

12-1944

The University of Dayton Exponent, December 1944

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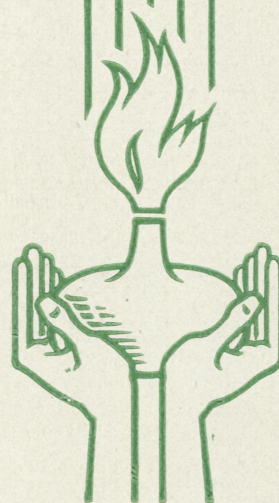
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EXPONENT



December, 1944

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Published Monthly from October to May, both inclusive, in the interest of the students of
The University of Dayton

Entered May 14, 1903, at Dayton, Ohio, as second-class matter under act of Congress, March 3, 1897. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized December 17, 1920.

Subscriptions	Two Dollars, Yearly in Advance
Single Copies	Twenty-five Cents

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO



THE EXPONENT, UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON



THE DIVINE LIGHT

*Footsteps all must homeward turn,
And, weary, follow sure the light
That always has and will always burn
From a still, brown manger on a lonely night.*

—ANNE MATSON

THE University of Dayton Exponent

VOL. XLII

DECEMBER, 1944

No. 7

FOOTPRINTS

On the sand of an island in the Pacific

THIS is just about the toughest thing I ever had to do. I'm not much good at putting things down on paper, but I think maybe Eddie would want me to.

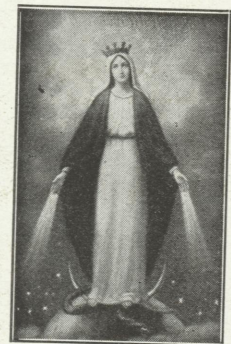
Perhaps I'd better tell you something about Eddie first, so you'll understand better. We got to be pretty good friends on the troop ship coming over here, and I guess I know more about Eddie than anyone else. You see, Eddie was one of those kids who never had a chance. You know the story - - probably heard it a million times or more. I know how it is because I came up the hard way myself; I just got the breaks and Eddie didn't. Well, anyway, he was the typical tough guy, hard as nails - - on the outside. On the inside he was empty and lonely, I could tell. I had another reason for taking such an interest in him. You see, I've got a kid back home, and if I thought he'd ever grow up to be like Eddie - - well, I don't know what I'd do.

Eddie didn't have any religion. One day the Chaplain in our outfit asked him about that and Eddie said he'd think about that when it came time for him to die, but he wasn't figuring on getting killed right away. That made me feel pretty bad, but I knew talking to him about it would only make him mad, so I just let it go.

Well, what I wanted to tell you about happened on Christmas Eve. Funny it should happen that way, but it did. We had made an unsuccessful attack that day, and lots of guys didn't come back - - Eddie was one of them. We were all sitting around feeling pretty blue and not talking much, that being Christmas Eve and all.

There we were, in a jungle on an island somewhere in the Pacific. A fine place to be on Christmas Eve! It had been raining that day, and it was hot and damp.

● By MARY COTTERMAN



I guess we were all thinking about pretty much the same thing: what was happening at home. Probably there'd be snow and people would be going to midnight mass. There'd be lots of parties and people would be laughing and having a good time. They would be decorating Christmas trees and tip-toeing in to make sure the kids were asleep. Yes, we were all feeling pretty bad, and I was feeling even worse, on account of Eddie's not coming back.

Like I said, we all were sitting there feeling lower than a snake's stomach, when someone heard a noise. We all listened and sure enough we heard a rustling just outside the clearing. We thought probably it was a Jap sniper so a couple of the guys crawled up to take a look. Pretty soon they came back carrying someone between them, - - it was Eddie. We took him into the hospital tent, but right away we could see it was no use. The Captain gave him stuff to ease the pain, but he told us that Eddie wouldn't last any longer than till morning, at the most.

Some of us who knew Eddie better than the rest decided to stick around and see if we could do anything for him, like writing a letter. It was the least we could do.

Eddie wasn't a dumb kid and he knew he was done for. He wasn't delirious either. A little later, when he got strength enough to talk, he said there was something he wanted to tell us.

I've heard lots of things in my time, but, honest, I never heard anything half as strange as what the dying kid told us that Christmas Eve. The other guys just put it down to the fact that he was delirious and didn't know what he was talking about. But I believed him - - I knew him better than they did. I'll try to tell you what Eddie said in his own words, as near as I can remember.

"Look, you guys. I don't guess you'll believe me. Can't blame you much, because it does sound crazy, but it's true just the same. All I know is I gotta tell you before I turn in my chips.

"It was about noon, I guess, when I got mine. Right away I knew this was it. The pain was something awful but I managed to drag myself a little ways. Finally, I had to stop, I didn't have the strength to go on. So I just laid there, and the pain kept gettin' worse and worse. I kept hopin' a Jap would find me and finish me off - - but no such luck. Funny, ain't it? When you want 'em they're never around!"

He managed a weak grin. I gave him a swallow of water and in a minute he went on.

"Well, then I thought I'd shoot myself, but I remembered I left my gun back where I fell, and I couldn't get up the strength to crawl back there. So . . . there was nothin' to do but lay there and wait for the end. Layin' there, I got to thinkin' about lots of things . . . about what the Chaplain said to me, and things like that. I got to thinkin' maybe I wasn't such a smart guy after all. I don't know how long it was I laid there rememberin' all kinds of things I thought I'd forgotten. Don't get me wrong, you guys. I wasn't delirious; in fact, things never seemed so clear before. Anyhow, I guess I must've passed out, because next thing I knew it was pitch black.

"Here comes the part you're not goin' to believe, but it's true, every word, I swear it. I told you it was dark, but I noticed a faint glow, so I turned my head to see where it was comin' from. *Honest to goodness*, there was a patch of fuzzy golden light and in the middle of it was standing the Holy Mother Mary! I thought I was goin nuts or maybe I was already dead. But I could still feel the pain, and I closed my eyes and opened 'em again - - and she was still there! She smiled at me, - the most beautiful smile I ever saw! Then she spoke, - the sweetest, softest voice there ever was.

"She said that in memory of her Son who was born this night so long ago, She would walk with me back to my friends. And She did - and I - I walked! When we came to the edge of the clearing She put her hand on my head and smiled again, and then She was gone. That was when you guys heard me. Please believe me, it's true, it's true!"

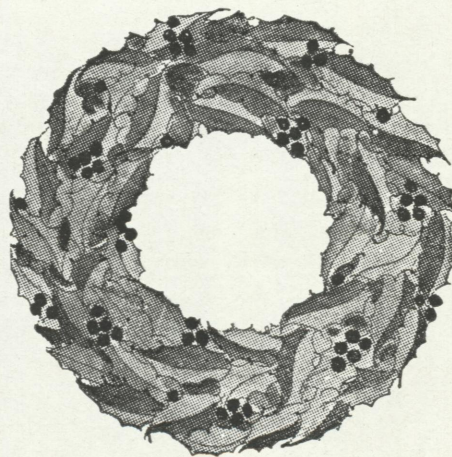
Eddie almost screamed those last words, but they were the last words he ever said. He went into a coma, and died just as dawn was beginning to break. But just before he died - - I was alone with him - - he opened his eyes and stared past me. He could see something, I could tell by the way he looked but I didn't turn around. I couldn't. Maybe I was afraid. I don't know what he saw, but I have a pretty good idea.

We were talking about it later that morning, and the guys were saying how Eddie couldn't possibly have walked to camp in his condition - - even the captain said so. They said that maybe a native had come along and helped him and that in Eddie's condition there was no telling what you might make out of that.

After a while, I sneaked out of the clearing and looked around. I saw fresh foot-prints leading up to the edge of the clearing. It hadn't rained 'till we were all back - - and these prints were made after the rain. There was no second pair of foot-prints.

When I went back I didn't say anything - - they would have said I was delirious, too.

★ ★ ★





FOR WHOM CHRISTMAS BELLS RING



● By C. KING BRADOW

With varying results

IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE. The snow is falling silently, softly, beautifully. Everything lies under a beautifying layer of clean, white snow. In a large, nearby city, the festive spirit seems to be in the air. The streets are almost deserted. Now and then a man walks briskly down the street, his coat collar turned against the soft, persuasive snow, and under his arm last minute Christmas purchases. The only cars to be seen conveyed laughing and happy people to various parties and entertainments. In this stream of festive faces, though, there moves one who seems to be out of place and time. A little man, old and stooped, detaches himself from the other hurrying pedestrians and enters a large downtown church. As he passes beneath the entrance light his patched coat and tattered muffler become apparent and he continually blows on his hands for he has no gloves.

As this little old man climbs the stairs to the bell tower, we see that, although his clothes seem incongruous with the season, his spirit is truly that of the Yuletide. As he ascends the steps with a slow and halting tread, his face seems to light and glow with radiance. At last, he reaches the belfry platform. Hanging above him in the gloom, he can see the outline of the great church bells, ready to send out their golden tones. Slowly he loosens the bell ropes, and then the bells ring out the story of the Christ Child and the Christmas message to the festive city below.

* * *

In a small, neat cottage not far from the church, a mother bends over her tiny daughter. The little girl's eyes are shining, glistening with anticipation of the surprises which will greet her on the morrow. As the mother stoops to tuck in the covers, she whispers, "Now say your prayers for Mother."

"All right, mummy. Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. God bless mummy and daddy, please. Amen."

These words, "... and daddy" bring a pang of sorrow to this young mother. She knows that he will need God's protection and care, since he is in the front lines in Germany. In an effort to be near him, she sits down and takes from her pocket his last letter.

