

THE SANTA CLAUS OF SILVER BOW

STORY OF BILLY GEMMELL, BON VIVANT OF BUTTE, AND HIS JOSHERS' CLUB.

Saloon Gathering of Twelve Years Ago Resulted in Building Up an Organization Which Has Accomplished Much for the Poor of the Great Copper Camp.

Twelve years ago, about this time of the year, or perhaps a little earlier, there gathered in a Butte saloon, a bunch of good fellows. They had heard of a number of needy people,



Billy Gemmell, Santa Claus of the Butte Poor.

without food, clothing or fuel. It was a cold night and the advance notices issued by the weather man were not encouraging. Possessed of the Christmas spirit they looked over the list of the needy that had been reported, and saw to it that the handful of families were well provided with the necessities of life, and the provisions furnished were sufficient to last a long time.

To cut a long story short it was out of this one little gathering that there has grown up in Butte an "organization" without officers and without charter, which has made it its business to see that no one in the great copper camp is without food and sustenance during the Christmas season. In the past 12 years it has given aid and succor to thousands.

The name of this organization is the "Josher's Club." The name is not appropriate, because its work is serious and sincere. Some of the newspaper boys hung the name to it and the name stuck. But the "club," if it can be so called, is no "josh."

Those who are active in the handling of this annual charity are unselfish. Names of donors are never mentioned, except in outstanding instances. The men who give their time and money generously are never listed in the press, but their names must surely be written down in the big book above, with that of Abou Ben Adhem, of those who love their fellow men.

The Unique Character.
There is one, however, whose name is featured every year as the moving spirit of the Josher's club. He is known as plain "Billy" Gemmell. Gemmell has done the hard work. He has kept the "Josher's" alive. He purchases the immense quantity of foodstuffs annually delivered to the needy, and has, through his wonderful personality, made possible all that has been accomplished by the organization.

One has to know Gemmell to appreciate him.

Billy Gemmell is a most unique character. He made a success and a moderate fortune out of the racing game. There is no man in Montana of consequence who does not call him by his first name. He is a bon vivant and a good fellow who has lived his own life and never bothered with the ideas of anyone else, and has seen to it that many of the unfortunate have not suffered from a lack of the milk of human kindness. He has been the soul of the "Josher's" club, and when he passes the organization will pass also. His dynamic energy crystallizes in this annual effort, and it is doubtful if another man could be found in Butte to take up his work and carry it to a successful conclusion.

A Brief History.
The history of the Josher's may be briefly told.

The organization cares for hundreds of families every holiday season. Even with great prosperity, such as Butte usually enjoys, there is much abject poverty. Wives lose husbands, sickness prevents employment, and a thousand things help to swell the multitude of the needy. The Josher's this year will provide not only Christmas cheer for one day, but provisions, clothing and other necessities of life sufficient to last for a couple of weeks. Every family in need is amply provided for.

This year the Josher's are in greater need than ever. While the support financially will be as great as before, it must be remembered that the prices of provisions and meat are literally sky high. This means that more strenuous efforts must be made to "deliver the goods." This is why "Billy" Gemmell is the busiest charity worker in Montana this year.

This is the story of Billy Gemmell, bon vivant, and his "Josher's" club. It is a real charity, the kind that warms the cockles of the heart. It has grown into an institution, and the warm hearted people of the great mining town are proud of it, and of the man who made it.

Christmas In Blizzard

By FRANK B. LINDERMAN

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"Better come up Christmas. A big bull elk fell over a cliff up to camp and broke his durned-foot neck. I've rustled his here fer trimmin's"—and Uncle Billy held up a demijohn and winked.

"Jest me an' you," he continued as he warmed his thin hands at the office stove. "He ain't no slouch, that elk ain't. He's fat an' fine, an' I'm a-goin' to give ye a reg'lar old fashioned feed, me."

A week had passed since the invitation had been accepted, and, after making a pack of some small gifts for the old fellow, I began to climb the gulch that led to his cabin.

It had snowed the night before and the chill wind snatched material for miniature blizzards from the snow-laden firs, as it swept among their boughs from every cradle of storms among the ragged cliffs, far above. Here and there dry leaves wrung from reluctant bushes, scurried across the white surface, followed by a mist of snow which, like

and cold, when in a grove of fir trees well known to me, the smoke from the rusty stove-pipe protruding from snow on the top of Uncle Billy's cabin, signalled that the journey's end was at hand.

