

THE GIFT OF THE MANGER

(Continued From Page One)

WHO'S there?" he called. He had taken Christine's light from the floor and now flashed it toward the sound.

"All a-right! I mak-a de light," a voice called; and with the careless noisiness of one who feels himself at home, and the newcomer stumbled toward a shelf near the door and presently succeeded in lighting a dingy lantern. It revealed him to be, as Norwood had foreseen, a person distinctly un-American; and as they drew nearer his features disclosed themselves, though undoubtedly old, as of that finished adherence to type which is the result, perhaps, of the many-centuries-old Latin ideal of human perfection—the type as distinct and clear-cut as a Neapolitan cameo.

"Well," said Norwood, jocularly, "quite a fire here, I see!"

The Italian raised shoulders and palms in that gesture of his race, alike disclaiming all responsibility and at the same time imploring the blessings of a benign Providence. "Oh, de fire, de fire! He burn all up; he burn up every-ting!"

By gesture and broken words he made the story plain. "Dis-a morn' Maria send-a me to River—you know, River. I tak-a de horse; I go. I come back. I see-a de smoke, de smoke away up. I whip-a de horse. I come to de hill. I see Maria run out of de house wit' de babee in her arm. She tak-a de babee to de barn and she run-a back. She run-a back to Stefano. Stefano he in bed. He in bed one mont', two mont', t'ree mont'—no can move. I whip-a de horse some more. I jump down. I t'ink I go too for Stefano. Ma' Dio mio!" Again the gesture imploring Heaven. "De house, de door, he go, he come down. Maria,

Stefano, all—come down, all go! Dio!"

He had made it graphic enough. They could see the quick tragedy of it, the wild rush of the mother taking her baby to its cradled safety in the manger, her dash back to the bedridden husband, the flames, the quickly charred timbers of the old house, the crashing fall.

Christine could feel the blood rush back to her heart; her forehead, her lips, were as cold as if an icy hand had been laid upon them; she trembled, and strained the baby to herself as if it could still the sympathetic pain at her heart. Norwood, seeing her distress, moved closer, drew her into the curve of his arm; her head bent to his shoulder, and he could feel her silently crying. Before the revelation of the pitiful tragedy they were momentarily speechless; then Norwood began to question the man.

"But the neighbors? Why did no one come to help?"

The sidewise bent of his head, the opening fingers of his gesture, spoke as plainly as the Italian's words. "No neighbor! Far away over de moont'. No can-a see! Far away!"

"He means that the nearest neighbors were too far off to see the fire," Norwood explained. "It's likely enough, in these hills!"

Again he asked: "But the barn? Why didn't the barn burn, too?"

"No burn-a de barn; de wind dat-a way— He made an expressive gesture. "De wind-a blow! De barn no burn."

"That's plain enough," said Norwood. "Well, I am mighty sorry for you, my friend. What can we do to help you? What are you going to do with the baby?"

The old man seemed to become aware for the first time of the child in Christine's arms. "Where you fin-a heem?" he asked.

"My wife found him, back there in the manger where the poor mother laid him for safety. I suppose. What are you going to do with him?"

"Me not-a do! He not-a my babee!"

"Good Lord, man! He is some relation to you, isn't he? Your grandchild, perhaps?"

"Ma! No-o! Maria, Stefano, come from Ascoli! Me"—tapping his breast in a magnificent gesture—"me Siciliano!"

Christine looked up and gave a little eager cry. "You are not related? He isn't your baby, then, and you don't want him?"

"Wait, dear! Make sure, first, before you set your hopes too high." Norwood understood what was passing in her mind, and he added to the old man: "You are not related? What are you doing here, then?"

Again the typical shrug. "Ste-

fano no can work; he much-a seeck! Me come along, Maria, Stefano, dey tell-a me. You stay mak-a de mon. Stefano get-a well, you can-a go! So me stay, two week, t'ree week, maybe!"

Norwood thought quickly in silence for a moment; then he asked the man, "Do you know where Squire Norwood lives?"

The man nodded vigorously: "Big-a house, white house; over dere—two, t'ree mile."

"Can you show us the way?"

"Si!"

"Then come on! We will give you a lift and a place to sleep in." He led his wife and the child, now sleeping, as many centuries before another had led a woman and a sleeping babe; the beauty and wonder and mystery of it was not changed, not lessened because he led them through the snow on a modern dispeller of distance, instead of through burning wastes on a patient beast. She had taken the child from a manger on this Christmas eve; and it seemed a very gift of God.

The distance to Squire Norwood's house was only a matter of a few miles; yet it must have been an hour later when the two old people stood framed in the lamp-lighted door, hurriedly opened in response to the call of the motor's horn.

"What's this? what's this?" his father's voice called out. "Thought ye were coming by train, and mother just broke down and cried when I come back without ye."

Bareheaded, the snow no whiter than his hair, he stepped out toward the dark, big shape of the car, which loomed enormous through the falling snow; then he turned to stare after the shape which moved so swiftly past him and up to the shelter of the old wife's arm. Doubtless there were hurried words, questions, answers; but the fact of the mere existence of the baby seemed to be enough for the two women—one so lately new to grief, the other so nearly beyond it for, all time. They stopped, then passed within; the lighted doorway was empty.