"Darling, I am writing this from a foxhole here in a German city. I can't tell you where, but the fighting is terrible. I am thinking of you as I write this letter, thinking how you would have loved this city before the war. We are fighting near an old cathedral. They say that the bells in the tower are beautiful. By the time you get this, it will probably be Christmas. Merry Christmas, darling. With love as always, Bill."

As she finishes the letter, the sound of bells comes into the little room. They are the great bells, proclaiming the Christmas message. In her imagination, she travels across the broad Atlantic to a city in Germany and stands beside a ruined cathedral listening to the beautiful tones of great bells with Bill beside her.

* * *

High in a penthouse atop one of the city's tallest buildings, a wild party is in progress. Wine and champagne flow like water. The falling of the quiet, God-made snow outside is matched by the falling of the noisy, boisterous, man-made snow-like confetti. Suddenly, however, all noise, confusion, and laughter stops. The clear, deep notes of the bells enter the lavish room. For a moment, all is quiet.

In that moment, the mind of one young man there present races back through time. He sees himself as a small boy, helping his father decorate the Christmas tree. He remembers the pure enjoyment he derived from going on caroling trips with others of his own age. Subconsciously, he contrasts the two kinds of parties, and instantly rejects the conclusion, because it is not the one he wants.

As he is thus lost in his thoughts, the silence is broken.

"Well, Merry Christmas. Let's all have a drink to it." When he is a bit slow in responding, he hears the taunt, "What's the matter? Are you getting soft?" So he has another drink.

* * *

Across a large building downtown is a sign bearing the words, "Times-Herald." Inside, in a little office, a man wearily turns off his dreary lamp. The final edition has at last "gone to bed." His work is finished for the day, and he has a holiday. As he pauses to light a cigarette, he thinks about his days as a "cub" reporter on this very same newspaper. It

was then that he formulated his code of ethics; never give quarter, never allow anything to stand in your way, and get what you can, when you can. He has operated under that code ever since.

It was unfortunate that he had to double-cross his best pal to get that big story that set him up, but it couldn't be helped. He was really sorry that he had to ruin that man's life to get his job, but after all, such was life. Yes, in his own words, he had "played the game hard".

Now he throws away the match and steps from the doorway. As the blast of the wind hits him, he turns up his collar. In his pocket is his paycheck plus his Christmas bonus. As he steps into the street, he hears the beautiful pealing of the bells. When the tones reach his ears, he mutters to himself, "Damn foolishness," and heads for the nearest bar.

* * *

A man is just leaving the bus depot. He wears a khaki overcoat and we know that he is a soldier. Across his breast are ribbons which show that he has been overseas and that he is no coward, for he has received several medals and citations. He has just disembarked from the boat which is returning him to his loved ones for a furlough.

As he is walking down the street, he reflects upon the blessings which are his. He is thankful to be alive, well, and not a prisoner. He is thankful that his loved ones do not suffer from lack of food or clothing. But most of all, he is thankful that he is a Christian and that Christ came to earth to redeem him.

As he passes the church with these thoughts in his mind, he hears the joyous ringing of the bells. They seem to strike a responsive note in his own heart, and he feels drawn to the church. As he enters the quiet interior, he, almost unconsciously, reaches into his pocket and draws forth an envelope. In the envelope is some of his back pay. This envelope he quietly and solemnly carries to the foot of the altar. As he places this gift there, he silently offers a prayer of thanksgiving and joy. Then he rises and leaves the church.

As he leaves, his steps quicken. He hastens through the half-empty streets until at last he comes to a small, white bungalow. There he goes directly to the door and gives the door a hard knock. As the door is opened, a somewhat elderly woman looks to see who is calling. Instantly, she recognizes the soldier standing on the threshold, and mother and son are locked in each other's embrace in the yellow light from the doorway.

In a tiny, poorly furnished room in the cheaper section of town, a man sits at a table in the glare of a single electric light. He is in his patched and ragged shirt sleeves, even though the room is rather chilly. He has not eaten for several days, on his face is the beard of almost a week.

On the table before him is a blank sheet of music paper. This man is a song writer, a composer. Tonight, he feels, will be his last chance to compose a great song. He realizes that he cannot continue any longer as he is, but must do something else. Tonight, though, he is making one last attempt to produce a great work.

As he sits with his pencil in his hand, he hears the bells ringing. They bring the song of Christmas to his ears, and in his mind he can hear the magnificent hymn of the angel chorus. As if in a trance, his fingers move, recording this great hymn. And thus, an immortal song is born.

* * *

In the belfry, as the little, old man pulls on the bell ropes, the years seem to slip from his shoulders and his mind goes back to his boyhood in Bavaria. He sees his long dead father and mother around the Christmas tree and at the crib of the Christ Child. He sees his father at work in his bell-casting shop, ready to cast these very bells which are ringing out so joyously. He sees himself offering his only gold piece to be melted in the bell to give it a golden tone. He sees himself coming to America, the land of opportunity, aboard the crowded immigrant ship. He sees himself journeying across the country, always to be with his beloved bells.

Finally, the years close in again, and he is brought back to the present, listening to the bells send out the joyful message.

Suddenly there is silence. Then, in the dimly lit belfry, the light seems to grow brighter. As it increases in brilliance, far greater, clearer bells are heard. Their tones seem to fill the room. Then, above the bells, are heard the voices of the angel hosts raising their voices singing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace to men of good will." Then, as the voices reach a heavenly crescendo and the heavenly bells ring more joyously and triumphantly than ever, the soul of the old man rises, and joins in giving praise, glory, and adoration to the new-born Christ Child for whom Christmas bells ring.



CHRISTMAS LEAVE

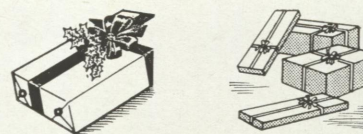
The doctor is grieved at our waste.

• By ALVERTA STALTER

THE ORCHESTRA swung into the catchy strain, "I Walk Alone"; the lights were lowered and a spotlight played glittery sparkles on a row of tinsel Christmas trees. A few couples were dancing, the crowd was just arriving. "Golly it's good to see you again, Doc. — I guess I should say Colonel. You are a Lieutenant Colonel now?" J. B. Hartford asked. "That's what they call me, I guess," Tom replied without much enthusiasm. The colored waiter floated around in his white coat "Yes-sir"ing the nearby tables. Tom couldn't relax. Less than a week ago he had been across the water trying to patch the pitiful bodies of his comrades. Didn't these happy-go-lucky, fine-feathered people realize there was a war going on in this world? They used to be his closest friends but somehow now he seemed to be a misfit.

"Have a cigarette," offered Jim Wilson, rather tightly grasping the pack as though he was afraid Tom would take two. "I happened to be lucky today, I found a place where they had this 'off brand' and bought all they would sell me." "You know," his wife cut in, "I've had just one a day all week. I think they should do something about giving us more cigarettes." Tom tried to keep a look of contempt from crossing his features as he heard them grieve about their trivials for the ink had scarcely dried on the imprint in his mind of the row of hospital cots with boys, writhing in mental and physical agony, biting holes through their lips to keep from complaining. Then he remembered a certain cot; Henry Jones, yes, that was his name, was giving the supreme sacrifice. Tom knelt by his bed trying to make out what he was saying, "If," his lips were so swollen, "if I could just kiss Mom 'good night' once more." He died in Tom's arms.

"Would a Colonel come out of a trance and dance with a lady bold enough to ask him?" Mary Jane smiled across the white table cloth. Tom followed her to the sparkling, tree-surrounded floor. When they returned the fellows said, "Just in time to see us mix the new drink we concocted since you left." They poured in a jigger of this, a few drops from that bottle and some fizzes from the soda siphon; then reached for a fresh egg and broke it into the glass. "Now the idea is getting the egg to slip down without letting anyone know about it." Tom had to hold himself back to keep from knocking the glass, drink and all into the corner. Just before he left over there the boys



found a nest of eggs. They fried them, allowing one-half egg to each person; every tiny morsel was chewed and held in the mouth until the flavor was gone. It was their first in months and here they threw them away in drinks. It wasn't right!

"If you will excuse me, I think I will go now," Tom started to rise. "You can't go yet," they chorused, "you haven't eaten." "I have the jitters," Tom explained "you know, nerves. That is why they sent me home on this Christmas leave. The only thing that helps me is to walk and walk some more. If I feel better later on I might come back."

Out doors Tom pulled the collar of his overcoat up to protect his ears. The wind whipped his face until he knew it was red. Winter had arrived five days before the calendar marked its arrival. Tom hurried along when he noticed an old lady struggling with her bundles. When she replaced this package another would fall. "May I carry some of your things?" Tom asked. "Yes, thank you," she seemed pleased, and continued, "I should know better than to buy so much at one time but I have been indisposed for the past two weeks and I must get these overseas' boxes in the mail. I have just a block to walk yet." You are rather late in mailing your overseas' gifts aren't you?" Tom inquired. "Oh, I mailed my son's presents in October but in his last letter, Sonny asked me to pack a carton or two for his buddy who never received anything from home. He's always thinking of somebody else." They turned in the walk and up the steps. "You must come in," she said. "Oh, no thank you," Tom declined. "I insist that you get warm before you start back to town." She held Tom's arm. He laughed and followed her into the old fashioned warmth of her home. "You stand by the register while I open the draft in the furnace." She dumped her packages on the round dining room table and went on to the kitchen. Tom heard pans rattling and cupboard doors opening and closing. He walked around the room and stopped at the picture of Sonny. He was a handsome lad and in his heart, Tom wished that his features would never be disturbed by war's horrible methods.

