

# A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

He believed in a great many things. He was fond of mystery, and some of the things he could not explain he believed in most. He knew that a broken stick circled about over a little boy's head would take off warts, because he had had a great many on one hand and his grown-up cousin had taken them off for him in that way. You had to say some words while you circled the sticks over the warts and then swing it three times about your head and let go of it so that it fell where you didn't see it. Then some day when you weren't thinking about it you would see all at once that your warts were gone.

He knew that a dead snake turned over on its back would bring rain. He knew this because once he had found a dead snake and turned it over to see. They were not needing rain at the time, but that night it poured down in a great flood, and the next day, too, it fell in torrents, until he heard his father say that if it kept on everything would be ruined. Then the little boy slipped guiltily out in the rain and turned the snake back to save the crops.

He believed in pulling wishbones. For he knew if he got the long end, and then put it over the door, his wish would be almost sure to come true. Along about Thanksgiving time there were a great many wishbones, and the narrow shelf at the top of the door casing was filled with grisly hopes that were mostly to come true Christmas morning.

For in the goodness of Santa Claus he believed most of all. His prayers were always ready, and when he said them he was not afraid, even of housebreakers. His parents he could depend on, too, for his everyday wants, but Santa Claus was a big, jolly fellow in fur who loved children and who, unseen, and mysterious, came once a year with a sleigh and reindeer to bring real things—the very things they wanted most. His sleigh traveled through the air and over the rooftops. He could come down a chimney of any size with his pack, and he always did come, and the long stockings that the little boy and his sister hung, one at each corner of the mantel, over the fireplace, were always filled.

There was just one Santa Claus, and there was no faith and no feeling quite like that on the afternoon before Christmas, when he drove the tack into the back left hand corner of the mantel piece and hung on it his longest and reddest stocking, and then sat in different parts of the room to look at it and so make sure that Santa Claus could not fall to see it first thing.

On other nights he was not always anxious to go to bed. On Christmas Eve he was willing to go before supper time. The morning would come quicker if he was asleep and then he could wake up earlier, too, and get his stockings. To get up early—long before daylight, long before the fires were lit; to race out into the sitting-room and back with the stuffed lumpy stocking—this was the one great joy worth the whole year of waiting. Months, weeks, days and at last hours were counted up to that moment. There was nothing beyond it—nothing but to begin the count of another year's waiting.

He had wanted a knife. He had wanted one since he could remember, but now that he had been going to school it seemed to him that there was nothing in the world he wanted like that. The other boys had them. To be sure, they were all older than him, but he had caught up with them in his lessons, and it seemed as if knives and lessons ought to go together. His parents were afraid he would cut his fingers, but he had used the other boys' knives and had not cut himself; at least only a little once, and that was an accident.

He made up his mind at last that in Santa Claus lay his only hope. Santa Claus, who knew everything, would know that he was old enough to have a knife—perhaps even one with two blades, a big one and a little one. He mentioned this to his parents, but they looked grave and said that Santa Claus was very particular about his little boys' fingers. Still he had faith, and day and night his faith grew until one day he went as far as three blades, a big one and two little ones, such as a boy in school had. But this frightened him even to think of, and he went back right away to two blades. He even said to himself that one blade, a big one with a flat bone handle—a Barlow, as the boys called it—would do. He felt sure of getting that, any way, and he put his hand in his pocket to see how it would seem there, and imagined how the boys at school would gather around to look at it and cut it against their own to see which had the best steel.

He had been getting all the long ends of the wish bones, and his wish was always for the knife. Above the sitting room door there was a perfect thicket of long ends. The knife was certain. He could hardly wait for the time.

But one day, when Christmas was no more than a few weeks off, his father returned from the village with a picture paper. It had a great deal in it about Christmas, and inside there was a set of pictures that covered over two whole pages. The little boy saw them and spread the paper down on

the floor to look at them. Then he forgot everything else in the world, for they were pictures of the life and home of Santa Claus! He had seen other such pictures, but never any before like these. There was the workshop with the old fellow at his bench, and the finished gifts piled around him. There were dolls and playthings without number, and there right in front of him, sure enough, was a whole row of pocket knives!

