



Whether Common or Not

By Will M. Maupin.

The Lookout Man

[Again we offer explanation for repeating the following verses. They appeared originally in The Commoner some seven years ago. Every year since, about this time, requests begin coming for their repetition. They are beginning to arrive now. The author thanks all of the writers for the compliment they pay when they make the request; also for the chance to fill the weekly allotment of space without the work and worry of grinding out something new.—W. M. M.]

Now, listen, little children, and I'll tell a story true—
And better you remember, for it means a lot to you—
For if you heed the lesson, then when Christmas time is here
You'll get a lot of presents and a lot of Christmas cheer.
The Lookout Man is walking when the stars begin to peep
To see if little children are in bed and fast asleep;
And all who act up naughty and don't mind their ma's and pa's,
The Lookout Man is watching, and he'll tell old Santa Claus.

I knew a little fellow once who got real bad, and said
He didn't care for Santa Claus, and wouldn't go to bed;
And said he didn't have to mind—O, he was awful bad,
And didn't seem to care a mite in making folks feel sad.
But when it came to Christmas Day he didn't get a thing,
For Santa Claus had heard of him and not a thing he'd bring.
He knew that bad boy's record—better mind your ma's and pa's,
The Lookout Man is watching and he'll tell old Santa Claus.

I also knew a little girl who was just awful bad.
She wouldn't get her lessons and she always got so mad
If anybody told her to be still and hush her noise—
Well, she was always wishing for a lot of Christmas toys;
But when 'twas Christmas morning, to her wonder and surprise,
An empty stocking hanging in the corner met her eyes.
You see, she acted naughty—better mind your ma's and pa's;
The Lookout Man is watching and he'll tell old Santa Claus.

The Lookout Man is peeping through the windows every night
And counting up the children who are always acting right.
And going off to bed at once when told it's time to go,
And never pouting, not a bit, or taking clothes off slow.
He puts them in the good book, but the bad ones in the bad,
And when he writes a bad one, O, he looks just awful sad
For he knows they will get nothing—better mind your ma's and pa's—
The Lookout Man is watching and he'll tell old Santa Claus.

A Christmas Story

We'll call him "Billy" because lots of people call him that, and also because that is as good a name as any. And Billy will never forget one Christmas about seventeen years ago. He was living in a big western city then, but not working. His idleness was due to no fault of his; it was the fault of industrial conditions which threw many men out of work, and which caused Billy to lose his position on a big daily paper.

And as Billy had a wife and a boy dependent upon him, and the Saturday night before that particular Christmas found him with just one lonesome silver quarter in his pocket, perhaps you can imagine how he felt. That was the situation on this particular Christmas.

Now to hark back about six or seven years further. Billy was working then. A politician of statewide note had been nominated for office and he wanted a speech—a rip-roaring, highfalutin' speech—and he asked Billy to take the facts and figures he had and write up just that kind of a speech. Billy did it for old friendship's sake. It must have been a pretty good speech for the candidate was elected. But in the excitement he never thought of asking Billy what Billy wanted for the work.

Now back to that particular

Christmas once more. Billy and his wife canvassed the Christmas situation immediately after supper, first seeing to it that the boy was in bed and asleep. They just knew that boy was expecting something, for the Christmas or two he remembered had been full of joy and presents and things. So Billy and the wife decided to ask a neighbor to come over and watch the youngster while they trekked down town and expended that sole remaining quarter. The neighbor came over all right and Billy and the wife walked three miles down town through the cold and snow—walked to save carefare. It was about the first time either of them had taken much thought of what Christmas fixin's cost, but they had to this time. A quarter won't go far in making Christmas for a lusty boy. So the pair of them wandered through two or three big stores, and finally decided on an orange, a trumpet, a pound of very cheap candy and a nickel "Mother Goose" book. That would exhaust the quarter. But before they squandered all their wealth they paused to gaze at the expensive things in one big show window.

And as they gazed some one slapped Billy on the shoulder and shouted, "Hello, Billy; merry Christmas!"