"I swan! Where'd ye get that baby?" the old man asked of the son.

Norwood explained; his father was quick with self-reproach that such a tragedy had transpired so near, while he, the friendly "Squire" of the countryside, should have been all unaware of it.

"Summer-time I might have driven home that way; mother and me often stopped to see how Stefano was coming along. But winter we always use the state road. It's longer, but better going. She! Mother will feel dreadful bad. She got to be real fond of Mareca, what with the baby coming, and after. Mareca used to tell as how

they hadn't any folks, poor young things!"

"Are you sure of that?" asked Norwood, sharply. "Could not Christine—could we have the baby?"

His father's voice held a sharp question, then became quickly misty. "I am sure; but as selection I can make it sure for ye beyond question."

The men's hand clasped; the squire coughed, and Norwood's doctor-sense was aroused.

"Why, father, you are standing here without your hat! You go right in, and I'll put the car in the barn. I guess we can give this man shelter over Christmas, can't we?"

It was, perhaps, some three hours later, after his mother had worn out all her persuasion in trying to coax them to eat to four times their capacity; and after they had exhausted every detail of talk about the fire and the tragedy; and after they had disposed the beribboned parcels to be opened in the morning; and after Norwood had lifted his mother fairly off the floor in his good-night "bear hug"—it was after all of this that Norwood followed Christine up to the big south room, with its white-hung four-poster, and found her kneeling over the old mahogany cradle which had been his own. The old clock in the hall

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below struck twelve. "It is Christmas," she said; and Christine arose, and laid her cheek against her husband's arm. the baby, sleeping, smiled.

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Read what Mr. C. G. Atkinson of Newelton, N.S., writes about the two Regattas in Western Nova Scotia.

Newelton, N.S., August 14, 1915.

Acadia Gas Engine Co. Ltd., Bridgewater, N.S.

Dear Sirs,

Since my return from the regatta at Shelburne have had one thing and another to bother me from writing particulars on the boat races, but will do so now, but expect Mr. Sollows has given you particulars before this.

Everything went along in fairly good shape, except the handicap race and in this race the time between the fast boats and the slower ones was so great that no boat ever built could make up the difference, and the boats finished almost in the same order as they started, that is, they did not all start together, but each one started on his allowed handicap and it was supposed to be a close finish between them all, and instead they were strung out at the finish nearly as much as they were at the start. Lyman Thorburn came in first with a 4 H.P. ACADIA; S. Sherman second; Award Smith, Newelton, N.S. 6 1/2 H.P. ACADIA, third.

In the race for boats not less than 25 feet with engines of 5 H.P. there were seven boats. The fastest boat of the fishing boat class was that of Award Smith's of this place with a 6 1/2 H.P. ACADIA, as she made better time in the "Free for all" than Victor Morrissey did with his 7 1/2 H.P. by two seconds. This boat did not enter the race boats with 6 to 7 H.P., as his boat fell a little short of 20 feet, but he went around the course with them and could beat the rest badly.

Colby Nickerson, of Woods Harbor, won this race with a 6 1/2 H.P. ACADIA. David Morrissey of C. I. second with a 6 1/2 H.P. ACADIA. George Lowe, third with a 6 1/2 H.P. ACADIA. Time was 1 hour 11 seconds; dist. 9 knots.

So you will see that the ACADIA made a good showing at the races. This also shows that the ACADIA is the engine of the day.

Yours truly,
(Sgd.) C. G. ATKINSON.

P.S.—The 11 H.P. "Bridgeport" made a poor showing. She entered in the 8 H.P. class and the engine expert figured this machine down to 7 1/2 H.P. at 740 revolutions per minute. The Bore and Stroke is 5 1/4 x 5 1/4.

Newelton, N. S., September 7, 1915.

Acadia Gas Engine Co. Ltd., Bridgewater, N. S.

Dear Sirs,

The boat races at Clark's Harbor resulted in an excellent showing for ACADIA engines. I cannot give you the time they made in the different races over the 8-mile course, but as the ACADIA won each race it is the most important thing to know that they won by a good margin.

The 5 H.P. race for boats 23 feet and over, there was six entered and was won by Ennis Newell of Newelton (ACADIA).

The 6 1/2 H.P. race was won by Job Nickerson, Clark's Harbor (ACADIA), second Oscar Shoalds, Bear Point (ACADIA), third, Henry Murphy, Clark's Harbor (ACADIA).

The 7 1/2 to 8 H.P. race was won by Will Blades of this place, 8 H.P. (ACADIA); second, Fred C. Smith, Newelton (ACADIA); third, Will Nickerson, Clam Point (ACADIA). These three boats were very close together and the boats with M-engines were so far behind that they dropped out.

Might add that these three winners with 8 H.P. engines were those equipped with the new cylinder; I now have the time of the different size boats over the 9 1/4 mile course.

8 H.P. 49 minutes
6 1/2 H.P. 55 minutes
5 H.P. 1 Hr. 1 min.

Yours truly,
(Sgd.) C. G. ATKINSON.

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