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WASHINGTON STANDARD
Telephone 86.

LITTLE MERRY CHRISTMAS

Now a Wife's Greeting Saved
Black Carston's Life

By GEORGE ETHLEBERT WALSH

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"Merry Christmas!"
"Huh! What's that?"

The gruff voice took some of the enthusiasm out of the childish treble, and it filtered somewhat weakly in repetition.

"Merry Christmas, sir!"

The big bearded man stared at the diminutive speaker and for an instant the hand drawn lines on the heavy face threatened to relax, but a moment later a spasm of a pain shot across it, and the voice rumbled:

"There isn't any merry Christmas—not in this world! Whoever taught you such an idea? Huh! Merry Christmas! I haven't seen one for forty years, and—"

The little white, drawn face had an intense appeal to it, but it fell upon a hard, stony nature. The forty years of hard life had dried up the well-springs of sympathy, and the gruff miner stumbled away, leaving the boy a mute witness to one of the tragedies of life.

A few minutes later the child trailed and walked in the opposite direction. There were no tears in the wondering eyes, but the mute face had the twisted sorrow of a wounded animal. Twice the little legs halted as if too weak to carry the slight body, and once the boy dropped on a fallen log and stared ahead of him.

It was unlike any Christmas the child had ever before experienced. Christmas had always been ushered in by snow, sleet, rain or cold north winds, but in this strange new land the flowers were in bloom in the dead of winter, and the sun shined brightly and cooled from nearly every leafy bower. It was hard to realize that in the faraway northern city the land was wrapped in the icy embrace of the frost king. A little pang of disappointment crept into his heart, and unconsciously he sighed for the old familiar scenes.

"Black" Carston stumbled down the slope of the hillside after leaving the boy, a growing anger and rage disturbing his mind. He was in no mood that morning to have the festive season of the year recalled to him. Only the night before the sluice which he had constructed had been washed away by a mountain torrent and filled with loosened stones and huge bowlders. It was only one of a long series of accidents which had followed his unexpected ventures, and at first he had accepted it philosophically.

But the piping voice of the child had made his ill luck more acute. "Merry Christmas!" He muttered the words under his breath and kicked viciously at the loose stones. When he came to the wrecked sluice he glared at it as he sagged and finally sneered:

"Well, what's the odds? There's no good here anyway—not a cent's worth—and I've only got the disappointment a little earlier than I expected. I'll pull out tonight and make another try over at Copper creek."

Then, with a grin: "And that youngster wished me a merry Christmas! Huh, what a foolish kid he is!"

The man dropped moodily on a rock and refilled his pipe. He sat there a long time smoking. Somehow his



There was a little cry of exultation. The child's morning greeting had clung to his mind, and it sprang to his lips suddenly again and again. Then his thoughts wandered, and he muttered over in his troubled dream:

"Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas! Ha, ha! Merry Christmas, youngster!"

In his agony he rolled over and wrenched the tortured limb until relief came again through sheer exhaustion. During the few lucid moments of the morning, Carston tried to think, connectedly and plan for some method of escape, but his strength was unequal to it.

Human nature yielded gradually to the strain. The waking, lucid moments grew fewer and of less duration. His mind wandered over the past. He babbed and talked in his sleep. At times forms seemed to surround him, and he forgot his predicament in talking to them.

Then music seemed to lull his senses, and he heard voices which soothed his mind. They were all singing the refrain that had so offended his ears that morning. Clear above all the others a childish voice sang. He was in church, but the voice was that of a child or of an angel. Carston could not say which.

"I wish you a merry Christmas! I wish you a merry Christmas! I wish you a merry, merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas!"

Almost unconsciously the man's lips framed the words and repeated a "merry, merry Christmas!" It was far from a merry Christmas to him lying there in prison in the rocks, with one leg crushed, but he was past physical pain now, and it was only the mind which took cognizance of the world about.

Then the high, piping voice changed. It seemed to come from a greater distance, vague, shadowy and almost inaudible. Carston strained his ears. It

Henry Trayne and his wife, Laura, had been married ten years and had not been blessed with children. Henry was thirty-eight, and Laura was thirty-two. They had reached the age where childless married people begin to try to supply the deficiency by pets.