Finally she emerged with a tray of hot chocolate, fruit cake and some delicious looking, man-sized ham sandwiches. "I must confess I haven't eaten this eve-

(Continued on Page 24)

"WHIST BOY"

● By CHARLES MULCRONE

Christmas in Erin.

WHIST BOY, let's you and me be after putting a light to our Christmas candle. In every house of Erin tonight a candle 'twill burn. 'Tis been done for centuries past, and 'twill continue as long as Irish hearts will beat with Christmas love the whole world over.

"Here boy, you strike the match, an' don't drop it neither. Many's the match I struck to light the Christmas candle year after year. But I'll never forget when first I married your grandmother (Lord rest her soul) that I almost forgot about our Christmas candle. And when I came from the village that Christmas Eve afternoon, the first thing she looked for was our candle. Saints! When there was none to be found, the calm left her face and she was speechless. Your grandmother, boy! (Lord rest her soul). So I didn't heave a sigh, myself, but quick as a banshee ran helter-skelter into the village to get ourselves a Christmas candle. And just as a wee bit of a pacifier I bought a fine red ribbon to put around the candle. 'Tis the same ribbon that's on that candle now.

"Have a sweet, boy. 'Twill cheer you the more on this Eve of Christmas. I'll be having a few puffs on my nice new clay pipe and let's both be after resting by the fire 'till the time comes to be on our way to Church. I'll take this chair, as I can keep my eye on the big clock. 'Twould never do to be coming into church late on Christmas morn.

"Many's the story they tell about the Christmas candle. Ah, boy, they're just stories an' I don't believe a one, but they've been told year after year and 'tis good if you know them to tell your own children.

"Now take the widow Toolin's boy, John Thomas. When he was a wee lad, his uncle took him off to England and divil a Christmas candle did he ever see there. He became a real 'narrowback' if ever there was one with his living there. And when once he came home for the Christmas holiday, his mother had to teach him again about the candle in her window.

"Here boy, will you see if the latch is on the door. 'Tis just an old custom to keep the door unlatched on this night, but almost as sacred as burning the candle in the window.



"Now what if a neighbor friend should die this night. Well, sir, the door is unlatched and he can come in to say good-bye on his way to Heaven. And then the candle in our window, sure it lights his way up to Heaven. Sure and everyone who dies this night will surely go to Heaven. . . . I think I see a wee bit of a grin there boy, 'Tis well for I grinned too when first I heard it.

"And they say that the banshees scream with fright on this night, for there are so many Christmas candles to light up the way of a soul going to Heaven. 'Tis just a saying, an' I don't believe it, now, but 'twon't hurt to let you know.

"But there's one story I do believe in boy, and that's the story of how Our Lord was born. Sure His father, St. Joseph and His Mother Mary were going from house to house, and from one inn to the next and not a one to be found and not a man in all Bethlehem town to give room to that Holy Pair, and Her with Child. Sure they wanted but a decent place to spend the night. Now maybe 'twas not an inch to spare in the whole town. But I'm thinking if they could have warmed someone's palm with a few pence or whatever kind of money they have there, there'd be many a door opened to them, and many a welcome.

"Well, boy, you see why we light our candle and put it in the window. We want the whole world to know that Our Lady and Her Child and their Protector, St. Joseph, sure and anybody that's exposed to the chill of this winter night is welcome to our home. Now mind they're welcome anytime but on Christmas Eve, it's a thousand welcomes.

"And boy you must never forget to light the Christmas candle and put it in the window. Just think of the poor couple roaming Bethlehem's streets and the many doors that were closed on them and let your fine Irish heart be softened that you may welcome anyone to your home on Christmas Eve.

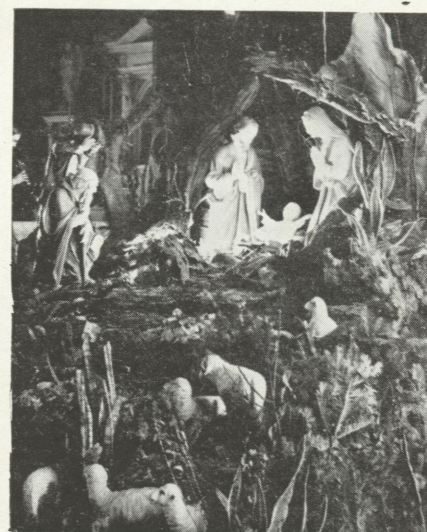
"They used to tell us never to put out the candle. 'Tis just another story an' I don't believe it, but they say that only she whose name is Mary may snuff the candles, the Church candles that is, on Christmas day.

"Whist boy, you're dozing off to sleep you are. Come, let's us be after getting to church now. For 'twould never do to be coming into church late on Christmas morn."

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

● By JOSEPHINE DI GIORGIO

With our fighting boys in France.



AT A SECLUDED CAMP near the French border, a group of the medical division were awaiting to receive their last mail before Christmas Day. Sgt. Danowski, the tall, stalky-built mail-clerk, called the names as he distributed the letters and packages

"Pvt. Daniel Dearden".

"Sgt. Dick Anderson".

"Cpl. Tony Loretto".

And so on, down the line, until the mail bag was empty!

Snap! Bang! Zing! A-a-a-h! The dayroom was filled with the crescendo of one hundred boyish voices! Each found exactly what his heart had desired! But, Cpl. Loretto, a handsome little Italian boy, nonchalantly laid his package on the floor, perked himself in the corner, and grinned as he watched his comrades.

"Well, Tony, old Boy!", they shouted, "Waht is-a da matter? No canna open, eh?"

"No", replied Tony, "I want to keep my package for a surprise.

"O. K?"

For a moment, the lads were stunned — reluctant to agree. But, as they looked at one another, they finally gave in to Tony's wish for they knew he was a congenial chap who probably had an intrinsic reason for this request.

"But", they retorted, "only for one day and, then —." Becoming absorbed in the contents of their packages, the boys soon forgot about Tony's mysterious one.

It was seven o'clock, Christmas Eve, and even at this time, not a sound was audible — the boys had gone to town that day. So, Tony tossed his package under his arm, tiptoed to the dayroom for fear someone might be around, and locked the door behind him. Quickly, he untied the cord that bound the package. — swish!, and in one pull, he removed the wrappings. Yes, this was it! — the entire Christmas Crib! Exquisite, no? He took out a tiny stable, statues of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph — and my, how sweet the Infant Jesus looked! — angels, the shepherds and their flock, the Three Wise Men . . . even Christmas trees!

"My", thought Tony, "Mom really did fulfill my wish — dear Mom!" (You see Tony had written home, asking for a miniature crib for their dayroom — to brighten the atmosphere of their secluded spot.)

With his deft and nimble fingers, Tony began to assemble the Crib.

"This is just the spot," he chuckled, as he chose the corner nearest the main entrance.

It was only eight thirty, and Tony could hear the sound of feet approaching. His heart missed a beat. Sure, enough! "Knock, knock, knock!" Someone was at the door.

Tony ran to the door, and turning the knob, he stared into his Commanding Officer's stern face.

"What do you mean by locking this door, Corporal?", demanded the C. O. "Do you not know that it is against the rule?"

"We-l-l-l, Sir", muttered Tony, "it's like this!", and he pointed to the corner.

Colonel Jones stood speechless. Then, patting Tony's shoulders, he remarked, "Tony, you are a

CHRISTMAS IN PUERTO RICO

• By PEDRO PEDRAJA

Somewhat different from ours

ALREADY it is getting chilly during the night in Puerto Rico. Now, most of the boys start rolling down their shirtsleeves and getting out their hardly used sweaters. Oranges are brought from the country to the market-place; stores are preparing their display of toys. Boys in the street speak of Christmas - - how much fun they had last year, what they are going to do this time. Little boys are planning most seriously what they are to ask the Three Kings, their beloved Reyes Magos. Big boys, *jovenes y señoritas*, look ahead to the traditional *Misas de Aguinaldo*, and to the *parrandas* that follow them. The radio-stations help along to form the spirit by broadcasting the *villancicos* and *aguinaldos* and all the other types of Spanish Christmas carols. In short, the entire Puerto Rican atmosphere seems to be filled with the joyous cry: "Se acercan las Navidades!" Christmas is coming!

During three years of war, Puerto Rican Christmas has been denied one of the main forms of celebration - - at least that's what the boys say. Imagine, they are prohibited to contribute to the feasts with their firecrackers. Now the Holydays are relatively silent. Specially, boys cannot see how the New Year can be welcome while such a contrasting peace and stillness reigns in the cities. Anyway, now is the time for searching good shoe-boxes to put the grass for the Three Kings' camels. As you know, instead of placing socks for Santa Claus, Puerto Rican children place grass for the camels of the Magi. You'll see how much activity there'll be the fifth of January: boys running all around pulling grass for their boxes. Before going to sleep that day, they will carefully place the grass below their beds next to their shoes. On top of the grass, so that the Kings cannot miss it, there will be the so much planned and discussed request letter.

Early on the morning of the Epiphany, one can hear the sound of the toy-trumpets, the shouts of joy and surprise; one can actually feel the happiness of all the children on their day.

Soon, a series of five o'clock Masses will start in preparation for the Christmas Mass. Popularly, Christmas Mass is called *Misa de Gallo* and those that precede it *Misas de Madruga*. You should see the cathedral during these Masses. Since the doors are kept closed until the ceremonies begin, the

thousands of faithful walk gayly along the plaza. A few minutes before five, they start gathering in front of the doors, each one trying to make sure he gets a place. And as soon as the doors are open . . . what a rush! In no time, pews, aisles, choir loft - - everything is filled with people. It seems that the whole town has all of a sudden become fervent. Never again do you see such eagerness to enter a church.

