—Hams, med., 25 to
s, 37 to 38c; smoked
cottage rolls, 21 to
acon, 23 to 27c; spe-
fast bacon, 29 to 31c;
29 to 36c.
Long clear bacon, 50
70 to 90 lbs., $16.80;
$15.50; lightweights
$33; heavyweight

tierces, 18 to 18½c;
pails, 18¾ to 19½c;
shortening, tierces,
14¾ to 15¼c; pails,
ts, 17 to 17½c.
eers, $6 to $7.50;
ood to choice, $6 to
ood, $4.50 to $5.75;
$4.25; butcher heif-
, $5.50 to $6.50; do,
0 to $5.75; do, com.,
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air to good, $3.50 to
utters, $2 to $2.75;
d, $4 to $5; do, fair,
n, $2.25 to $3; feed-
5 to $5.50; do, fair,
good, $4 to $4.75;
$4; calves, choice,
ed., $8 to $9.50; do,
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eep, $6.50 to $7.50;
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good ewe lambs,
cks, $10.50 to $11;
culls, $9 to $9.50;
fed and watered,
$8.50; do, country
off cars, $9.25; se-

REAL.
69½c; No. 3 CW,
feed, 65c. Flour,
pats., firsts, $9.20;
ng bakers', $8.50;
$6.90 to $7. Roll-
s., $3.75 to $3.85.
rts, $34.25; Mid-
, No. 2, per ton,
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ESTHER OF THE HIGH HILLS

BY ORVILLE D. WESCOTT.

Once upon a time, very long ago, there lived a little girl in Judea, whom everyone called, "Esther of the High Hills." She had been given this name because, of all the little children in the little stone-walled village, she was the most active and fearless, ready to climb heights that others thought impossible.

Esther's father was a shepherd, grazing his flocks in the early springtime in sight of the ancient city of Jerusalem. When the heat of summer came, burning the grass and drying the brooks and the springs of fresh water, the sheep were led back to the hills where there was grateful shade and where, in the deep valleys, the rich grasses grew through the summer.

The shepherds' families always accompanied them to the hill pastures, where they wandered by day in the open and slept at night under black tents. It was the custom for several families to herd their flocks together. To the little children, the summer months mean tthe Land of Enchantment, with constant change of scene and fresh adventures daily. These adventures were stored up and on the return in the autumn were retailed to the children who were condemned to the monotony of village life.

Though her heart was in the hills, it was in the winter months that she was to have her most wonderful adventure which changed her name from Esther of the High Hills to Esther of the Snow-White Lamb.

It happened in this wise. In the month of December, following the summer she was twelve years old, the shepherds were grazing their flocks a little way from the village. On a night late in December, Esther and her little brother had carried out to her father a hot cooked evening meal.

The short winter twilight had merged into the darkness of night by the time they returned. The younger children were put to bed and Esther sat with her mother in the one big room in the cottage.

Esther was on the floor before the open fire, over which the evening meal had been cooked. Of a sudden the fire seemed to lose its glow. A strangely luminous light filled the room. In quick surprise Esther jumped to her feet, meeting her mother's frightened eyes. Instinctively they turned to the open door of the tiny bedroom where the other children were peacefully sleeping; then the mother unbarred the outer door and they stepped into the night, a night so strangely different from any in the past.

No village house or feed stack was ablaze. Instead, the horizon was a shimmer of soft tremulous light that seemed to come from directly overhead where burned a star transcendently bright. As they gazed it seemed to draw nearer to earth. They stood and watched, shading their eyes from the brilliance that steadily grew in intensity.

Esther dropped her eyes to the plains, where, half screened by a low hill, the flocks were sheltered for the night. The shepherds had left their flocks for a moment and gathered on the crown of the hill, watching the star as it dropped slowly down through the ambient blue that was now almost the brightness of noon day. The star was directly overhead. One by one the shepherds fell to their knees, covering their faces with their hands.

Esther could see her father standing a little apart from the others. The whiteness of his sheepskin mantle caught and reflected the sheen of light. She was seized with a longing to go to him. Her mother stood still, awed into silence, with her hands shading her eyes.

Esther plucked at her gown: "Come, Mother, let us go out there and be with Father to watch the Star."

The mother did not turn, did not even hear. She kept her eyes fixed on the Star but her thoughts were busy recalling the prophecies to the Tribe of Judah and the House of David. Was this the heralded coming of the promised King who should reign over Israel?

In the distance, just over the brow of the hill that sheltered the sheep, was Bethlehem. Of it the prophet Micah had said: "Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be Ruler in Israel."

