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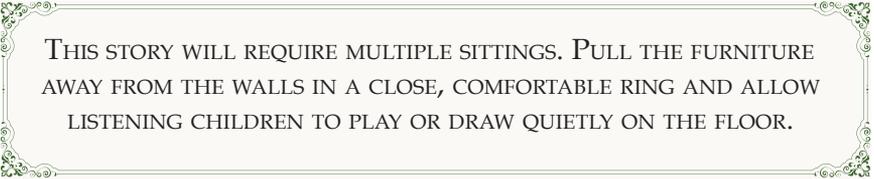
CHRISTMAS STORIES  
EVERY FATHER SHOULD READ  
TO HIS CHILDREN



# THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH, A FAIRY TALE OF HOME

by Charles Dickens

Christmastime is the homiest holiday: firesides, feasting, family... and fairy folk. The unseen gods and guardians of domesticity chirp with the invisible watchfulness of crickets on the hearths of every home, and it is with this image that Charles Dickens unfolds a Christmas tale about the fracturing and re-forging of a family. Through longings, betrayals, and reunions, the angelic cricket keeps the tempo of life and love that holds any household together. Charles Dickens was called “The Man Who Invented Christmas” as his writings instituted a true and charitable understanding of Christmas. Dickens jarred the world out of the cosmopolitanism and puritanism of his day, even as they jar that same world out of the commercialism and secularism of today, replacing unholy preoccupations with a holy humanitarianism. Dickens discovered the indigenous Christmas like a long-lost fairy treasure, and *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845) chirps with the homely cheer he felt so fervently and shared with a new-found fairy touch. There are Christmas witnesses that corroborate and cooperate with Luke and Matthew – and Charles Dickens is one of them. There are creations that profess and process from Scripture – and *The Cricket on the Hearth* is one of many. There are fairy blessings that compliment those of heaven – and “to have a Cricket on the Hearth is the luckiest thing in all the world!”



THIS STORY WILL REQUIRE MULTIPLE SITTINGS. PULL THE FURNITURE AWAY FROM THE WALLS IN A CLOSE, COMFORTABLE RING AND ALLOW LISTENING CHILDREN TO PLAY OR DRAW QUIETLY ON THE FLOOR.



# A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES

by Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (1952) is not so much about Christmas in Wales as it is about Christmas in the world. This beloved composition is composed of sudden flashes that surround drawn out recollections that tease laughter and tears with the warm delights of childhood. The poem is an ice-crystal kaleidoscope of family and friends, of food and fun, dancing in and out of a white wintry fog of memory. Everyone shares Christmas, and all Christmases are so much like another: visions, vignettes, and voices that hang on the edge of a stream or dream of consciousness; never clear, but always strong in impression and presence; at once as distinct and indistinct as shifting tem-



peratures or shimmering scents and, though glancing and ghostly, are the very foundations of security. The power of this prose poem is that it is about each and every one of us, awakening

memories of who we are and why we are, and speak with unspoken confidence about the future as it gives voice to the past. All men share these memories in common, reflecting the Common Savior that was born to save common men.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED IS THE HOLIDAY HOUSE BOOK EDITION  
ILLUSTRATED BY TRINA SCHAT HYMAN. AFTER READING IT YOURSELF,  
PLAY THOMAS' OWN FAMOUS RECORDING FROM STEINWAY HALL, NY.

# THE SHOP OF GHOSTS

by G. K. Chesterton

Wandering into a mysterious Battersea toy shop, G. K. Chesterton met an ancient white-whiskered man drooping beneath a modern truth. Christmas has been boiled down to giving and getting: materialism and consumerism sugared over with “good-will-toward-men” clichés. The spiritual center has been lost. As with other holy days, what the Church has established as upright the world turns topsy-turvy. Instead of Easter commemorating the most significant event in human history, it is now about an insignificant bunny. Instead of Valentine’s Day commemorating the patron saint of love, it is now about the patron saint of greeting cards. Instead of Halloween commemorating the triumph of life over death, it is now about the triumph of death over life. Instead of Christmas commemorating peace on earth, it is now about pressure and worth. Let no Catholic stand idly by while earth claims what heaven has made her own. The world has sold Santa Claus into the slavery of a Christ-less Christmas, and left him a ghost of his former self. Santa Claus’ spirit has suffered, but only because he was deemed worthy of assault. But, as G. K. Chesterton’s curious tale *The Shop of Ghosts* (1909) assures us, though he may be dying, Father Christmas will never die.



