



HANGING UP THE STOCKINGS

A Shepherd's Christmas

By Temple Bailey

The boy's lantern glowed like a will-o'-the-wisp as he came down the dark mountain path to the little church. Soon other lanterns joined his, and now and then the flickering light played on the bright dress of a girl or the eager face of a child, but for the most part the shadowy figures gave no hint of face or degree, until at last the little crowd gathered into a poorly lighted room, where the flare of an oil lamp showed a motley gathering of country people.

As the boy slouched toward a seat a girl stopped him. She wore a pink knitted hood, and her cheeks rivalled the color of her head-covering.

"Merry Christmas," she said, and gave him a coquettish glance from her bright eyes as he returned her greeting.

The boy walked by her side a little awkwardly, but unafraid. He was 19, and he lived on the hills. It was the time for love, and the girl was his chosen mate. After the festivities they would go up the dark path together, and he would kiss her at the door of her father's cabin, and that would be their betrothal.

"They sat together on the front bench and read from the same hymn book. The boy sang softly. He would not let out his voice in the little room; it was only on the mountain top that the deep tones rang like a bell as he chanted a wild song to his sheep.

The thought of the sheep brought uneasiness. Up there on the mountain his flock lay waiting for him to come and open to them the shelter of their shed, but the temptation to go adventuring had been great, and the smile of the pink-cheeked girl, the middle, the light, the companionship, had lured him from the lonely watch under the stars.

Then the girl whispered to him, and he forgot care, until a little later an outer door opened and a man stepped in, his shoulders white with glittering flakes.

"It's snowin'," said the boy.

The girl nodded, but kept her eyes on the singer, where four small girls recited a Christmas poem in unison.

Again the boy's thoughts flew to the mountain, where the snow was blowing and drifting and drifting against a closed door, and where the patient flock, nose to nose and body to body for warmth, bleated for the shepherd who did not come.

"At last he moved restlessly. 'I've got to go,' he said.

"No, you hain't," her voice pleaded.

"It's a fearful storm," he whispered. "Hear the wind, an' the sheep are out."

"They hain't a-goin' to hurt," she whispered back, "an' you got to go home with me."

"Your pap's here," he said.

"If you don't stay," and now she threatened querulously, "if you don't stay, I'll go home with Jed!"

The boy looked at her, at her ro-

red cheeks, at her blue eyes, at the thin line of her scarlet lips. "But the sheep," he said, uncertainly.

The new minister was speaking enthusiastically, yearning to move this feckless people. The boy listened with face aghast. Through the long hours of his childhood he had sat in the sunshine and dreamed of great deeds. With the awakened impulses of youth, he had tramped the forests and wondered what life meant to the men who were not of the mountains. And now he knew, for the minister was voicing the doctrine of endeavor. It was not emotion that made the world better, but energy; one must first drive dreams into reality. The great men were those who were faithful in the little things.

"Remember that to-night we make merry," he said, finally, "but in the year to come we must work—work for the souls that are within the fold; and as the shepherd cares for his sheep, so must we care for those who are astray."

"As the shepherd cares for his sheep," The words struck the boy with the force of a blow. He half rose in his seat, but the girl reached out a restraining hand.

"Stay," she commanded, but the boy looked at her with unseeing eyes.

"I go to find my sheep," he said, and left her.

He found them in a close gray bunch against the shed. The wind howled around them, and the snow piled over them, and those that were nearest the door stumbled in stumby when the boy unlocked it.

Inside was a rude fireplace, and wood was piled beside it. The boy built a great fire, and the flock, retreating before the blaze, lay down on the trodden straw with soft sounds of content. Then the boy brought in two weak ewes, and laid them close to the flames, and watched them anxiously until they revived and staggered back to their fellows.

For a long time after that the boy sat in front of the fire and thought of the girl. She would go home with his rival and they would part at the door. The boy's face flushed and his hand clenched as he thought of the parting. Would she—

He rose and went to the door, and flung it open. Outside the stars were blotted out, the wind raged and the snow whirled. He fell as if between him and the girl there was the barrier of an unknown world. He had done his duty, and she had not understood.

He went in and laid down in front of the fire, with his great ear drawn over him.

"Let her go, let her go," sang the roaring flame. "Let her go, let her go," raged the wind outside. Then came the soft consolation from within. "You cared for the sheep, you cared for the sheep."

And so he fell asleep and was comforted, but his cheeks were wet.

In the morning he broke a path down the mountain. The sun shone and the sky was blue and the world sparkled after the storm. When he reached a certain clearing he stopped and looked over the glistening expanses toward the girl's house. Suddenly his eye was caught by a flash of pink. Through that white, white world the girl was coming to meet him!

