The Kind Deeds Messenger

UNIVERSAL KINSHIP

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"Alexander and Caesar and myself founded empires, but upon what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love. And today, while my armies have forgotten me, millions would die for Him. What an abyss between my misery and the eternal reign of Christ."—*Napoleon's tribute to Christ, whose birthday we celebrate this month (written at St. Helena).*

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Adapted from CHARLES DICKENS

BY DOLORES WILKENS KENT

"I am the spirit of Christmas. Come with me," said the child.

ONCE upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his office. It was cold, biting weather with a thick fog, and he could hear the people outside go wheezing up and down, stamping their feet upon the pavement-stones to warm them.

It was just three o'clock, but it was quite dark already, and lights were dimly shining in the offices. The door of Scrooge's room was open so that he could see into the outer one, where his clerk sat, copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire—but that of his clerk was so much smaller it looked like one coal.

"A Merry Christmas, Uncle," cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, and he had been walking so rapidly in the fog and cold that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome and his eyes sparkled. "A Merry Christmas," repeated he.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

"Christmas a humbug, Uncle?" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be cross? You're rich enough."

Scrooge said "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug!"

Don't be angry, uncle. Come, dine with us tomorrow. Christmas is a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time, when we can help others to be happy. Come be happy with us tomorrow, won't you, Uncle?"

"No—I won't!" roared Scrooge. "Good afternoon."

"Well—a Merry Christmas to you, anyway, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge. "And a happy New Year!" said his nephew.

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

With a hearty Christmas greeting to the clerk, Scrooge's nephew left—and Scrooge felt doubly irritaed to hear the clerk warmly return his good wishes.

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At last the time to close the office arrived and Scrooge said grudgingly to his clerk, "You'll want all tomorrow, I suppose?"

The clerk smiled faintly, "Yes, sir, if I may?"

"I suppose you must," said Scrooge, buttoning his heavy overcoat to the chin. "Be here all the earlier next morning."

Scrooge took his lonely dinner in a shabby little restaurant and went home to bed. He lived in a gloomy old house and had a large gloomy room—but he didn't care a button—it was cheap—and he hated to spend money. He was tired; so undressed quickly and went to bed.

Suddenly he awoke. It was so dark that he could scarcely see the window-pane. But then the clock struck—so he listened for the hour; just twelve o'clock.

What was this? A bright light shone about him, and the strangest sight met his eyes—for right in front of him stood a child—a beautiful boy, dressed all in green, with a red cap on his head.

Scrooge sat up in bed in amazement. "Who are you?" he gasped. And the Child said, in a clear, bell-like voice, "I am the Spirit of Christmas. Come with me."

Now was the time for Scrooge to say "Bah!" and "Humbug!"—but somehow he couldn't. He just stared and stared. The Child repeated, "Come with me" and beckoned. Scrooge found himself out of bed and dressing hurriedly, bundling up in his muffler and overcoat, as though he knew he was going a great distance.

The Child stretched out his hand and clasped Scrooge's—there seemed such strength and warmth in the pressure. As they turned to go out, Scrooge felt something rub gently against his leg. He looked down. A dog! It couldn't be—he rubbed his eyes—yes, it was Ben, old Ben, whom Scrooge had dearly loved in his boyhood and sadly missed when he died. The Child smiled. "He will go with us," he said gently, and together they passed out of the room and the gloomy old house—the Child, the Man and the Dog.

The city had vanished—the darkness and the fog were gone. It was a cold, clear winter day with snow upon the ground. "Good heaven!" said Scrooge. "I was born in this place. I was a boy here!"

The Child gazed upon him mildly, and he felt the joy and hope of long ago. They walked upon the road. A little town appeared in the distance. Some shaggy ponies were trotting toward them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country carts and wagons, driven by farmers. They laughed and shouted until the broad fields were filled with merry music and the crisp air laughed with them.