THIS WARM AND WHIMSICAL MEDITATION CAN BE FOUND IN THE COLLECTION TREMENDOUS TRIFLES. IN READING, LEAVE GOOD ROOM FOR CHESTERTON’S INIMITABLE STYLE TO TUMBLE AND TWIST.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE

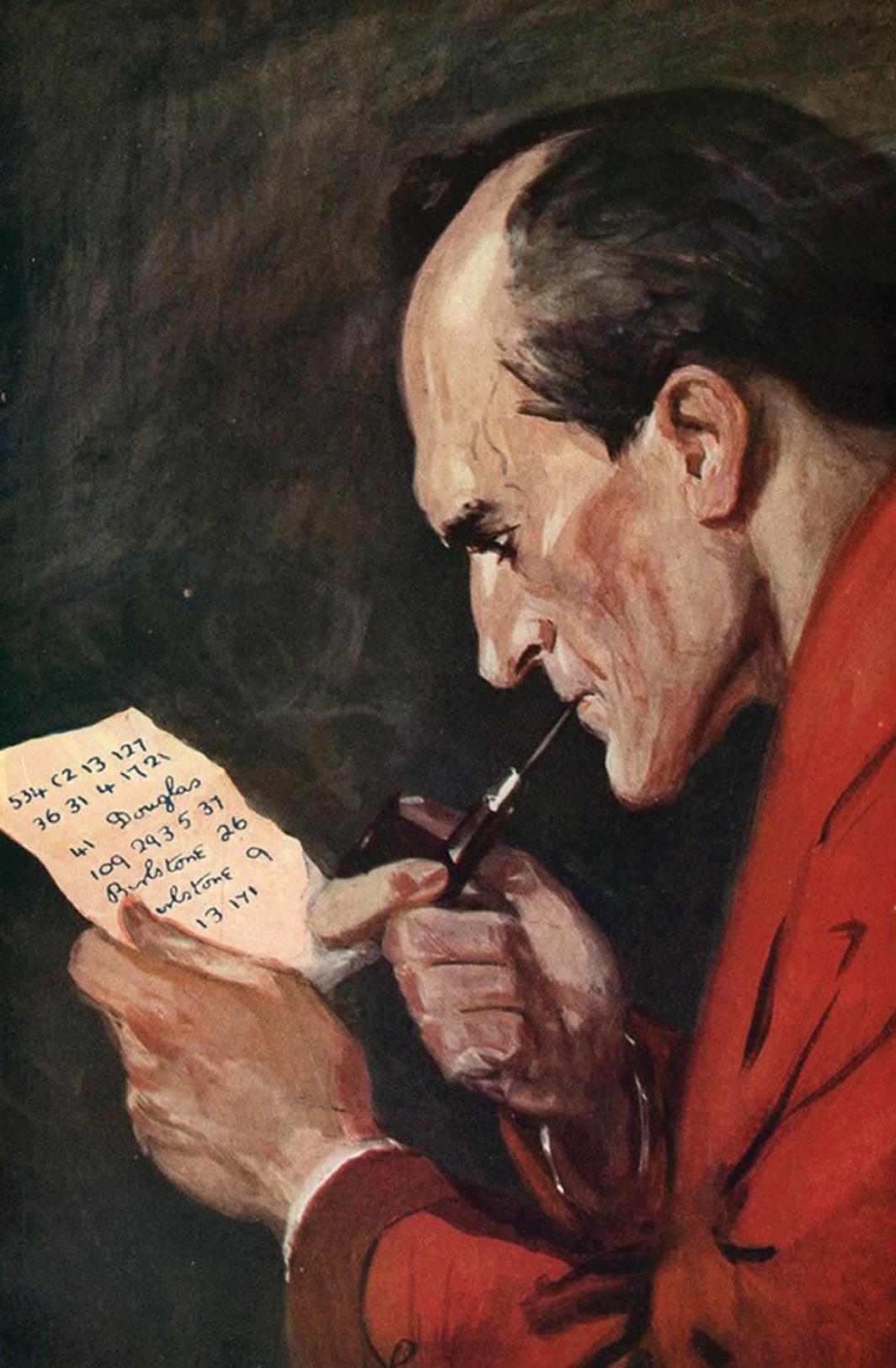
by Arthur Conan Doyle

**T**hough ice cold logic was ever his bread and butter, Sherlock Holmes was not devoid of warmth. There were times, few though they were, when he exhibited a mercy that was more of a mystery than the one he had just solved. How fitting that the chief of these instances occurred at Christmastime, as recorded in *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* (1892). Just as Mr. Holmes was himself a mysterious paradox of rationalist and romanticist, so is Christmas composed of paradoxical mysteries. The Incarnation marked an elimination of the boundary between the ordinary and the extraordinary, evidenced in the joyful juxtaposition of angels and shepherds, peasants and



kings, man and God. The world of 221B Baker Street is one of similar juxtaposition, where courage and justice clash with helplessness and crime, casting warm gaslight through the frigid fog, and speaking to readers through fantastic, chivalric literature to inculcate the immortal principle of human honor and human hope. Sherlock Holmes is a hero who evokes the optimism of salvation, and especially in that merciful moment when a miserable, mediocre thief was forgiven and given a second chance on Christmas Day.

INCLUDED IN THE COLLECTION *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, WIDELY AVAILABLE FROM CASTLE BOOKS, WHICH INCLUDES THE ORIGINAL *STRAND MAGAZINE* LAYOUT AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIDNEY PAGET.

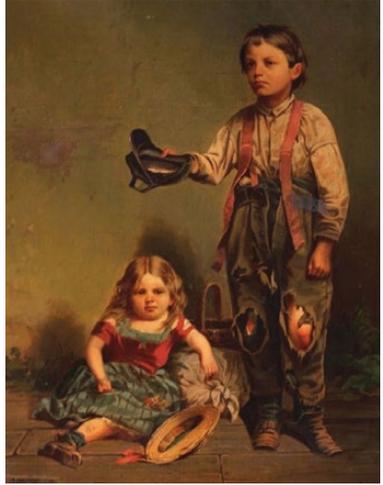
