

# "A DREAM STORY"—THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

One of the prettiest stories written by Henry Van Dyke is entitled "A Dream Story," and describes "The Christmas Angel."

"It was the hour of rest in the country beyond the stars \* \* \* It was in one of the quiet corners of the green valley called Peacefield, where the little brook of Brighthopes runs smoothly down to join the River of Life, that I saw a company of angels returned from various labors on Earth, sitting in friendly converse on the hillside, where cyclamens and arbutus and violets the fringed orchids and pale lady's-tresses, and all the sweet smelling flowers which are separated in the lower world by the seasons, were thrown together in a harmony of fragrance."

We are told that three of the company seemed to be leaders "distinguished not only by more radiant and powerful looks, but by a tone of authority in their speech and by the willing attention with which the others listened to them; as they talked of their earthly tasks, of the tangles and troubles, the wars and miseries that they had seen among men, and of the best way to get rid of them and bring sorrow to an end."

The archangel Michael, "the mightiest one among the warriors of the King, and the executor of the divine judgments upon the unjust," declared that the earth was tormented with injustice, full of oppression and unrighteousness and said that force must be used to establish the law of God among men.

Another angel, "Uriel, the spirit of the sun, clearest in vision, deepest in wisdom of all the spirits that surround the throne"—Uriel said that force would not do, that "power corrupts itself and might can not save."

"There was silence for a moment on the slopes of Peacefield, and then over the encircling hills a cool wind brought the sound of chains clanking in prisons and galleys, the sighing of millions of slaves, the weeping of wretched women and children, the blows of hammers nailing men to their crosses." Then the sound passed by with the wind and Uriel spoke again: "The Earth is full of ignorant strife, and for this evil there is no cure but by the giving of greater knowledge. It is because men do not understand the evil that they yield themselves to its power. Wickedness is folly in action, and injustice is the error of the blind. It is because men are ignorant that they destroy one another, and at last themselves. If there were more light in the world there would be no sorrow."

The company seemed to be pleased with the words of Uriel, but one among them remembered something that the others had forgotten. He reminded his fellows that when one had been sent to counsel with Balaam, the son of Beor, as he was riding to meet the King of Moab, the dumb beast profited more by the instruction than the man who rode him; also that Solomon, who was called the wisest of all men, having searched out and understood the many inventions that are

found under the sun, was "prince of fools and philosophers, unable by much learning to escape the weariness of the flesh and despair of the spirit." It was the archangel Raphael who spoke and he added: "Too well I know that power corrupts itself and that knowledge can not save. There is no cure for the evil that is in the world but by the giving of more love to men. The laws that are ordained for earth are strange and unequal, and the ways where men must walk are full of pitfalls and dangers. Pestilence creeps along the ground and flows in the rivers; whirlwind and tempest shake the habitations of men and drive their ships to destruction; fire breaks forth from the mountains and the foundations of the world tremble. Frail is the flesh of man, and many are his pains and troubles. His children can never find peace until they learn to love one another and to help one another. Wickedness is begotten by disease and misery. Violence comes from poverty and hunger. The cruelty of oppression is when the strong tread the weak under their feet; the bitterness of pride is when the wise and learned despise the simple; the crown of folly is when the rich think they are gods, and the poor think that God is not."

Then Raphael asked: "How shall the miracle be wrought in human nature to reveal the meaning of humanity? How shall men be made like God?"

"At this question a deep hush fell around the circle, and every listener was still, even as the rustling leaves hang motionless when the light breeze falls away in the hour of sunset. Then through the silence, like the song of a far-away thrush from its hermitage in the forest, a voice came ringing: 'I know it, I know it, I know it.'"

"Clear and sweet—clear as a ray of light, sweeter than the smallest silver bell that rang the hour of rest—was that slender voice floating on the odorous and translucent air. Nearer and nearer it came, echoing down the valley, 'I know it, I know it, I know it!'"

It was a new angel, a little child, who spoke. "All the angels rose and turned to look at him with wondering eyes. Multitudes of others came flying swiftly to the place from which the strange new song was sounding. Rank within rank, like a garden of living flowers, they stood along the sloping banks of the brook while the child angel floated into the midst of them, singing: 'I know it, I know it, I know it! Man shall be made like God because the Son of God shall become a man.'"

Raphael objected that if he became a man He would be at the mercy of men and the cruel and wicked would make him suffer.

"I know it," answered the young angel, "and by suffering He will understand the meaning of all sorrow and pain; and He will be able to comfort every one who cries; and His own tears will be for the healing of sad hearts; and those who are healed by Him will learn for His sake to be kind to each other."

Uriel objected that he must first be a child,

simple, and lowly, and helpless; and that he would never gain the learning of schools, because the masters of earthly wisdom would despise Him and speak scorn of Him.

