

# Christmas Just the Same

BY ESTELLE M. HART.

"Come right in, Lois. Isn't this a glorious day? It really begins to smell like Christmas, don't it?" and Eleanor Day bustled cheerily about, settling her guest in the most comfortable chair, and assisting her to lay aside her wraps.

Lois Robinson looked at her, half in wonderment and half in bitterness. "Don't see what difference it makes to you and me whether it smells like Christmas or not—smells like a snow-storm coming up, I should say," she replied tersely.

"Well, maybe, 'tis the snowy smell I mean," Eleanor replied good-naturedly. "I'm glad you can talk that snowy smell, too; some folks don't seem to. They say it feels like snow, and it looks like snow, but I can smell it and hear it, too—that kind of muffled stillness, you know—and it makes me realize that it's most time to get ready for Christmas."

"Eleanor Day," said Lois, with something very like scorn in her voice, "you're as lone and lorn as I am, and you don't mean to tell me that you pretend to keep Christmas, all by yourself!"

These two elderly women had been separated for nearly twenty years until within the past few months. Brought up as neighbors and school-girl friends, they had lived on adjoining farms until, after the death of her father and mother, Lois had left the old home town and gone West to keep house for a widowed brother. Within the last year the brother also had died, and now she had come back to the old house, a solitary and lonely woman, to pass the rest of her days.

Eleanor, too, led a lonely life. Father, mother, sister and brother had long ago been taken from the old home and she had been left quite alone to make the best of life that she could, with what was left her—the old house to live in, her hands to work with and a cheerful heart; these were her sole assets.

Lois Robinson had as much, and more, in the way of earthly possessions, but the cheerful heart, the best possession of all, had long ago deserted her. So she had spoken with wonderment and something not unlike envy in reply to Eleanor's cheery reminder of Christmas.

"I don't pretend," Eleanor Day replied, echoing her word. "I keep it. It's Christmas just the same, and I'll tell you, Lois, though I never said so to another soul, I keep it for all the rest, and that makes it the happiest kind of a time. I never feel so close to them as when I am planning Christmas presents for Father and Mother and Hetty and John."

"Eleanor Day, what do you mean?" Lois looked at her almost in fright. Was Eleanor losing her senses? She certainly was a very composed and comfortable looking lunatic, if she was as she sat rocking gently in her chair and clicking her bright knitting needles.

She stopped and looked at Lois for a moment with a little kindling light in her eyes.

"Why, I mean this," she said; "the things I would give to Mother I give to somebody else that is old and that hasn't any daughter to do for her. There's old Miss Partridge still living, you know, and Aunt Mary Woodruff, she ain't any aunt, but Mother taught me to call her so. Then there is always some old gentleman to make me think of Father, there are invalids for Hetty and kind of queer, nice odd folks for John. And then there are always children."

"Well, who are the children for, I'd like to know?" Lois inquired.

Eleanor flushed a little and sat back in her chair and resumed her knitting and her rocking.

"Oh, I suppose I'm awfully foolish, Lois," she said. "I didn't mean to mention about them particularly, but I always get sort of lonesome, about Christmas time for the children I might have had, maybe, if some things had been different; and it kind of warms me up inside to plan things for some children somewhere, if they ain't the ones I wish they were."

Lois's own face softened a little, but she only said, "Well, you do beat the Dutch!"

"I'll tell you, Lois," said Eleanor, "you just step in next week, a day or two before Christmas, and I'll show you the things I've got. It's little I can do, and I'd be ashamed to show them to you, but I kind of think you might like the feeling of it, too, if you tried it once. Why, it seems to me 'twould make me sick abed, I'd be so lonesome, not to keep Christmas at all."

"Everybody ain't like you, Eleanor Day," Lois replied. "You was always a master hand at playing, when you was children; it seemed as if 'twas really so and not playing at all, and I believe you're at it still!"

"Well, you know it says in the Bible there'll be 'boys and girls playing in the streets thereof,' and sometimes I wonder if it don't just mean us that have got through being children here, learning how over again. I don't believe but that God likes us to play as well as to work."

The talk drifted to other things, as another neighbor came in, and when Lois went away, Eleanor said to her, "Do be sure and step in next Tuesday or Wednesday. I'll be glad to have you help me do the things up." And Lois came.

