

"Door-boy at Baumberg's," was the brief answer.

At another time he might have resented being called a child, but to-night he was too tired. Besides, his throat ached, and there was a queer, heavy feeling about his head. It had been hard work to push that heavy door to and fro for the crowds of Christmas shoppers all day long. He had shivered and flushed alternately between the keen winter winds and the blast of heat from the great steam-radiator at his back, and now it was after ten o'clock. Small wonder that Christmas-time had no glad tidings for him!

The bushy, gray eyebrows frowned ominously as the third question was asked: "How much do they pay you?"

"Two dollars a week."

"And you live on that?"

"Mother gets sewing sometimes when she's well enough;" and then the car swung around a circle, and Arthur reached up, dizzily, to pull the strap.

He heard a muttered something about "Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children," and it surprised him a little to find himself carefully assisted down the slippery step and across to the sidewalk: "Which way?"

The questions were almost as short now as Arthur's answers had been.

"Down South C," he said, clinging to his new friend with a strange sense of confidence and protection; and yet, a few moments later, when the little tumble-down house was reached, he would have been inclined to think he had fallen asleep in the car and dreamed it all, but for the fact of a big silver dollar that certainly had not been in his pocket when he left the store.

The broad corridors of the Patent Office re-echoed the busy hum of work. Down in the mail-room the great piles of letters were being sorted and distributed; busy messengers were running to and fro up and down the marble staircases; young men bent over long tables and made queer drawings of wheels and spikes and odd-looking machinery; typewriters clicked industriously through "specifications" and "amendments"; and hundreds of pens scratched untiringly over patent-head blanks and books of record. It was Christmas Eve, and tomorrow would be a holiday.

Outside in the corridor more than one man waited an audience with the commissioner, but Dr. Baker held his place resolutely. "I tell you, Mr. Commissioner," he was saying, "that I intend to have a Christmas gift from the Government before I leave this building, so you might as well give me what I want first as last."

The commissioner laughed.

"Take it easy, Baker! You can't expect to move the wheels of Government with one little shove. We can't do things in such a hurry; but I'll see about it."

"Oh yes—the first vacancy; I know what 'seeing about it' means. No, sir; I want a messenger's commission to take over to the secretary for signing at once, if you please. Promote somebody if you can't give me the place any other way."

Mr. Commissioner laughed again. Perhaps he too felt Christmas in his bones.

"If there's no other way of getting rid of you, I suppose I must," he said. "Well, have your own way, but, ten chances to one, I'll have to dismiss him before he's been in a month. It's risky business taking a boy in out of the street after that fashion."

"I'll answer for him," replied Dr. Baker gravely, and went his way with the coveted slip of paper.

He stopped at Baumberg's that afternoon, but to brown-eyed, sad-faced little boy stood behind

the plate-glass door; a freckle-faced youngster, upon whom the cares of life did not seem to weigh heavily, filled the position instead. For a moment the doctor paused, wondering if he had made a mistake, and his bushy eyebrows knit with an expression of annoyance.

"Where is Arthur Palmer?" he asked gruffly.

"Dunno!" The little doorkeeper lifted a turned-up nose and a pair of impertinent eyes toward his questioner. "Sick, I reckon. I've got his place, anyhow."

"Keep it, then," said the doctor impatiently, "and much good may it do you!" with which he strode out into the street again and made his way rapidly toward the avenue.

The surging crowd at the corner brought him to a sudden halt, much to his discomfiture. He could not see why Pax & Co.'s window should always be thronged. Did all the world run wild on the question of clothes? As if in answer to this un-Christmas-like thought, a waxen manikin stretched out confiding arms to call attention to the red-ticketed overcoat it wore.

"Only six dollars!" said the doctor, frowning again. "I wonder how long it would take to find a clerk to wait on me?"

In the little tumble-down house on South C street Arthur had tossed and turned on a sick-bed all day, while his mother sat over a handful of fire, stitching with tired fingers, and wondering how it would be possible for them to live if this day's illness should really cost Arthur his place.

"I think God forgets," said Arthur bitterly. "Everybody else does, I know."

His mother sighed. She hardly knew how to be hopeful herself, but it hurt her to know the child's bitter feeling. "The widow's cruse was filled," she said slowly, "and the ravens fed Elijah—No, Arthur; God never forgets, but sometimes it seems long to wait."