Now the Mass starts. The choir sings beautiful carols with the accompaniment of the huge organ, of the castanets, and the purely Puerto Rican *guiros* and *maracas*. As soon as the Holy Sacrifice is over, the young folks gather in groups, *parrandas* as they call them, and go around the town singing *aguinaldos* until the sun rises.

On Christmas Eve, each home has its official Christmas dinner, or rather Christmas supper - - *la Cena de Nochebuena*. At each table, no matter how poor the family, there is the savory *lechón asao* (Puerto Rican pork) *morcillas*, *pasteles* . . . Everybody is happy this night. Even the indigent forget their misery and join in the celebrations of the birth of Jesus.

On New Year's Eve the members of each family try to assemble so as to be together at the welcoming of the New Year. As soon as the clock strikes twelve - - what a moment of tears and emotion! Parents bless each of their children, begging God, Mary and all the angels, to protect them in a special manner during the newly arrived year. Then come the greetings to all the neighbors. There is real love and union among everybody during these holidays.

Celebrations then continue until the Epiphany, when the boys get their share from the Three Kings. As I mentioned before, Christmas in Puerto Rico is a time happy for all, including the large number of the poor class. Although these latter may not be able to celebrate much materially, they do so in an exemplary way by celebrating spiritually which in fact is the main way of celebrating Christmas. It you pause a moment and say a Hail Mary for them, you'll be helping them to enjoy a real *Feliz Navidad*.



CHRISTMAS VIGIL



I light the taper slowly
 And place it on the sill,
 Praying, hoping, dreaming,
 As every mother will.
 The old tradition tells me
 That the candle's beam will guide
 A wandering son this blessed night
 Back to his mother's side.
 The taper burns on strongly
 Casting the light afar
 Now touches the silken banner
 And caresses its one gold star.

—RITA MCGARRY



NUN OF A CLOISTERED ORDER

In a long, soft habit of grey,
 In a room of opaque light,
 She had come alone to pray,
 All secure from human sight.

Her prayers were for many tonight,
 This still, white Christmas Eve,
 For the boys who had gone to fight,
 For the mothers left to grieve.

For the men of conquered will
 And men with souls destroyed,
 For some there was hope left still,
 To save the soul alloyed.

When millions of hearts despair,
 One light must be left to warn, - -
 One beacon left to declare
 That for which Christ was born.

—ANNE MATSON

CRESCENDO

Angelic choir, this night your lullabies
 Will soon be lost in anguish, sobs and cries.
 You cannot lull this Babe to sleep tonight,
 For through soft strains of heavenly delight
 The cries and yearnings of the earth will pierce - -
 So plaintive never heard, nor yet so fierce.
 Sing high, soar high through winds of harmony.
 Forsake the sad, though sweet, lest sympathy,
 Struck with dying groans, intensify
 The restless moans 'till He begin to cry.

—CHARLES DAVID ROGGMANN



LET US GO OVER TO BETHLEHEM

Are tears like springs that gush from bitter earth;
 Will sorrow teach the way to weep for mirth
 When joyous tears were falling when they might?
 Too late they well, unseen, in sorrow's night.
 Long alone the angels chanted there,
 Until men moaning came to join the air.

—CHARLES DAVID ROGGMANN



MIRACLE OF THE CHILD

O Mother,
 Wrap up the Child in thy bosom
 Shield him safe from the blast
 He needs protection this Night
 Till the storm is spent and past.

But lo,
 Whom do we shield with our weakness,
 Whence comes this terrible light?
 There stream the beams of His glory
 They sweep away the night.

O see,
 What strength has childlike thought,
 This meek yet changeless will.
 Why, infant hands called down
 The Truth that shields us still!

—ADA KAY BOMFORD

Editorial Comment . . .

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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our Readers

★ ★ ★

WATCHMAN, TELL US OF THE NIGHT

On the road to Bethlehem there is a well called "the well of the star." It is said that on the long journey the Three Wise Men, becoming weary, lost sight of their star and that they stopped at the well to rest. But on looking into its depths they found the star reflected there.

Where now to find a well so pure that it will reflect the guiding light? Where is the well to which we may go and look, and see, and seeing, find? In our country with her machines, her factories, her weary people . . . in foreign countries with their bleeding lands, the ruins, their war-weary people - - what of "the well of the star"? Looking about us we fear that the blessing of Christ is far from being reflected in the lives of people. What should they do? They should turn to Him in humble prayer. By a sincere desire and an honest effort they can find Christmas. The answer comes clearly to the man who has looked up beyond the earth and reached a star.

The answer? "The well of the star" means the heart of each one of us rendered so pure that it can reflect the gleam of the Spirit.

To each one of us belongs the blessing of Christ's coming, and because each blessing has a duty, we know that in the measure in which we purify the depths of our hearts, spiritualize our thinking, love our neighbor, we shall be warmed with the true spirit of Christmas.

He showed us the way. Out of the beneficence of His omnipotent love He sent that message to earth, so that when the times of darkness came, the men who accepted Him would have within their hearts the well of light, the eternal beam of the Bethlehem star.

"Watchman! tell us of the night,
What its signs of promise are.
Traveller! o'er yon mountain's height
See that glory-beaming star!"

—A. K. BOMFORD

★ ★ ★

PRAYER

At the end of this year, we shall have two days, which shall have left a deep mark on the heart of mankind. D-Day. - - - On D-Day we made one of our greatest advances toward world peace. We set our target. Christmas Day. - - - On Christmas Day, we shall have to pray the hardest that we have ever prayed in our lives, that we shall not miss our target, that we shall reach our ultimate objective, that in fighting this war to its end, we shall have the power of arrangement, we shall have a competent world force with authority to act in the hands of its leader, and that we shall have won, not only the peace, but we shall have won for every man, a place in the human family.

—ANNE MATSON

CHRISTMAS

Bells jangle merrily in the distance! The air is filled with the fresh, clean smell of pine and holly! Christmas is here!

Christmas cards are arriving by tons with every mail! Anonymous packages are being sneaked furtively away to be hidden from curious eyes until the time comes for their opening!

Even though your days of belief in Santa Claus are over, you can still feel the eager expectancy of the season. Even though you are doing nothing but walking along the street amid the throngs of Christmas shoppers, you can still feel the happiness typical of the season. Christmas bells toll their greeting and harmonious, or sometimes not so harmonious, caroling brings joy to the hearts of the hearers. Everywhere you go, happiness is the conspicuous note of living. Tired though the people are who jostle their way through Christmas crowds, hearts are gay in the spirit of the season.

From the colorful splendor of Midnight Mass to the dim, early light of Christmas morning when gifts are found beneath the tree, hearts are warmed and thrilled with pleasure.

Then Christmas day itself! The teasing smell of Christmas dinner as it cooks and the hosts of friends who drop in for an eggnog, their conversation punctuated by the crackling snaps of the huge pine log burning on the hearth! The amazing and gradual dwindling of the candy canes from the once heavily laden tree, bows out the season which is officially ended by the blazing of the discarded tree in the gutter with children standing round, occasionally salvaging some bit of tinsel.

The happiest season of the year is over and its mirth, gaiety and cheer leave a pleasant memory in the minds of those to whom Christmas means the joy of giving.

—B. C. T.

"WITHERED WASTES OF LIFE"

If at times we find it hard to be cheerful and optimistic, consider for a moment the plight that faces a veteran who must stand up to take his place in the world with less physical assets or abilities than we have.

It is beyond even our imaginations to picture the condition of despair, self-consciousness, and agony that must exist in a mind bruised by war, death, and sorrow in tremendous doses. It is this quality of despair in even those untouched by loss of limbs, that must be remedied to restore to veterans tranquility of soul and enable them to return to a peacetime world as peacetime citizens. It is a huge task, not only for those who must see and minister to the most tragic extremes of it, but also for all whose lives are even minutely touched with it. Aside from methods prescribed by pathologists in such fields, the basic principles of charity and prayer must be put into practice in each life to help guide these men toward happiness and away from tragedy.

Your faith, your confidence, and your prayers are needed and urgently too. This is a cause that concerns everyone and one in which everyone should work. Don't let it go unaided.

—B. C. T.





We . . . *The Women*

WOMEN'S EDITOR . . . BEVERLY C. TOMPKINS

CHRISTMAS EVE

It was a cold night and the wind blew fiercely when old Mr. Lowell came out into the street. He wasn't dressed well for the weather; so he was soon walking fast in a vain attempt to keep warm. The street was quite dark, but there was some light coming from windows of the houses he passed.

Through one window he could see three little boys all ready for bed, just starting up the steps, their faces aglow with happy expectation of Christmas morning. He remembered how he and his sisters used to look forward to Christmas and how it was always a happy occasion even though their gifts were few and inexpensive. It was their mother who made it happy by talking about Christmas for several weeks before it came. She often reminded them of the true meaning of the season — of the birth of the Lord.

Mr. Lowell remembered how the youngest sister, Ann, had looked like those boys on Christmas Eve — she would be smiling as she ran up the steps to her room.

Waking from his reminiscing, he found he was walking more slowly. A light snow was beginning to fall and the wind seemed colder than before.

Soon he was looking in the windows again and, at one home, he saw a young couple decorating a tree with long pop-corn strings and a few lovely, just bought ornaments. It made him think of the happy evenings when he and his wife made gifts and trimmed trees for their baby. The thought gave him a lonely feeling, for both his wife and son were gone for many years now. He wished he could go into this house and help prepare for a child's Christmas morning.

