

A Group of Poems

BY WEIR VERNON

THE little foolish songs I sing
Because the earth is strange and fair,
Because most unbelievably the moon
Spills silver on my hair—

The little foolish songs I sing
Because of flower-breath at night,
Because of maddest violins
And scarlet petals in the light—

The little foolish songs I sing
I dedicate them to the wind—
That blows the dead leaves and the dust
That once knew laughter, sang, and sinned.

* * * *

I WISH my father was a gipsy—
I wish he never wore a dinner-coat—
And if sometimes he happened to be tipsy
And rumbled strange, long swear-words in his throat—

I should not care—for Oh! we should be going
From pious folk and towns and prison bars,
To wander where the chill night wind is blowing
And cook our supper underneath the stars.

* * * *

WHEN you are twenty years, they say,
You must learn to be wise;
But how can you remember this
When there are mackerel skies?

How can you think of all they say
Of duty being good,
When there are humming-birds and sun
And orchids in the wood?

* * * *

WHEN my heart is dust that sang and sinned
And over my head the grasses sway,
Shall I remember sunlight—wind,
The lonely sail on the lonely bay?

To be merged with beauty in joy I'd go—
But in the grave if one forgets,
It nothing avails me—I shall not know
That at last I am one with the violets.

“Christmas Again”

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

CHRISTMAS is our annual reminder that there is another plan for the conduct of human life than the one that has been followed so long by the inhabitants of Earth. The plan in use seems more and more to fall short of giving satisfaction, so much so that its deficiencies, from being merely an embarrassment, have become nowadays a source of absolute consternation. The western nations have got up the industrial civilization and have filled their part of the earth with commodities, and improved agriculture so that immense quantities of food can be raised, and have improved transportation so that it can be carried from country to country and concentrated in great centers of population, and, indeed, have done a great many things that have in them the promise of good physical lives for very many people. But now there is a hitch, because of competition for markets, and because in developing efficiency in everything else with which the mechanical arts are concerned, the present generation has also developed efficiency in war; has developed it indeed to such an extent that nobody is any longer safe if any considerable people with modern appliances undertakes to do them damage. Of all great countries in the world which practice the modern ways of doing things and making things the United States is undoubtedly the safest, but it is only comparatively safe, because it can develop inside of itself the same diseases that affect the safety of the rest of the world. In Europe nations quarrel and one nation is in danger from another. In our country different social groups may quarrel so as, conceivably, to produce conditions of quite as much peril.

So we need to put into operation a better law of life and we go back inevitably to one we have had a long time and know a good deal about, and have paid much attention to, but which we have long been assured has never yet been put into practice. That is the rule of life of which Christmas comes to remind us. There is a good deal of dispute nowadays about the circumstances of the birth of Christ, and some of our theological brethren wax quite heated about it; but the important thing in these very political times is not so much by what means Christ came into the world as what were his policies. It is his policies that are important; what he said and did; what was his theory of the proper basis of human relations.

Some of the greatest politicians and the most famous and the most successful have studied for their guidance the policies of Christ as the New Testament discloses them. Jefferson made himself a little book of the philosophy of Christ. He made it by cutting Christ's sayings out of the New Testament and putting them together unconnected by any narrative. What he wanted was not what was said about Christ but what Christ said. His little Bible, which has lately been published in a popular form, seems to contain all of Christ's doctrines as to the relations of men. It has nothing in it about miracles, nothing about Christ's birth or his resurrection, but all of his sayings that seemed to Jefferson characteristic and valid. It was incomplete as a Bible but, of course, it was valuable as far as it went. It said what was precious in this life and what was not. It said, do not run after riches; do not

render evil for evil; consider every man your neighbor and take thought for him as you would for yourself. If he is your enemy, that makes no difference. We know what the doctrine is if we have read the New Testament. We also know that it is not the way of this world, though even in this world it has tempered behavior and promoted civilization, and does so now.

The rule of this world is to get physical power and trust to that for safety and comfort. The rule of this world is thrift, to accumulate treasure, to fight one's enemies, to prepare in peace for war. The fortunate in this world, as we have thought of them, have ordinarily been the rich. The fortunate countries have been the strong ones. Anybody who doubted these rules of the world and was strong enough to fight them has been very ill considered by most of us. Jefferson was not a great friend of them, and was much disliked in consequence. The world likes not such men. The mass of the people often like them and follow them and keep them in office.

There is still a great clash between the teachings of Christ and the practice of the world. What makes it particularly interesting at this time is that the practice of the world seems more than usually to lead to failure. It is not a success. It needs to be bettered. Is there something better to be gotten out of the teachings of Christ? If so, are we getting it?