And just then—such things do happen in real life once in a while—the jingling old bell rang, and Mrs. Palmer opened the door to find a modern edition of Santa Claus standing there, his bushy gray hair powdered with snow, his keen eyes twinkling frostily, and looking very anxious to get rid of the big bundle he held in his arms. It was like a fairy-tale, Arthur said; but fairies in olden times did not bring such prosaic things as overcoats, unless they were *invisible coats*, you know, and though Mr. Pax is a wonderful outfitter, he does not keep things of that sort yet. Moreover, no invisible coat ever disclosed such a magical paper as that Arthur pulled out of the breast-pocket. It had a queerly-twisted monogram up in one corner, and below that it read:

"Department of the Interior,
Washington, Dec. 24, 18—.

"Arthur Palmer, of Washington, District of Columbia, is hereby appointed a messenger in the Patent Office, at a salary of three hundred and sixty dollars per annum, to take effect when he shall file the oath of office and enter on duty—*vice* John Andrews, promoted.

— — —, Secretary."

"Is it really true?" he gasped, sitting up in bed and clutching the paper with feverish, trembling hands. "Oh, mother, God doesn't forget, after all."

The doctor's eyes twinkled with a suspicious gleam: "So you thought he forgot, did you? I've thought so once or twice myself, but I've lived a good many more years in this world than you have, my boy, and I know he always remembers in his own good time."

Three hundred and sixty dollars! It seemed to Mrs. Palmer that the age of miracles was not yet past. Was this any less wonderful than the

widow's cruse? Thirty dollars every month instead of eight, and no more night hours for her delicate boy to keep! The change from Baumberg's store at seven o'clock in the morning till seven, eight, nine, ten at night, to the seven hours a day which is all the Government requires, seemed to be too good to be true. But it is true, every word of it, and by-and-by our boy will be promoted; and with no work to do after four o'clock, why should he not study till he can pass the Civil Service examinations, until in course of time he becomes a "Mr. Commissioner," or even a "Mr. Secretary," himself? Who knows?

But the best of all the good things that have come to him through Dr. Baker is the sure belief that God never forgets.

The Star.

BY SUSAN COOLIDGE.

THEY followed the star the whole night through;
As it moved with the midnight they moved too;
And cared not whither it led, nor knew,
Till Christmas day in the morning.

And just at the dawn in the twilight shade
They came to the stable, and, unafraid,
Saw the blessed Babe in the manger laid
On Christmas day in the morning.

We have followed the star a whole long year,
And watched it beckon, now faint, now clear,
And it now stands still as we draw near
To Christmas day in the morning.

And just as the wise men did of old,
In the hush of the winter dawning cold,
We come to the stable, and behold
The Child on the Christmas morning.

And just as the wise men deemed it meet
To offer him gold and perfumes sweet,
We would lay our gifts at his holy feet—
Our gifts on the Christmas morning.

O Babe, once laid in the ox's bed,
With never a pillow for thy head,
Now throned in the highest heavens instead,
O Lord of the Christmas morning.

Because we have known and have loved thy star,
And have followed it long and have followed it far,
From the land where the shadows and darkness are,
To find thee on Christmas morning,—

Accept the gifts that we dare to bring,
Though worthless and poor the offering,
And help our souls to rise and sing
In the joy of thy Christmas morning.

THE EPWORTH LEAGUE.

Question. Is it necessary for a local branch of the Epworth League to undertake the literary and social work as well as the distinctively religious activities of a young people's society?

Answer. The conditions of membership in the Epworth League are very liberal. Plans are provided in the "model constitution" for the organization of all the young people of the Church for active work in all proper ways. This arrangement was made in order to suit the varying demands of the different societies. But it is not a cast-iron system to which all affiliating leagues must adapt themselves. If your society is purely a "praying bond," devoted with entire consecration to strictly religious work, it has just the same rights in the Epworth League as that branch which adds to its religious activity those social and literary pursuits which should grow out of spiritual strength, and should themselves contribute to the fellowship of the Church and mutual improvement of its membership. The social and literary departments are not indispensable, but in most cases they will be found a helpful addition to the religious work.