"I know it," said the young angel, "but in meekness will He answer them; and to those who become as little children He will give the heavenly wisdom that comes, without seeking, to the pure and gentle of heart."

Michael objected that evil men would hate and persecute Him and might even take His life. "I know it," answered the young angel, "they will nail Him to a cross. But when He is lifted up, He will draw all men unto Him."

Then the little one revealed himself to his companions, saying: "I am the Christmas angel and must fly quickly before the sun rises, to bring the good news to those happy men who have been chosen to receive them."

Then we are told that "the young angel rose, with arms outspread, from the green meadow of Peacefield and, passing over the bounds of Heaven, dropped swiftly as a shooting-star toward the night shadow of the Earth. The other angels followed him—a throng of dazzling forms, beautiful as a rain of jewels falling from the dark-blue sky." And as they followed they wondered who had been favored and chosen to receive the glad tidings. One said to was the Emperor of the World and his counsellors; but the flight passed over Rome. Another said it must be the philosophers and the masters of learning; but the flight passed over Athens. Another said it must be the High Priest of the Jews, and the elders and the scribes, but the flight passed over Jerusalem.

"It floated out over the hill country of Bethlehem; the throng of silent angels holding close together, as if perplexed and doubtful; the child-angel darting on far in advance, as one who knew the way through the darkness."

"The villages were all still; the very houses seemed asleep; but in one place there was a low sound of talking in a stable, near to an inn—a sound as of a mother soothing her baby to rest."

And as the child-angel passed over the fields on the hill sides, the shepherds tending their flocks were sore afraid; but they were reassured and told that the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger was the Saviour of men. Then they heard a multitude of the heavenly host, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the shepherds said one to another: "Let us now go, even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass."

"So," concludes the writer of this sweet story, "I said within myself that I also would go with the shepherds, even to Bethlehem. And I heard a great and sweet voice, as of a bell, which said, 'Come!' And when the bell had sounded twelve times, I awoke; and it was Christmas morn; and I knew that I had been in a dream. Yet it seemed to me that the things which I had heard were true."

## NO PAY FOR POLITICAL SPEECHES

Mr. Bryan's attention has been called to a republican paper of Oklahoma which alleges that he, Mr. Bryan, received "two thousand dollars hard cash" for his speeches in Oklahoma last fall. The fact that Mr. Bryan does not receive any pay whatever for campaign speeches is known to every republican who has intelligence enough to occupy an editorial position. The editor referred to could ascertain from the democratic committee, if he cared to know the truth, that Mr. Bryan's services were rendered without any compensation.

Mr. Bryan's campaign work is a source of expense to him rather than a source of profit, for his traveling expenses amount to considerable for each campaign, and his income from lectures is cut off while he is at work in the campaign, but he is glad to be able to devote his time to a cause in which he feels deeply interested, and hopes to be able to give more and more time to politics each year.

His income is derived from his lectures and writings, and thanks to a generous public he is able to make enough from these sources during a part of the year to enable him to devote the rest of his time to gratuitous service. This state-

ment is made in order that the readers of The Commoner may be able to answer such malicious misrepresentations as that put forth by the Oklahoma paper.

## THE JOB SESSION

The short session of congress which meets after the election is the job session. Whenever the financial interests have any questionable measures to put through, they wait until after the election before they spring them. Then they proceed to the manufacture of public opinion in favor of the speedy passage of their bills. The two jobs which the corporate interests have on hand now are the ship subsidy and the asset currency. The present congress has no time to consider tariff reform or an income tax or an inheritance tax or anything else that would bring relief to the people, but it now looks as if it was going to have plenty of time to rush a ship subsidy bill through and to turn over to the bankers the power to issue an asset currency. The ship subsidy is a job, its object is not to help commerce but to help a few ship companies. It may be that only the thin edge of the wedge will be presented at this session—the giving of subsidies to South American lines—but it is the beginning of a new raid upon the treasury, and the democrats should fight it with all the weapons at their command.

The asset currency is another scheme, and it is likely that it, too, will be presented in its most attractive form as a remedy for temporary stringency. The emergency note based upon the assets of the bank is the forerunner of the asset currency. Secretary Shaw called attention to this subject several years ago, and the large bankers have been gradually reaching out for the privilege of issuing money upon their assets, although they now draw interest upon those assets. If the asset currency is not guaranteed by the government, it is not secure. If it is guaranteed by the government, the burden is put upon the people and the profit goes to the bankers. This is another measure to which the democrats ought to offer a unanimous opposition. And in this connection it might be well for the democrats to point out the fact that the jobs are always left for the session after the election. At present congress does not convene in regular session until more than a year after its members are elected, and the second session of each congress is held after many of its members have been retired by another election. The constitution ought to be so amended as to convene congress within a few months of the election so as to prohibit the holding of any session after the election. The people ought to be able to sit in judgment upon the action of congress when they elect the next congress.