



CHRISTMAS

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky.

George Herbert.

A Gift from "The Other Wise Man"

By EMMA CASE MOUTON
(Successful Farmer)

"I THINK it's mighty queer Aunt Kate didn't send me anything this year. I worked days and days on those old doilies I sent her," pouted Mildred as she stood by the window looking out at the drifting snow, Christmas day. "Oh, well, you know the postman hasn't been here. It may come yet," said the mother. The holy wreaths in the window, the piles of gifts on tables and chairs, the tissue paper and scraps of bright ribbon in the wastebasket told that Christmas had come again in the Blakely home. Christmas, the wonderful, joyous, sacred love feast, when for a time all over the wide, wide world the clang of the shuttle and the whirr of wheels is stilled and the men mark to the angel song of "peace on earth, good will to men"—when they turn their eyes heavenward that they may catch once more a glimpse of the guiding star and there is kindled anew in their hearts the light of love. And the warmth and the radiance of that love is felt in all the world at that time and we call it the Christmas spirit. It manifests itself in a revel of giving and sacrifice, of song and of gladness.

This spirit was everywhere in the little town of Donnybrook. You heard it in the sleigh bells of happy messengers distributing gifts; you caught it in the tone of the "Merry Christmas," shouted from neighbor to neighbor; you could see it reflected in the faces of Mildred's father and mother as they read aloud the Christmas notes from absent loved ones, but in Mildred's heart it came not. I fear that in all this holy time she had not once looked up, so she had failed to see the star or to hear ever so faintly the angel song. Surely there was no reflection from the star in her eyes nor echo of the song in her heart, but just sordid, dry-as-dust selfishness. She wanted a silver vanity bag and it hadn't been among her many gifts. She had hinted as much as she dared, in fact she had almost told Aunt Kate that she wanted it.

As she stood there mentally figuring the profit and loss of her Christmas transactions, she caught sight of the postman and rushed to the door to receive the bundle of mail he had for the Blakely's. Sure enough there was a package for her from Aunt Kate. Her eyes lighted with pleased anticipation only to be filled with vexed fears of disappointment on finding a book, "The Other Wise Man" by Henry Van Dyke.

"I don't care! She is a stingy old thing and I wouldn't read her old book on a bet," and she tossed the despised gift aside and turned to the rest of her mail.

"Oh, dear, here is a little crocheted doin' from Boss Franklin and I didn't send her a single thing! I know what

I'll do. I'll send her this old book from Aunt Kate. I'll date the card two days back and she will think the package was delayed in the Christmas rush. She is pious enough, maybe she will like it."

So off on the second stage of his journey started "The Other Wise Man," happy, no doubt over a secret he held close, a secret that the selfish Mildred learned a few days later when she received the following note:

My Dear Mildred,—It came; "The Other Wise Man" brought it; that blessed, blessed ten dollar bill. It was such a beautiful Christmas thing to do, to send it in his keeping. You knew I hadn't been home since little sister Grace died and you know how my heart ached to be there, so you went without the pretty things you

loved just to give me two happy weeks at home.

"The Other Wise Man" told me his story last night. I think Christmas will always mean more to me because of your unselfishness and thoughtfulness. And, Mildred, I am going to earn another ten dollars this year and when the Christmas star shines again I am going to send it, as you did to me, by "The Wise Man," to the girl of all my friends who most needs the joy it can bring, and it will be your gift to her.

I don't need to ask if you had a Merry Christmas. You must have been aglow with the Christmas spirit or you couldn't have passed so much of the joy of it on to

Your friend,

Bess.

Mildred read the letter twice. A silver vanity bag! She had no need of one for that letter had brought her, somehow, face to face with her real self, and she saw in the reflection nothing of which she could be vain. She had received a gift through "The Other Wise Man," after all, that was worth far more than the ten dollar bill she had failed to find.

A Farm Girl's Experience in the City

(Continued from last week)

"I don't want to go about with you; so don't worry," I retorted with an angry flush. This put an end to the intimacy. We had roomed together at first. Now each girl paid for her own room; and I, at least, found life harder than I had ever imagined.

How to make my earnings cover all the needless expenses was the one problem ever taxing my tired brain. It became so and worn looking, so that even Beulah was touched with a feeling of compassion, when she chanced to encounter me on the street.

"What in the world's the matter with you, Ellen Hartwell?" she de-

manded sharply. "You don't look fit to work. Why don't you go home? You don't have to stay in Chicago."

"I can't go home, I repeat, as we walked together to the car line."

"Mother wrote for Cousin Amelia Brooks to go and live with them after I left. And now they do not need me."

The lump in my throat made speech difficult.

"Well, your father would likely send you some money if you asked him," suggested Beulah. "You look as if you'd been living on bread and water for a month. And a new rigging throughout wouldn't hurt your appearance any," with a coarse laugh, though she did not mean to be unkind.

Sick of the City

"My father has been laid up with rheumatism all winter, and needs every cent he has. I wouldn't let him know how hard it is for me to get along for the world," I cried indignantly. "I can manage all right."

"Not if you lose your job, you can't," declared Beulah bluntly. "The management is talking of cutting down the number of help in each department. I was told so this morning. It's likely they will keep only the old hands."

I turned paler, if possible, than I had been the moment before, and I returned to my dingy room that night with a heart heavy with foreboding. I sat down at the one window, which opened on a dark court where the air reeked with vile odors from a multitude of sources. I tried to put from my mind the tumult of terror which was driving me wild. I succeeded for a short space of time, for the heavy atmosphere and my utter weariness made me doze, and my rocking chair, though cheap and battered, was comfortable. I fell asleep, and dreamed a happy dream of home and friends and familiar scenes—the greening fields, the warm sunshine, the dainty, and my fragrant lilacs, of joy and gladness in a world of springlike loveliness and beauty. Could heaven itself be more delightful to homesick hearts? Philip Marston was there—a central figure—waiting for me on the verandah, his honest grey eyes looking tenderly into mine. And as in all dreams at the culminating point of utter bliss or deepest woe, I awoke. And behold, it was a dream!

Bitter were the tears I shed that night. The longing for home was almost more than I could bear.

"It is no more than I deserve," I told myself with bitter sorrow. "I despised that quiet, humdrum, safe life, which now seems to me the loveliest, the dearest in the world. I think they would all want to see me—all but Philip, perhaps, who must know that I despised in my heart all he tried so many times to offer me. But oh! I am ashamed to go back. I can't go back, for I have no money."

The blow fell the following day.

At noon I received my dismissal, along with a number of employees—who were not needed during the summer months. I took it quietly, and probably no one looking at me, as I waited upon customers after customer, would have dreamed of the agony I was enduring. Only for one thing, I could have held out until the store was closed, though after that—I. The last straw to my burden of endurance was a bunch of lilacs in the hand of a lady of motherly appearance, who stopped at the counter and looked intently into my face, pallid I well knew. She was accompanied by a tall, wholesome looking young man, with a good-looking, bronzed countenance.

I looked at neither of them. My gaze was centred on the lilacs. The "homey" look of them, the sweet familiar scent, was more than I could



Who Wouldn't Be a Friend of Santa Claus?