And what was this but his Star, the "Star out of Jacob," the "Sceptre that was to rise out of Israel?" Was the promise of the prophet Isaiah about to be fulfilled? "For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His Glory shall be seen upon thee." So ran the ancient prophecy.

Again Esther tried to draw her mother's attention but she did not heed. With a last look at the rapidly descending Star, Esther turned and with flying feet ran down the narrow path that led to the stream, up the long hill and across a plateau to where her father still stood. The ascent of the opposite hill was not steep but the way was rough. Brambles caught her rough spun frock. Boulders and loose stones impeded her progress. She reached the top breathless and nearly exhausted. Meantime the Star had dropped lower and lower, its brilliance increased and seemingly focussed on the hill top, a hundred [illegible] across the shallow [illegible] shepherds, in fear and trembling, were lying on their faces, hands close-pressed over their eyes.

Esther no longer dared lift her eyes to the Star. In spite of the longing to reach her father, she felt she must stay there and wait the impending Event. Kneeling, hands folded across her breast, head bowed and eyes closed, she waited for she knew not what.

The Star stopped its descent, remained stationary and then, from the midst of it, there stepped forth an Angel form. For an instant Esther dared to lift her eyes to his face. She saw the form of a man with a countenance of wonderful calm, radiating such peace and good will that she was no longer fearful.

Without touching the earth, the Angel appeared to come to rest a little above and in front of the shepherds. Wings of snowy lustre half enfolded him. The poise was one of perfect grace but withal dominating, the attitude that of a Messenger. As she looked, Esther felt that the Heavenly Messenger was about to speak. In the hush and silence that hung over the night it seemed as if the world were holding its breath waiting some great revelation.

Across the intervening space the words came clearly to Esther. The sound of the Angel's voice was the music of bells, the concentrated sweetness of all the worlds, of all time, drawn out and tuned down to perfect cadence. It filled her with ecstasy. So intense were her feelings that she could not move. She scarcely breathed.

The first words were reassuring and they burned themselves into her memory:

"Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The angel ceased speaking. His message was delivered. Yet he lingered for a moment. Then lifting his eyes above he gazed upward as if to seek approval of the Infinite Power authorizing his message. Slowly the ouspread wings unfolded, the Star seemed to open to receive him and instantly the earth became filled with the sound of music, voices in glad unison, uplifted in a chorus of song. Although they seemed to come from a distance the words were clear and distinct. Again and again the mighty chant rose and fell, the last sound dying away, only to rise again, a throbbing wave of melody: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Esther felt faint and dizzy with emotion and with the vivid consciousness of being alive. As she lifted her eyes in wonder to gaze at the Heavenly Host surrounding the Messenger, they were gradually withdrawn from the earth. She cought the glint of many wings, the flash of rainbow hues. Out of the night was borne to her senses a perfume not of earth. It left her reeling with the longing to join that immortal cloud of transcendental beings.

Slowly the vision faded and with it the rose colored light. For a long time an afterglow lingered and the music of the hosannas floated down to the listening ears after the last faint vision of the angel forms had vanished into the night. Esther strained her ears to catch the last refrain drifting down from measureless heights. Fainter and fainter came the words: "Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

When she could not longer hear a sound she turned toward the shepherds and with a cry sprang to her feet. Even as she called, they were passing down the hill to the town of Bethlehem. She hurried forward to overtake them but when she had crossed the narrow interval to the spot where they had stood a moment before, there came to her the consciousness that the message had been to them; not to her. It had been vouchsafed her to witness it, to hear the voice of the Messenger and the song of the angel hosts but she had not been called to worship at the mangerside of the new born King. Instead, to her had fallen the duty of watching over the unguarded flocks.

At her feet lay a shepherd's crook and a sheepskin mantle in which a shepherd had been wrapped when the Heavenly visitor appeared. A star, brilliant and beautiful, hung low over Bethlehem. Esther looked at it with longing but her thoughts turned to the flocks around her and to the little lambs, many of them but a few days old, which, unguarded, might easily fall victims to wolves or bears. So with deep joy in her heart, but with many a tremor at the terrors of the night, Esther wrapped the sheepskin about her shoulders and began her lonely vigil.

Calling the dogs to her side, she slowly made her way around the flock, searching the shadows for some prowler of the night or for a lamb strayed or helpless in pit or bramble.

The hours dragged slowly. In spite of the heavy sheepskin, Esther was chilled by the wintry air. Night birds flew by and gave weird calls at sight of the huddled sheep. Earth dwellers at times scuttled by close at hand or betrayed their presence in the crackling brush. Once a bush, swaying in the breeze, brought her heart to a standstill with the thought that it was some ill-omened creature of the night.