The snow was falling heavily about him and the night became more beautiful, but the aged man walked faster, anxious to be out of the cold. He looked

straight ahead now, heedless of what he passed. After a little while, he saw out of the corner of his eye, a large window with light streaming from within; and looking more closely, he saw that there was a manger scene prepared so that passers-by might enjoy it.

He came up close to the window to see the little characters better. He stood there studying the scene for a few minutes, for it was a beautiful thing. And, as he looked at it, he was once more remembering the past, but a past of long ago. He remembered the Infant Jesus and the Virgin Mary watching over him fondly. Joseph and his shepherds were there, and the Magi, and it seemed that he should be there himself, kneeling for love of the King.

So when the old man walked away from the window, he didn't feel old or sad, but was full of joy.

In just a few minutes his walk was over, as he came to the church and went in to pray.

—MARGARET DIERKIN

★ ★ ★

ONCE UPON A TIME, AND NOW

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," the first Christmas, to a world that raised its voice as in a cry of victory. A silver song from the heavens rang out to fill the listening hearts of those who slowly made their way to the scene.

Christmas was "once upon a time" a magical combination of great excitement and a real, holy, peace . . . It seemed to young and old that this was one time of the year that had been taken from a fairy tale, a time when the heart's desires were fulfilled. Christmas was all the hustle and bustle of last minute shopping, car-

olers, and "Hark the Herald Angels" in the snow-filled darkness and a pyramid of gifts beneath a glittering tree.

It's a little different this year but many things remain. Shopping is complicated but it still retains its fine frenzy. The turkey may take the form of ham, the champagne, the form of ginger ale, and the carolers may be missing, but we can sing the Christmas hymns a little louder.

Yes, some of the magic is gone, but the Christmas spirit that means the unmistakable faith in a better world that's coming, is here.

—JEAN WRIGHT

★ ★ ★

THE SCENE IN THE WINDOW

Every time that I was in the vicinity of Rike's corner window in the last few weeks, I was detained by the beautiful scene there. Not merely the usual Christmas decoration this, but a complete little Marionette show. There are all types of carols sung and all types of beguiling carolers singing and dancing to them. The whole parade of marionettes is so gay and colorful that one is compelled to stop.

But there is another show taking place outside the window, which competes in interest with the one inside. This is the happiness and joy experienced and radiated by the children whose ruddy faces are pressed against the window. The "Ah's" and "Oh's" emitted by them, and their rapturous expressions in the course of the performance, are a joy to witness. The smaller ones among them are rather puzzled by it all but enjoy it nevertheless. The pleasure is not reserved for or peculiar to the youngsters, however, as the adults seem to enjoy the scene in the window as much as any of them.

Everyone seems to fall in love with the small blonde marionette who helps in the singing of the Wassail Song. He seems to capture the hearts of the entire audience with his stumbling and his queer little walk. The climax of the delight for the children is reached, of course, when Santa Claus appears. This jocund marionette proceeds to bounce his way on his journey through the window, halting at intervals to return the hand-waving of the enthralled children. Santa is followed by a rather sad-faced character, a sort of town crier, who travels through the town and closes the show.

The people, happier for this half hour production, proceed on their Christmas-shopping way, but many of the younger crowd remain to see the marionettes on the next hourly journey of caroling.

—CATHERINE STICH

THE STRANGER AT THE DOOR

Roseann watched the clock anxiously as she put the finishing touches on the Christmas dinner, whilst keeping an eye on small Tommy's play pen at the same time. She stood frowning, a little provoked because Tom had to work on Christmas Day. It was after dark and he had not come home yet. Then her face lit up when she heard steps on the porch, and, thinking it was Tom, she hastened to open the door. She drew back seeing the man who stood before her, in tattered clothes, but impressed by the refined look on his face, she asked him to come into the house and warm himself for a few minutes while she fixed him a bite to eat.

The stranger and little Tommy developed an instant liking for each other and when Roseann returned from the pantry with a tray, she found her small son chuckling in the arms of the man. As she sat holding Tommy whilst the stranger opposite her ate, she wished that Tom would hurry home because she did not feel safe in the house with someone that she did not know. Just as she was on the verge of asking the strange man to leave, she heard Tom's cheery "Hello" in the hall and she ran to meet him. She told him of the man who was out in their kitchen and Tom answered her that he would get rid of the unwelcome guest immediately.

But as they entered the kitchen she was amazed to see Tom bound over to the man, grab his hand, shake it and pound him on the back and greet him as an old friend. An old friend he was indeed, as it developed, and a few minutes later Dave Burns sat eating Christmas dinner with Tom and Roseann, explaining his strange attire and method of securing food as he ate.

He had been discharged from the army recently after some months in the Pacific and decided to spend the holidays with his family in the East. Lacking funds, he started to hitch-hike home. He was very glad that he had happened to stop at Tom's home in Ohio that night.

The next day, replenished with money and clothing by Tom, Dave boarded a train for home. As Roseann and Tom waved good bye they were both glad that they had a chance to help a friend at Christmas time.

—HELEN TUCKER



CHRISTMAS VIGNETTES

• By ISABEL KLOPF

Around the town with the carolers

"Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright!
Round yon beautiful mother and child,
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace —
Sleep in heavenly peace."

floated across the crisp night air as the band of young carolers started on their journey of cheer through the small village. It was Christmas Eve, a glistening Christmas Eve with a blanket of fresh snow having just fallen, and the stars and moon peeping through the clouds, giving a sparkling effect to the whole landscape. Their first stop was at a comfortable-looking brick house where, through the dining-room window, they saw the family seated for a dinner. As the youthful carolers outside burst forth with "Come Now, Let Us Be Merry," the mother within placed a platter of golden brown turkey on the table. The smile of pleasant anticipation that lit up the faces of her children was heartwarming to see, and it glowingly remained in their mind's eye as they proceeded down the street.

Singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem", they paused before a gray cottage. Within, the scene was one of calm and quiet. An aged man and his dainty white-haired lady sat before a tiny Christmas tree in their small living-room, doubtlessly reliving the Christmas Eves when their Bob, Jack, and Jane were children at home. Upon hearing the sweet voices singing outside, the old couple went to the window and asked for more hymns, but the happy carolers shouted "Merry Christmas" and ran on down the street.

Knowing that the genial village postmaster was having a party that night for his small grandchildren, the songsters pursued their way to his old-fashioned house. As they mounted the porch steps and peered through the windows, they lustily sang "Jingle Bells." They could not have sung a more appropriate song, for inside, jolly Santa Claus himself was handing out presents to the delighted children. Some of them timidly stood back against the wall, gazing with awe at the plump man in red; others were grouped around him, their faces filled with joy and expectation. The squeals of pleasure that echoed through the room as they opened their gifts more than repaid the postmaster for his efforts. Rather reluctantly the carolers left this happy scene.



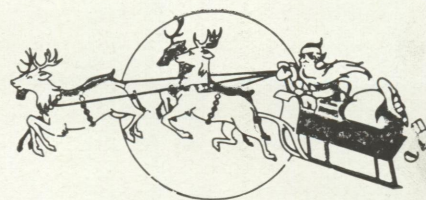
Beneath the nearest street light, they gathered, singing hymn upon hymn, filling the air with rich, melodious tones, giving added happiness to all who heard or saw them. What a colorful group they made with their coats, caps, and mittens of green, yellow, red, and blue against the background of white snow!

Slowly they again wended their way through the soft snow to serenade more homes. They stopped at crippled Grandmother Matthew's house. From her wheelchair in front of the window, she blew them a kiss as they saluted her with "The First Noel." They also visited the Lawton house where the family was decorating the Christmas tree. Young John Lawton was home on furlough, and the carolers sensed the added joy in the family because Johnny was there to help them this year. How pretty the tree grew as the Lawtons added bright lights, shiny ornaments, and ropes of tinsel! It seemed only natural for them to sing "O Christmas Pine."

It was growing late now, and the carolers wished to trim their own trees yet that night. They accordingly disbanded and hurried toward their homes, each singing softly to himself as he crunched through the snow,

"Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright—"

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT



Lillian throws a party

• By BARBARA RUTH JONES

LILLIAN was deep in thought when her boss, Mr. Chambers, came buzzing in demanding, "Miss Krause, please take this letter." Reluctantly returning once again to her routine office world, Lillian grabbed her notebook and obediently took down his words in shorthand, thinking as usual, any English teacher would faint if he heard the grammar her boss composed in a letter. After completing the letter, Mr. Chambers was out of his office again, probably up on the fifth floor betting on the horses, or, down in the cafeteria getting a second cup of coffee, but it didn't matter as business had been slow for the last month, so Lil laid the letter on his desk and thankfully sighed for the peace again. Chewing on her lower lip and doodling on her scrap paper with her pen, she again reviewed her thoughts. Christmas was coming up again. The third Christmas she was to spend alone without Milton! It seemed unbearable. She could still remember the night they said "so long," as it was not their policy to say, "goodbye." Goodbye seemed too definite and saying "so long" made the time seem shorter. Glancing at the third finger, left hand, she recalled how they had planned to be together on the next Christmas. That was last Christmas and another one was coming up. Another one and still their plans lie like cold ashes on a hearth. Would this war - - - "Miss Krause, would you please run across to Pete's Cigar Store and buy me another pack of cigarettes, I seem to be out again and they have just received another batch," shouted Mr. Chambers as he hurried in. "Sure, be glad to," Lil replied, again returning to earth and mustering a cheerful air, glad for the chance to leave the office and to breathe fresher air. Any chance to leave her desk for a moment seemed as if a heavy weight had been lifted from her. Mr. Chambers was an odd character, she mused, as she sauntered down the hall; with his five-by-five figure and his little short legs, he was a rare sight as he scurried from one place to another, betting on horses and talking to all his many cronies at the office. Well, at least he was a swell boss and everyone liked him.