The little boy got down and looked at the pictures very close. Which knife was for him? If he only knew! Then he looked at the other picture. There was one of Santa Claus starting off with his loaded sleigh, and another one of him just stepping out of a chimney into a room where two children were asleep. But in the centre of the page there was the largest picture of all. It was a great castle amid the icebergs of the far north—the home of Santa Claus!

On a high battlement stood the old fellow himself. He was leaning over, and with a long spy glass was sweeping the world below. The little boy's heart jumped. He knew about spy glasses, and he understood now how it was that Santa Claus could tell the good children from the bad. It was with that spy glass.

He lay on the floor looking at the picture and thinking. Had he always been good? He began to have grave doubts. He was not always obedient,

thing. But like a flash the little boy was out on the icy floor in the dark. Out into the dim sitting-room, where the empty fireplace was cold and shadowy in the first gray of dawn. Then the full stocking that crunched when he hugged it to his breast, and a bound back into his little home-made bed, shivering with a delicious sense of cold and joy.

There was something hard and kind of lout at the top. That was candy—a big stick of peppermint; he could tell by the feeling and smell. He bit a little piece off of the end of it. How good it was. Nobody ever made such candy as Santa Claus. He laid it out on the cover and went in deeper. There was a small package next, but it was not the knife. It was soft, and when he opened it it felt woolly. Oh, yes, it was mittens. He tried to see what color they were in the dark. They were fastened together with a long knit string. That was to go round his neck. He had wanted mittens like those before he wanted the knife so badly. Then there was a round quite big package that he could hardly get out. That wasn't the knife, of course. He knew it was cookies as soon as he got it open. Real Christmas cookies, with white frosting and red sugar sprinkled on the top. He wondered why his mother never made such good cookies as those. He bit one in two and went deeper. Still no knife. His heart sank a little as he drew out a long roll, that must reach, he thought, to the very end of the stocking. It was a book rolled up, and inside of it was another package of candy-mixed candy this time. He stuffed a gum drop into his mouth and seized the stocking again. There was something more in it, but it did not feel like a knife. It was kind of big and soft. He drew it out and made sure that the stocking was empty. Then he began to unwrap. One paper came off, and then another. Still another paper, and yet another paper, and another and an-

other. Each paper that came off left the parcel harder and harder, and harder, and there was something now about the shape of it that made him fairly wild with eagerness. He was so excited he could hardly unwind the last paper, that seemed to have no end. He tore off great pieces of it and once the package slipped out of his fingers. At last the wrapping was all off, and clutched tightly in his hand was a treasure cold and hard, but which warmed the little boy to his very soul.

"Ma!" he cried, "Oh, Ma! Oh, Pa! Santa Claus did bring me a knife! He did, Ma, I told you he would!" There was a sound something like laughter from the big bed. Then a voice: "I guess Santa Claus must have forgotten how old you are. I suppose we'll have to lay it away for a year or two."

But the little boy knew it would not be laid away. He was snuggled down now with the precious cold treasure clutched tightly in fingers that were devouring it in every part.

"Oh, Ma, it's got two blades!" "Has it?" "Yes, sir, it has! A big one and a little one, both at the same end!" "Well! Well!"

The small fingers roamed over the smooth, wooden handle which he could not yet see. The sturdy thumb nail bent itself time and again in the little catches of the two cold blades that were too new for him to open. Now and then he reached out to feel of his mittens and the cookies and to find another piece of the mixed candy. He sucked the candy to make it last.

Dear heart, how happy he was.

The Night of Love.

O little town of Bethlehem! How still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by; Yet in thy dark street shineth The everlasting light!

The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to-night.

—Bishop Phillips Brooks.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON NO. XIII  
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Christi—Coming Foretold.—Isa. 9: 2-7.

Time—B. C. 735-732. Place—Jerusalem.

Persons—Isaiah, Judah, Christ. Commentary—Connecting Links. (Read introduction.) "Israel was rapidly hastening to its end amid great disorders. The end came about the middle of Isaiah's prophetic work. Hosea's was contemporary in Israel with Isaiah, and with Nahum and Micah in Judah. Possibly, also, Joel in Judah, and Amos and Jonah in Israel, may have been still living, old men, in the early days of Isaiah."