"Whoop—eee—" The door opened and in it appeared the old man, his face wreathed in smiles and his white hair and beard blending with earth's mantle.

Roast of Elk Meat Wafts Aroma Around.

"Merry Christmas to ye. Dog-on me if ye ain't pretty good rawhide to mix it with this weather. Come in. Come in. I've got a hot toddy waitin' in. I've got a hot toddy waitin'." "Smell it?—Hey?" and the old chap opened the oven door that the savory roast of elk meat might waft its aroma about the room.

"I hain't no artist at fancy dishes, an' I hope ye'll be game an' tackle a puddin' I've made. It's a heap like a political platform, that puddin' is;

to watch Uncle Billy fill his pipe. He did the job with such nicety and precision, seeming to prolong the task that realization might be magnified by anticipation.

There was silence, as the wreaths of blue spoke floated about the cabin.

The nickel-plated alarm clock ticked off the seconds industriously and the moaning of the wind among the firs outside lent enjoyment and flavor to the tobacco. My eyes fell upon the old man and presently he rose slowly, stealthily—his eyes fixed upon the far corner of the cabin.

Bushy Tail and Shining Eyes Appear for Last Time.

Looking in the direction indicated by his stare, I saw the bushy tail and shining eyes of a mountain rat. Reaching under the soiled pillow, Uncle Billy drew forth a Colt Frontier six-shooter—waited for the rat to show himself to better advantage and then—BANG. The cabin was filled with foul-smelling smoke and

trail for his discovery. Bill told me afterward that a big Missourian had started to cheer fer Jeff Davis, an' Bill knocked him down, after a preliminary of bad language in which the lineage of the rebel sympathizer were questioned.

Bill Is Soon Surrounded By Price's Right Wing.

"In less time than it takes to tell it, the right wing of old Price's army hed surrounded Bill, an' hell were doin' fer the union blue, when I got near enough to land with a stick o' limb-wood I'd gathered from a wood-pile near the door. I don't remember much about the fight. My lights went out somewhere's about the first innin' an' next I knowed Bill were a-puttin' snow on my head an' callin' me pet names. Soon's I come to, he handed me my rifle an' suggested that a change of scene were necessary for the peace of the community, and judging from his nose, which never amounted to anything as an ornament after that day, he were right. His eyes were blacker'n a professional politician's record, an' blood had dripped on his forehead till he looked like a Blackfoot buck in war paint. Soon's I felt a little better, we started for a camp of some friends of ours, some 10 or 12 miles down the river, intendin' to spend the night with 'em an' to figger on the next move. Travelin' wan't much of a luxury fer me an' I allowed Bill's joints were a little off as well as my own. We neither one said anything about it, but I reckon we each hed suspicions.

Flying Snow Cuts Faces Like Lash of Whip.

"It were as cold as a refused proposal an' the wind hed hauled from hidin', a reg'lar old blizzard an' sent it curlin' over the country at a fearful rate. The flying snow cut our faces like the lash of a four-hoss whip as we traveled quarterin' with the wind. The country were rollin' an', after crossin' a knoll, I missed Bill. It were so thick you couldn't see a dozen feet an' I called to him as loud as I could, but you'd about as well try to bore an auger-hole with a gimlet, as to try to out-howl that blizzard. Being a bundle o' bruises yellin' wan't specially comfortin' an' I give it up an' fired a shot out of the rifle, but I didn't git no answer an' concluded I were in fer it. I managed to git another load into the gun after losin' three or four charges of powder, an' I figgered to save the load for an emergency. It were mighty lucky fer me that I did, too.

Nothing to Do but Keep Traveling With Wind.

"There were nothin' to do but to keep travelin' with the wind an' ye



The old bull fell in his tracks and the rest of the herd went on "like shadders in a bad dream."

just vengeance, in every case overtook and buried them. A camp-robber, driven by a sharp gust, narrowly escaped being blown against a huge pine snag as he crossed the gulch, and a cottontail that I had scared from his hiding place, hurriedly sought new cover with his ears tight against his back.

Growing Drifts Make Traveling Laborious.

The trail was obliterated, and growing drifts made traveling laborious for one unused to winter in the hills. I crossed the trail of a deer that had been drifting with the storm, and although comparatively fresh, the tracks were scarcely visible, and for long distances they were completely covered. I tried to picture the gulch and steep hills on a summer day, but my imagination revolted and refused to be driven to a milder clime. I was growing tired

because it's made up of a whole lot o' truck that nobody cares much about, but my receiptbook, which in this here case I liken to the scrap book of a professional politician, called fer 'em an' I built it to meet demands." With this, he busied himself with a dinner that I shall never forget. "Now help yourself an' don't put on airs. Remember we might be dead next Christmas an' cut as big a gash in pleasure as ye can."

