

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, high-falutin' 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 of joy and presents 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 walked down town and expended that sole remaining quarter. The neighbor came over all right and Billy and the wife walked three miles down town to save carfare. 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 jolly 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. "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 carfare 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.—W. M. Maupin in "The Commoner."

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| Pulverized Sugar 8c. | | Loose Raisins 10c lb. |
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| Red Sugar 20c lb. | | Citron 18c lb. |
| Green Sugar 20c lb. | | Best Layer Figs 15c lb. |
| Walter Baker's Chocolate 18c. | | Dates 10c lb. |
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| Choice Seeded Raisins 11c lb. | | Mince Meat 10 and 12½c. |
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HARRY R. DeVRIES, Freedom, Md.

POLITICIANS CONCEDE CLAIM.
Local Option Bill Will Probably Pass.
The Baltimore Sun has investigated the Anti-Saloon League's claim that the local option bill has a majority in both houses of the next Maryland Legislature and in a leading article of a column and a half last Saturday giving an outline of the provisions of the bill to be passed, says:
"The forces which have previously prevented the passage of the Local Option Bill do not vary considerably from Mr. Anderson's figures. Many of the politicians figure that the bill will have at least one majority in the Senate and about five in the House. Everyone admits that Mr. Goldborough will sign it if it passes."
The matter has assumed such proportions that Governor Crothers in an interview outlining his forthcoming message published in the Sun of last Monday, while declining to state whether he would refer to the local option bill in his message did suggest that the bill might be passed and get the question out of politics as a disturbing factor by providing that there should be no vote under it in Baltimore City as a whole for some definite number of years in the future. The League Superintendent in the Sun's interview of Saturday stated that the League will confine itself for some time to the residence wards in Baltimore City that want to vote and to the counties where sentiment is ripe and that the League has no intention of bringing on a fight in Baltimore City as a whole for at least three years. Under the circumstances, the League could hardly complain if the bill should be actually passed with such a proviso which would not exempt Baltimore, but simply make binding the League's own suggested limitation as to the possible time of the vote in the entire City.

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February, "	224,989.00
March, "	227,233.00
April, "	230,831.00
May, "	230,936.00
June, "	232,918.00
July, "	236,190.00
August, "	265,830.00
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