



# *This Holy Night*

By ELEANOR FARJEON

**G**OD bless your house this holy night,  
And all within it;

God bless the candle that you light  
To midnight's minute:

The board at which you break your bread,  
The cup you drink of:

And as you raise it, the unsaid  
Name that you think of:

The warming fire, the bed of rest,  
The ringing laughter:

These things, and all things else be blest  
From floor to rafter

This holy night, from dark to light,  
Even more than other:

And, if you have no house to-night,  
God bless you, brother.

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# Three Stockings

By JAN STRUTHER

*This delightful addition to Christmas gaiety is from the book Mrs. Miniver, a collection of sketches about a happily married Englishwoman, published in 1940. A picture based on the book won seven Academy Awards in 1942. Jan Struther, who was born in England, is married to A. K. Placzek, assistant librarian of Avery Architectural Library at Columbia University*

HOWEVER much one groaned about it beforehand, however much one hated making arrangements and doing up parcels and ordering several days' meals in advance—when it actually happened Christmas Day was always fun.

It began in the same way every year: the handle of her bedroom door being turned just loudly enough to wake her up, but softly enough not to count as waking her up on purpose: Toby glimmering like a moth in the dark doorway, clutching a nobbly Christmas stocking in one hand and holding up his pyjama trousers with the other. (He insisted upon pyjamas, but he had not yet outgrown his sleeping-suit figure.)

"Toby! It's only just after six. I did say not till seven."

"But, Mummy, I can't tell the time." He was barefoot and shivering, and his eyes were like stars.

"Come here and get warm, you little goat." He was into her bed in a flash, stocking and all. The tail of a clockwork dog scratched her shoulder.

A few moments later another head appeared round the door, a little higher up.

"Judy, darling, it's *too* early, honestly."

"I know, but I heard Toby come in, so I knew you must be awake."

"All right, you can come into bed, but you've got to keep quiet for a bit. Daddy's still asleep."

And then a third head, higher up still, and Vin's voice, even deeper than it had been at Long Leave.

"I say, are the others in here? I thought I heard them."

He curled himself up on the foot of his father's bed. And by that time, of course, Clem was awake too. The old transparent stratagem had worked to perfection once more: there was nothing for it but to switch on the lights, shut the windows, and admit that Christmas Day had insidiously but definitely begun.

The three right hands—Vin's strong and broad, Judy's thin and flexible, Toby's still a star-fish—plunged in and out of the three distorted stockings, until there was nothing left but the time-hallowed tangerine in the toe. (It was curious how that tradition lingered, even nowadays when children had a good supply of fruit all the year around.) Their methods were as different as their hands. Vin, with little grunts of approval, examined each object carefully as he drew it out, exploring all its possibilities before he went on to the next. Judy, talking the whole time, pulled all her treasures out in a heap, took a quick glance at them and went straight for the one she liked best—a minikin baby in a wicker cradle. Toby pulled all his out, too, (Continued on page 68)

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