2. The people that walked in darkness—From the people of Judah. They were at this time under a two-fold darkness: (1) The darkness of outward trouble. See II. Kings, xv. 37; xvi. 4-8, 17; II. Chron. xxviii. 5-8. (2) They were in moral darkness. They were attacked by the king of Israel and by the king of Damascus, and afterward by the king of Assyria. Great multitudes were carried captives, or were slain. The Philistines took permanent possession of the territory which they had over-run, occupying it and adding it to their dominion. Judah was indeed "brought low and made naked."

3. Thou hast multiplied the nation—The prophet shows them the Messiah and His times. He would move them to hope, awaken faith, arouse to righteousness, by the vision of good times coming. The only way to such a blessed consummation was by the path of holiness, obedience and faith—Deloubet. They lay before Thee—The prophet notes it to be a religious joy because it is said to be before God—that is, in His presence and with a grateful acknowledgment of His benefits.

4. Thou hast broken the yoke—The Jews were successively delivered from the burdensome and galling yoke of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians and Macedonians; but these deliverances were only a shadow of redemption from the yoke of Satan; and that redemption seems here especially predicted as if already accomplished. Scott. As in the day of Midian—As Gideon with a handful of men conquered the hosts of Midian, so Messiah, the "child" (v. 6) shall prove to be the "Prince of peace," and the small company under him shall overcome the mighty hosts of Antichrist. See the same contrast in Mic. v. 2-5.

5. For every battle—It was the custom of antiquity to pile the arms of prostrate enemies, the spoils of less value, and their spotted garments, into a heap and then burn them.—Rosewin. All that belongs to war shall be swept away; the war itself shall die. The Messiah abolishes all war; but not until his foes are either swept away by his judgments or melted into penitence and won over to submission by His love.

6. Unto us—The prophet spake of the predicted blessings as if already communicated. Angels say, "Unto you," but this child was born for the benefit of us men, of us sinners, of all believers, to the end of the world.—Scott. In the far distance of the prophet foresaw the Redeemer of the world. It is interesting to notice how this promise gradually dawned upon the world through the prophecies. A little later came the vision of the suffering Saviour (Isa. 53); then the town where He should be born (Micah v. 2); a more complete revelation came through Daniel. A son is given—God's gratuitous gift, upon which man had no claim. John iii. 16.—J. F. & B. A gift of love, of eternal enrichment, of forever increasing value, and this gift insures all other gifts. Rom. viii. 32.—Funk. As Son of man Jesus was "a child born"; as Son of God He was a "Son given."

—Surreon. Government—The ensign of government, the sceptre, the sword, or key, was borne upon or hung from the shoulder. All government shall be vested in Him.—Barnes. His name—A name stands for all that is in the name—his character, his principles and his property.—Deloubet. Wonderful—Because His nature was both human and divine. Whoever refuses to believe in the supernatural must pause at the manger. He can go no farther. Counselor—One who has wisdom to guide himself and others. Jesus was the embodiment of the wisdom of God. A Saviour, both God and man—a personal revelation of God's love, a perfect character and example, the sum of all motives for being good, the atonement that takes away sin while it forgives, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the institution of the church, its continued guidance, an everlasting but unseen Saviour—all these are proofs of wisdom, divine and limitless. Mighty God—God the mighty One. As He has wisdom, so He has strength; He is able to save to the uttermost; and such is the work of the Mediator that no less a power than that of the mighty God could ever accomplish it. Everlasting Father—Expressing that the love and pity for men, a love that can never fail, for it is everlasting.—Henry. Prince of Peace—As a King He preserves, commands, creates peace. His peace both keeps the hearts of His people and rules in them. He is the present and future bliss of His subjects.—Com. Com. Peace is used to express all the blessings that come to a kingdom where there is peace from outward enemies, peace between rulers and ruled, peace between the different members of the kingdom; no disorders, no idleness, no criminals.—Deloubet.

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

National darkness. Behold the people of God devoted to the worship of idols! Recall the many times that God had shown mercy unto this disobedient people. Think what wealth was given them in the products of their land. See how minutely God had given them His laws. Remember how He subdued nations under them, and

exalted them to honor and power. Yet, for all this, we find them walking in darkness and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death. Political and moral darkness enveloped them, and they groined in sorrow and despair.