"My land!" she exclaimed, as she looked at Eleanor's little kitchen table, set out with a varied array of articles, and with several empty boxes, plenty of neatly ironed wrapping paper and a roll of narrow red ribbon at one side. Then, with some disapproval, "It must have cost you a lot of money!"

"Now, I'll tell you about that," Eleanor responded cheerfully. "I suppose I couldn't do it if I didn't do a considerable planning. I figure it this way: If I sew or knit or crochet, or whatever it is, six hours a day, I can manage to get enough to live on—it don't take much, you know. Well, that gives me plenty of time for housework and making my own clothes and doing errands and making calls, and going to prayer meeting and monthly societies, and working in the garden in summer; and then I begin the first of January and put in half an hour's work a day extra, for the next Christmas. It averages about five cents a half hour, you know, on knitting or plain sewing, and that's thirty a week, and that's about fifteen dollars a year. You wouldn't think 'twould be so much, would you?"

"Well, that buys all the materials, and I make 'em up evenings, if they're of the making-up kind, and some of them I buy right out. I always buy a rubber water bottle for some old lady—Mother did enjoy hers so much. This one is for Aunt Mary Woodruff. Her son's wife is kind of close, to tell the truth, and don't waste any coal, and Aunt Mary is having rheumatism quite a bit this fall.

"The bedsocks are for Miss Partridge—pink is a foolish color, maybe; drab don't show the soil half so quick, but land! can't you remember when we was little girls how lovely Miss Partridge used to look walking up the church aisle with a sprigged pink muslin and pink roses in her bonnet? It seems to me she'd like to feel that the pinkness hadn't all gone out of her life."

"Old Deacon Andrews used to be such a scholar, you know, and he was one of Father's best friends. He don't have nothing to read but the 'Hop River Herald,' and that don't tell no-thing except when Warner has painted his chicken coop, and I don't suppose that gives the deacon much food for thought."

"These cost four dollars and a half, the two of 'em," and she reverently lifted from their box two fine new volumes of a recent history of Egypt. "It seemed a lot to pay, but I talked it over with the minister and he said they was real choice books, and that the deacon would read them back-wards and forwards for a year, and I decided 'twas worth while. Maybe it's the last year he'll have, and if ever there was a saint that walked this earth, Deacon Andrews was him, and we know it. Dreadful heathen looking pictures, ain't they? But the minister said they was just right."

Lois Robinson listened in petrified astonishment. "Why, Eleanor Day," she finally gasped, "four dollars and a half!"

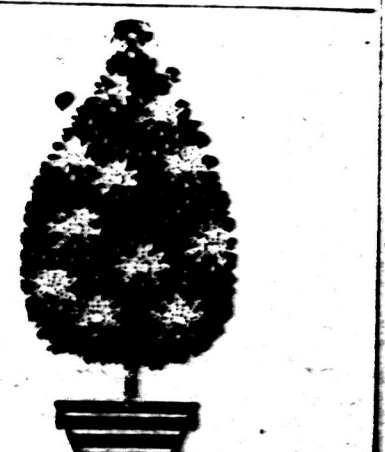
"I know it," Eleanor replied guiltily, "but somehow when I got thinking how comfortable Deacon Andrews would look a-sitting by them south windows a-reading these books, and how he'd push his spectacles up on his forehead and smile, kinder like Father, I just wanted to, and so I did!"

"It's about the hardest to get things for Henry Harrison, and he's so proud that he wouldn't take nothing from me ever, but, you see, I get him to take me around in his old sleigh Christmas morning regular, and I tell him I'm too proud to hire it for nothing, and so we kind of even things up by my getting him some little thing or other. He and John was great friends, you know. I've subscribed for a magazine for Henry; he'll enjoy that. These men folks cost the most."

"Then there's Julia Morris, with a spinal complaint, poor child! I got this lot of ribbons at a sale last spring real cheap—just look at them roses! They are for fancy work. Julia likes to make pretty things, and this gives her a chance to give some things away herself, so the good times I have kind of spreads, you see."

"And now, see here!" Her motherly besom expanded and her eyes grew brighter and more tender, as she opened a long box and displayed three dolls, "just of the holdable, huggable size," Eleanor said, delightfully, as she lifted them up, and displayed the pretty, home-made clothing that would "take off and put on," and all complete to the little hoods and sweaters and mittens.

