

CHAMBERS & CHAMBERS

A Joyous Christmas To Our Patrons, Friends and Everybody



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"Christmas Gift I Should Like to Be Able to Give Bud"

By EDGAR A. GUEST

(From the December Rotarian)
That boy of mine, Buddy, celebrated his tenth birthday the seventh of last July and at that time I thought he had asked for and received almost everything a boy could want.

But here is Christmas Day approaching and I find his wants, publicly expressed and artfully implied are as numerous as ever. It seems to be no trouble to Bud whatever he is in want. He can begin wanting something early in the morning and keep it up all day, and just as he is dropping off to sleep at night he will rouse himself to remind you of a new want that will need attention as soon as the sun comes up. This is all right; it is evidence of a normal boyhood and a healthy condition. If I had a ten-year-old boy who didn't want anything I should be worrying about him. The times I ask Bud what he wants, and he replies "nothing." I know he is running a high fever and is threatened with something. As soon as he begins to want again I know he is convalescing.

This year his Christmas wants are many and natural. He has informed me that he wants a regular football suit, with headgear, cleated shoes, a nose guard, and a spine protector.

He wants a regular football to go with it.

He wants a model airplane. He has described it minutely. It has a wing spread of three feet; is built like a regular plane and has a motor in it which will carry it up and about for three hundred feet. He understands that I can get one for \$8 or \$9—not any more than that; he thinks probably less!

He wants a new bicycle, and several books which he has named and written down for me.

He wants a drawing set, a couple of good games, and—

But why go on? The list wouldn't be complete if I wrote it all down. Tomorrow there will be additions and before the Rotarian can print this article the list will have grown several feet. He will go right on wanting until Christmas Eve, and begin wanting again the day after Santa has filled his stocking.

Lately I have been thinking about these wants of his. I am glad to gratify his whims and wishes as far as possible. Giving him what I can afford is my best fun. Sometimes I have a real thrill of pleasure by giving him something which is just a little beyond my means, an ex-

pensive toy for which I have to step out of bounds or deprive myself.

I know better. No one needs to tell me that I am doing a foolish thing. It would be better for him, too, if I dealt with him more wisely and less liberally. I do it for purely selfish reasons—I like the joy of giving him things. It is self-gratification purely. Somehow or other I have a secret exultation of pride whenever I hear him shout happily to his playmates:

"Oh, fellows, come on over and see this American League baseball my father just brought home for me!"

There's no use denying it—it

may not be for his good; they may not last beyond the day, and it is safe to add that most of them will have been forgotten before another Christmas rolls around. These Christmas gifts, however, will be to me symbols of my love for him; symbols, in a way, of the greater things I would do if the power were mine. I would not stop with toys this Christmas. If I could give all that I would like to bestow upon him, I would equip him for life.

He has learned that Santa Claus is his father, but if his father could truly learn how to be Santa Claus he would arrive at Bud's bedside with a wonderful

He's Just Plain "Eddie" Guest

Edgar A. Guest, "The Poet of the Plain People," is "Eddie" Guest to an ever-growing host of friends. He was born in Birmingham, England, and started his newspaper career as office boy on the Detroit Free Press in 1895. Later he became a reporter, then got the exchange desk and the poetic urge simultaneously. For a year or so afterwards he covered the "crime beat" and wrote verse between fire alarms. Then he was relieved, with orders to be funny at the rat of a column a day. His verse and humor were well received, for Eddie knows his public with that intimate knowledge of newspaper men. The homely philosophy he expresses is applicable anywhere and always meets ready response.

His first book of verse was privately printed in 1910, with the assistance of his brother, a printer. The partners had but one case of type, and often after setting six pages of verse they ran out of "e's" and had to wait till the sheets were run off and the type distributed. They printed 800 slender volumes in this fashion and in 1912 handled 1500 copies of "Just Glad Things" in similar style.

In 1914, Detroit Rotarians urged him to publish 3500 copies of his third volume, "Breakfast Table Chat." Brother Harry superintended the job, one Rotarian had the type set, another handled the presswork, and a third put it through his bindery. Eddie thought it a risky venture, but it paid expenses.