A detailed oil painting of a man in profile, facing left. He has a serious expression and is looking down at a small, rectangular piece of paper held in his left hand. He is holding a dark pipe in his mouth with his right hand. He is wearing a vibrant red jacket. The background is dark and textured. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face and the texture of his skin and clothing. The overall mood is one of intense focus or investigation.

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# WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS

by Leo Tolstoy

**W**ritten in 1885 by Leo Tolstoy, *Where God Is, Love Is* tells the tale of Martin Avdeitch, a poor, kind-hearted cobbler. He lost his family one by one, leaving him alone and dejected. It was then he searched for God in the Gospels, where he saw Christ coming to the houses and hearts of those alone and dejected. Falling asleep with a scrap of hope, Martin was shaken by a voice: “*Look out into the street tomorrow, for I shall come.*” Martin awoke—and prepared for the coming of Christ on a cold winter’s day. Though desperate to find Him, Martin grew dismayed as the hours passed and the only people he saw and met were poor folk, until a hidden truth suddenly made his dream come true. Tolstoy believed the underestimated poor were the preservers of Christianity and followed the serf’s faith and fellowship. Towards the end of his life, he wore only peasant garb and refused all writing royalties, finally boarding a train in the dead of winter to live out his days at a monastery. Falling ill in transit, Tolstoy died in a railroad station—but, like Martin the cobbler, it is to be hoped that he finally found his God where he least expected to find Him.



