THE SHOEMAKER'S DREAM

Edwin Markham, one of America's great poets, tells the story of a cobbler, a Godly man, who made shoes in the old days.

One night the cobbler dreamed that Christ was coming to his humble shop. He got up early the next morning and went to the woods to gather green boughs to decorate his shop, so that it would be an appropriate place to receive so great a guest.

He waited all morning, and the only thing that happened was that an old man shuffled up, asking to rest. Conrad, the cobbler, saw that his shoes were worn through, so he brought the old man in. "I'll give you a new pair", he said, and put on the old man the sturdiest shoes in the shop, before sending him on his way.

He waited through the afternoon, and the only thing that happened was that an old woman under a heavy load of bundles came by. She was weary and, out of compassion, Conrad brought her in and gave her some of the food he had prepared for the Christ child. She was very hungry and ate with relish and, refreshed, she finally went on her way.

Then, as the shades of night began to fall, there came into his shop a lost child, crying bitterly. Conrad was annoyed, because it was necessary to leave his shop in order to take the child home, for she lived in the opposite side of the city.

Returned, he was convinced he had missed the Lord. Sadly he lived through the moments, as he imagined them: The knock, the call, the latch pulled up, the lighted face, the offered cup. He would have kissed the hands where the nails had been, washed the feet where the spikes had entered; then the Lord would have sat with him and would have broken bread.

Conrad cried, "Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay? Have you forgotten that this was the day?"

Then, soft in the silence, a voice he heard. . . .

"Lift up your heart, for I kept my word. Three times I came to your friendly door; three times my shadow was on your floor; I was the beggar with the bruised feet; I was the woman you gave something to eat; I was the child on the homeless street."