

CHRISTMAS.

BY SUSAN COOLIDGE.

How did they keep their Christmas then, he little fair Christies? How long ago? O, many there were to be housed and fed, And there was no place in the inn, they said, To lodge with the cattle and not with men. The ox and the ass they munched their hay, They munched and they slumbered, wondering not.

And in the midnight cold and blue The shepherds slept, and the sheep slept too, Till the angels' song and the bright star ray Guided them.

Even then the wise men knelt and praised, And only the shepherds came to see, And the rest of the world cared not at all. For the oxen in the stall; And we are angry and sad.

That such a dull, hard thing should be!

How do we keep his birthday now? We ring the bells and we raise the strain, And the children sing and the mothers weep, And bid the tap-tap twinkle fast. And feast and frolic—and then we go Back to the same old lives again.

And we so better, then, than they? We are not angry, we are not sad to see? To them a helpless babe—*to us* He shuns a Saviour glorious.

Our child, our friend, our all—*yet we* Are half asleep this Christmas day.

A COMMONPLACE CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY ROBERT J. BURDETTE.

It was not a very cheerful apartment in which Wilson McWhirter opened his eyes Christmas morning. His real name was Wilson McWhirter, but his eccentric name was "Rubber" to his friends. They called him "Gumbe," but nobody also knew why he was originally called Wilson McWhirter neither, so that made it even.

On this Christmas morning he was exactly almost 13 years old. I don't remember just how almost, but it was almost; as the "Tourists" say, not too almost, but just almost enough. He was not rich, Wilson on wasn't. He wore on this sharp, biting, Christmas morning the same clothes he bought last June. He bought them at a rag warehouse when the warehouse man was not looking.

Wilson was not a boy who was particular about settling his bills, and accordingly put him in the cold and silent jug two or three times for this little eccentricity. If he had been older, and wiser, and richer, he might have gone through life, paying 30 cents where he owed 100, and went on building more houses and buying new furniture, and been respected and esteemed. But he was too poor and didn't know enough for that. So he did all his mortgaging business in the old-fashioned way, and got very little credit for it. He only worked for a few days, but that was the first time, and it didn't count. He roared that it should never happen again. And it never did. The next time it was twenty days, and he never afterward fell below that high standard.

Wilson was born at an early period of his life, of poor but honest parents. They weren't very honest, but they were most awfully poor, so that made a good average. Wilson didn't remember much about them. His mother went away with a circus and never had time to come back, and his father raised the deserted boy on the bottle. Occasionaly he would bring him home, and bind him on the toe of his boot. Wilson never went to school but once, and then it was to the Reform School, and he ran away two days before his time was out. He never went to Sunday-school, and if he ever knew any good thing, he had forgotten it long ago. And if there was anything bad, that he didn't know, he was going to learn it before he went back if he had to sit up all night. A hopeful, a very hopeful subject for a Christmas gift. Wilson was.

When he rolled out of his miserable bed Christmas morning, he didn't look up in his room, because he didn't dare. He didn't look for his stocking, because he had none. Not a solitary stocking more than if he had worn peg legs.

"What is your name?" And don't you like it or I'll put you in a dark cell on bread and water for six months." "Wilson McWhirter," said the prisoner.

Mr. Bartholomew started to his feet. "Well, I am blown," he said, but he said no more. Again he heard the voice of the tender-hearted magistrate.

"With the wheat crop in this country 40 per cent larger than it was last year," sneered the broker, in derisive incredulity.

"As though you could eat a wheat," said the tender-hearted magistrate, and that settled it.

"How old are you?" he went on.

"Thirteen years," said the boy.

Mr. Bartholomew started. Thirteen years? Somehow the troubled look came and went over the broker's face like a passing cloud. Thirteen years? Why he thought—but just then he heard the voice of the tender-hearted magistrate.

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