

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is coming the geese are getting fat, please put a penny in the old man's hat.

My earliest memories go back to 1919. my most momentous early memory was of an event in 1921. I was five years old. I rolled all the way down the attic steps. Cried but no bones broken. I was carried by my Mother and Auntie, in turn, and by Tramcar to the Leeds General Infirmary for a hernia operation. But I was not going to stop in there; a nurse held me down in a bed and told my Mother and Auntie to go as quickly as possible. I can still see the tears in my Mother's eyes. I remember every detail of going down for the operation, even being told to count whilst putting me to sleep. I counted up to 13 before it happened.

My Mother and Auntie brought me home on the Tramcar with 12 stitches in my groin. Dr. Piercy took them out in front of the kitchen fire with my Mother boiling water for his scissors, every detail etched on my memory.

It was also the year that I made my first appearance on stage in the Guiseley Providence Methodist Church Bazaar. The church was always known as the Prims. All the Churches held Bazaars in those days for the upkeep and good causes. I had the honour of presenting the lady Opener with a bunch of flowers. I remember what I had to say "The older ones have played their part and so it is time to do ours and here I gave to the Lady fair these sweet and lovely flowers".

My second appearance on the stage that year was at the Prims School Hall. It was the tradition to give a presentation of Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol" with Mr Scrooge and all. I took my first part as Tiny Tim, the Cratchet family's youngest and invalid little boy. It was said that they made me up to be so ill that when I appeared on stage carried in on Bob Cratchit's shoulder with my little crutch that my Mother cried! I remember that at the Cratchet Christmas Dinner there was real homemade Christmas pudding with white sauce, I loved that! I had to say grace before Christmas dinner began "God bless us, everyone". I took part every year; the last I remember was when I was cast as Scrooge's nephew. I remember knocking on Uncle Scrooge's door

and in my loudest and most cheerful voice saying “Merry Chistmas Uncle”. The reply came loud clear and bitter “Humbug, I say Humbug. Every idiot that goes around with Christmas on his lips should be boiled in his own plum pudding an dburied with a stake of Holly through his heart, Humbug, I say I say, Humbug” for me to reply “Oh Uncle, I always thought Christmas time as a good time, a kind and forgiving time, a charitable and pleasant time. Indeed the only time in the long calendar of the year when men and women by one consent open their shut hearts freely, and therefore Uncle I believe it has done me good and will continue to do more good and so I say, God Bless it”.

So friends, let us be ready for Christmas and may everyone their cold and shut hearts, let the glorious Christmas Spirit in. Also that corruption, violence, war and every other form of inhumanity come to an end.

A happy and joyful Christmas to you all.

By Stanley Waddington