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# The St. Tammany Farmer.

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St. Tammany Parish  
OPPORTUNITIES

D. H. MASON, Editor

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## A MERRY CHRISTMAS



### The Best of Friends



## Santa Mike

### A Christmas Convict Story

By T. C. Bridges.

As the December night closed across the desolate moor, the snow ceased falling, the clouds broke, and a brilliant moon shed its silver light across the wide stretches of rolling whiteness. With the change, it began to freeze fiercely, coating the sodden drifts with a crisp film of ice.

At every step Mike Dempsey's tired feet broke through this coating, and sank deep into soft stuff beneath, making the traveling so terribly hard that, in spite of the bitter cold, perspiration stood in beads on his thin, brown face.

He was breathing hard, and evidently desperately weary, yet he never stopped for a moment, though now and then, as he plowed his way onward, he would turn his head and cast an apprehensive glance back over his shoulder.

Had anyone been near enough to watch him, they would easily have understood his haste. The drab livery plentifully besprinkled with broad arrows marked him as one of the state's unwilling guests. As a matter of fact, Mike Dempsey had been for the last three years a prisoner in an inmate, and it was the intention of escaping another seven years of unappreciated hospitality that he had, a few hours previously, "gone a bunk" under cover of the sudden snowstorm.

"I've buried these screws, that's what I'm sure," he muttered to himself, and in spite of his fatigue a slight chuckle escaped his thin lips. "But faith, I've puzzled myself, too, and I don't know where I am no more than Adam."

"If I could only get a landmark of some sort!" he went on. "Eh, I could find my road to the railway, I'd win clear. Mike Dempsey wasn't a navy seven years for nothing."

He crunched his slow way across a flat valley, jumped a little brook and pushed up the steep slope beyond. A gleam of light in the next valley attracted his attention. It came from a lighted window, and there was something comforting to the lonely fugitive in the red glow cast upon the glittering snow. Without hesitation, he started downhill toward it.

Presently he was cautiously approaching a small house, which stood in a tiny garden surrounded by a low dry-stone wall. There was a gate in front but Mike preferred to approach from the back, and clambering gingerly over the wall crept up to the window from which the light came.

Raising himself till his head was on a level with the sill, he peered through the uncurtained window into a barely furnished living room, lighted by a great fire of glowing turf.

A couch stood in one corner, on which lay a youngish man whose bandaged head showed him to be the victim of some accident. On a chair beside him sat a sweet-faced woman, and on the bare earthen floor played two children—a curly-haired boy of about seven, and a chubby girl a year or so younger.

But what arrested Mike's attention was a little fir tree, not more than four feet high, which stood planted in a tall bucket, on the table in the middle of the room.

For a moment it puzzled Mike. Then he gave a little gasp. "Beggory, if it ain't a Christmas tree! Why, 'tis Christmas eve, I do believe, though, faith, I'd lost track of the date in the ould stone jug on

the hill. But where's the presents? 'Tis as bare as my own pocket," he went on wonderingly.

At that moment the boy got up, and going forward to the woman, pulled at her dress to attract her attention.

"Mother, isn't Santa Claus coming? He's awful late. We shan't have no Kismas tree if he doesn't come soon."

"It's the snow, dearie," explained the mother. "Such a bad storm that I expect he was late in starting. But now it's cleared up I daresay, he'll be here soon."

Her words were chery, but Mike caught the anxious glance she gave her husband.

"Go ahead and see if William's in sight yet, Alice," said the man. "He ought to have been here an hour ago. I only hope nothing has happened to the poor old fellow."

Mike dropped on his hands and knees behind the angle of the wall as the door opened, and the woman stood on the threshold looking out down the empty snowclad valley.

Sometimes the pathos of the bare little Christmas tree and the anxious soul, and when the door closed again he rose to his feet, and instead of following out his first intention and entering the house to demand food and clothes, climbed the wall again and made off down the valley.

"If William's coming, there'll be a road of sorts, he said to himself.

And sure there was. Though covered deep in snow, he found that there was a path down the valley, which he had little doubt would lead eventually to the main road to town.

He had gone another mile when a dark patch in the snow straight ahead attracted his attention, and he caught his breath sharply as he stopped beside it.

For it was a man lying flat on his face, and, judging by the snow which almost covered his body, he had been there in the same position for some time. Beside him lay a half-filled sack, also covered with snow.

Mike gave a sharp glance around. The moonlight horizon was still bare. He stooped and turned the man over.

"Dead!" he muttered. "Dead and cold!" as he laid his hand against the chill cheek.

For a moment he stood staring at the dead man's face, which was that of a little man, wizened and bearded, and very much of Mike's own type and build.

Then, like a flash, it came to the convict that here at last was his chance, and a thrill shot through his weary frame.