TRANSLATIONS OF THIS STORY ARE DIFFICULT TO FIND. A FINE ALTERNATIVE IS THE CHILDREN’S ADAPTATION *PAPA PANOV’S SPECIAL DAY*, RETOLD BY MIG HOLDER AND ILLUSTRATED BY TONY MORRIS FROM LION BOOKS.

# THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

by O. Henry (William Sydney Porter)

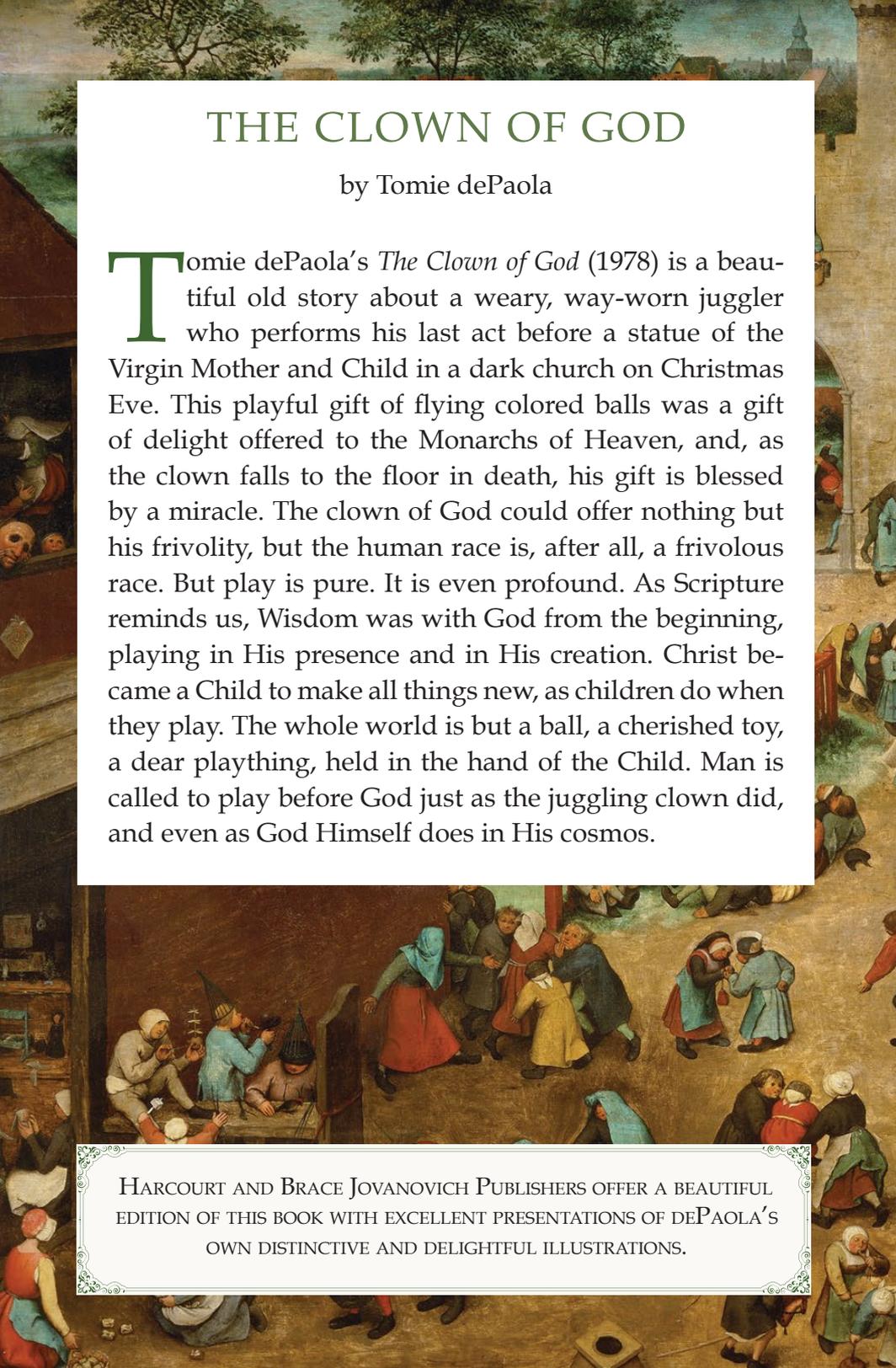
A tiny tale of love, courage, tears, and terrible happiness, O. Henry's *The Gift of the Magi* (1905) breathes with that spirit of sacrificial gift-giving that makes Christmas a joy. Though short, its memory stays long with readers, for people do not soon forget things that leave them brokenhearted. In their material riches, Della and Jim are likened to the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. With the loss of their riches, they are no longer



