

It's Christmas Eve in Hollywood, and a child star has a wonderful secret to share with her friend Henry

TO COME UNTO ME



By **ROBERT NATHAN**

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"Let's pray," Lettice told Henry, certain that she knew who the baby was.

THAT YEAR there were very few houses for rent anywhere, and people lived wherever they could. Only the rich were able to buy an entire house, with wood and plaster walls, a rose garden, and a bathroom.

Nevertheless, on Christmas Eve both rich and poor enjoyed the spirit of the season; for the rich gave each other gifts, and the poor were delighted with the sight of the Christmas trees which, painted white, blue, and even green, and decorated with colored lights, twinkled everywhere along the public highways.

At the house of a very famous man a party was in progress. Since this man was the president of a motion-picture studio, his guests were for the most part motion-picture actors and actresses, which is to say that they were the most beautiful and famous people in the world. This did not make them as happy as might have been expected; and they joined in the singing of Christmas carols with hearts no less lonely and empty than those of poor people who also wished to be loved.

Among these famous and beautiful people, were two children, Henry and Lettice. Everybody in the world knew what they looked like, what they talked like, what their favorite games were, what they wore, and what they liked to eat. But what no one knew was what was in their hearts because their hearts were the hearts of children.

And so, while the fiddles scraped, while the great singers sang, and while the footmen passed about among the guests with glasses of champagne and punch and little sandwiches in the shape of snowflakes and crescent moons and gingersnaps for the children, Lettice went tiptoeing to Henry in one corner of the great room and asked him, "What are you doing?"

To which Henry replied, "Nothing."

However, nothing to a child is so crowded with dreams as *nothing*. And so, when Lettice said, "I know a wonderful secret," Henry followed her out of the room and down the long hall and out into the garden, prepared for all the beautiful things without a name which he had been dreaming about.

But all he saw at the end of the garden was a kind of stable, with a little light over the door. "I don't think that's so wonderful," he said.

"That's because you don't know," said Lettice. "Don't know what?" asked Henry.

IN ANSWER, Lettice opened the door of the stable. And there, lying in a crib made of an old manger, was a baby.

"Now what do you think?" said Lettice triumphantly.

"I don't think it's wonderful at all."

"Do you think maybe it's Baby Jesus?" asked Lettice.

"I don't know," said Henry. "I never saw it before."

"I wish it was Baby Jesus," said Lettice, "because then we could pray."

"You can pray if you want to," said Henry, "on account of you wouldn't know who it was till afterward anyhow."

"I can say 'Now I lay me' and the Lord's Prayer," said Lettice.

"All right," said Henry. "I don't mind."

So the two children knelt on the floor of the tool shed, in front of the baby, whose father and mother, having no other place to live at the moment, were helping the cook at the big house wash dishes in return for a place to stay.

"Our Father which art in Heaven," said Lettice. "Hallowed be Thy name . . ."

AND ALL AROUND THEM as they knelt, the invisible air was peopled with the unseen faces of the past, with saints and captains, beggars and kings, with the smiling children, the dreaming children into whose hands, year after year, God had delivered His world, into whose hearts, endlessly renewed, He had put His love, into whose keeping He had given His Son.

For it is in the hands of the children that all things are placed, both good and evil, the poem and the sword, the knowledge of distant worlds, the hope of peace, and the fruitfulness of earth.

"I pray the Lord my soul to keep,"

In the big house they sang "O Little Star of Bethlehem," and Lettice's mother and Henry's father wondered where they were. And in the kitchen the two new helpers smiled at each other across the soapy water. They did not expect very much for their child. Perhaps he might grow up to be a good carpenter.

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COVER:



There is one in every home—a hopeful child waiting for Santa and his bag of gifts. Our gift to you?—an issue of entertaining features. Photo by Doris Pinney.

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