

A Newsboy's Merry Christmas

By D. M. EDWARDS



IT WAS Christmas night and Patsy Higgins was "stuck"—that is, he had more papers than he could sell. With a small bundle under one arm and hands thrust deep in his pockets he strolled up Broadway in the happy Christmas crowds. Through the diamond frosted windows of the restaurants he could see the diners within laughing and animated over their holiday banquets. He jingled a handful of pennies and nickels in his pocket and wondered how in the world a boy with a stock of unsold papers on his hands and only 22 cents with which to have his Christmas feast, keep him through the night and start him in business the next morning, had much chance to be so very happy.

As he plodded aimlessly across Forty-third street a big man, hulking of shoulder, lantern jawed and deep chested, lumbered out of a gambling house near by and swung into Broadway. Grumbling about "bitting me pretty hard" and "never had any luck in my life," he plowed his way across the sidewalk, lunging against any one whose path lay across his. He bowled through a line of mincing men and women who blocked the sidewalk in front of an all night restaurant, scattering them like tennins and making no apologies. Blind to everything but his own ill luck, he noticed nothing until he came upon a disheveled and boisterous man holding a newsboy and trying to take his papers from him.

"What th' ell y' doin'?" growled the gambler, as he gave the unsteady man a quick punch and tumbled him into a pile of dirt, allowing the lad to dart out of harm's way, yelling in glee at the fallen tyrant.

"Y' big stiff," threatened the gambler, as he leaned over the man, "if y' peep another word I'll wring yer head off. Glit up now an' go home t' your wife—An' I s'pose you'll beat her t' git even," he commented, as he turned away.

A few blocks further he heard a voice at his elbow:

"Say, mister, I want t' thank y' fer helpin' me when that dude pinched me papers."

"Run along, sonny; don't let it worry y' none."

"I want t' give y' a paper, mister."

"Trot!" returned the other, curtly.

"Please take a paper, mister," persisted the lad, running along beside the man and holding out his bundle. "Cause, gee! we don't of'en have folks help us like you done. I'm stuck to-night, anyway, an' have got plenty to spare."

The gambler stood still and sniffed the air as if at that moment, for the first time, he had caught the infection of the Christmas atmosphere.

"Pretty tough on some of you kids," he said. "Here, take this and go blow yourself," he added, as he pulled a greenback from his pocket, pressed it into the boy's hand and continued on his way.

"I ain't askin' you fer money," called Patsy, tagging along in the man's wake. "I jes' wanted t' give you a paper fer helpin' me."

The gambler made no reply, but walked on all the faster. He had gone a block further and evidently thought himself rid of the boy, when the latter suddenly piped out again:

"Please take yer money back, will yer—"

"Aw, beat it!" said the gambler, savagely.

Patsy stopped. He watched the form of his big man fade into the darkness and then looked at the crumpled greenback in his hands.

"Gee, wouldn't dat mostly crimp yer?" he mused as he turned back into the canyon of electric lights and headed for a place where he knew he would find cranberry sauce, steamed dumplings and mince pie at newsboy rates.

SURPRISED THE POSTMAN.

Expected a Christmas Present Which He Didn't Get.

It was the day after Christmas, and the hardworking postman ploughed his way through snow and cold winds, a sack of unusual size on his back.

He ascended the spacious steps of a West-end residence, and in answer to his ring a manservant in rich livery appeared.

"Wait a moment, please," said the servant, as he took the letters. "The mistress wishes to speak to you."

The postman's eye brightened. It was the holiday season. He had done his duty with fidelity. Now, no doubt, in recognition of his regular and faithful—

"I shall be glad," he said politely, "to await your mistress' pleasure."

In a few minutes the lady appeared.

"Are you," she asked, "our regular postman?"

"Yes, madam," he answered, bowing.

"Do you come in the morning?"

"Yes, madam."

"And in the afternoon and evening?"

Again he assented, smiling eagerly.

Then the lady said:

"Well, was it you who broke our bell?"



Bethlehem.

