

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

GENTLE MEN

Come wealth or want, come good or ill.
Let young and old accept their part
And bow before the Awful Will.
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses, or who wins the prize?

Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail, or if you rise,
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

A gentleman, or old or young!
(Bear kindly with my humble lays)
The sacred chorus first was sung
Upon the first of Christmas days:
The shepherds heard it overhead—
The joyful angels raised it then:
Glory to Heaven on high, it said,
And peace on earth to gentle men!

My song, save this, is little worth
I lay the weary pen aside,
And wish you health and love and mirth,
As fits the solemn Christmas tide,
As fits the holy Christmas birth.
This, good friends, our carol still:
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
To men of gentle will.

—WM. THACKERAY

THE DIVINE CHILD

The wonder of Bethlehem is renewed once more. Bedded on the manger's straw, by His Virgin Mother's hands, the Divine Infant lies. Bowed in hushed adoration Joseph kneels at His side, while the Angel song again resounds: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

He is come unto His own, but of His own how many will receive Him? Yet nothing is so greatly needed by the world today, in its individual lives, in its social relations or in its vast and far-reaching international policies, as the lesson of the Crib of Bethlehem and the love of the Christ Child poured out into the hearts of men.

Yet through them all the Christmas star is shining. Again the Babe of Bethlehem stretches out His hands in love and brotherhood that all may sweetly be united in Him. Childhood is the world's sovereign peacemaker. There is no remedy for the world's evils so sweet and easy as the lesson to be learned at the Crib of Bethlehem. Here let men cast aside their foolish pride of intellect; their empty vaunt of science and of learning that astounds the ignorant and makes the judicious grieve; their hatreds and racial rancors and that inordinate desire of riches which the Apostle tells us is "the root of all evils."

What indeed could be further than these things from the Divine humility, gentleness, love and self-chosen poverty of the Christ Child? Yet unless we ourselves become as little children we cannot enter into His heavenly Kingdom. Such is the condition He Himself has placed. Heaven's gates, an old English poet beautifully wrote, are lowly arched and the humble of heart alone can ever hope to enter there. Humility of heart, poverty of spirit, abounding faith, trusting confidence, purity in thought and word and deed, and above all things else a love embracing all mankind, a love that knows no limits of race or class or nation, such are the gifts the Christ Child brings to us. With these in our souls we shall again possess the golden heart of childhood.

At the Crib of Bethlehem, let men find all that they so greatly need: truth, wisdom, love and happiness, and as the source of all and the end of all, God Himself become a child for them. There, in that Babe of Bethlehem, will they find the solution of all the problems that have vexed the world and have disturbed their souls. The Divine Child shall lead them.—America.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

—MARTIN J. SOUL, S. J.

I wonder how many of us reflect on the direct meaning of the word, Christmas? Literally it means Christ's Mass. The Mass on this day refers almost entirely to Christ. Rather I should say the Masses on this day. For on Christmas every priest may say three Masses, a most unusual thing. These Masses commemorate Christ as God, His eternal generation; Christ as man, His birth at Bethlehem; and Christ as our Saviour, His birth in our hearts.

What a wonderful thing it is to consider that God so loved the world as to give us His Only Begotten Son! That was God's Christmas gift to mankind. And how wonderful to think that Christ, the Son of God, so loved us that He was born in a stable for us! He might have come, as God's gift to us, in regal splendor. But that would not satisfy nor show His love. You know that love shows itself in sacrifice. That is why we know that our mother loves us so much. No one in this world makes such sacrifices for us as our mother. And that is why we love our mother as we do.

So Christ knew the best way to our hearts. After all He should, for He made us. He came not only in suffering but as a little Child. What a marvellous combination! Suffering shows His love, and babyhood attracts our hearts. How we love children! And since Christ came to win our hearts He took the lovely form of an infant.