As she entered Pete's Cigar Store she glanced at the large red letters "Ten more days until Christmas." Yes, ten more days until Christmas. Her life was fly-

ing by and what had she to remember of the past three years; rations and walking every place she went! These problems did not worry her so much, but being apart from Milton annoyed her. Here she was, doing the same things over and over and becoming very bored with her life. Oh, well, and so it goes - - -

That night, as Lillian was writing Milton his daily letter two small voices drifted in from the room across the hall. Paula, her small five year old sister, was talking to Jimmy, the seven year old neighbor boy, "and when I get big and the war is over I'm going to have a big bicycle like the big kids have, my daddy said so, so there too!" Jimmy promptly replied, "And when the war is over my brother is coming home and we are going to have a great big Christmas dinner and I'm going to have lots of toys." (Jimmy's brother had been in the South Pacific for the past two years.) And so the discussion began and the two little children argued of all they would do when the war was over, until Jimmy's mother finally called him home to bed.

Lillian reread her letter to Milton and sized up the contents of what she had written. Why all she had been doing was complaining because she was robbed of Milton. Why, she had had a childhood and after she had met Milton they had had wonderful times together and here all the little children of today had been deprived of the lovely Christmases she had known. Little Paula wasn't old enough to remember when there wasn't a war. How dreadful! What a realization to wake up to the fact that war played maybe an even more important role in the lives of little children.

Before Paula went to bed, she tiptoed to Lillian for her goodnight kiss. As she hesitated before leaving, she surveyed Lillian sleepily and in a tiny voice asked, "Will Ed, my cousin, come back?" "Why, of course, he will," Lillian gulped, controlling her astonishment at such a sudden question. "And when I die will worms crawl all over me, Lillian?" Paula continued. "Why Paula, if you are always a good girl, when you die you will live a beautiful life in heaven; this is only a part of your life here on earth!" exclaimed Lillian. Satisfied at her answer Paula went to her dreamland. Lillian pondered over the question and remembered Paula had asked the same question twice before. It is

no wonder the little children dwell on such topics these days; all they see and hear is war and they can't have this and that because of the war! The poor kids were being shoved aside for the duration.

Before turning out her light Lil fingered her neatly scrawled letter to Cpl. Milton Lacey and tore it in a thousand pieces, hopped in bed and lay awake to give the coming Christmas a serious thought. Wouldn't it ever be fun to have a big Christmas for Paula and her little friends? Why, of course! What kind of a girl would Milton have to come back to if she stayed the same dried up person she had made of herself? Wouldn't he be proud of her if she carried on the job of making people happy around her and built something real for him to come back to? Now her first job was bringing happiness and joy into the hearts of these children who have heard of war and bloodshed for three years. What a world a few adults can make for the small people of the world to observe! Lil fell asleep with her heart full of warmth and her mind buzzing with ideas.

The following days were full ones for Lillian as she hurried about buying gifts for her family and close friends and attending various parties. But she saved Christmas Eve for the surprise party she had planned for Paula. She had gained her mother's permission to invite Paula's friends to the small party and made her plans in secret from there on.

Christmas Eve had arrived and after gulping down her supper, Lil slipped out the back door to the barn. The night was just right to fit her plans. Snow was on the ground almost a foot deep and as she walked along, the sound of her feet echoed as she crunched the snow beneath her. The moon was a clear cold ball and lit up the sparkling white blanket that covered the world. Smiling to herself, Lil slid into the barn and reappeared in the open again, but this time dressed in Old Saint Nick's clothes. Her five feet, five inch height and slight build did not quite fill out the Santa clothes, but with the aid of a couple of sofa pillows she thought she would look at least presentable. She climbed into the sleigh and cracked the whip for Ol' Joe to move. Luckily Mr. Bowlus was a kind farmer and did not mind lending his horse and sleigh for the evening.

When she returned home again the sleigh was full of five small laughing children. They raced from the sleigh into Paula's house and surprised a wide-eyed youngster.

Paula was in her glory. She and her five friends exchanged gifts, as Lil had seen to it that Paula had

one to exchange. They pulled taffy and made pop corn balls. Little blond, curly headed Marilyn was heard to shout at Jimmy, "Jimmy Murray, you just stop putting taffy in my hair." With a mischievous look in his eyes, Jim continued to annoy her and then raced off to torment the other play mates.

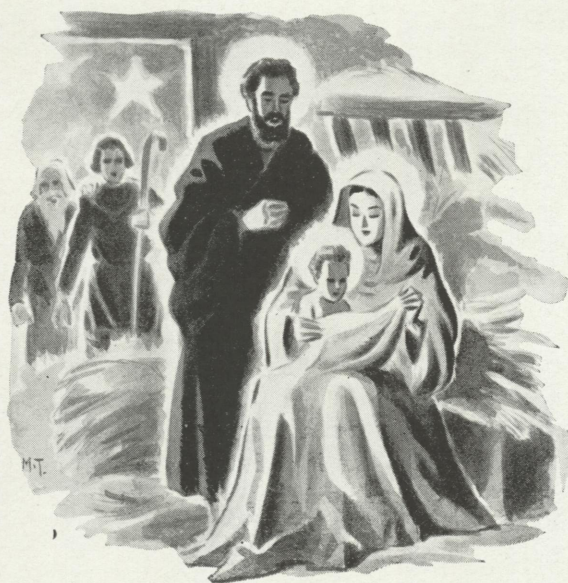
Once Lil stood back and looked at the tall, straight Christmas tree decorated with many beautiful lights and candy canes dangling from different branches and the gifts scattered all over the cotton sparkling with snow bought from the ten cent store. As her eyes lit upon the Santa bulb sitting in the top of the tree she thought she saw him wink and she laughed at such a childish thought. Anyway, foolish people are happy, she mused.

Around nine, Lil, who had been working all the while to keep the party going, glanced at the clock and decided to take the five sleepy children home. Pushing her hair from her face and wiping off a little of the surplus dirt from her face she donned her coat, bundled her prodigies into their wraps and delivered them safely to their respective homes.

She peekd in at Paula asleep in bed and she felt Christmas was going to be all she expected. Next Christmas Milton would be home and meanwhile she had a big job keeping the home fires burning.

God was pleased with Lillian who slept that night so full of goodness and charity, her Christmas could hardly be anything but beautiful. How many Lillian's will there be this Christmas among the war weary world?





THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

In the poor shelter of a hillside cave, the Saviour of the world was born. The night sky of Bethlehem shone bright with stars, and over all there blazed a heavenly light that cast its brightest beams on the crude stable-cave. The chill wind moaned about the entrance and blew the loose straw into long heaps on the stable floor. High on the inmost wall sputtered a tiny lamp that cast its glow on rocky walls. A young woman lay, cloak-covered, on a bed of straw. At her side sat a strong, handsome man, Joseph of Nazareth. He gazed with loving concern on his lovely wife, Mary. She seemed to sleep, but soon she stirred, half rose from the straw and stretched her hand to Joseph. He was on his feet the instant she had moved. Gently he helped her to rise, and together they walked to a crude manger in the far corner of the cave. Quickly Joseph lined the crib with straw, then fell to his knees at Mary's side. For a few breathless moments they knelt wrapt in adoration. Suddenly the kneeling woman shone with a brilliant light. In her arms lay a tiny Infant. The Virgin Mother wound a long, linen band about her new-born Baby and fondled Him on her breast. All the while through the night air burst a chorus of heavenly voices. Multitudes of angels filled the sky, caroling the praises of their Infant-God. Throughout the night, the simple shepherd-folk of Bethlehem's hills arrived at the cave to adore the new-born Saviour.

This Christmas Jesus finds a birthplace colder than Bethlehem's hillside cave. He is born to us in the cold ruins of war-torn lands. It warmed His heart when the herdsmen knelt, awe-struck with love, at the manger's side. This Christmas He is heartsick to see homeless waifs and sorrowing mothers kneeling at His crib. On that first Christmas night the angels caroled His praises. But in many lands today the carols sound from throats all but tightened with sorrow.

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will." We sing glory to God with grateful voices. It's Christmas time again, and our heart's yearn for the peace of Christ's Nativity. Troubled hearts they are, but our Baby-God will give them rest. Our new-born King will fill the great gap that war has made in our souls.

—MICHAEL MOAKLER



CHRISTMAS EVE IN AMERICA

The snowflakes twirled and twirled as if they were choosing a resting place this December night. A soft white blanket was quickly and surely being laid everywhere. Beautiful lights of various hues gleamed from the Christmas trees, through the windows of the holiday-spirited homes. As one passed along on the walk voices of laughter and happiness rang forth.

Package-laden people bustled up and down the street with heads bent to protect them from the snow, except when an occasional bump necessitated a smiling glance upward. Gladness seemed to be within and without. Farther down toward the end of the street children's voices floated through the air. Tiny noses pressed on the window panes looking for Santa Claus. A tired and cross adult voice assured them that their watching was in vain.

In one window we saw one of the most touching things of the season. It was a simple decoration of a service star. And going into a home of a friend we saw a mother near the fireplace holding a small child while two older children were sorting tiny socks, to hang up near the chimney. They stopped and looked up, now and then, at their mother as she softly repeated "Twas the night before Christmas". The children asked her questions and having answered

them she continued her recitation. Eventually the children decided on six tiny holeless socks and hung them up for Santa to fill them. Then they ran to mother's side and knelt at her feet and recited a prayer asking God to bring daddy home to them for Christmas. The mother smiled as she brushed a tear, wishing that it would be possible for daddy to come home for Christmas. She thought also of Christmas in the past when she and her loved one were so happy filling the tiny socks. They dreamed of the days when the children would be larger and realize more what Christmas meant. That day had arrived but daddy was gone, but she hoped only for a short time. After putting the tiny one in its crib she paused in front of the window, not looking for Santa Claus but for a bright light in the Far East.