Three times Esther made the complete round of the flock, stopping to rest after each round in the shelter of the boulder that was partial protection from the chill night wind. The dogs huddled close and kept her warm. She watched the stars as they dropped to the horizon and disappeared beyond the western hills. The noises of the night pressed in upon her and she was acutely conscious of the uneasy movement of the sheep from time to time.

It was after four o'clock, just before the first signs of dawn. Esther was again making the round of the flock. She was weary. Sleep dragged at her eyelids and more than once she stumbled over the rough, uneven places.

At the far end from her resting place the sheep seemed more restless than before but the dogs gave no sign of an enemy. A moment later she crossed a low ridge and stood confronting a pair of glaring green eyeballs, not twenty paces away. The suddenness of it deprived her utterly of strength. She could not move. She was conscious only that her heart was beating wildly, almost to suffocation. To scream would have been a relief but Esther could only stand and stare at those hateful green eyes. It was for only an instant. The dogs rushed forward, the eyes disappeared like the shutting off of a light far out at sea and there was a crash and scurry in the underbrush. Presently the dogs returned bristling and with low growlings.

Esther strove to control the wild beating of her heart. She gathered a handful of stones to fling down the swale in the direction in which the wolf had disappeared.

At the far end of the ridge, where the valley narrowed and became more shallow, the sheep had crowded down to escape the wind. Here the rocks were interspersed with boulders and Esther kept a sharp lookout for signs of a hidden enemy. Half way up the sharp incline, there was a sudden surging of the flock toward her. She heard the sharp bleat of a sheep and the pitiful cry of a lamb.

With that cry, all fear was forgotten. Calling to the dogs, that at the moment were ranging on the far flank of the flock, Esther rushed forward. The wolf had crossed the farther ridge, worked back and, chancing the wind, had run in and seized a lamb. The mother had endeavored to defend it. As a consequence she suffered a torn throat but had failed to save her little one. It was bleating pitifully under the huge paw of the wolf. This time, as Esther approached, the green eyes did not disappear. The wolf would not leave his prey.

With all her strength, Esther flung her largest stone. It missed but the wolf flinched to one side, trying to keep his hold on the lamb still struggling in his grip. Esther stopped and hurled her stone straight at those hateful gleaming eyes. It struck the shoulder nearest her. The wolf growled in rage and crouched for a spring at the frail slip of a girl. Esther saw that her sole defence must be the crook. She saw also the bleeding frightened lamb beneath the hungry jaws of the wolf. The sight nerved her arm. She swung the heavy cudgel over her head to meet the shock of the wolf's spring. A stone under her foot turned and she went down, her blow missing its mark. Almost instantly she was on her feet and as the wolf again sprang, she met the

attack with a swinging stroke that happily caught him on the end of his sensitive nose. Dazed and maddened with pain, the wolf made quick recovery. Before Esther could again raise the crook, he had crouched for his spring, but in that instant a rock hurtled through the air, striking him squarely on the head. Others followed and he did not move again. The heavy cudgels of the shepherds beat out his life.

Strong arms gathered Esther in a close embrace and a shepherd brought the lamb that had fallen victim to the wolf and placed it in Esther's arms. It was bruised and bleeding but otherwise uninjured and as she held it close in her arms, comforting it motherwise, the men looked on in simple adoration. The shepherd who had brought the lamb spoke.

"Brethren, we have this night worshipped Him who, though born in a manger, is yet to be the deliverer of Judah. While we worshipped, our Esther of the High Hills has guarded our flocks. Let her be known henceforth as Esther of the Snow-White Lamb, because, forgetful of self, and out of a great love for the weak and helpless, she has saved one of the flock."

Esther grew to be a beautiful woman and one of the leaders of the religion Christ died to preserve. The story of her brave act in childhood became a part of the legendary history of the church. When the Rennaisance artists sought inspiration for their masterpieces from the heroic deeds of the women of that early period, they painted the lovely Esther with the Snow-White Lamb in her arms and little children at her knees.

Christmas in the Farmyard.

There was once a small girl who insisted upon giving every animal about the place a Christmas dinner. Of course she was laughed at a good deal, and assured that the cats and dogs and chickens did not know Christmas from any other day, but she stuck to her point, and the pets were lined up, and fed all sorts of forbidden goodies. How they must have wondered what it all meant! It wasn't very much, and of course the animals promptly forgot it. They acted very much like humans after all. They stuffed disgracefully, then sat around and licked their chops and paws, which was their way of using table-napkins and finger bowls; they played a little in a feeble, stupid sort of way, then they lay down in a quiet corner and went to sleep. But the instinct that prompted the small girl to see that even the animals joined in the fun, grew and blossomed, and bore fruit, so that in after years, it enabled her to do something lasting and worthwhile for the animals that suffer so needlessly from people's carelessness and cruelty.