As Jesus was God's gift to mankind, Jesus' own gift was Himself. That is the meaning of Christmas. Christ could think of nothing as a

Christmas gift better than Himself, and as He wanted to give His best He gave us Himself! That was the beginning of the beautiful custom of presenting gifts at Christmas. Jesus taught us the lesson of thinking about others to make them happy. Before He came among us the world was very selfish. Every one thought only of his own welfare. But after the Babe of Bethlehem came people began to think of others.

See how God uses apparently little things to achieve great results. Only God would think of changing the heart of the world through a helpless babe in a manger. But that is God's way. Anyone can do big things with big help. But God does the greatest things with the most trivial means. He wants to show us too that we do not need to do great things to show our love for Him, but to do little things with great love. We can all do that.

So God's Christmas gift to us was His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. And Christ's gift to us was Himself as a Babe. Now you know that you do not like to receive gifts without giving some token in return. That is why you try to find out what a friend likes, so that you may send him a present, if he has sent you something. It is not paying back, exactly. It is not understood in that way. But it is a return of love.

Have you thought of making a present to Jesus? You do not have to think hard to find out what He likes. And no matter how poor you are, the fine thing about giving a present to Jesus is that you have the very thing that He wants. You know what it is without my telling you. You know He wants your heart. The stable and the manger are very cold for the Divine Infant and He wants to dwell instead in your heart. Of course He cannot do that unless you invite Him. But you will do that, I am sure, realizing that He left His home in Heaven for you.

You know He can never dwell in a heart that has sin in it. For He hates sin worse than you hate serpents. You would not want to live in a place with vile reptiles, would you? So no matter how much Jesus loves you He can not bestow Himself on you, unless you make your heart an inviting abode for Him. But you will do that I know. For you do not want Jesus to do so much for you without doing something for Him in return. It will help greatly to make your heart desirable for Jesus, if for His sake you make happy some unfortunate person, who otherwise might have a sad Christmas.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS CHRISTMAS

At last Thou art come, little Saviour!
And Thine Angels fill midnight with song;
Thou art come to us, gentle Creator,
Whom Thy creatures have sighed for so long.
Thou hast brought with Thee plentiful pardon,
And our souls overflow with delight;
Our hearts are half broken, dear Jesus!
With the joy of this wonderful night.

Thou wilt stay with us, Master and Maker!
Thou wilt stay with us now evermore:
We will play with Thee, beautiful Brother!
On Eternity's jubilant shore.

—FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER

THE BEST CHRISTMAS STORY

"I think, mother, this is the best Christmas story that ever was written."

The children were gathered about the sitting-room table, with their books, in the good old-fashioned way—with mother near at hand, and always ready with a word of explanation or information when appealed to. She smiled when fifteen-year-old Gerald laid down his magazine and turned to her in his eager, enthusiastic way.

"No, dear, the best Christmas story that was ever written is told to us by St. Luke. You have heard it, Gerald, many a time, and I should like to hear you read it aloud to us all, to prepare our hearts for Christmas, by reminding us of what the great day really means."

So Gerald brought the Bible to the table, and read in his clear young voice the beautiful story of how Joseph and Mary went up from Galilee, out of the City of Nazareth, and into the City of David which is called Bethlehem.

"And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn," read Gerald. "Oh, mother, if we had been there, I would have given Him my bed," put in little Margaret, pressing close to her mother's side. And mother smiled, and laid her fingers on her lips warningly.

Gerald read on: "And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock."

"And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people."

"For, this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David."

And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.'"

"And it came to pass after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another: 'Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass which the Lord hath showed to us.'"

"And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant, lying in the manger."

Gerald paused. "How our Lord must have loved the poor, mother! you see how the first visitors to the Christ-Child were just these poor ignorant shepherds."

"Poor, but not so ignorant, dear boy," said Mrs. Stanton. "They had the highest of all knowledge, they knew the will of God and heeded it, and thanked Him for it. What does St. Luke tell you about that, Gerald?"