"Oh, it was such fun to make the tiny things!" she said. "One goes to Susie Sullivan—her mother takes in



washing and can't get Susie any play-things worth speaking of; and one to Mollie Stevens, who is lame, you know, and has to stay indoors a lot; and one to little Louisa Clark—I don't know as there seems to be any particular reason for giving it to Louisa, only she's such a motherly little thing."

Lois Robinson half shut her eyes in reverie. What did she dimly remember about Jack Clark's attentions to Eleanor one winter forty years ago or so? And this was Jack's little daughter—no, granddaughter—well, well, to be sure!

But Eleanor had put the dolls snugly back in their respective boxes, and was laying out half a dozen pairs of mittens of assorted sizes, for some children who lived down at the corners, and there were tops and jumping-jacks, and two or three gayly colored picture books.

"They need the mittens," said Eleanor, "but bless you! Christmas would not be Christmas unless there were some presents that you could get along with 'em," and she sat back and viewed the treasures happily.

"'Twas kind of close skimping after buying them books," she said, "but there was just enough left for a roll of red ribbon to tie them all up with. The wrapping paper that comes on bundles I always save and iron out, and it answers beautifully, if it isn't soiled to start with."

"Well, I never!" said Lois.

"Did you?" responded Eleanor.

"And ain't it beautiful? Now, there's nothing left but the hatpins, I always make a lot of cup cakes for Christmas and put frosting on top and little red and yellow candy mites—Mother always did that and then I make a big one for Henry and me. I make him come in to dinner when he brings me home from our morning rounds, or else I tell him I won't go, and think how that would disappoint the whole caboodle!" and she laughed the cheeriest kind of a laugh.

Suddenly Lois Robinson's eyes gleamed, and she sat straight up in her chair, her cheeks turning an old rose pink.

"Eleanor," she said, half tremulously, half fiercely, "let me do some of it. We were never great hands to give presents at our house, but we was master hands at feeding. I'd like to do something for my mother," and her voice broke suddenly, "please," and she grew eager, as she caught the look of surprise and hesitation on Eleanor's face. "I'd like to have a part in Christmas myself. You and Henry stop at my house on your way down, and I'll have them cup cakes all ready. And I got here this fall in time to put up pickles and grape jelly—the mothers of the poor children would like that. Then when you and Henry come back, you just stop at my house for Christmas dinner. You wouldn't have room to put in Aunt Mary Woodruff and bring her along, would you?"

"Why, Lois Robinson, I guess we would," and Eleanor's face was already aglow with the pleasure of seeing Lois so animated and happy, though she was stifling a regret in her heart that she couldn't make those cup cakes herself.

"It will save me a lot of trouble," she said, "and I was worrying because I didn't see how I could ever finish a pair of gray mittens that I had begun for old Uncle George Ripley, who brings me my wood. I was just thinking I'd have to wait till New Year's!"

Yes, it was a happy Christmas, "just the same," as Eleanor had said, even if they were solitary elderly people. As she sat alone before her cheery fire in her comfortable chair on Christmas night, she said to herself: "It seems as if each one was a little better than the last. How pretty Lois looked when she got set up getting the dinner, and how kind of limbered up in his spirits Henry seemed to get, too! Yes, this certainly was the best Christmas yet!"

## The Sunday School Lesson

DECEMBER 23

The Universal Reign of Christ—Christmas Lesson—Isaiah 9: 6, 7; 11: 1-10; Psalm 2: 1-12. Golden Text—Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.—Psalm 2: 8.

LESSON SETTING—In the last few lessons we have been following the growth of the missionary spirit and the extension of missionary operations in the early Christian church. In principle it became universal, and in operation it became everywhere aggressive. In our lesson to-day we turn back to the pages of the Old Testament, where the prophet gives us a vivid picture of the Messiah and the magnificent results of his reign.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAH, ISA. 11: 1-5.

Vs. 1, 2. *There shall come forth a rod.* When Assyria falls it falls like a cedar of Lebanon which sends no fresh sprout from its broken stump, but Judah is like an oak which, though hewn to the stump, sends forth new growth. A shoot shall spring from the stock, and a fruit-bearing branch shall grow from the root. When Christ was born we see how low the fortunes of God's people had fallen, and from what we know of the earthly circumstances of Joseph and Mary, we see how humble had become the circumstances of the family of Jesse and David. *The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.* The spiritual endowment of the Messiah is to be in marked contrast to his material circumstances. *The spirit of wisdom and understanding.* The fruit of the Spirit which rested upon the Messiah is now described in a threefold way. First, he has wisdom and understanding, or what we might call insight, and foresight. He sees through, and sees beneath, and sees beyond. *The spirit of counsel and might.* Second, he has the spirit of action. He acts with wisdom and power. He has the "final decision and heroic energy." *The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*



## Bachelor Bear's Christmas

BY ENOS B. COMSTOCK.