As she came up, he put out both hands and took her smaller ones in his. "I had to go," he said.

The girl fell a few dignities in his manner. She blushed and trembled, then her lips quivered. "I went home with pap," she sobbed, her cheek against his coat.

"I'm glad you didn't go home with Jed," he said, simply, "an' that you knew just how I was a feelin'."

She did not know, would never know, what that night had meant to him, for it is not given to such women to touch the depths of a man's soul experience; but she knew love, and so she missed nothing, as in the stillness of the perfect Christmas morning she raised her radiant face to his.

Home-Made Christmas Sweets

Honey Candy.—One pint of white sugar, water enough to dissolve it, and four tablespoonfuls of honey. Boil until it becomes brittle on being dropped into water, and then when cooling.

Peanut Brittle.—One cupful of sugar. Put in frying pan and shake vigorously over hot fire until sugar is dissolved, add one-half cupful of chopped peanuts, shaking briskly. Be careful not to burn peanuts.

Chocolate Caramels.—One-half pound of chocolate, one-half cupful of milk, two cupfuls of light brown sugar, one cupful of molasses, and a piece of butter as big as a small apple. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour into a pan and cut into squares.

College Girls' Fudge.—Four ounces of chocolate, lump of butter size of an egg, two heaping cupfuls of granulated sugar, three-quarters of a cupful of sweet milk, mix and boil ten minutes. Take from fire and stir until it begins to harden. Add vanilla and chopped nuts. Turn into buttered tins and cool.

Everton Taffy.—Dissolve a pound of granulated sugar in a teacupful of water, add one-quarter pound of butter that has been beaten to a smooth cream; flavor with lemon; cook until it "cracks" from the spoon; turn out on greased pan or slab and mark into squares with a greased knife.

Cream Walnuts.—One pound of white sugar, one-half teacupful of water; put on the range and boil until it threads—flavor well with vanilla, remove from the fire and stir until white and creamy. When cool enough to handle, roll into balls, press walnut halves into the sides, and drop into granulated sugar, shaking violently for a second or two.

Fruit Nougat.—Remove the shrunken skin from a pint of roasted peanuts and one-quarter of a pound of almonds by dropping for a moment into boiling water. Chop one-half pint each of figs, citron, raisins (seeded or seedless) and candied orange peel. Moisten two pounds of sugar with a little vinegar, add a heaping tablespoonful of butter, and cook until almost hard, but not brittle. Beat well, adding the fruit and nuts, pour on a wet cloth and roll up like a pudding, slicing off candy in pieces after it is cold.

Popcorn Balls.—Pop corn and only take the kernels which are all popped out; make a syrup of the following: One cupful granulated sugar, two cupfuls molasses, butter the size of a walnut, tablespoonful vinegar; boil without stirring until it spins a thread and then pour over the corn, forming into balls before it cools; lay on buttered dish.

Cream Nut Fudge.—Bring slowly to boiling point two cupfuls of granulated sugar and two-thirds of a cupful of milk. Boil hard until a soft ball can be formed by dropping a little in cold water, then add one tablespoonful of butter. Remove from the fire and add vanilla to suit the taste and one cupful of chopped nuts; stir until smooth, then pour into a buttered pan to the depth of half an inch and block into squares.

Contracts.

"My husband's attention to me when I am away is irremittent. I get a letter every day. You don't hear so often, Mrs. Jones." "No, my husband's attention is not of the irremittent kind. He always includes a check."

CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY.

Its Date First Set as December 25 by Hippolytus.

In 225 Hippolytus, a theologian, announced that as a result of careful research he had determined that Jesus was born on a Wednesday, on the twenty-fifth of December.

He is regarded as the original authority for celebrating Christmas on that date. A later theologian declared March 28 as the date of Christ's birth, and he based his theory on Jewish tra-

ditions, that the world was created at the period of the vernal equinox, or about March 25, was taken by both writers as a starting point upon which to base their calculations.

They held that this would naturally be the period of the creation of the new order of things springing from the incarnation.

Just when the celebration of Christmas as a religious festival began is not known, or, at least, has not been definitely established.

The festival was established by Telesphoros during the second century, but this authority has long been discredited.

Other authorities, more highly regarded, state that the festival of the Nativity was instituted at Antioch in 372.

Some of the Christians of the early ages held their Christmas celebration in April, others in May and still others in June.

It was not thought likely that the shepherds would have been watching

their flocks by night in December, even in India, which is apt to experience cold and rainy weather at that season.

Still it is the spirit of the time, and not the day itself, that is observed with such rejoicing, and the Christmas celebration serves as a pleasant break in the monotony of winter.

Hippolytus selected the actual birth of Christ as the beginning of a new era, while other theologians have placed the beginning at the time of the annunciation to the angels.