They called "Merry Christmas" to one another, and Scrooge rejoiced to hear it. And then—they were in a school-room, and a boy sat at his desk wondering when the call would come to go home—glancing anxiously at the door. It opened and a little girl came darting in and putting her arms around the boy's neck said "I am come to bring you home, dear brother. Home for Christmas." And it was Fan—the boy was Scrooge—Fan, his little sister, she had died long years ago.

Then they were alone again—the Child, Scrooge and the Dog, who pressed ever lovingly at his side. What was this? They were back in the city, with all the bustle and traffic. It was evening and the streets were lighted up. A young man was bending over something in the gutter—the dog beside Scrooge whined softly. The man lifted a tiny bedraggled kitten in his arms and stood up. Scrooge saw his face. It was himself—himself as a young man.

In front of them stood a big warehouse. The door was open.

"Do you recognize it?" asked the Child. "Of course, I worked there!" said Scrooge in great excitement. They went in following the young man with the kitten, into an office, where an old gentleman was sitting with a high hat on, so high that if he had been much taller it would have hit the ceiling.

Scrooge cried out, "Why, it's old Fezziweg! Bless his heart; it's Fezziweg alive again!"

"See what I have found, sir," said young Scrooge, showing him the little kitten.

"Bless my soul," said old Fezziweg, "a poor little cat, half starved. Take it upstairs, Ebenezer, take it up to the girls. They will care for it. Then send Dick Wilkins to me. For no more work tonight. Christmas Eve, boys, Christmas Eve!"

Ebenezer went out with the Cat, and the Child, Scrooge and the Dog watched while old Fezziweg bustled about directing the clerks. In a little while everything movable was cleared away in the big main room of the warehouse. The floor was swept. The young men and women employed in the business came trooping in and decorated the walls with greens, holly and mistletoe.

In came an orchestra and tuned their instruments like fifty stomach-aches. And in came Mrs. Fezziweg, one vast substantial smile and the three beaming, pretty Miss Fezziwegs. Back came young Ebenezer Scrooge, leaving the kitten fed, safe and warm in the living quarters upstairs.

What a dance they had. Scrooge felt young, happy and gay again as he watched. What would his business friends think if they could know how he felt. What would his clerk? He felt the Child's glance.

"What is the matter?" said the Child.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think," the Child insisted.

"No," said Scrooge, "I should like to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."

His former self turned down all the lights as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge, the Child and the Dog stood side by side in the open air. Before them was the poor, four-roomed house of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk, and the Child, Scrooge and the Dog entered and stood watching.

The plain rooms were spotlessly clean and made home-like by taste and care. Mrs. Cratchit in a shabby dress made gay by ribbons, for they are cheap, and her second daughter Belinda, also gay in ribbons, were busy laying the table. Master Peter Cratchit was all dressed up in a high white collar of his father's and had a hard time to keep the corners out of the saucepan of potatoes he was plunging a fork into to test their cooking. While the two smaller Cratchits, a boy and a girl, were dancing about, getting in everybody's way. "What has happened to your father?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha late by a good half an hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke. "Here's Martha, Mother. Hurrah!" cried the two young Cratchits.

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit kissing her a dozen times and

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lovingly taking off her hat and coat for her. Martha worked for a milliner, and didn't get home often.

"Here's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid and in came Bob, Scrooge's clerk, with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas, for Tiny Tim. He bore a little crutch and his limbs were supported by an iron frame. "Why, where's Martha?" said Bob, looking around. "Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Not coming!" said Bob. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha couldn't see him disappointed even in a joke, so she came out from behind the closet door and ran into his arms. Then such a bustle as ensued, and such a dinner as there was—so pitifully simple, but dressed with the sauce of love, kindness and good cheer. The crowning point was the pudding—that came in held proudly aloft by Mrs. Cratchit—round like a speckled cannon-ball with a great sprig of holly stuck in the top. Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said so. At last the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept and the fire made up. Cider, apples and oranges were laid upon the table and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. The Cratchit family sat around the fire, and while the chestnuts sputtered and crackled noisily Bob Cratchit raised his glass of cider and proposed a toast—"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears, God bless us!"