OUR HOLIDAY WISH TO YOU.

May Peace and Joy with you abide
Throughout a happy Christmastide,
And Health and Wealth and Love unite
To keep your Future always bright.

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS

By Edgar Daniel Kramer

The firelight is glowing on the pine boughs and the holly
In the House of Christmas that my dreamings ever know
And sweet, childish voices, jubilant and jolly,
Hymn the Babe of Bethlehem, born long years ago.

Through the starlit stillness the Christmas bells are ringing
From the highest hilltop to the deepmost glen,
And the House of Christmas joins them in their singing,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem! Peace on earth to men!"

Once again the Wise Men walk in the ways of dreaming,
Till they find the manger where the Christ Child lies
On the breast of Mary, in whose eyes are gleaming
All the lights of glory from beyond the starry skies.

Once again the Shepherds come across the hills and meadows,
Bringing gifts of soft white wool and flax that they have spun,
While the cattle, solemn-eyed, wonder in the shadows
And the Wise Men kiss the feet of Mary and her Son.

The House of Christmas fills my heart and oh, the bells are ringing!
The Christmas candles beckon me and I grow young again
As I hear child voices and all the glad stars singing,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem! Peace and good will to men!"

A Yuletide Legend.

A pilgrim walked with weary tread,
He sought the Flower of Peace, in vain,
Though he found other blooms instead,
Blossoms of worldly wealth and gain.

These blossoms, dazzling to the eyes,
Soon faded, now the earth lay bare
As 'neath the cheerless Eastern skies
This pilgrim searched with zealous care.

Men scoffed at him. "Why labor on
For that which you may never find?
Why strive with evil? Peace is gone,
'Tis easier to be resigned."

But, though this counsel made him grieve,
Undaunted, steadfast on he went,
Till on that first glad Christmas Eve
His heart was filled with deep content.

He knew his weary quest would cease,
For in a humble cattle shed
At last he found the Flower of Peace
Growing beside the Christ Child's bed!

—Leslie M. Oyler.

White Christmas.

When Christmas hangs on high the holly bough,
And Christmas trees bear fruit of varied blisses,
And traps are set with waxen mistletoe
As bait for kisses,
Let me not hear the crying ghosts of rain
Beyond the uncurtained pane.
Let snow fall in the night, as soft as breath,
And clothe familiar things with frosty change,
Till every bush and fence rail wears a wreath
Lovely and strange.
Let frost shut from the window with frail laces
Those fragile, peering faces.
What should I do, remembering tonight
Those footsteps that I knew, now light as air?
Rather I choose to hear the laughing, light
Child feet on the stair.
What should I do, holding the door for thin,
Frail ghosts who come not in?

—Dorothy Stockbridge.

"We Are Ready, Santa."

The minister made a jolly, plump Santa Claus, and the little ones waited before him in breathless, eager suspense. Suddenly one little voice piped up, "Are you coming to our house, Santa?" Immediately there was a chorus, "I've been good, are you coming to my house?" Finally one little girl cried, "We worked hard and cleaned all up for you, Santa. Are you coming to our house to-night?"

The last child had the right idea, and I think there must have been a happy, busy Christmas at her house, with mother and the little helper working together to keep the joyous time. Too many things at Christmas time are done by mothers for children when the ideal way is to do them with the children. In that way there are never any fussy, restless, bothersome children, but a willing, interested, unselfish group of youngsters having the real spirit of the day.

"Where's the pretty things?" wailed a five-year-old laughter as she surveyed the dining table on a holiday.

"I haven't had time to get the usual decorations," replied the hurrying mother. Then noticing the disappointment on the child's face, she suggested, "You know where I keep them in the attic; why don't you get them and arrange them for me?"

The little girl trotted off happily and much to her mother's secret surprise, did get the simple napkins and crepe paper runners and flags, and placed them very daintily on the table. The proud delight of the child was a revelation to the mother, and after that she always said a few days before a holiday, "Well, daughter, we must soon be getting ready to make a nice holiday and have everything clean and pretty." Then would follow plans for a few simple ways the child could help.

The best Christmas of all to the children would be the one when they helped make table decorations, chains and paper flowers for the tree, helped pack the box of food or clothing and gifts for the unfortunate ones, and "worked hard and cleaned all up" for Santa Claus.—Lydia Lion Roberts.