—JESSIE MORRISON

★ ★ ★

CHRISTMAS IN THE ARMY

"Christmas in an army camp" sounded awfully unexciting to Company G until a few of the fellows decided to do something about it. Maybe they could not go home this Christmas, but, gosh! they did not have to sit around and hang their heads because they were restricted to twenty-four hour passes. Anyway this was the time to be happy and gay and have a whale of a good time.

Private Bill Forster, Bob (Kansas) Dungee, and Joe Flinn put their heads together and came out of the huddle with grins from ear to ear. Why had they not thought about it sooner? Of course, they would be permitted to do it. Gee! this was going to be great.

They were pounding on Lt. O'Leary's door in less time than it takes to run from their barracks to the PX. The big lieutenant opened his door and growled "Now, what do you privates want? I told you before that I could not give you a pass."

"Please sir," pleaded Kansas, "That is not what we want. You see, sir, we have a plan that might make the men feel a little more like celebrating Christmas, and well, sir, with your permission we thought we might be able to carry it out - - sir."

"Well, mumbled the lieutenant, "come in and we will see what we can do about it."

That is all the encouragement the three fellows needed. They sprang through the door like three pup-

pies dashing after a bone. Fifteen minutes after they entered the officer's quarters the happy-go-lucky pals came tumbling back out again. Even the lieutenant was smiling now, and half shouted a "Merry Christmas" after them. Evidently their plan had clicked.

* * *

Going down the road in a jeep the merry trio brought smiles to the lips of all they encountered. And why shouldn't they? A jeep full of Christmas trees, ornaments, apples, nuts, and three spirited soldiers was an unusual sight even in the busy, wartime town of Darwin. Bouncing through the streets and out into the open country they soon arrived at the camp. Trying to sneak through "Army town" in a noisy jeep, they discovered, was no easy job, for heads popped out from behind buildings, out of windows and in general from nowhere and from everywhere.

A secret is no longer a secret when a few inquisitive G. I. Joes discover it and shout from one end of the camp to the other, "Hey, where ya goin'?" or "What cha got there?" No amount of shushing or signaling could quiet the gathering crowd and by the time the three beginners had reached the mess hall quite a large group of G. I.'s had been picked up here and there — almost fifty strong by now. Well, one thing was sure, no one would have to be drafted into service for decorating and rearranging the dining hall. All the help was there willing and waiting.

On Christmas, the soldiers of "Army town" decided the army Christmases were not so bad, especially when the camp was the fortunate owner of three certain, spirited "whizz kids". With a tree decorated just like at home, a stupendous turkey dinner, presents from loved ones, and Christmas songs around the tree it turned out to be a Merry Christmas indeed. Who knows, perhaps, by this time next year this Christmas would be just like a dream and wartime America might be celebrating a peaceful Christmas as it did before.

—EILEEN WENIG



JEREMY ALDER

● By MICHAEL MOAKLER

*(Excerpts from the diary of
Jonathan in Anno Domini, 1832)*

Lincoln Square, London; the offices and residence of Alder Brothers, Ltd., Maritime Shippers.

23 December—Heartsick as I write. Fog and bitter cold all day. Jeremy's Ellen is dead a year today the saddest anniversary he has ever kept. He is disconsolate and nothing avails to cheer him. I engaged six of the jolliest waits (warehouse folk, the most jocund men I know) to carol the sadness out of him, but for all their gaiety they but put him in mind of last Yuletide's sorrow. He was most grateful, but unconsoled. The Reverend Woodruff, a loyal old friend of Father's came in from Covesby for his seasonal visit. He spent his stay beguiling Jeremy with parish tales. But Jeremy had little heart for laughter. His whole intent was upon a snow-covered mound in St. Andrew's churchyard. The shipping lags of late and the books are in perfect order, thanks to Tilson, our excellent clerk.

Ten o'clock. The wind moans about the eaves. The drumming of the shutters was never so doleful, nor the glow of the street lamps so dismal. I bade Jeremy goodnight with words of God's mercy, Ellen's bliss, the hope of the season. I shall have scant rest tonight for thinking of Jeremy. O God, that sorrow were a fleeting thing; that Jeremy were his merry self again.

24 December — A day of blessings. Jeremy roused me at dawn, his spirits up after my words of hope last evening. He pressed my hand and left the house to be gone until noon. A visit to Ellen's grave gave him courage and warm trust. He has spent over twenty pounds dispensing provisions to the poor in the warehouse district.

An air of joy about the Square this whole day — children sporting; young and old exchanging a good-natured snowball time and again; waits in profusion to carol us; heart-warming friendliness in everyone. Early this afternoon, little Meg, the cooper's child came to see us. She was never so welcome. Her lovely treble is as nigh to an angel's as one could wish. She sang half the afternoon and helped Jeremy give away a goodly sack of nuts and oranges to the children of the Square. A delight to see them — Jeremy, like Father Christmas bearing the sack of treasures, and

Meg at his side, like the wee Spirit of the Yuletide, dispensing them with all joy. Her good father is ill, and so, Meg has asked Jeremy to take her to church on the morrow. Jeremy beams at the prospect.

Eleven o'clock. The cozy lilt of carols in Jeremy's soft tenor. We are restless with joy, and never so happy since Jeremy's wedding day. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let Heaven and earth rejoice." ... Jeremy sleeps, and I must off to rest.

25 December — Our happiness is complete. Gaily off to St. Andrew's, Meg, Jeremy and I, with hearts full of joy at the caroling and the greetings. A simple ritual ever so beautiful at Ellen's grave. Jeremy wreathed the headstone with holly boughs, and left a lamp burning on the mound as a symbol of his hope. Meg sang *O Come, All Ye Faithful* in homage to Ellen's memory. The good parish folk were in tears, and Jeremy and I wept for joy.

The good cooper from his sickbed sent Christmas blessings with his kind invitation to dine with the family. We were a jolly pair wending our way to Meg's home with armfuls of good things, not the least of them a portly goose. Sickness and poverty to try their spirits, but I have never seen such bouyant happiness. Glorious hours spent all too soon, and never-to-be-forgotten.

Twenty minutes past ten p. m. Jeremy is ever so merry. He sings and tells me of his plan to have the worthy cooper fashion our casks. There will be increased need of them since we have a new market with the French vinters of Bordeaux and Moselle. He is triumphant at thought of it.

We are happy beyond telling. Sorrow is gone. There is only joy and the hope of the Season.



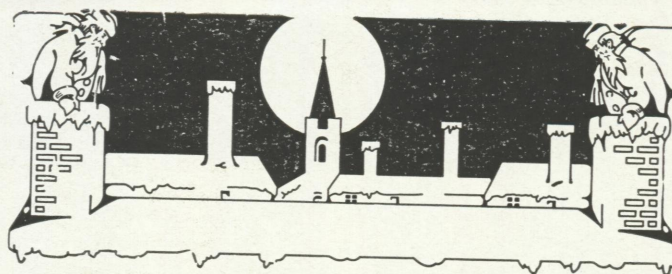
A "MARY" CHRISTMAS

● By JOHN KLEIN

THE gold star atop the tree blinked unceasingly. The little bells, (which Dick never tired of tinkling) tinkled sweetly, thinly, almost sadly. The candy canes, the dainty Santa Clauses, reindeer, antelopes, and dogs and cats hung lightly on the branches. The tinsel and the shimmering spiral icicles reflected the dim blue lights which gave the room an atmosphere of eeriness, of mystery. But that's the way Dick liked it. Ever since he was five, the tree had to be this way and no other. Yes, just like that. The gold star blinking, the little bells tinkling, Santa Claus and all the animals hanging in place, the tinsel and icicles reflecting that eerie blue, and, last, but not least, the crib with the Infant, Mary, and . . .

"Why the crib, of course. How could I have forgotten that! Dick would never forgive me. Well, won't take but a minute and all will be perfect." Saying this, Mother Carey lifted the stable from its box and placed it carefully below the tree. This little stable, made of twigs, papier-mache and whatever else Dick could lay hands on, had been in use these last ten years. Mother Carey remembered still with what pride he presented it to her then, how he pointed out fondly to her the tiny smiling Infant and the adoring Mary and Joseph, and how he liked to move the sheep and oxen from this place to that, the better to see the Infant. Mother Carey remembered, and smiled. But the smile changed. Two tears trickled slowly, burning down her cheeks. Slowly she eased herself into the ottoman, burying her head in her hands. Straightening, she reached for the picture of Dick resting on the cabinet before her. Still the same old Dick. That never fading smile, those mischievous brown eyes, that inveterate mop of coal black hair bobbing over his forehead. No, he hasn't changed. All the Navy Blue does is make him look more manly.

Slowly, stifled, as if wrung from her very heart, "Dick, Dick," escaped her clenched lips. She sighed, then relaxed, casting an appealing look to the Divine Infant's Mother. In that look was a plea for succor and compassion in this bitter trial. As if



strengthened, she brushed away her tears, straightened her hair, leaned back thinking . . . hoping . . . praying. . .

* * *

The Infant lies on the yellow straw, wrapped in swaddling clothes. He smiles - a smile of peace and welcome. On either side kneel Mary and Joseph in silent adoration. A weather-beaten shepherd enters the little stable shyly, falls to one knee, rises. In a low tremulous voice, fearful of disturbing, "Lovely Lady," he whispers, "there is a woman here who wishes to see you." As an afterthought he adds, "She seems worried."