Old Bachelor Bear lived all by himself in a lonely part of the forest. The other animals saw little of him, and because he had so little to say when they did see him, many of them thought that he must be a queer and unpleasant old coozer. But the truth is, he had a very kind heart, only he did not know just how to go about making friends. He had a speaking acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Raccoon and knew something about their family affairs, or, to be more outspoken, he knew that they had a large family of children and also that they were very poor. In his high-hearted way he often wished that he might do something to help them.

It was Christmas eve. The ground was covered deep with snow and old Mr. Bear had thought of a most delightful plan. He had secured a large sack and filled it with all sorts of things that he knew would make the little Raccoons happy and he meant to play Santa Claus.

So, at about eight o'clock, when he felt pretty sure they would be wishing that something might happen to make their Christmas a cheerful one, he dressed up in some Santa Claus clothes and, taking his sack of good things and toys, he tramped through the woods to the little hut where the Raccoons lived.

Old Bachelor Bear had his heart set on climbing to the roof and coming down through the chimney, just as Santa Claus does. He was quite disappointed when he discovered that they had a great fire blazing in the open fireplace and there were so many sparks and so much smoke coming out of the chimney that he knew it would not be safe to attempt to go down that way.

But Mr. Bear was not one to give up a plan after it was once made, so he set about thinking up a way that would make it possible. There was a snow-shovel just outside the door and the roof was heaped high with snow. "I know what I will do," said he to himself. "I will get up onto the roof and shovel enough snow down the chimney to put out the fire; then I can go down very nicely." So he took the shovel and climbed to the roof.

Mr. and Mrs. Raccoon and the eight little Raccoons were sitting before the great open fire watching the flames and sparks crackle and roar and rush up the chimney way. Perhaps they were just a little bit sad, for every one likes to have something different and exciting happen on Christmas day. To be sure, they were cozy and warm, and there was a basket partly filled with dry corn, beside the fire-place. It would do for their Christmas dinner. But there was nothing exciting or jolly about corn! However, Mr. Raccoon had been trying his best to make things cheerful and was reciting *The Night Before Christmas*. He had just reached the part where

it says, "When out on the house-top I heard such a clatter," when he saw a great crash and a splash, the spouting of snow and coal and ashes and the fire.

Some of the little ones were frightened that they were being loaded. Missus Raccoon, who happened to be sitting very close to the fire, held her baby on her lap, threw her back so suddenly that the chair tipped over and she rolled in a heap on the floor.

Mr. Raccoon was very angry, as soon as he had time to catch his thoughts, he supposed that Mr. Bear was playing a trick on them. Missus was doing her best to get up, but she was not like practical folks.

He rushed out of the house, shouting and threatening all sorts of things and there might have been some trouble, for, when he saw old Bachelor Bear standing on the roof, he thought that the bear was shoveling snow down the chimney just as fast as he could shovel.

But fortunately in another moment he noticed the Santa Claus clothes and caught sight of the sack and the things of a sudden, the whole truth dawned on him! So he climbed up on the roof and very warmly shook hands with Mr. Bear and they whispered to each other for a minute or two. Then Mr. Raccoon went back into the hut and lighted some candles on a little Christmas tree that he had brought in earlier in the day.

"I couldn't see nothing," said he to his waiting family, "but I think it must have been old Santa trying to get down our chimney. I will go up with the story and perhaps he may try again now that the fire is out. Let me see! Where did I leave off? Oh yes—

"When out on the house-top there arose such a clatter, I sprang to the window to see what was the matter."

Just at that moment there was a rustling, scraping noise in the chimney and then a thud and a bump, as old Bachelor Bear, a bit sorry to be sure but laughing widely, picked himself up and stepped out of the fireplace into the room, carrying his big sack of treasures.

If Mr. Raccoon had not prepared his family for the surprise, the little ones might have been very frightened. As it was, they were all expectant and very much delighted and you may guess what a very happy time they had, the kind people can have when they are good friends.