Prophetic light. While the prophet gazed upon the people he saw only foreshadowing death. He saw nothing to recommend them to God. He saw no effort to reform. King and people were plunged into an and superstition. When the scene was almost overwhelming God drew his attention to future days. Here the prophet was blessed with a view of the days of the Messiah. He was led to exclaim: "Unto us—yes, unto us a child is born, and descended from this very tribe—a child and a Son! Wonderful, was His name; Counselor described. His nature; Mighty God told of his high origin; Everlasting Father bespoke His love and gracious care.

Messiah's kingdom. It was one of peace. What could be more desirable to a people beset by enemies, and feeling the displeasures of God resting upon their consciences? It promised a complete transformation—joy for mourning, and peace instead of war. It told of worship before God, before whom all idols were forbidden. It told of prosperity, with judgment and justice. "It is his delight to bring peace to each individual soul." 1. Peace with God. 2. Peace with heaven, a harmony and sympathy with all that is there. 3. Peace with self; all the various faculties of the nature being in accord and working harmoniously. 4. Peace with men. 5. Peace of an approving conscience. 6. Peace of submissive will. 7. A peace which is eternal, unbroken, perfect."

### How to Grow Christmas Trees.

Strings of colored popcorn festooned from limb to limb are pretty and inexpensive. The top of a tree always looks well ornamented with a figure of the patron saint of the Christmas season, St. Nicholas. Small figures of this sort can be bought for ten cents of the dealers in Christmas goods. Bits of cotton fastened all over the tree make a fine imitation of snow. A yard of tulle costs but a few cents, and may be cut up to make dozens of little boots and hearts, filled with bright colored candles and stitched together with bright yarn. Tinsel paper can be cut into cornucopias, the interiors of which are lined with lace paper to cover the candy and protect it from the dust.

Plenty of tinsel should be displayed upon the tree. It costs little and can be saved to use again next year. The shops, too, have a pretty imitation of snow, made of fine tissue paper. The gilt bon-bons, which can be bought in the shops by the dozen, not only make the tree look bright but afford the children a lot of amusement. Sprays of red-berried holly tied here and there on the tree tend to brighten it. Gift stars do not cost much. They may even be made at home, cardboard being cut out to form the star, and covered with gold or silver paper. Tiny candles to light the tree at night cost about five cents a dozen. Little metallic candlesticks to attach to the tree cost very little, and are a protection from fire.

The box that holds the tree may be covered with thick moss, bits of broken mirror being interspersed to represent water. A box of tin soldiers, a Noah's ark or a wooden village, a gift for one of the children, might find its first use in populating the miniature landscape at the foot of the tree. In the shops, castles and toy fountains, all sorts of devices to add interest to the moss covered foot of the tree, may be purchased. Iron holders for the Christmas tree may also be had in the shops. A box weighted with bricks, however, will do just as well, a hole the size of the trunk of the tree being burned through the thick lid of the box with a red-hot poker.

### Christmas in Bethlehem.

It is interesting to know how it seems fitting that it should be so that in one obscure corner of this great world Christmas is a day of purely religious ceremony and worship, with none of the social merriment—which is but the outcome of the Christian heart and home—so dear to us.

This spot is Bethlehem, the birthplace of the Saviour. There, in the Church of the Nativity, which is supposed to contain the grave or grotto in which Jesus is born, upon such returning Christmas Eve a vast concourse of bishops, priests, and people assemble and hold religious services all night long in remembrance of, and thankfulness for, Christ, the great gift which God in His love and compassion for a benighted race bestowed upon it, and without whose presence in our hearts the Christmas which we love so well, the day when self is cast aside, and we feel and know that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," would not be possible.

### Christmas Greeting.

Sing a song of Christmas!  
Pockets full of gold;  
Plums and cakes for stockings,  
More than they can hold.  
Pudding in the great pot,  
Turkey on the spit,  
Merry faces round the fire—  
Sorrow? Not a bit!

### His Time Coming.

Mrs. Smith—John, you must keep that boy down. Smith—What's the matter with him? Mrs. Smith—He's getting far too diletant. Smith—Oh, well, let him enjoy himself while he may. He'll marry some time, and that'll end it.