They drank it gravely—then Mrs. Cratchit asked what had kept Martha so late in coming. "Poor old Mr. Tugby's sick again, so I ran in to cheer him," said Martha smiling. "He was in a sad way last week, it had grown harder and harder for him to feed his old dog and horse—not being able to work and make the money for their keep. But what do you think, father, mother?" Martha beamed happily as she turned from one parent to the other. "A rich lady heard about it and she came herself and left enough money for Mr. Tugby to buy food for all of them for many a long day, and sent a real Christmas dinner all cooked—and best of all—she's coming every week to see that Mr. Tugby has care and comfort."

Mrs. Cratchit clapped her hands happily and Bob Cratchit nodded, smiling with joy. "That's just what I always say, if you're kind and love your neighbors and your animals as Tugby does, good luck will come to you, and it has. Many's the time I've seen Tugby give his lunch to some poor hungry dog or cat and go out of his way to find them a home, and heaven knows there's enough of them. It makes my heart ache to think of all the starving animals in this big city tonight. Then—if Tugby saw any man hurting a horse—in the days when he was hale and strong—it was the last time he'd do it, when Tugby got through with him!" and Bob Cratchit took a long drink of cider with a relish.

"Let's drink to Mr. Scrooge," said he, "The Founder of the Feast!"

"Founder of the Feast, indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here, I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children, Christmas Day!"

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's" said Mrs. Cratchit, "but not for his, the mean, stingy old man!"

The children drank the toast after her but it was the first of their proceedings that had no heart to it. Tiny Tim drank last of all.

The Child looked at old Scrooge—he shrank away and looked down—he felt so ashamed of the man he had been—the shadow his very name had cast upon the happy family. The dog pressed closer to his side and gently licked his hand.

Then Bob proposed, "A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears, again. God bless us!" Which the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all. He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his little withered hand in his own, as if he wished to keep him by his side and feared he might be taken from him.

"Child," said Scrooge with an interest he had never felt before, "Tell me if Tiny Tim will live?"

"I see a vacant chair in the chimney corner and a crutch without an owner," said the Child sadly. "If Tiny Tim hasn't the care that money brings, another Christmas will not find him here."

Scrooge started, and found himself in bed. The voice of the Child was still ringing in his ears. He could still feel the loving pressure of old Ben, his dog, but the gloomy room was empty in the pale morning light that filtered through the dingy window-panes.

Scrooge jumped out of bed with a bound. He was so flustered and so glowing with good intentions that he could hardly dress, but he finally did so, turning his garments in and out in hands that trembled with joyous haste. "I don't know what to do first," he cried. "I wonder what day this is. Was it all a dream? Oh, I feel so happy! I am as merry as a school boy!"

Running to the window he opened it and put out his head. No fog, no wind; clear, bright, golden sunshine—sweet fresh air, and merry bells ringing, ringing—Oh, glorious, glorious!

"What's today?" cried Scrooge, calling to a boy in Sunday clothes who was looking about him.

"Today!" replied the boy. "Why, Christmas Day!"

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself, "then I havn't missed. Oh, what a Christmas it is going to be!"

He put on his very best clothes and at last got out in the streets. The people were pouring forth to church and to feasts, and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded everyone with a delighted smile. He looked so pleasant that three or four good fellows said, "Good morning, Sir! A Merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said afterwards that those were the blithest sounds he had ever heard.

He walked to the grocers, and what an order he gave—every good thing imaginable for a Christmas dinner—with candy and delicate fruits and cakes, and where was all this to go? To Bob Cratchit's—bless you—straight to Bob Cratchit's little four-room house. And not a word to go with it as to who sent these things, not a word—it was a surprise.

Then chuckling he went off to church—still, chuckling, walked about the streets and watched the people hurrying to and fro—smiled upon the children and patted dogs upon the head—and found that everything could give him pleasure. He never dreamed that any walk, that anything, could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times before he had the

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courage to go up and ring. But he made a dash and did it.

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl, very.

"He's in the dining-room, Sir. I'll show you upstairs if you please."