"Thank you, Ahm, you may tell her to enter," answers Mary in a soft voice. The lady, none other than Mother Carey, enters hurriedly, anxiously. In a moment she is on both knees, adoring her Savior. Remaining in a kneeling position she stretches her hands forth towards Mary in a gesture of supplication. Her lips quiver, but utter not a sound.

"What is it, my daughter? What can we do for you? Tell us, won't you?" asks Mary in her calm soft voice. Encouraged with this kindness, Mother Carey manages to say, "Mary, you know what it is to love a Son. You know what it is to suffer. Mary, I'm a mother. I have a son, a good son. A son I love with my whole heart - love him more than my life, Mary. I love him as you love your Son. . . . Now he's in the Navy." Here she falters, overcome with her sorrow. But at a sign of understanding from Mary she continues. "He's in the Navy fighting for his country. I haven't seen him for two years." Another pause. "I know not where he is, what he is doing; I know not whether he is even alive. Mother, on this Christmas Eve my heart is heavy, sad. It's broken." With her whole soul in it she pleads, "Mary, Mother, bring me back my son. For the love of your Son, there, give me back my son."

Mary rises, walks over to the kneeling Mother Carey. "Rise, daughter," she says in a soft tone. Then continuing, "You say you have a son. You say you love him with your whole heart - love him more than your life. I believe you. But what of Janice your other child whom the Father has given

you, - - who loved and married a poor man, - - and you rejected her.

A look of fear passes over Mother Carey's anxious countenance, but changes suddenly into one of shame; slowly she lowers her head. Tears begin to flow. Tears of repentance. "Mother forgive me, forgive me," she pleads.

"Daughter," Mary begins, "look at Joseph and myself. He, is a poor carpenter, a hard worker, scarcely making enough to live. And I, a simple maiden. Two happier people you could not find. Poor, humble, but between us the Creator of heaven and earth." Then, after pausing, "What is money? Can it buy happiness? You know the answer only too well. You beg for your son. My Son gave him to you; he also gave you a daughter. You accept the one, and reject the other. In the light of this, do you still beg me to give you your son?"

Tears of repentance well up in Mother Carey's eyes. They well up and overflow.

* * *

Dan Carey stepped lightly into the room. Seeing the tree and crib exactly as in years gone by he stopped suddenly, a look of sadness crossing his face. Approaching, he noticed Marthey, cuddled up, sleeping in the ottoman, clutching Dicks photograph. Bending over her he recognized in that eerie blue, two tears trickling down her face. Poor Marthey," he sighed, kissing each away lovingly.

"Oh Dan," she whispered slowly opening her eyes, "Dan, I must have fallen asleep. I was thinking about Dick, and I guess I was rather tired. But," she added quickly, "we've got work to do."

"Work? why Marthey dear, what work? It's Christmas Eve already," and with a lowering and sadening of voice, "There's no work, Marthey, now's the children are gone. You've got no dinner to get either, as I promised you we'd have Christmas dinner at the hotel, and you . . ."

"Oh Dan, Dan," Marthey interrupted, "I've been an old fool. Yes, there is work to be done. Quick Dan, call Western Union and send a telegram to Clifton. Dan, tell Janice and Tom to . . . to come home for Christmas, that is," she said, lowering simultaneously her voice and head, "if they will come." Then brightening up she said, "Now shake it, Dan, and get the telegram off before the Blessed Virgin's admonition wears off and I lose my head and act like an old fool again. Meanwhile I'll run down cellar and dig

up some of that canned chicken, peas, cranberry sa. . ." Slam! Dan was gone, fearing lest Martha should change her mind and forbid Janice to return home.

* * * *

Before falling asleep Marthey half whispered, loud enough for Dan to hear, "Thanks Mary, for pounding some sense into my thick skull," and rolling over, she slept a queenly sleep.

* * * *

By ten Christmas Day Marthey and Dan were in the living-room, waiting. Dan was composed, wreathed in smiles; Marthey was nervous, a bit ashen. At the sound of a car stopping outside Marthey whispered, "Dan, I'm afraid. What will I tell them?"

"Everything will be all right, Marthey, just you see. Try to compose yourself. Here they come." Saying this, Dan took Marthey and they walked arm in arm to the door. Dan pressed her hand, and opened the door.

"Merry Christmas, Mother and Dad, Merry Christmas," shouted Janice and Tom, beaming with joy in the doorway.

This was too much for Mother Carey. Bursting into tears she fell on Janice's shoulder, her emotions getting the best of her. At last, composing herself, "Janice, Tom, will you forgive me?"

Janice said in a soft sweet tone, "Forgive, Mother? Nothing to forgive. You just didn't understand. You were just seeking my happiness and couldn't understand how I could possibly be happy with a poor man. But I am happy, so happy - - now."

"And I'm not so poor either," chimed in Tom. "The boss has let down the barriers and I'm making enough to soon have your daughter sitting on easy street."

"Well," suggested Dan, "no sense in standing here in the hallway; come on in the living-room and take a gander at our tree. Just the same, Janice, as when you and Dick were kids." At this Mother Carey swallowed hard.

"Just a minute," said Janice, "I have a little surprise for you both. You go ahead into the living room, and I'll be along shortly." Then, slipping outside, "O. K. Dick, come on in." And who should it be but Navy Blue Dick himself! As the talk in the living room was jolly, Dick stood in the doorway at least a minute before attracting attention. Finally, "Merry Christmas, everybody," did it.

"Dick, Dick," cried Mother Carey, falling into his arms. "Dick, I . . . I can't believe it," she sobbed.

"It's true, Mother, it's true. Got back from overseas Wednesday, stayed at Janices' till today. Wanted to make it a real Christmas." Then, noticing the crib and tree, "Why Mother, you old dear, all exactly as in years gone by. Blinking star, blue lights, my little crib, all. Mother, you dear."

By now all had gathered around the tree. All were smiling, but there was not a dry eye in the crowd. "Well," said Mother Carey, drying her tears and straightening, "this is wonderful. Yesterday no Dick, no Janice. Dick was . . . well, God knew where, and," hesitatingly, "between Janice and us there was more than just seventy-five miles of highway." Then she added, "What a Merry Christmas this is!"

"Yes," repeated Dan, winking at Marthey, "what a 'Mary' Christmas this is!"

★ ★ ★
CHRISTMAS LEAVE

(Continued from Page Seven)

ning," Tom explained with a mouthful of his second sandwich. "And I must confess," she explained, "that I haven't eaten much for two weeks until now. It tastes so much better when someone eats with you." "This is real cake, it just hits the spot," Tom paid her a compliment. "Would you like to help me pack the boxes?" She seemed tired so Tom said "Sure." "T" shirts, books, socks, candy and a tiny Christmas tree with wired ornaments were neatly divided into the three containers. "I do wish he could have the tree for Christmas," she audibly thought, "but I'm afraid air mail and special delivery would never get it there in time."

Tom thanked her for the most enjoyable evening. "Do come again sometime," she almost pleaded as she followed him to the door. The neighbor's radio faintly sounded in the howl of the wind, "Star of Wonder, Star of Light." Tom's head turned for a last glance at the house when the lamp by the window seemed to send lights streaming from the gold star in the crisp, new service flag that hung therein. Like the Star of Bethlehem it guided him back up the steps. When she opened the door he said, "Say, I could take that package with the tree along back with me as far as London and he could have it by Christmas." Her face brightened as she returned with the parcel. Tom gathered her frailness into the strength of his arms in a big hug and his lips touched her forehead. "Good night," he hesitated, then said, "MOM."

Her eyes were misty but she smiled, "That did me more good than any of the medicine I am taking. You should be a doctor I think you would make a good

one." Tom grinned as he walked down the street. He wondered if her name could have been Jones - - - he guessed it really didn't matter.

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

(Continued from Page Nine)

genius! I know that the boys will be more than pleased!"

They both left the dayroom and this time, the Colonel locked the door. Tony's heart missed a beat again!

The one hundred strong marched to the dayroom after mess that evening and, as they entered it, they gazed in amazement! Instantaneously, they fell on their knees to pay homage and respect to their King! The air seemed to be filled with music from heaven! The boys turned their thoughts to home - Mom, Dad, the ones they loved - and they fought to keep back the tears that were wont to fill their eyes.

Now they could hear their favorite record playing

"I'll be home for Christmas -

(Remember when we sat around the tree,
Singing so merrily)

You can count on me -

(You bet you can)

Please have snow -

(Like we used to see it,
Soft as a white and fleecy blanket)

And mistletoe -

(In that hallway)

And presents on the tree -

(Ties, shirts, socks,
And boxes of candy rocks)

I'll be home for Christmas -

(You bet we will)

If only in my dreams."

(To see Mom and Dad whom we revere,
And all the ones we hold so dear).

"Gee, Tony, old boy", exclaimed the boys in unison of voice. "This is great!"

Then, the boys exchanged gifts and passed their boxes of goodies around. It was one for all and all for one!

That night, as they laid their heads to rest, they found that their hearts were not so heavy - yes, the passing wind was carrying them off to sleep with the far-away organ melody of the "Adeste Fidelis". Although unusual, to each Medic, the sound sounded as though it were being played as it was in the little church at home. See, Mom, Dad, and the ones they loved, standing there! And, as the soldiers closed their eyelids, they knew that they were home yes home . . . even, if only in their dreams.

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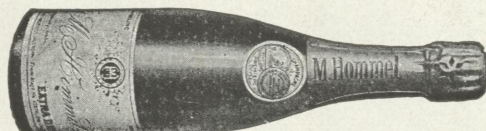
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