INTO THE LIGHT

BY Helen Keller

JEDEDIAH TINGLE

Isn't that the most delicious name! Whenever I say it over to myself, I want to smile, I want to write rhymes mating it, of course, with “jingle.” Or I want to write short stories, with Jedediah Tingle as my whimsical, humorous, lovable hero.

Jedediah Tingle, however, is not mere rhyme for “jingle.” Neither is he a story-book character. He is a real person. I know, for I had a letter from him this morning.

“Dear Helen,” said Jedediah Tingle, “I rarely write letters to people who are written about, talked about, beloved—crowned heads of the earth, as it were. My mission is to seek out the unappreciated genius, to encourage patient merit, to lift up the sick, and follow where misfortune has descended on noble souls, and you may well know that that keeps me busy.”

Mr Tingle goes on to say, however, that he remembers me when I was a tiny girl with the world all shut away, and has watched my progress out of the dark with interest and pleasure. Therefore, though he believes me to be one of the people “written about, talked about, loved,” he sends me a check to use in my work for the American Foundation for the Blind.

I think that Mr Jedediah Tingle is one of the most wonderful men in the world. His time is spent in seeking out in obscure places people who need help, encouragement, a word of cheer—and something tangible to go with the cheer. As he says in his letter, he has no time for “the crowned heads of earth.” But an obscure poet or artist is very likely to find a letter and a check from Jedediah Tingle in his otherwise dreary assortment of morning mail. A mother, working to send her boy through school, may hear from him. A hack writer, who has written a little article which shows understanding and love of his fellow humans, may hear from him; a factory worker who is sick, or an old woman who is alone and crippled with rheumatism may receive an unexpected message from Jedediah Tingle.

And always the letter, with its genial, beautifully worded message, is accompanied by a check. The recipient of that check may feel the name too fanciful and believe, bitterly, that it is all a hoax. But on presenting that check at a bank he finds it always honored, and the good work of Jedediah Tingle goes a little further on its modest way.

It is the name of a long dead New England forbear which Jedediah Tingle uses under which to do his kindly deeds, and to preserve his own anonymity. No one, not even the omnivorously inquisitive reporters have broken through that anonymity. They respect it, I think, because of the real beauty and love which prompts good deeds done in this charming and unassuming way.

Wonderful, kindly, loving, glorious Jedediah Tingle! Not just the subject for a funny rhyme or a gay short story, but a sort of real, honest-to-goodness, all-the-year-round Santa Claus—a whimsical, dear Kris Kringle—Jedediah Tingle!

There—I did make a rhyme after all, and in spite of myself.

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Friday—Fog Bound.