"Thank'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room doorknob. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in and around the door. They, his nephew and niece, were looking at the table that was spread out in great array for the Christmas dinner.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how they started. "Why, bless my soul!" cried Fred. "Who's that?"

"It's I, your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It was a mercy they didn't shake his hand off. Nothing heartier could ever have been than their greeting, and the greetings of the other guests when they came! Wonderful party—wonderful games—wonderful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. If he could only be there early and catch Bob Cratchit coming late!

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was fully eighteen minutes past his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open so he could watch the little outer office.

Cratchit's hat was off before he opened the door—the overcoat and muffler were off in a jiffy, and he was on his stool driving away with his pen for dear life.

"Hello!" growled Scrooge, in the voice he used to have, as nearly as he could make it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, Sir," said Bob Cratchit, "I am behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes, I think you are. Step this way, Sir, if you please."

"Its only once a year, Sir," pleaded Bob, appearing at the door. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, Sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool and giving Bob such a dig in the ribs that he staggered back into the outer offices again, "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!" Scrooge kept his word. He raised Bob Cratchit's salary—helped his struggling family and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, but got well and strong under good medical care, he was a second father.

It wasn't only human friends he thought for on that Christmas Day—for late at night Scrooge sat writing a check for a sum of money, so big that it was hardly believable—and sent it to a society that took care of animals—sent it in memory of his old dog Ben—that would enable them to gather in from far and wide upon the city streets the starved and suffering creatures. And upon New Years Day at this same society's big shelter, what a second feast was held! They even had a tree that had the foods animals like upon it—and in many of the outside squares trees were decorated with strings of pop-corn, cookies, seeds and dainties that the birds enjoy, the birds that suffer so in the bitter cold of winter.

Scrooge became a friend to all, man, beast and bird, rich and poor, great and small. Some people laughed at the change in him—but he let them laugh and did not care. And it was always said that he knew how to keep Christmas better—far better—than most people.

And so, as Tiny Tim observed—"A Merry Christmas and God Bless Us, Every One."

The end.

SCHOOL PROJECTS

The following story comes to us from Lee McCleary, fourth grade, Cornell School, Albany, one that we find most appropriate for our Christmas issue.

We have already given the projects from Palomares and Tennyson Schools and we appeal to all the schools to contribute to this project so that they may be represented in the visual program that we are compiling for school use throughout the state.

Prize Essay

TWO LITTLE LOST LAMBS

(True)

We were out driving one Sunday, north of Richmond, and we stopped by a field where a herd of sheep were grazing. Among the herd there were two little lambs separated from their mothers by a fence shutting off the slough from their pasture grounds.

The mother sheep kept calling to their little ones, to hear them answer back in a frightened little voice. They were so nervous they could hardly eat for fear of the safety of the young lambs. The rest of the herd kept on grazing and didn't pay the slightest attention to their cries.

Feeling sorry for them, I thought I would like to make them happy once more. My brother and I crossed the field and climbed upon a fence, which had a long, narrow strip of board at the bottom and barbed-wire at the top and in between, which made it very hard to keep your balance. Under this fence was a slough which was about six inches deep.

We climbed along this fence, to where the little lambs were and they became quite frightened at our actions and didn't realize we were trying to help them.

One of the lambs in his effort to escape from me, tried to force his way through the wire of the locked gate. In spite of all his frantic efforts he was caught. I rushed up, and folded my arms around him. I gave a few tugs and loosened him from the wire, then lifted him over the fence. Away he went to his mother with a leap and a bound. His mother, who was very glad to see him, and who had been very anxious for his safe return, ran to meet him.

My brother and I tried to get the other little lamb which was very frightened and ran back to the slough in the corner of the fence, which I am very sorry to say we could not get him out of.

LEE MCCLEARY,
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HUMANE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The next meeting of Mr. Vierling Kersey's Committee on Humane Education will take place on January 14th, 1931.

Sub-committees to formulate programs are now being formed by leaders of education in different parts of the state. Full information will be published in our January number!

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