

## A KIND FAMILY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT



ONCE, long ago, in the mountains of southern France, there lived a poor but honest family of a father, mother and two children. The father was named Adam and the mother Hannah. The son, Peter, was twelve years of age, and the daughter, Esther, was only nine.

Father Adam was an honest, hard-working man. On the steep sides of the mountains he kept his sheep and a cow, and in a little valley that lay between the mountains Mother Hannah made a garden, tilling the soil by her own hands, with the aid of a few simple gardening tools. And her son Peter gave her what assistance a boy of his year could give. Esther kept the little thatched cottage tidy and clean, preparing the meals for the three workers who were out of doors most of the day and who came in at night from their toil very, very tired.

But they never grumbled at their lot, for they had hopes that Fortune would smile on them some time. And she did—in the form of a fairy.

One morning the day before Christmas Father Adam and family sat



BEFORE HER STOOD A FAIRY.

around their plain wooden table eating mush and milk. Adam spoke.

"Tis the holy time of Christmas, mother," he said, "and we should do an act of charity toward some one poorer than ourselves, even though it should be giving ever and ever so small a gift. The Lord gave his life for sufferers in his name on the day of his Nativity. What say you, mother?"

"You are right," agreed Mother Hannah. "There is the Widow David, who stands in great need. She has two children, and the wolves got among her sheep and killed three of the finest. She is trying hard to keep her children and herself. What say you to our sending her a bag of wheat and a small cheese?"

"Very good, mother," agreed Father Adam. "And as I shall have to watch the sheep and cow either Peter or Esther shall take the wheat and cheese to Widow David's cot."

"I'll go," offered Esther, "for Peter and mother are digging up the ground for the planting of vines in the spring."

So it was agreed that Esther should take the dogcart and make the journey over the mountain to the cottage of the Widow David. As soon as breakfast was over Esther tidied up the house and placed the noon meal—a loaf of bread, a jug of homemade wine and a small cheese—on the table. "Mother and Peter will be hungry after the forenoon spent in the garden," she said. "Poor father always carries his bread and cheese in his pocket and eats as he herds the sheep."

"Now, before going I shall fix the fire to hold till noonday; otherwise the house will be cold on mother's and Peter's return."

So saying, Esther picked up a huge log that lay beside the fireplace. "Ah, this is the log father said should burn our Christmas eve fire. It will soon be Christmas eve, and I'll throw the log on the flame and have the house cheery on the return of the dear ones." But just as Esther was lifting one end of the heavy log—the Yule log—a flash of light barked from the farther end and caused Esther to close her eyes. When she opened them again there before her stood a fairy. "Ah! I have come to bring you some Christmas cheer," said the fairy. "Your parents are good and deserving folk. They were adding their labor to help the needy widow. So here is a bit of good fortune for you and yours, little helpful maid. Take of it for yourselves and for those about you who are in need." Then, before Esther could reply, the fairy had disappeared, leaving on the hearth a bag of gold.

The three sat up and called in her parents and mother. When the father looked into the bag of gold he said that there was enough there to keep them all in comfort for the rest of their lives and which to help their less fortunate neighbors as well.

And you may be sure there was a merry Christmas for the family, with many good wishes for the kind fairy.

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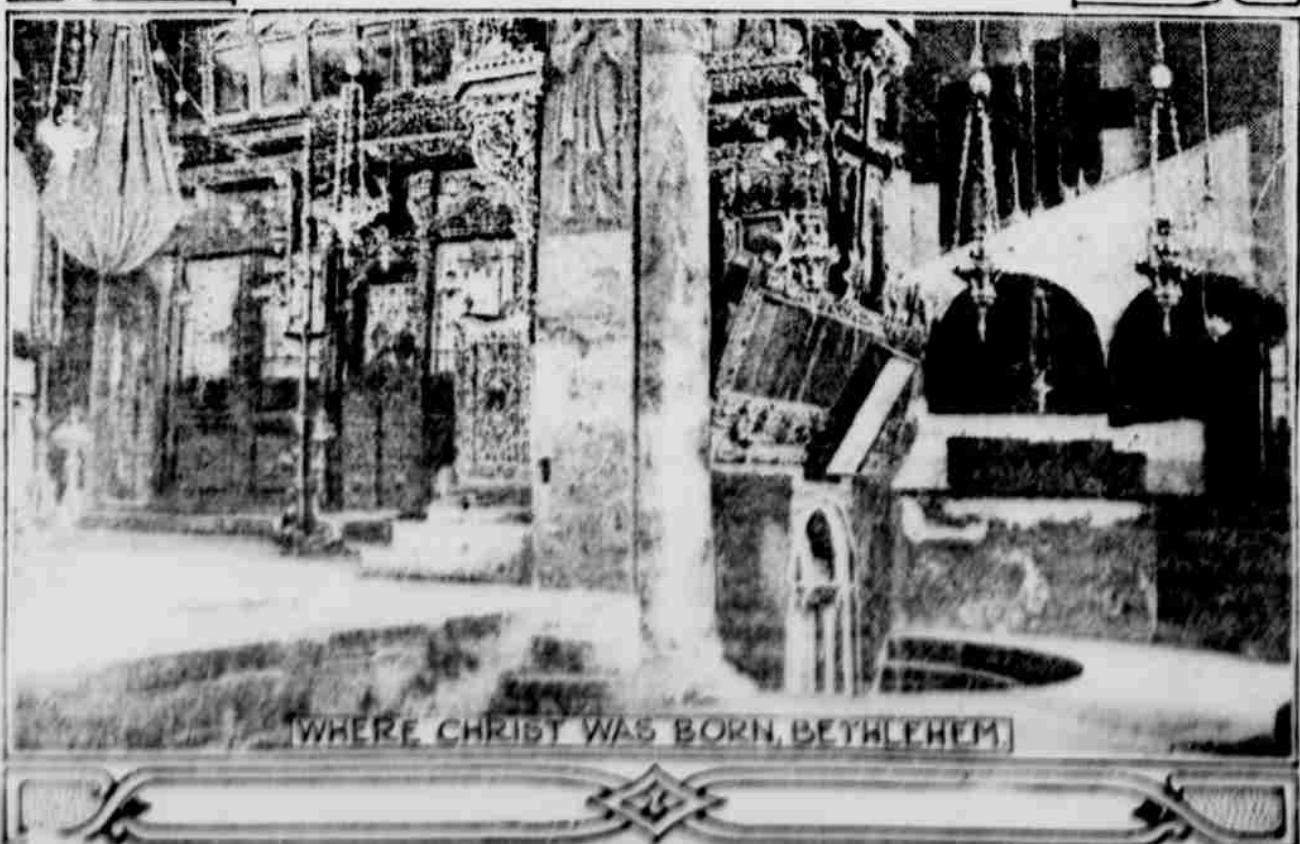


## Good Christian Men Rejoice.



2. Good Christian men, rejoice  
With heart, and soul, and voice;  
Now ye hear of endless bliss:  
Joy! Joy!  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He hath oped the heav'nly door,  
And man is blessed evermore.  
Christ was born for this!

3. Good Christian men, rejoice  
With heart, and soul, and voice;  
Now ye need not fear the grave:  
Peace! Peace!  
Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all,  
To gain His everlasting hall:  
Christ was born to save!



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