Appetite Sharpened to Edge Of Keen Appreciation.

The trip up the gulch; the greeting and—yes, the toddy, had sharpened my appetite to an edge of keen appreciation, and, as Uncle Billy said, "I done noble."

"Now, we'll jest let things set, an' smoke a spell," and suiting action to the words, he produced his pipe and tobacco. It was always a luxury

snow was blowing through a hole in the chinking where the 45-caliber bullet had torn it away.

"Got him," said the old fellow as he crossed the room, picked up by the tail the mangled rat, tossed him out of door and began to stop the hole in the chinking with some rags. "If there's one redemmer feature about them devils, I hain't been able to find it although I've been closely associated with 'em since '63," he said as if in apology for his deed.

Finds Chance for Revision Of Aesop's Fables.

"If old man Aesop had a-known about 'em, he'd a-never hung the can of pure cussedness to a member of the canine family, like he did in his 'dog in the manger' stunt, fer a mountain rat has got 'em all skinned raw when it comes to packin' of things that they ain't got no earthly use fer jest to keep the rightful owner from enjoyin' his own property. I been a-layin' fer that feller fer a week, but he were cunning' as a fero dealer. He's gone where he'll find a heap more of his kind, wearin' my brand."

"Hear that wind? Makes me think of a Christmas I spent in '65. Did I ever tell you about it?—no?"

"Well, me an' old Bill Hanks, he's dead an' gone years ago—hed been on a little bender down to Fort Benton. We'd been down the river an' had got back on the last boat up. The weather hed been mild an' nice till jest before the holidays, but the first storms of any account, drove in the prospectors an' some of the buffalo hunters.

Has Working Interest In Bill's Trouble Herd.

"The camp were pretty lively, I can tell ye. Me an' Bill were partners in some ground that were payin', an', bein' flush, we trotted a pretty fair heat along with the rest of mankind that hed drifted west fer the love o' driftin'. Things got to hummin' an' of course there were a good sprinklin' o' fights durin' the time we were a-tryin' to drink up all the booze there were, but I kept out of 'em, knowin' that I wan't built fer close quarters an' figgered to defend my right to peace, if I hed to. Bill wan't so lucky. He never seemed to savvy that trouble were a maverick drift on the range of human life, an' couldn't keep his brandin' iron off'n its hide. Time an' time agin, he got lessons—practical as hell, too, but they never learned him to nibble before he bit. He hed a bad habit o' declarin' me in on everything, an' along with a partnership in the placer diggin's, I hed a workin' interest in Bill's trouble herd.

Hears Racket and Hits Trail for Discovery.

"I never knowed much about his breedin', but if a man kin make hisself standard-bred by performance, same's a hoss kin, Bill were blooded, an' don't ye forget it."

"Were Christmas when we went prospectin' fer trouble in as likely a spot as I ever see, an' 'twan't long before he got his notice on a claim that it took us both to represent, an' we left it jumpable, at that. I wan't with him when he made the strike, but I heered the racket an' hit the

MONTANA HAWK MESSAGE CARRIER

CAUGHT IN CARBON COUNTY IT IS KILLED IN THE UNITED STATES OF COLOMBIA.

Farmer Tied Message to Leg of Hawk and Turned it Loose; Receives Reply From Bogota, Capital of Colombia; Flew 3,700 Miles to Deliver Montanan's Message.

Here is a story of a Montana hawk, captured in a Carbon county oat field, last August, and which was given its liberty after a small bottle had been fixed to one of its legs. The bottle contained a message. It flew south into the United States of Colombia, and was killed on the table lands of Bogota, near the capital of that country, 3,700 miles from Ired Lodge, seventy days after it was turned loose in this state.

Eddie Hotchkiss' Message.

On August 29, a little less than three months ago, Eddie Hotchkiss, a Carbon county farmer, was at work in his oat field. He found a hawk that had become entangled in the shocks of the oats, and took possession of the bird. He wrote a message and put the note in a small bottle which he tied to the hawk's leg. And then he gave it its liberty. The message asked the finder to write the sender.