"And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

"And unto us," said mother, softly, "that is such a wonderful, beautiful thing, dear children, coming down to us through 2,000 years, and bringing us to Bethlehem even as the shepherds came."

"And the Kings, mother?"

Anthony had brought his cardboard crib to the table and was arranging the figures. "Please read the story of the Kings, too, Gerald."

"St. Matthew tells us about them. 'Thoughtful Mary found the place for her elder brother and Gerald read of the Wise Men who came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him?'"

And of how Herod summoned them and bade them seek the Child, and tell him where they found the Kingly Babe. And how they went their way, and behold!

"The star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was."

"And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 'And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, His mother, and falling down they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.'"

"And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country."

"The Bible story is the most beautiful story about Christmas," Gerald admitted as he closed the Holy Book. "Mother was right."

"Mother is always right," said loyal Margaret. Mother looked at the bright innocent faces turned toward her so lovingly. The words "the brightness of God shone round them," came to her thoughts, and she made them into a prayer for her own: "May the brightness of God shine always around my children, and keep them ever near to Bethlehem.—Catholic Standard and Times."

"JES" FORE CHRISTMAS

They're acting mighty funny up at our house nowadays.
They're different than they used to be an' changed in many ways;
Not long ago, if I should want some toy upon a shelf,
They used to make me get a chair and hunt for it myself!

Las' night I wanted building blocks, and went to get 'em, too;
An' three of 'em got up an' said: 'I'll get 'em for you.'

I used to have to hunt for things, that somehow went astray;
They let me open bureau drawers without a word to say;

Ma would sew and sis would play, an' pa would read his book,
An' never think of gettin' from their chairs to help me look.

But las' night when I started in to find 'lectric car,
They all exclaimed: 'We'll hunt for it; you stay right where you are!'

I've never known 'em be so kind in all my life before;
They'll jump to wait on me an' find the things I'm huntin' for;

Although they used to grumble an' to say I was a pest,
I'm not a bother any more—but why, I haven't guessed.

—EDGAR A. GUEST

A CHRISTMAS WISH

Wherever there is sickness,
May Santa Claus bring health;
Wherever there is poverty,
May Santa Claus bring wealth.

Wherever one is weeping,
May tears to smiles give way,
Wherever sadness hovers,
May joy come Christmas day.

To every heart that's aching
May peace and comfort come,
And may an outlook rosy
Supplant each outlook glum.

May friends now separated
Soon reunited be,
And every one find gladness
Upon his Christmas tree.

"A WARNING"

The feast was set in heaven
In dazzling gold and white,
With comet-tails festooned about
The stars for candle-light.

The feast was set in heaven
With silver moons for cake,
And crystal clouds in ices
And creams that angels make;

With rainbows curled in ribbons
Around the Christmas tree,
High-hung with fluffy azure
And bits of frozen sea.

The feast was set in heaven,
And all the cherubim
Were blowing suns in bubbles
Above the table's rim.

And all of heaven's nursery
With puffy cheeks quite red,
Were carolling and carolling
Enough to wake the dead.

The feast was set in heaven—
But one of the young things
Stood far apart and hid his head
Beneath his folded wings.

Though all the cherubim were gay,
He stood in dark disgrace.
And though he showed his golden curls
He dared not show his face.

And then a great Archangel
Came swooping down the sky
With gorgeousness sufficient
To blind a mortal eye.

And shrugging his fine pinions
With his best high-heaven air,
He said: "Why keep that young-ster
So sadly standing there?"

From his top seat at the table,
St. Nicholas arose,
And blew a cloud of silver dust
From off his morning clothes;

His long white beard stood right out
straight.
His cheeks grew doubly red,
And to the great Archangel
He very sternly said:

"No sympathy for him, sir,
He must suffer his remorse,
For he told his little sister
That there was no Santa Claus!"

—MYLES E. CONNOLLY

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND CHRISTMAS?