"He'll not need them duds any more," he muttered, and, dropping on his knees in the snow, began with trembling fingers to strip the dead man of his clothes.

They were worn and old, but to Mike as precious a wardrobe, for once he was rid of his convict garb he had multiplied his chances of escape a hundredfold.

Not till he had completed the whole change of costume down to boots and hat, and had buried his broad arrows in a neighboring drift did Mike bethink himself of the sack.

He snatched it up eagerly, hoping it might contain food, and turned the contents upon the snow.

A small drum, a bag of lead sol-

## Covington Wins From Slidell Gymnasium Basketball Saturday

Covington high school basketball team won its third straight victory by defeating the strong gymnasium team of Slidell last Saturday night. The game was hard fought from beginning to end. The first half ended 10 to 3 in favor of Covington. In the second half Slidell substituted Smith and Parker for Oliver and Coleman. No change was made in the high school line-up. The Slidell team made a desperate effort in this half, but it could not overcome the early lead of the visitors, and the final score was 21 to 13.

The game seemed to mark the end of the bitter rivalry existing between Covington and Slidell in athletic sports. Mr. Homer Fritchie, manager of the gymnasium, and the other members of the team, treated the Covington boys with great consideration, both on and off the field. Chris Schultz was satisfactory as referee. He was asked by the management of the Slidell team to officiate in the return game that will be played in Covington after the holidays.

## Dr. K. Winfield Ney Returns From European War Front to His Practice In Madisonville and New Orleans

Dr. K. Winfield Ney, who has recently returned from France, where he was doing hospital work for the French Red Cross Society at the front. Dr. Ney bears a certificate signed by President L. Salle of the French Red Cross, which states that "during the pending period (from July to November) the surgeon-in-chief, Dr. Ney, has treated great numbers of wounded, which have necessitated multiple and important surgical interventions, executed with the highest competency." So Dr. Ney in his surgical work on the field of battle in a foreign land won the same reputation for skill that has been associated with his name here.

France is closer to us than any other nation. As to the duration of the war, Dr. Ney states that it is conceded that its termination is at least eighteen months away. That in the meantime France is doing nicely in the matter of food and that the cost of living is remarkably less than is generally understood. Women are doing all kinds of work, in the field, in the shops and off railroads, and they are doing it cheerfully. He believes the plans being effected by the allies cannot fail to accomplish their purpose and that they are on the eve of a successful campaign.

## People Working For a Good Fire Department--List of Donations

The people and general public seem to begin to realize the need for a good fire department, and in backing up their belief they have subscribed to same. All the department needs is a few more amounts on this list and they will have our chemical at fires before the whistle stops blowing. That will be some fast, but you just put your name down for its benefit, and you will see that it can be done. The following are strong for a good fire department:

- Joseph Seller, \$5.00.
- Adam Seiler, \$5.00.
- Wm. Frederick Co., \$5.00.
- A. A. Frederick, \$5.00.
- Association of Commerce, \$25.00.
- R. L. Aubert, \$5.00.
- P. J. Lucroix, \$5.00.
- Emile Frederick, \$5.00.
- G. W. Aouille, \$5.00.
- Covington Grocery & Grain, Co., \$25.00.
- J. S. Jones, \$5.00.
- Segond & Fontan, \$5.00.

## DEVICE FAILED TO PLEASE

Old Gentlemen by No Means Grateful for Contrivance Meant to Save Him Trouble.

A Staten Island man named George Moore recently invented a rocking chair rocker that never reached the patent office in Washington. The inventor was discouraged by his grandfather, Samuel P. Moore, for whom he had constructed the rocker.

Moore the younger has always been known as a tinkerer. Back of the house he has a workshop and for years has whittled away many an hour putting things together that never brought him any return save the satisfaction he felt in constructing them.

Grandfather Moore has always had the habit of violently rocking his rocking chair on the porch. First Grandson Moore invented a rocker silencer, so that the old man could rock away to his heart's content and never get on anybody's nerves. The elder Mr. Moore did not seem to take as much pleasure in rocking as formerly, but nobody commented on the fact at the time.

A few days ago Grandson Moore, while Grandfather Moore was down at the post office, attached a small motor to the rocking chair in such a way that by connecting the wires the chair could be set going like a seasaw.

When the elder Mr. Moore returned and took his favorite seat the chair began to pitch him back and forth without an ounce of effort on his part. Did he feel grateful? Not at all. He left the chair, kicked the motor contrivance and told his grandson what he thought of it.

"Don't ye know my pleasure is in rocking myself?" he cried.