A publisher caught the enthusiasm in 1916 and brought out "A Heap O' Livin'," which went through eight editions in twenty months. Since then three additional volumes of verse have been published.

Between times he studied billiards, golf—and human nature. The ten-year-old son "Bud" has figured so frequently in Eddie's verse that we wondered what his father would give him for Christmas. This article is the answer.

is good to be known even among the small boys of your street as the kind of a father who brings real league baseballs home to his son.

So this Christmas I shall probably overdo the Santa Claus act. I shall give more than he ought to have and probably more than he can really appreciate. I shall go into the toy store to buy him one or two good games, and wind up by buying several things which he hasn't asked for, but which strikes me as being things he will get some pleasure out of. That's my weakness. So long as I have money I can't escape the lure of a toy shop. All the clerk has to do is to show me something Bud hasn't already had and I'll pay the price and have it sent home. Mother doesn't trust me alone in a toy department any more than a drunkard's wife would send her inebriate husband into a blind pig to get a \$10 bill changed.

But what about Christmas and Bud? It's time when the old heart warms up a bit and seeks to do for those it loves all that it can for their happiness. Of course the heart has to keep one eye on the purse and the other eye on the forty or fifty others to be remembered also. However, it is out to do the handsome and in the cases of the children it will go the limit.

Personally I shall see to it that Bud's Christmas stocking will be filled. Mother and I will talk it over and plan it out and she'll put the brakes on my foolish impulses, but at the end nearly everything for which he has asked will be provided.

These are all things which money can buy. They are wishes which a little effort on my part can supply. They may or

pack on his back.

I would have in it all the big traits of manhood. I would give him the gift of honor and the gift of courage. He would take from me the knowledge that no gain and no goal is worth cheating for. He would walk the world fearing no man's voice. He might fall and he might suffer loss, but each morning would find him head high and unshamed.

With the gift of courage I would fit him for labor. He would meet his duties calmly. Whatever his task he would perform it to the best of his ability, believing in it, and believing also that when he had proved his worth in one spot, life would call him to another. I would make him brave enough to take defeat without being himself defeated. Further, I would have him gentle and modest in victory and unspolled by today's success and unspolled by today's success for the work of tomorrow.

I would give him a love of books, good books. He would look upon them as friends for a lifetime. He would become their friend and know their people. They hold the wisdom of the ages and are the truest of counselors. He can turn to them at all times. Their characters never change; never play false; never die. He who has good books is never without help in times of trial.

I would give Bud also the gift of good nature. This, of course, is not necessary to success, but it will smooth the way. Christs have become famous men, great artists and writers and painters and poets and statesmen and rulers of the world, but they did so not because they were Christs but in spite of the fact. They could have been just as great had they been a little kinder and they

would have been much happier. The gift of good nature would make Bud patient with the little shortcomings of his fellows; he would be not so wrapped up in himself and his own ambitions but what he could remember and understand the difficulties of others. He would have time to be friendly and time for the little gracious acts of life which make for comradeship. To stand alone at the topmost peak of conquest may be fame, but it is not a happy state.

I would give him a right value of money. He would be neither a slave to the dollar nor a despiser of it. He would have a bank account and would know that in that bank he was safeguarding his self-respect. He would grow to look upon his money as the tangible evidence of the fact that he had worked. He would provide for himself and for those dependent upon him all that was necessary to comfort and happiness, and against the inevitable penalties of age he would build his safeguards. To become old without provision is the bitterest of all fates. But I would not have him put into the bank the money which he should give away or the coins which he might rightfully be spent. I would not have him save the dollar which would relieve the distress of a poorer man. I would not have his bank account grow great while his soul shrivels. I should hate to think that he could look with pride upon a miser's hoard and not see within it the joys which he could and should have given to those about him. I want him to pay his way; to bear his share of life's expenses, to be generous with others, and to be saving after that.