Sheltered within the hollow of her arm
The Son of Man lay sleeping. On her cheek
She felt his warm breath stirring, like the faint

And fragrant breeze that fans the silver leaves
Upon the slopes of Olivet. Her eyes,
Still shadowed with the pains of motherhood,

Dwelt tenderly upon the placid brow
And cherub features of the infant Christ,
The babe in swaddling clothes, whose destiny

Led to Golgotha's summit, where the Cross
Was yet to groan beneath the sacred weight
Of his perfected manhood. All the cave
Was luminous with starbeams, and her face,

Like some pale lily, drooping on its stem,
And washed with heaven's dews, gleamed pearly white
In that strange radiance. Somewhat apart

And leaning on his staff, the carpenter,
Joseph of Nazareth, musing, stood:
"Lord, who art thou?" he marveled in his soul,

"That thou shouldst deign from thy exalted place
To cast thine eyes upon me and to say
'Behold! he shall be warden to this pearl,

This pearl of perfect womanhood, more pure
Than any of the daughters of mankind
From the beginning of the world and down

Through all the ages that are yet to dawn!
Lo! shelter she shall find, and sustenance
And one round arm encircled the fair child

As if the newly-awakened mother love
Lay listless, with transparent fingers curved
As though she clasped some blossom in her sleep—

Some rare, sweet flower she was fain to keep
And cherish always. Joseph took the hand
And held it in his rough, toll-hardened palm,
Wondering at its softness, the blue veins

That threaded all its whiteness, and the bloom
That made a sea-shell of each fingertip.
But he forbore, though sore his heart did yearn,
To clasp the little sleeping new-born babe

Whose golden head lay pillowed on her arm,
Thinking: "It were not well for her or him
That he should waken suddenly." A sigh
Heaved the soft breast of Mary, and her eyes,

Like heavenly blue flowers, opened wide,
Meeting the gaze of Joseph, as he knelt
In reverent adoration. Her low tones
Thrilled like aeolian strains; her tender smile

Flooded his soul like sunshine as she spoke:
"Joseph, my husband, I have dreamed a dream!
The Angel of the Lord hath been again,
Saying: 'Behold! that which thou hast brought forth

This night is the Redeemer of the World—
Ever Messiah!'" But a grave voice cried
As she ceased speaking: "Peace to all within!"
And, lo, there stood upon the threshold one

Who bore much gold and frankincense and myrrh
In his two hands. And Joseph answered: "Sir,
Peace be unto thee, now and evermore!"
And, lo, there came two others bearing gold
And precious spices, who likewise did say,
"Peace and good will!" And Joseph made reply:
"Peace unto thee and thine forevermore!"
Then spake the foremost stranger:
"Where is he,
Born King of Jews this night in Beth-
lehem?"

Three kings are we that come to worship him,
For we have seen his star in the Far East
Beyond the deserts. We have journeyed far,
Star-led, and, lo, it standeth o'er this roof,
A sign celestial!" Then each laid aside
His mantle and his sandals, bowing low

Before the mother and the holy child,
Crying: "All hail, Redeemer of the World!
King of the Jews, all hail!" and they did break
Boxes of precious ointments, and the air

Was heavy with the perfume of rare gums
And costly spices, cinnamon and myrrh,
And sandalwood and cedar, and the scents
Distilled from blooms in gardens of the East,
And ambergris and frankincense and nard,
And they laid down their offerings of price,
Soft yellow bars and bags of shining dust,
All intermixed with amethysts and pearls

And carbuncles and diamonds and the pale
Lack-luster topaz. And the foremost guest
Unclassed the heavy chain of beaten gold
That hung about his swarthy throat and showed
Its curious pendant, fashioned in strange wise
And hammered from a nugget, soft and pure,
For uncouth semblance to a rugged cross,
Speaking in awed, low tones of prophecy:

"A voice cried in the desert wastes,
'Arise!
Take of pure gold a nugget large and bright
And hammer it into a massive cross
Such as the common criminal, condemned
To die, yields up his shrinking spirit on,
And hang it to the chain about thy neck,
And when thou comest to the journey's end
Lay it within the mother's hand, that she
May read therein a sign.' Lo, I have done
According to the word!" And Mary's eyes
Grew wide with terror, as her fingers closed
About the gleaming symbol, for she saw,
As in a dream, three crosses on a hill,
And, nailed between two thieves of aspect vile,
Upon the middle cross, a tortured form
That moved her strangely with a sense of loss
And woe unutterable, for multitudes
Surged round the sufferer and scoffed at him,
Crying, in mocking tones: "Hail, King of Jews!"
But he that hung cast downward pitying eyes,
Full of meek pardon and of tender love,
Gasping: "Forgive them, Father! Oh, forgive
Thy children, for they know not what they do!"
And in those dying orbs compassionate
She saw a semblance of the holy light
That shone within the eyes of her fair babe,
And moaned: "Take it away—the cross of gold!
I shudder at the phantasies it brings!"
At which the strangers out of the Far East
Arose and gave their blessing to the child
And passed into the night. And Mary slept
The sleep of sweet forgetfulness, while he
Who stood in place of father to the babe
Watched the sweet pair until the morn
Awoke
The songbirds in the clustering olive trees
And kindled with light the roofs of Bethlehem.

