

**PRODIGAL
VILLAGE;
A CHRISTMAS TALE**

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Prodigal village; a Christmas tale by Irving Bacheller

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IRVING BACHELLER

**PRODIGAL
VILLAGE;
A CHRISTMAS TALE**

THE PRODIGAL VILLAGE

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A Christmas Tale

By

IRVING BACHELLER

Author of

THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING
A MAN FOR THE AGES, Etc.

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THE PRODIGAL VILLAGE

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CHAPTER ONE

WHICH INTRODUCES THE SHEPHERD OF THE BIRDS

THE day that Henry Smix met and embraced Gasoline Power and went up Main Street hand in hand with it is not yet forgotten. It was a hasty marriage, so to speak, and the results of it were truly deplorable. Their little journey produced an effect on the nerves and the remote future history of Bingville. They rushed at a group of citizens who were watching them, scattered it hither and thither, broke down a section of Mrs. Risley's picket fence and ran over a small boy. At the end of their brief misalli-

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ance, Gasoline Power seemed to express its opinion of Mr. Smix by hurling him against a telegraph pole and running wild in the park until it cooled its passion in the fountain pool. In the language of Hiram Blenkinsop, the place was badly "smixed up." Yet Mr. Smix was the object of unmerited criticism. He was like many other men in that quiet village—slow, deliberate, harmless and good-natured. The action of his intellect was not at all like that of a gasoline engine. Between the swiftness of the one and the slowness of the other, there was a wide zone full of possibilities. The engine had accomplished many things while Mr. Smix's intellect was getting ready to begin to act.

In speaking of this adventure, Hiram Blenkinsop made a wise remark: "My married life learnt me one thing," said he. "If you are thinkin' of hitchin' up a wild horse with a tame one, be careful that