In all the cycle of the year there is no time that brings families together as does the Yuletide.

Though you were at the ends of the earth you would long to be home for Christmas and if it were at all possible you would be there. In the long ago when travelling facilities were very limited, people endured great hardships that they might be with friends and loved ones on Christmas Day. Today it is so different. The modern railway enables you to cross the continent in a few days in comfort.

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Ridicule is assumed superiority; criticism is expressed superiority. Anxiety which anticipates evil is not the faith which faces the difficulties through which God sees fit to make us pass.

Happy the girl who can go to her mother with even foolish, girlish secrets—not to be laughed at, nor to be scolded, but to be told gently and lovingly what is wise and sensible.—Father Bernard Vaughan.

Love one human being purely and warmly, and you will love all. The heart in this heaven, like the wandering sun, sees nothing from the dewdrop to the ocean, but a mirror which it warms and fills.

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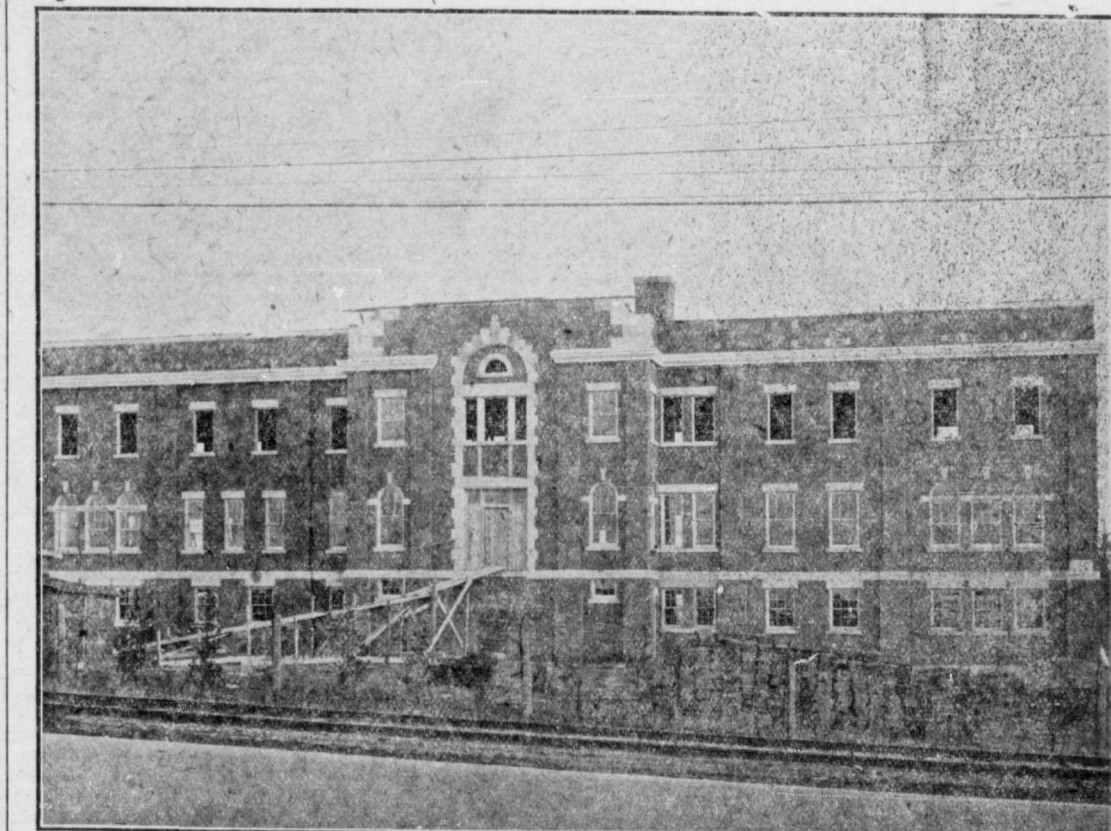
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