## CATS AS DOMESTIC PETS

Many Famous Men Have Been Fond of the Animals and Made Them Their Companions.

serve to robe Queen Mab. The neck-ruff, the "feathered" ears and feet, the falling whiskers and the squirrel-like tail of a milk-white Persian tabby, make it a thing of ideal beauty. The hand longs to stroke it down. As it is a creature of ready sympathies, and not suspicious, it is glad to be caressed. Perhaps it is not so intelligent as the tiger-striped cat, but it is quicker to lend itself to the ways of a kind master or mistress.

French men are even greater amateurs of cats than French women, who resemble them in so many things. A cat was suffered by Richelieu to nurse his kittens in his cardinal's hat. Mazarin (but he was an Italian) used to stroke down a cat that he kept in his arms when dictating to his diplomatic secretaries.

The only domestic animal Victor Hugo would allow in his house was a cat, because "domesticity did not curtail its liberty." He had at Guernsey a slate-colored Maltese, with a black mottle and a black end to its tail, which (the cat, and not the tail) used to sit on his desk when he was writing.

The black cat is the least apt to scratch. It got a bad name when old women were burned for witchcraft, and sometimes, because suspected of being evil spirits in feline guise, shared their fiery fate.

Work Requires Skill. One of the spectacular features of the work on the modern steel building which always attracts the interest of the spectators is the adeptness of the man at the forge, whose job consists of heating the rivets to the point of redness and then tossing the glowing metal to a workman somewhere in the vicinity. He catches it and drives it into a hole awaiting its reception. In its heated condition the two ends are then clinched by a few blows of the hammer. Occasionally these motorlike missiles go astray, and are likely to do some damage, unless they are looked after. It has been found that a better way of accomplishing the practice is by means of a chute.

## HER POOR, PETTED HUSBAND

Wife's Solicitude for His Health, and Her Own, Was Very Touching, Indeed Yes.

The petted husband and his wife were amiably discussing the advisability of a trip to Palm Beach, in order that the wife of the petted husband could get back some of the strength that, with her, wasn't so latent as the distinguished physician who called upon her some time during the petted husband's office hours thought it ought to be.

"The only trouble, darling," said the petted husband, "is this: that if you should want me to go with you I should have to leave my business just at the period when I am most needed to make our profits large enough for me to maintain you in the proud position to which you have been accustomed.

"On the other hand, should I remain behind, the first of the month will come without your being here, and the thought of opening all the bills for things you have ordered but forgotten to mention, without your moral support, is rather disconcerting."

"And I suppose," said the wife of the petted husband, "you have not considered that if I should go alone there would be no one, absolutely no one, to see about my baggage, arrange about the sleeping compartments and hotel rooms and protect me from being insulted by total strangers. I should think, after our being married all these years, you ought to feel pretty good about my wanting you to go, anyway, and you would if you had a spark of human feeling in you."

Thereupon the petted husband inquired of the tourist agencies, saw the hotel representatives, made arrangements to stave off his creditors and close up his business for six weeks.

At Palm Beach the wife of the petted husband remarked to a friend: "Yes, I brought my petted husband along. The poor man absolutely needed a change of scene."—Life.

## Unstable Moon.

The celebrated observatory at Greenwich, the place from which we reckon longitude, was founded by Charles II in 1675, mainly for the purpose of investigating the movements of the moon in the interests of navigation. Although in the intervening two and a half centuries astronomers have worked at the problem, the moon has not yet become entirely amenable to their mathematics. The astronomer-royal of Great Britain, in his report of the work at Greenwich during the past year, calls attention to the increasing deviation between the calculated position of the moon in the sky and its real position as shown by the Greenwich observations. The deviation has lately been growing in a serious manner. The error last year was more than twelve times as large as the error twenty years ago, and the average annual increase during the two decades has amounted to half a second of arc in longitude. The reason that astronomers have failed in getting exact results from calculations based on dynamical laws of gravitation is possibly the existence of some attractive force that they have not yet discovered, although the result may also be affected by the true shape of the earth, which still awaits accurate determination.—Youth's Companion.

## Fumed Oak.

A good method of producing the peculiar dark brown of old oak is by fuming with liquid ammonia. The wood should be placed in a dark and air-tight room, and half a pint or so of ammonia poured into an open dish

placed upon the ground. The gas that comes from the ammonia acts in a wonderful manner upon the tannic acid in the wood, and browns it so deeply that a shaving or two may be taken off without removing the color. The depth of shade will depend upon the quantity of ammonia used and the time allowed for the operation. Other methods may be used to obtain a similar result. Liquid ammonia may be laid on the wood with a brush or rag, and the color will deepen immediately. Potash bichromate, dissolved in cold water, will produce a similar effect. In Germany, the cabinet makers use very strong coffee for darkening oak. To make it very dark, use iron filings with a little sulphuric acid and water, put on with a sponge, and allow it to dry between each application, until the right hue is reached.

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