There are some encouraging signs, and to find them we should observe not governments but people. Christ never preached to governments but always to people. Governments are often important, but in the long run it is the people who make them and not they who make the people.

We notice that the power of money is not what it was. People still want it,

indeed, they have to have it. The earth abounds with wrangles over who shall have more or who shall have less, but a great deal of that is really a sign of a struggle not so much for more money as for more life. People want the means of a more abundant life. To them those means take the form of higher wages or larger incomes. But the attractiveness of great accumulations of money and the power of such accumulations seems much less than it was even twenty years ago. They got to be too common and too easily examined. A great many people reading the newspapers and observing what they saw, concluded that a whole lot of money is really not very good to have. For it is true that, while increased means may make for more abundant life, a superfluity of money may mean a less abundant life, because abundant life is largely a spiritual acquisition, and cannot be bought. On the whole one may argue that the world has come of late appreciably nearer to Christ's views about money.

Then there is force. Feeling about force has changed a great deal since 1914. The world had four years of force and got enough of it. Its conclusion is that it is a very stupid means of getting anything done, particularly as nothing stays done that is done by it.

Christ said take no thought for the morrow. That is hard on thrift, and a certain amount of thrift is very much respected, but in all of Christ's sayings as we get them, look for the spirit, remembering that the letter kills, and the spirit gives life. We know that thrift runs easily to excess, and our world in the last four years has had terrific lessons about the insecurity of savings. Thrift will not save the world. Force will not save it. Not even salesmanship will save it. In the end we may have to turn to love.

Nice Neighbors

BY MARY S. WATTS

GUIDING the possible tenant about the house, Miss Wilcox pointed out its desirable features in a dry little monotone that gave no hint, she hoped, of her inward taut anxiety. She could not have achieved the persuasive enthusiasm of the young man from the real-estate office even if she had thought it becoming to a gentlewoman. Apparently he could see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil; there was something abnormal about his incapacities; he was magnificent, but at moments Miss Martha feared that he was not strictly conscientious. And besides, to what end shutting his eyes and thereby perhaps influencing others to shut theirs against unhappy facts? Truth will out. The house *was* old; the floors *did* need refinishing; the front-parlor fireplace *did* smoke—

"Them ceilings sure are high!" ejaculated the possible tenant, cocking a measuring eye heavenward.

"Y-yes, they *are* high," Miss Martha admitted helplessly. At this familiar—and perfectly just—criticism the agent always burst into flaming eulogies of high ceilings. Just the thing for our summer climate, our super-heated furnaces in winter! Tell you, the old-timers knew how to build for comfort! Miss Martha shrank from conjecturing what he said when ceilings were low. This whole experience illuminated depressingly the practice current in what it was the modern shibboleth to call "big business," she thought.

"Well, eighty-five per is a whole lotta money," said the possible tenant. She gazed round indifferently as they stepped out on the little side porch; then all at once her expression altered with surprise and interest. She clutched

Miss Wilcox's arm, holding her back with an energetic whisper of warning. "Sh-h! See that bird? See him? Washing himself in that old pedestal washstand somebody's left out there? If that ain't the cutest thing! He's just sloshin' right in like a person, you 'r I 'r anybody. Like it was put there just on purpose for him!"

"Why, it was. It's a birds' bath, you know," said Miss Martha, somewhat startled, fumbling for her eyeglasses; the pretty spectacle was no novelty to her, yet it never lost its charm. "Oh, that's one of the thrushes. They must have a nest somewhere near—"

"Sh-h!" the other interrupted peremptorily. "There's another one goin' in!" She tiptoed to the edge of the porch and stood there entranced, following the movements of the birds, a vague smile irradiating her worn, sharpened, insignificant features. The shoving and spattering and small outcry finally subsided, the last robin hopped out, spinning the moisture from his feathers with quick wings; and she turned away reluctantly, drawing a long breath in childishly frank delight. "What d'you know about that, huh? I wouldn'ta believed they'd do that, take a bath that way. You couldn'ta *made* me believe it! I don't know much about 'em, but I always *have* liked 'em. Birds, I mean, and—well, dogs and all kinds of regular pets, you know. I always did like 'em. Say, you got your grounds fixed up real nice, ain't you? I like flowers, too."

She went down the steps, and Miss Wilcox trailed after, resigned to seeing the garden butchered to make a possible tenant's holiday; but the visitor moved about carefully, without offering to