

Nurse's hand relaxed on the half crown and she began to think hard and furiously, in some such words as "No Room for Him in the Inn."

"Ye did it not to Me." Was it really true that the Christ Child still walked the earth? Really and literally true? If so—Why then—No, she really couldn't. Not in her snug, clean little room—not in her special chair—not eat at the same table? Impossible! Surely half a crown would accomplish all that behoved her. Back went her hand to her pocket, at the same moment, a voice, surely not hers, insistent with urge said:

"Come home with me, my dear, there's a nice Christmas dinner waiting and a lovely fire, and it's because I've been to Church that I know I must share it with you."

The woman looked at her intently.

"I used to believe in Gawd," she said, "I reckon I shouldn't have forgotten Him if there was more like you."

It is of no use to pretend that Marigold's Christmas was not spoilt—it was, but the woman enjoyed a material heaven.

She devoured the chicken and mince pies with wolfish hunger, she crouched over the bright fire warming her chilled fingers, and the odour from her steaming clothes was not agreeable.

Poor Nurse fought against the tears of disappointment which would well up as she cleared away the unsightly debris of her Christmas feast.

Instead of her anticipated novel, she set herself at the piano and played the old, old Christmas hymns to her guest, the poor guest to whom Christmas had meant nothing but bitterness and pain.

"Stop it, Missus', for Gawd's sake stop," said the woman by the fire, "it's most more than I can stand, it 'minds me of 'ome when I was a little kid."

She rose to her feet. "I'll be getting along now," wiping her eye on the corner of her skirt, and she shuffled out into the gathering darkness, Nurse Marigold's half crown tightly clasped in her hand.

It must be confessed that as soon as she had gone Marigold opened the windows, changed the cushion cover in her chair, and swept up the carpet.

And by that time, Christmas night though it was she had to go out again to a special case.

Through freezing cold and black fog, her active little figure sped through the gloom, down the familiar streets.

Bang! crash! agonising pain! darkness! blessed oblivion! and that which had been Nurse Marigold was, in an incredibly short time, a heap of bandages and dressings on a bed in the nearest hospital.

Those who tended her were struck by the beauty of her uninjured face—she who was a plain woman—and from time to time they caught a whisper from her lips, "No Room in the Inn" they thought it was.

At midnight the fog had cleared and the Christmas stars shone out, and once more the Angels sang "Glory to God," as they bore the soul of Nurse Marigold to receive the kiss of the Blessed Mother whose little child she had tended that Christmas day.

H. H.

GARROULD'S CHRISTMAS BAZAAR.

One of the Christmas Bazaars we never fail to visit is that of Messrs. E. & R. Garrould, 150-162, Edgware Road. We recommend our readers to do so also. There they will find charming decorations for Christmas trees, stockings filled with treasures calculated to bring delight to the heart of any child, dolls which go to sleep, and toys of all kinds, so arranged as to facilitate easy inspection. Go and see, and we feel sure you will be pleased and buy.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

THE NEW ERA.

The Treaty of Locarno, and the other Treaties initiated at that lovely little Swiss town on October 16th last, were signed by the plenipotentiaries of seven Nations at the Foreign Office in London, on Tuesday, December 1st.

The dignified Golden Room had been brightened for this notable occasion, new filmy-lace curtains draped its splendid windows, gold and white chairs covered with crimson silk were ranged along the walls, and a flood of electric light dispelled the usual sombre effect of its atmosphere. A life-sized portrait of the King looked down from the walls, with his usual benevolent expression of keen interest in great events, and before the signatories were ushered in by Sir Austen Chamberlain, K.G., it was good for peace prospects to find women, the wives of leading Ministers, coming quietly in amongst eminent persons admitted as spectators.

Sir Austen Chamberlain presided, and opened the proceedings in the following words:—

"By command of His Majesty the King, my august Master, I bid you welcome to the metropolitan city of his Empire.

"His Majesty charged me to tell you with what interest he followed the discussions of the Conference of Locarno and to express to you his profound satisfaction at its successful issue.

"His Majesty congratulates himself on the choice which you have made of his capital as the place in which to sign the agreements concluded at Locarno. His Majesty regrets that the sad loss which he has just sustained prevents him from celebrating the occasion as he had wished to do, but his dearest hope is that this great work of appeasement and reconciliation will provide the foundation for a sincere friendship between our seven nations and will assure peace to our peoples."

After reading the Message from the King, Sir Austen made the first of the short formal speeches which preceded the signing of the Treaty, which closed with the following hopeful promise:—

"Having put our hand to the plough we shall not look back. His Majesty's Government will do everything that lies within their power to ensure a successful issue to our labours, to bury the hatreds and the suspicions of the past, and to spare future generations from a repetition of the misfortunes and the sufferings of which the world of to-day has been the witness and the victim."

All the signatories spoke feelingly of the horrors and destruction by war. Herr Stresemann (Germany), in a most impressive passage, recalled the blind destruction by war of those young capacities, intuitions, and talents, those impulses of genius which, but for the war, might have been enlightening us now.

M. Briand (France), in his rich and musical voice, said: "It is not without emotion that I shall sign the great Treaties which are destined to draw the nations of Europe closer together to mark the inauguration of an era of peace which corresponds to the most profound feelings and to the desires of all the nations who suffered so terribly in the war."

Signor Scialoja (Italy) concluded his speech with the words: "Italy is proud to participate in this great work of peace and to afford her disinterested guarantee with the sole object of seeing the realisation of the opening of an era of fraternity between the nations."

M. Vandervelde (Belgium) expressed the hope that "that which we began at Locarno is about to become an accomplished fact. May a new era be dated from this day, wherein the nations who suffered the scourge of war may work together in a spirit of mutual confidence and prepare by the disarmament of hearts for the disarmament of hands."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)