compared to Old Testament monarchs, but with New Testament ones – the Magi. These two young lovers are described as foolish (as lovers are); but sometimes it requires foolishness to arrive at wisdom (as lovers prove). No one can know the wisdom of giving the gift of oneself until one gives oneself up like a fool. In giving gifts at Christmas, people of faith must give of themselves first, and then in presents. There is no gift if there is no sacrifice, and gift giving should always involve some tears – the waters that make gifts pure.



STRONGLY RECOMMENDED IS THE ALADDIN PUBLISHING EDITION  
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LISBETH ZWERGER, BEST READ WITH BLANKETS,  
SLIPPERS, AND TEA.



# THE CLOWN OF GOD

by Tomie dePaola

**T**omie dePaola's *The Clown of God* (1978) is a beautiful old story about a weary, way-worn juggler who performs his last act before a statue of the Virgin Mother and Child in a dark church on Christmas Eve. This playful gift of flying colored balls was a gift of delight offered to the Monarchs of Heaven, and, as the clown falls to the floor in death, his gift is blessed by a miracle. The clown of God could offer nothing but his frivolity, but the human race is, after all, a frivolous race. But play is pure. It is even profound. As Scripture reminds us, Wisdom was with God from the beginning, playing in His presence and in His creation. Christ became a Child to make all things new, as children do when they play. The whole world is but a ball, a cherished toy, a dear plaything, held in the hand of the Child. Man is called to play before God just as the juggling clown did, and even as God Himself does in His cosmos.

HARCOURT AND BRACE JOVANOVIH PUBLISHERS OFFER A BEAUTIFUL EDITION OF THIS BOOK WITH EXCELLENT PRESENTATIONS OF DEPAOLA'S OWN DISTINCTIVE AND DELIGHTFUL ILLUSTRATIONS.



# THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER

by Beatrix Potter

**T**he richest Christmas traditions concern down-to-earth things; which makes sense as they celebrate the greatest Down-To-Earth Thing: the Word made Flesh. This is precisely why fairies, ghosts, and elves play a part in Christmastide's union of the ordinary and the extraordinary. While the Christmas fairy tale *The Elves and the Shoemaker* introduced the idea that elves are quite normal, Beatrix Potter



raised the stakes. The Brothers Grimm would have us understand that elves are like mice. Mrs. Potter would have us understand that mice are like elves. Christmas Day in the morning is the time to awake to a miracle accomplished by unseen presences that are a part of our lives. Everyone who has been a child will remember such miracles performed by parents who, on Christmas Eve, secretly donned