Old Mr. Bear was invited to spend the night with them so as to be on hand bright and early on Christmas day. The fire was rekindled and they all sat around and told stories and nibbled at the good things from Mr. Bear's sack and it was very late when all wished each other a Merry Christmas and cuddled up and went to sleep.

## Concerning Christmas.

The date on which Christmas was originally observed was January 6th. Uniformity in the date of Christmas—with the exception of the Armenian Church, which still retains January 6th—was not attained until A.D. 428.

To-day Christmas commemorates not only the birthday of Christ, but originally four events were commemorated—the birthday, the appearance of the star which guided the Wise Men, the baptism of Christ, and the first miracle.

"Yule," as a name for Christmas is derived from an ancient pagan festival—Jul— which was held in the passing of the shortest day of the year, December 21st.

The beginning of the modern Christmas pi-m-pudding was "plum pudding," esteemed a great treat. "Holly," the favorite decoration of Christmas, should really be "holly" was accounted sacred.

Dip down deep into your purses, you who have them, but don't leave love out of your gift. You who have no money can give the best gift—the Christ gift. He never gave money, but wherever He went He brought his love, health, power, hope, strength to overcome all difficulties. By giving Himself He lifted men above themselves.



## HEALTHY HEADACHES

Sign the Blood in Water and Impure.

People with thin blood are more apt to have headaches than full-blooded people and the form of anemia that is growing girls is almost always accompanied by headaches, together with disturbances of the digestive system.

You have constant headaches and pallor of face? That is blood in trouble. Blood should be direct building up your blood. A doctor with Dr. Williams' Pink Pills will do this, and the rich blood made by these pills banishes the headache.

Disturbances to the health caused by their blood that most people have an idea of. When the blood is impoverished, the nerves suffer from lack of nourishment, and you may be troubled with insomnia, neuralgia or sciatica. Muscles are liable to strain are undernourished and you may have muscular rheumatism or lumbago. If your blood is not you begin to show symptoms of these disorders, try building up the blood with Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and as the blood restores its normal condition the troubles disappear. There are many people who owe their present state of health to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, most of them do not hesitate to say so.

If you are suffering from any of the above conditions, or from any other disease of the blood, or from weakness of nerves, begin taking Dr. Williams' Pink Pills now, and note your strength and health will improve. You can get these pills through any dealer in medicine, or by mail, 50 cents a box from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

## The Hill of the Winds.

We went to the Hill of the Winds on an amber afternoon. From its crest we looked between the trees

Where a river ran for winding. By shelving banks and sedgy islets Like a placid long tongue.

There was never a cloud in the vast blue vault of the sky. For a winnowing wind swept endlessly

Out of the west where the trees were bare. And it sang sweet songs to us, as we were glad as the wind went by.

As the wind and the depths below, oryed dainties with beaded nod.

Of the gleam and the toss of the grass, of the sheen of the moss and the glow of the soil.

With the joy that lovers know. Now is the age of the year. When the heavens are blurred with rain.

When the air is chill and the ground is gray. Sweet, let us take the upward way. Let us go back to that perfect day. And the Hill of the Winds again. —Clinton Scott

## HEALTH BY DR. PROVINCIAL

Dr. Middleton will be glad to answer letters through this column. Crescent, Toronto.

High blood pressure is a common ailment, but these days it may be due in part to the strain of life. In these hectic times, over-indulgence of one kind or another makes the condition worse. High pressure means several things: That the heart is beating too fast; (2) that the blood vessel walls are thickened and inelastic; (3) that the person is obese or overweight. It can be caused by any or all of the above.

Nature provides blood vessels are large enough and smooth for blood to flow through. The heart contracts every time the beats, the vessels being elastic like a rubber tube. As age advances, the vessels become rigid and the heart has to work harder to pump the blood through them.

## Come to the Lecture

## Ontario Agricultural Society

1924 — SH

and Soil Judging, weekly, January 8th - 19th. Country Raisins, Four weeks, January 8th - February 5th. Horticultural Courses, Fruit and Vegetable Growing, weekly, February 2nd - 19th. Floriculture and Landscaping, February 4th - Feb. 19th. Dairy Courses, Courses for Factory Cheesemakers, January 14th - 19th. Cow Testing, Jan. 17th - Jan. 21st. Pea Factory, Milk and Cream, including Factory Management. These courses are planned to meet the needs of the agricultural community and are free of charge to all interested parties. A charge from the home department is required for the purchase of the course and the text book. REYNOLDS, M.A. President