Whereupon Billy grasped the hand of his old-time political friend, and

smothering his real feelings returned the greeting in kind. A few words passed and then Billy introduced his wife. A few more words and the subject of politics came up, and as that didn't interest the wife she turned again to the show window. Then said the politician:

"By the way, Billy, I never paid you for that little article you fixed up for me."

"Forget it," said Billy. "That was squared by friendship years ago."

"Say not so," quoth the politician. "I insist on paying something for it and paying it right now. Name the amount."

Now Billy yearned mightily to say "ten dollars," or such a matter, but being somewhat proud and unwilling to expose his poverty he grinned cheerfully and said:

"Oh, well, if that's the way you feel about it, old man, just buy the misses a little trinket she can hang on the wall, and that will remind us both of you, and we'll call it square."

"Agreed," said the politician, "but I haven't got time to buy it; got to make a train. But I'll give you a piece of money and you can select it and give it to her with my compliments."

"Nuff said," replied Billy.

Whereupon the politician pressed something into Billy's hand, shouted a cheery farewell and rushed for a street car.

Billy watched the departing politician until he disappeared from sight, then turned to the wife and remarked:

"Well, sweetheart, we've got more than a quarter now."

"How's that?" queried the wife.

"Why, Blank just gave me some paper money to buy you a Christmas knick-knack, and they don't make paper money in less than dollar bills it's a cinch we've got at least a dollar and a quarter, and I guess it's five and a quarter—maybe ten and a quarter."

"I hope it's ten and a quarter," said the sordid-minded woman.

"Well, here's seeing," said Billy, opening his hand.

And lo, and behold, there before the protruding eyes of Billy and the wife were three beautiful, artistic, perfectly lovely bills—two twenties and a ten—fifty good old dollars!

Maybe the Christmas lights didn't grow brighter. And maybe two hearts didn't follow suit. And maybe there wasn't a sudden change of Christmas program. And don't you believe Billy and the wife went home with any little old quarter's worth of Christmas fixin's for the boy.

Billy has often told us that it was the gloomiest "day before Christmas" he ever experienced—and the brightest glorious Christmas day of his life.

And from that day to this Billy hasn't been out of a job, for on that particular Christmas morning he received a telegram telling him a good

job was waiting for him in a city not far away, and having money for carefare in his pocket and some over, Billy wired that he'd be there the next day—and he was, too, believe me.

Not much of a Christmas story, perhaps. Might have been fixed up with a lot of highfalutin' language about "Christmas bells" and all that sort of thing. But just the same, as that story is here presented it will be to Billy and his wife just about as good a Christmas story as was ever written.

Perhaps that politician really meant it as payment for Billy's work. Maybe he had learned that Billy was up against it good and hard and remembering the speech had seized upon the incident as a good way of giving Billy a lift without wounding his pride. We don't care a rap what the politician thought about it—all we know is that wherever he is, Billy and his wife never forget him on Christmas day, and never fail to send him a telegraphic Christmas greeting from hearts that will never cease to be grateful.

AWFUL

Henry Clews, at a dinner in Newport, said of American traveling:

"It is delightful to travel in America, but I think that American porters handle our luggage a little too roughly."

"Once, at a certain station, I was amazed and pleased to hear a uniformed official shout to a burly porter:

"Hi, what are you knockin' them trunks about like that for?"

"The porter had ben listing great trunks above his head and hurling them down onto the floor furiously; but now he stood stock-still in astonishment."

"What's that, boss?" he said.

"What do you mean by knockin' trunks about like that?" repeated the official. "Look at the floor, man. Look at the dents you're makin' in the concrete. Don't you know you'll lose your job if you damage the company's property?" — Epworth Herald.

HE PASSED

There were some questions in geography required in the preliminary examinations for law students who aspired to admission to the bar. Among them was—"Name ten animals that live in the Arctic zone." One young man wrote: "Five polar bears and five seals. N. B.—Permit me to call your attention to the fact that the question does not specify that the animals should be of different varieties."—Ladies' Home Journal.

PERFECTLY SAFE

"I should think you'd be afraid to let your boys run your automobile?"

"Oh, no; I have it insured." — Home Herald.



"Kiddies Six"

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WILL M. MAUPIN, Care Commoner, Lincoln, Nebraska