Henry Trayne, who was a professional chemist and mining engineer, was offered every inducement to go to the Pacific coast and direct the operations of a mine. Besides his salary, he was offered some stock of the company. For a long time he declined, not caring to break up his home on an uncertainty—for the mine might prove worthless—or to leave his wife while the experiment was being made, but "the wolf" was prowling about the door, and at last the couple made up their minds to bear the separation.

Henry was obliged to make a preliminary trip to a distant city where the capitalists who were to employ him lived in order to look matters over and become posted as to his work. During this absence, which lasted a month, Laura had a taste of what she was to endure during the longer separation. When her husband returned the couple were enraptured at the reunion, being like a young couple in their honeymoon, except that the longer separation stared them in the face.

When the March winds were blowing Henry bade his wife a sorrowful adieu and went to the field of his operations. During the first month of absence Laura wrote him every day very much. The day you miss you are whined and fretted and ran about pinning for his dear papa. "Toddie" (the parrot) "said yesterday, 'Oh, Henry, how can I live without you? I wonder if the dear girl got that from me.'"

Had the letters fallen into the hands of strangers they would have supposed the writer to be referring to beloved children. However, after a few weeks—possibly Laura was becoming more accustomed to her husband's absence and did not need to lavish so much love on Chimmy and Toddie—the letters assumed a more practical tone. Laura hoped her venture would be successful. They were getting on toward old age and nothing laid up. It would be nice if in addition to Henry's salary the shares that had been given him would become valuable. Then they would not have to worry about the future. In one of her letters she asked Henry if there were good schools in the district where the mines were located. Henry wrote back that he hadn't taken any interest in the schools, for if they made the place a permanent home, not having any children of their own, it wouldn't make any difference. To which Laura replied that she thought Toddie could be taught to read, and she wouldn't like to take her where such a thing would be impossible if desired. Henry, who had got used to being separated from his pets, thought this absurd.

He arrived on Christmas morning. As he ran up the steps of his house he noticed an auto standing before the door and in the hall met the family physician, who was giving some instructions to a trained nurse. Henry, in terror, begged to be informed as to the reason for their being there.

"The crisis is passed," said the doctor. "Don't worry. Nurse, go up and prepare Mrs. Trayne to meet her husband. We don't want to startle her."

The nurse went upstairs and in a few minutes called out that Mr. Trayne might come up. Henry was so anxious that he had not responded to Chimmy's greetings and when the dog got in his way as he was hurrying upstairs gave him a push that sent him away yelping. When the eager husband reached his wife's door he was astonished to see a placard on it bearing the words:

"Merry Christmas from Henry."

"Too anxious to give way to wonder as to what it meant, he opened the door softly and entered the room. There lay Laura, with the tiniest bit of a baby on her arm, and the mother had a happy smile of welcome on her face.

"A Christmas present for you, Henry!" said Laura.

The nurse, who took a position to see the husband's face at the moment of his surprise, told the doctor that "he looked as if he had had a pitcher of joy poured over him." He responded to a moment enraptured at what he saw, then took his wife and their child in one embrace.

"Now I know," he said, "why you were inquiring about the schools and were giving me that nonsense about teaching Toddie to read. But why didn't you let me know?"

"I wanted to surprise you. And when I learned that you were to come at this time I hoped my Christmas gift would be here ready for you. The doctor delivered it without wrapper or address for more than at 8 o'clock."

And so it was that Chimmy and Toddie were relegated to a very inferior position to make way for the rising son of the household. Toddie, who was bright enough to deserve a better fate, says:

"Shut up! You'll wake the baby!"

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HIS CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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"OH, ARE YOU ALIVE?"

"Good news on Christmas morning! Christ was born in Bethlehem and is living now and here."

The voice and song trailed off until lost entirely to the ear. When silence fell around the man vaguely wondered if this were death. He had often thought of death. He had seen it in so many different forms that the fear of it had seldom disturbed him. Now he dreaded it—no; wished for it, for the pain was past endurance, and there was no release from his prison.