LILITA LEVER.

Story of an Army Christmas

By Col. J. A. WATROUS, U.S.A.



WHAT was my most memorable Christmas?

"The one which always comes back to me when thinking over Christmas festivities—comes rushing in at the head of the line—is that of 1862, but in telling of it it will be necessary to bring in the army, and I suppose you do not want anything that reminds of war in a Christmas talk."

From a number of others, childish and others, came: "Yes, yes; that is just what we want, a story about Christmas in the army."

"The motion prevails, and you shall have what you vote for—a story of an army Christmas," said the veteran of three wars—the civil, Spanish-American and the Philippine insurrection.

"There were many troops in and about Manila in December, 1900. My temporary home was with an American family that had rented the large, beautiful mansion on San Sebastian street occupied by a Spanish admiral before Commodore Dewey sailed up Manila bay and said: 'You may fire, Gridley, when ready.'"

"This patriotic man and his wife, a former Wisconsin teacher, planned a Christmas dinner and party. They invited a dozen or more officers and their ladies. The dinner did not differ materially from most Christmas dinners, yet it reminded the diners of holiday events in far off America, and the conversation soon turned in that direction.

"One little army lady began to tell about a home Christmas, its tree and the good cheer, when she was a small girl. 'No other Christmas had seemed quite so heavenly. I can see how lovely that tree looked; I can hear daddy's voice as he called off the presents; can see mamma's smile as we children danced and chattered; I can see the happy gathering about the table Christmas-laden; I can hear daddy's request for a blessing and—well, it was all so sweet and beautiful. Before another Christmas came I hadn't any daddy.'"

"The little lady's handkerchief was not the only one that brushed away a tear.

"Captain, this dinner reminds me of one our fathers have told us about."

"The captain was the son of a Wisconsin soldier of the civil war, and the speaker a lieutenant, the son of another civil war veteran.

"Tell us about it," said the wife of another captain.

"Yes, we want that story," said an old major of regulars, who had come down from the civil war.

"It was after the battle of Fredericksburg, Va., in 1862. Four tent-mates, one of whom was my father, and another the father of the lieutenant here, were remembered by their sweethearts. The four sweethearts got up the nicest kind of a Christmas dinner—did all of the cooking themselves—and sent it to their soldier boys. Accompanying it was a good, fat letter from each of the girls to her particular soldier boy. They told us of the table they set in their small tent, of the coffee they made, the comments as they ate the good things, of the four sweet girls, and how it was all enjoyed. Before the war was over all of the boys won commissions and were wounded, two of them twice, yet all returned home and married the four girls. One of those girls was the best woman ever born, and the lieutenant here will say the same about another of the four."

"And I will bear the same testimony as to another of those blessed sweethearts of 1862," said the wife of the other captain. "She was my mother."

"It is my turn to speak," said the old major. "I was one of the four to enjoy that Christmas dinner back of Stafford Heights, in 1862. The mother of my bairns was second to none of the four sweethearts."

"Then the four—the captain, the lieutenant, the other captain's wife, and the old major—left the table, formed rows, shook hands, laughed, congratulated, and had such a reunion as seldom occurs.

"Well, well, well, what a little bit of a world it is, anyway," said the astonished hostess."

Under the mistletoe. Young Jones was coming down the stairs
A night not long ago,
And saw a figure in the hall
Beneath the mistletoe.

He chuckled softly to himself,
And said, "Now, here's a lark!
Who'er it is, I'll creep behind
And kiss her in the dark!"

He did—but on her face the light
Fell suddenly a-slant;
He looked, and to his horror saw
It was his maiden aunt!

Make it Easy. Daughter—Ma, I think you'd better let pa smoke in the house.

Mother—I should like to know why? Daughter—Every Christmas we have trouble trying to find a present for him—Everything is so expensive, you know; but we can always get very pretty ash-trays at 25 cents!

Be Merry. Make your own Christmas merry by making a merry Christmas for others.