'To go with a rough dry-goods box,' he replied, 'which a father has fitted up himself, to be his little daughter's doll house. Ah, how elegant she will think it!'

Strangely enough this lovely being was followed by one who seemed as careless and negligent as it is possible for these beautiful sprites to look, and his errand was a similar one!

'But the doll house with which I am to go "is" an elegant one, bought at a fine store, with so many other presents that the child will hardly look at it. I carry so little happiness that I am ashamed of myself!'

By this time the hill was deserted, and as a log falling down in my grate caused me to stir, I fell to wondering what sort of angels would accompany the presents I intended to make on the morrow.



The Secret of Christmas.

(Priscilla Leonard, in the 'Child's Hour.')

What does Christmas mean to you
My pretty lass, with the eyes so blue?
A doll, a book, a ribbon, a ring,
That this day of gifts is going to bring?
A feast with games and song and fun,
Where you are ever the foremost one?
A time when all is merry and gay—
Is this the meaning of Christmas Day?

What does Christmas mean to you
My frank-faced lad, with the brow so true?
A holiday full of gifts and toys
And jolly fun with the other boys?
A frolic the freest of all the year,
A table heaped with the best of cheer,
And skating or snow or hearty play—
Is this the meaning of Christmas Day?

Ah, bright are the hours of this happy time,
And gay is the ring of the Christmas chime,
Yet through it all must whisper still
'Glory to God, to men good-will';
And in every heart of girl or boy
Must be the holy Christmas joy
Before we can gladly and truly say
'I have learned the meaning of Christmas Day.'