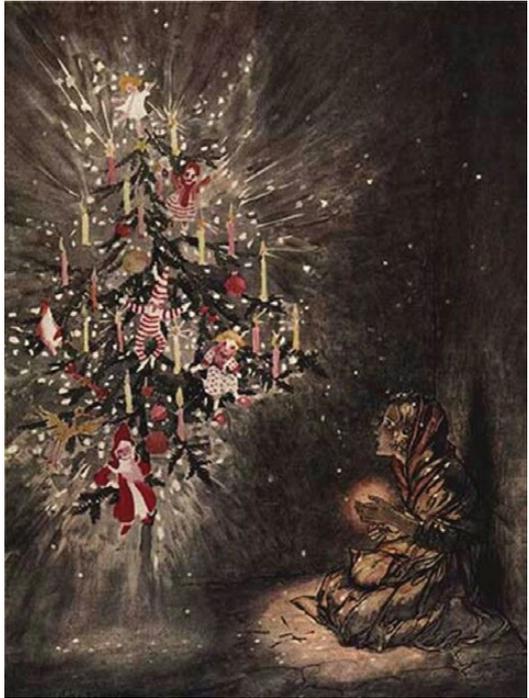
the mantle of angels—or elves. Beatrix Potter's book maintains a traditional extraordinariness, but enshrines it in things as ordinary as mice and cats and Christmas Day. *The Tailor of Gloucester* (1903) is a tale that keeps alive the belief that there are ordinary things in the world that can accomplish extraordinary things. With God nothing is impossible.

THE ORIGINAL, DIMINUTIVE FREDERICK WARNE EDITION SHOULD,  
WITHOUT DOUBT, BE GIVEN PREFERENCE.

# THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

by Hans Christian Andersen

**H**ans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* (1845) treads deftly between the realms of parable and metaphor, as so many of his fairy tales do. It is a challenging read for modern man and a challenge to him as well. The story takes place during the cold Christmas season and reminds us of Scripture's call to serve the poor and lowly, who "He will lift from the dust of this world — Yes — from the ashes." But Andersen also portrays — through a barefoot, suffering little girl who sells matches in the street — a picture of mankind's lot inherited in the fallen nature bestowed on us from the first sin. We are nothing more than wounded wanderers battered by the harshness of this vale of tears. But amidst this pilgrimage so often filled with sorrows, we are given moments of warmth and visions of the eternal banquet to which we are all called in the end.



IN THE INTERESTS OF AVOIDING SENTIMENTAL ILLUSTRATIONS, SECURE A COLLECTION OF ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR RACKHAM FROM WEATHERVANE. SAVE THIS READING FOR A SNOWY EVENING.

# THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

by T. S. Eliot

**T**homas Stearns Eliot's poem *The Journey of the Magi* (1927) presents a stark yet salvific glimpse into the pagan perspective of Christ's Nativity, the collapse of the old order for the new. While most of creation exulted in the Incarnation and angelic hosts chanted Hosanna from on high, there were those who in the fullness of time were left desolate and divorced from their broken idols. The words of the Wise Man in this poem are not comforting, for Christ stands in opposition to the comforts of this world. His birth is a war cry against the world and the underworld. "This Birth was hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death." As light disorients those who have spent too long in the darkness, so is the Wise Man left reeling at the end of his life, unable to understand the event he witnessed in Bethlehem so many years before. But we are called to stare into the light, until the follies of this world are burned away, and we are able to realize that our death is a birth into eternal life and find it satisfactory.



THIS POEM CAN BE FOUND IN NEARLY ANY OF ELIOT'S COLLECTIONS. THOUGH CHALLENGING, FATHERS SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO READ THIS ALOUD TO THEIR CHILDREN. LET ITS MUSIC AND MYSTERY FLOW OVER THEM.



# 10 CHRISTMAS STORIES

## EVERY FATHER SHOULD READ

### TO HIS CHILDREN

When St. Nick drives his miniature sleigh full of toys drawn by eight tiny reindeer to the snowy housetop, and drops to the sooty hearth below, the *paterfamilias* is bidden to attend. It is the father who hears “the prancing and pawing of each little hoof,” and springs from his bed to stand witness and impart his blessing on the mystical proceedings over his children’s stockings. Father Christmas and the Christian father share a domestic priesthood that presides over the Christmas mysteries - and the liturgy and lore of Christmas must be read in their good season.

This booklet calls on fathers far and wide to take up the books of Christmas, and to take the time, for it is precious, to draw their children into a ring round fire or tree to be read to. These familial read-aloud recommendations come to you with the hope that their words will serve to strengthen those bonds of kith and kin - both earthly and heavenly - which are central to the joy that the Word was made Flesh.



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