The Children's Festival.

On Christmas night, the Angels say,
A babe was born far, far away;
A Little Child so fair to see,
He lay upon His Mother's knee.

From fields afar then shepherds came,
And wondered at His Glorious Name.
A King they sought and found a Child,
A Babe so pitiful and mild.

There at His feet they knelt and laid
Their offerings down and humbly prayed.
Oh, 'twas a blessed sight to see
Their Lord in such simplicity.

And ever since we know it well,
Christmas the children's Festival.
The night when Christ came down to reign
To conquer death, and sin, and pain.

Do not give children too much at Christmas. There is nothing more nauseating than a blase, surfeited youngster. Encourage the children to think more about giving pleasure to those who have very little, and less about their own things. Teach them to divide up.

Young Folks' Community Christmas Tree.

We had one last year, and here is how we did it: About half a dozen of the young folks got together and decided to have this tree. We knew it would require some money, so a committee visited every man and woman in the community and fully explained the project, and as a result quite a substantial sum was raised. One man donated the tree, a big evergreen, and we had it dug up by an expert and planted in a central position. This tree will be used again this year, as it kept right on growing.

We were fortunate to be near electric light wires, so for a very nominal sum had the electric light company string a wire to our tree. Practically all the work was done by the young folks. We wired the tree, then bought various sizes of red, white and blue electric light globes; also metal stars and some red balls. We also bought peanuts, oranges, lolly-pops and small boxes of candy.

We invited every member of the community to be at the tree at eight o'clock sharp, Christmas eve. Everybody was there. The lights were turned on and we distributed printed copies of Christmas carols. We had a good sing for about twenty minutes, then sleigh bells were heard and, to the great delight of the youngsters, mingled with a little fear, Santa Claus, with a big pack, was seen coming down the road. The lights from dozens of parked automobiles were thrown on him and excitement ran high. Santa came to the group, shook hands with all, patted the children and gave each child a bag containing peanuts, candy, orange and a lolly-pop. That ended the entertainment and all went home feeling happy. The same program will be repeated this year.

A Fine Old Custom.

The Christmas season is upon us and our minds naturally revert to such old-time customs as "Christmas Caroling." But the point is—do we made enough of this fine old observance? After all, it is a beautiful thing, this Christmas caroling—isn't it? The writer remembers having been in old London (England) one Christmas eve a few years ago. Shortly after darkness had fallen on the city, the "waits" began to appear on the streets, and in a short time delightful, fragrant, inspiring carols were being wafted upwards on the evening breeze. The spirit of Christmas was there. The singing sent thrills up and down one's spine. One could hardly help but think of Old Scrooge in Dickens' "Christmas Carol," so much like Christmas was the whole atmosphere.

Organizations on this side of the Atlantic are at work trying to create more general interest in caroling. The Salvation Army must not be forgotten in this connection. This body has been pioneering in this direction, and results have been most encouraging, it is said.

People will not, however, get the right slant on caroling until the custom is more widely taken up by music lovers. Are church choirs and choral organizations of every kind doing their share in this direction?

FOR THE DINNER TABLE.

We have planned a novel feature for our Christmas dinner table in the line of illuminations. A number of tiny plant pots have been given a coat of white enamel, and pasteboard glued inside so they are in no danger of letting anything through the hole intended for drainage. In these we have planted red and yellow candles—one candle in each—using sand for the purpose and covering the surface with artificial snow. The candles are held firmly and dripping wax soils only the snow.

A sprig of holly is fastened to each pot with a fine rubber band or two. There will be enough of the pots so each child guest will have one as a souvenir. For a smaller dinner of adults one might put place cards in the holly sprays.—M. S.

Gifts.

Many people think that because they are not able to give Christmas gifts, because they can not give money or what it buys, they can give nothing. How little we realize that the best thing anybody can ever give in this world is not money or expensive presents, but himself.

A poor woman who has no money for Christmas presents, writes the most beautiful, encouraging, cheer-up letters to many poor and unfortunate people, especially the sick in the hospitals and other shut-ins. She fills them with the spirit of Christmas, and that is what counts. If that doesn't go with the money you give, or the gift you send, you are not giving anything worth while.

I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time—a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself.—Charles Dickens.

The most beautiful thing in the world, the most gracious gift, that which every human being craves most, is love and the more of love we give out, the more we have, the richer we are. Love maintains perpetual summer in the soul and shuts out winter's chill. Love of man is love of God, and love of God prolongs life.