He seemed to wait and listen eagerly for the song again, but all was silence around. A great dreary blank drifted across his mind, and he was unconscious of pain or suffering. How long this stupor lasted he could not say, but when consciousness returned again an agonizing pain shot through his leg and body. He groaned and tried to change his position.

Then close to his lips a little sobbing voice cried out: "Oh, are you alive? I thought you was too late. Wait a minute and I will get the leg free."

It was dark all around, but Carston, looking up, saw stars shining overhead. They came through a big hole in the wall of rocks. His leg was so numb that feeling was nearly gone, but he was conscious of little hands digging and tearing at the dirt beneath the crushed limb. Then suddenly a great weight was lifted from it and the little sobbing voice said:

"Now pull with me."

How the little hands worked the dirt and rocks loose from the bowlder and pulled to extricate the man's body from the death trap Carston could never clearly understand, but after an hour of agony he felt himself lying on the surface of the earth with a little, slim, slender creature by his side, rasping and panting from its exertions. Tiny drops of moisture trickled on Carston's face, but they were blood from lacerated hands and not tears. The little sobs were dry and tearless.

Carston swooned again in spite of his heroic will to fight back the weakness. In the interval the stars above down upon him in their cold, hard brilliance, and the soft, cool air filled his panting lungs with healing strength.

They carried the man to the nearest mining camp and gave him such medical attendance as he needed. After a week of fever and delirium Carston's strong constitution brought him through successfully. His first thought was of the child who had rescued him. "Bring that merry Christmas youngster to me!" he almost shouted. "Where is he? Don't keep me waiting!"

Rugged old Carston, black by name and character, swung his arms around the slender neck and, with a great sob in his voice, cried: "Merry Christmas! A merry Christmas, youngster, and God bless you!"

But even then he did not know that his faint "Merry Christmas" uttered in his feverish dream when imprisoned in the rocks had first attracted the little singer's attention and was responsible for his rescue. That was long ago, and Carston now celebrates the Christmas season with religious zeal and ceremony, and there is always a little "Merry Christmas" to help him, for nothing could satisfy him but to nickname his rescuer "Merry Christmas."

GALLOPING ARMY KITCHEN.

British Government Arranges to Feed Tommy Atkins Well.

The British soldier is notoriously fond of his rations and, like every other soldier, is a poor fighter when his meals do not appear with proper regularity. So that Tommy Atkins may not be kept a second late from his beef and to the army has rigged up a novel "galloping kitchen," a cooker on wheels, which cooks as it goes and can rattle along on its gun carriage over the roughest roads a horse can take, the roughest boiling away all the time.

There is a boiler divided into four compartments, with a firebox below—nothing more. The arrangement could not be simpler, and it saves the annoyance of setting up a whole cooking outfit at every stop when the army is on a rapid march and also assures a meal for the detachment that is away from camp on a scouting or skirmishing expedition.

The very young traveling salesman was registering at the village hotel. "I want a room with running water in it," he remarked. "Runnin' water?" cackled the landlord; "what do you want to do, mister—practice indoor trout fishing?"

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

In the Superior Court of the State of Washington for the County of Thurston.

In re estate of Joseph Deibler, Deceased. Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed executor of the last will and testament of the above named Joseph Deibler; and that all persons having claims against the said Joseph Deibler, or his estate, be, and the same are required to present the same, duly verified, to the undersigned executor, at his real office, 105 1/2 First Street, Washington, or to him personally, or to his attorneys Troy & Starbuck, at Olympia, Washington, within one year from the date of the first publication of this notice, or the same will be forever barred.

W. W. DALTON DEIBLER,
Executor of the last will and Testament of Joseph Deibler, Deceased.
Date of first publication, Nov. 11, 1910.

John M. Wilson ATTORNEY AT LAW

(COUNTY ATTORNEY)
Office: Court House, Olympia, Wash.
Washington St., Bet. 4th and 5th, Olympia

DANIEL GABY ATTORNEY AT LAW

AND NOTARY PUBLIC
Washington St., Bet. 4th and 5th, Olympia

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