I would give him the gift of broad-mindedness. I would spare him the petty narrowness of the bigot. He would sneer at no man's religion and enlarge upon no man's faults. I would keep him free from sin himself, but tolerant with all who sin. He would have understanding and sympathy. He would know that where he is strong others may be weak, and where he is pitifully weak others are strong. To be really better than his neighbor he must be kinder and gentler and truer and more patient. Merely to be virtuous is not enough. One can possess all the virtues and still be despised. He must respect the freedom of others and their right to live their lives as they choose. He has lived well who has set a good example to go beyond that is neither necessary nor kind.

I would give him the gift of responsibility. I would have him use his brains for thinking purposes. He would leave no task unfinished, and spurn no little task which he could do. He would not measure his work by the clock, but by his employer's advantage. If he could advance the interests of his employer ever so little by going out of his way, that he would do. At least he should never offer the excuse, when failure came to him, "I didn't think."

I would give him the gift of reverence that he might willingly pay his tribute to the sacred things of life. Not alone to those things which have been especially vested with a sacred character through any special theology but the reverence which readily responds to any form of virtue, the reverence which is a part of true chivalry and is not to be dazzled by mere display of ostentation.

I would give him the gift of health that he might never give his character warped through pain and suffering; that he might rejoice in his youthful strength and in muscles responding swiftly to their tasks; that he might be free of those petty hates and carping fancies which are often the outward signs of a sickly body.

I would give him a will that should be firm enough to overcome obstacles, yet elastic enough to yield to reason. A will that would save him from the embarrassments of too-ready assent to the claims of specious fellowship; yet one which would also be gracious enough to admit mistakes and never blindly obstinate.

I could go on with this list still further. Bud has not asked for these things, nor does he know he needs them. Unfortunately there is a difference between wants and needs. What he thinks he wants I can buy for him; what I know he needs, I can only wish for. But having lived through many years of life and knowing what shortly he will have to face I want to see him well equipped.

If I were Santa Claus I would give him all these gifts. He might not know that he was receiving them and might not know their worth. But as I slipped them into the stocking of his mind I would whisper to him as he slept:

"This, my boy, will bring you safely through the perils of manhood; this will assure to you the respect of all; this little gift of courage will enable you to rise from failure to victory, and this gift of honor will bring with it the precious boon of sleep."

Life is not hard to live if we but know it. Most of the difficulties we encounter we ourselves have made. If we could now make a fresh start and wipe out all the petty jealousies we have builded; destroy the false idols of sham and pride and self-florification we have thrown up; if we could forget the lies we have told and the meannesses we have done, our bickerings and our hatreds, and start anew to neighbor here with one another, knowing what we have now learned, how different we should try to live. And this is what I hope for Bud. That he will come to the world when it has need of him, ready to do his best in its service; that he shall know that as he shall take so must he expect to give; that he cannot injure his neighbor without dealing a much worse injury to himself; that nothing which afterwards must be lived down is ever worth its profit in gain or glory and that he alone is responsible for his future.

These would be rich gifts to give, and I can only wish that I could bestow them. But the very wish carries with it the realization that it is my obligation. I cannot be Santa Claus. I have no magic powers. As his father I am limited to the means within my command. In so far as those means go I conceive it to be my duty to provide him with the best equipment possible. Since it is my pleasure extravagantly to supply his wants from time to time; since I gladly spend more money than I should upon his toys that he may be happy, should I not stand ready and wil-

ling to go just as far for him that he may be truly successful? To me he must look for guidance and help. From me must come his training if he is ever to know the love of friends and the respect of his associates.

After all, these Christmas wishes of mine perhaps I can give to him—not all this Christmas, but through the Christmas days to come. Perhaps I may be able to

show him the right way to live; what men will expect and what he may in honor grant. To do this may cost me much in personal pleasure; much in time which I might spend upon myself, much thought and self-denial, but like the toy, which I cannot well afford, yet gladly give, extravagant though this expenditure of self may seem, I shall gladly make the effort.

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God's century old promise was then fulfilled to His people. Jesus Christ did arrive in accordance with the prophets.

Let us worshipfully and humbly observe the memory of this grand and holy commencement, the arrival of Our Master and Teacher of Peace, Love and Truth.

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John J. Rottle

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