Hotchkiss was surprised a few days ago to receive a letter from Bogota, the capital of Colombia. It was written by Louis Filipe, a resident of Bogota. He detailed the circumstances under which the message had come across two continents to him. He said he was hunting in a wheat field on the plains of Bogota and had shot a hawk. He noticed a bottle fixed to one of its legs. He broke the bottle and read the note it contained.

International Courtesy.

He presented his greetings to the Montana farmer who had sent the message on the wings of the great trade winds into the far southland, and expressed the hope that the relations between the United States of Colombia and the great republic after which it was patterned would always be friendly, and he added naively that he hoped we would not take it into our heads to dig any more canals across the isthmus of Panama.

PROPOSALS FOR PEACE

The glow of a new dawn of peace and good will is faint on the world horizon as the day of the Christ birth nears. Germany has made the first move. The proposal to discuss terms, received at first with derision in the entente capitals, seems likely to receive consideration that will result in an exchange of views. The neutral nations, particularly the United States, are expected to exert their influence toward adjustment of the conflicting demands and viewpoints that stand in the way of an armistice or a final peace treaty.

couldn't feel the warmth that I knowed were in the huge carcass. My hands were numb with cold an' it were so dark that I couldn't see no more. One foot hed no more feelin' in it than a boulder.

Carcass freezes as Hard As Pharaoh's Heart.

"I were in fer a night of it if I lived, but I reckoned that mornin' would find me drifted over an' dead—er'n a defeated candidate fer office. I were goin' to freeze, an' I knowed it. I leaned the empty rifle again the bull, pulled out my butcher knife, an' after a heap o' misery, opened the big blade, knealt down, ripped him open an' stuck my hands inside. With the feelin' of warmth, come an idea which, no doubt, were half born when I pulled the trigger that ended the buffalo's life, an' I dragged out his entrails an' crawled into the holler. There hain't no use in tryin' to tell ye of the sufferin' I lived through, but the blizzard howled an' raged till night daylight, an' the carcass hed frozen as solid an' hard as Pharaoh's heart. I couldn't git out. No, sir,—I couldn't git out.

Sets Up a Yell When Friends Come Trooping Toward Him.

"To make it more interesting a pack of buffalo wolves were howlin' around the carcass, an' I wan't much stuck on 'em a-playin' a game o' hide an' seek with me through the old bull's ribs, neither, but unless I could cut my way out, an' pretty damned soon, too, I wouldn't see 'em, that were as sure as there were liver in a bear. I guess they'd have got me, all right, if they could hev gnawed the meat. Fer more'n once I heered 'em tackle the job an' it made me nervous as if I were a-settin' fer my tin-type, an' don't ye forget it. I whittled away, but made mighty little headway although the work kept my mind off'n the wolves an' kept up a little circulation till daylight came, when I didn't hear 'em no more.

"Pretty soon after day broke, I heered a shot, then another, an' another. I yelled out but got no answer an' bimeby I heered a hoss loppin' toward the buffalo. Bein' on the ground that way I could hear anything movin' fer again as I could hev hed I been standin' up. I set up a yell, fearin' they would pass by, an' pretty soon I heered somebody say, 'Well, I'll be damned.' They cut me out. I couldn't stand up an' were sick fer four weeks afterward, but I'd a-died in the bull if old Bill hadn't made the camp an' started out with the rest of 'em as soon's the storm died down, to hunt fer my remains.

"That's a pretty stiff yarn, partner; better wash it down with a little smile."

And Uncle Billy passed the demijohn.



"I've rustled this here fer trimmin's"—and Uncle Billy held up a demijohn, and winked.

Montana Flax Grower Is Champion of the World



Drilling in Winter Wheat, Following Binder, on Hall Farm.

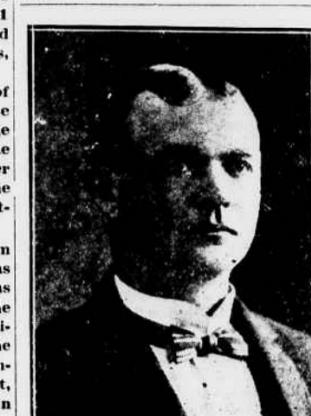
This is John Hall, dry land farmer of Toole county, who has been nominated for the Hall of Fame by E. R. Holderby, editor of the Sweetgrass Record. Farmer Hall grew 2,731 bushels of flax on 73 acres of land near to border town of Sweetgrass, and broke the record.

Mr. Holderby annexed the title of champion flaxgrower of the universe for Farmer Hall by affidavits of the farmer who grew the flax and the thresher who threshed it, together with documentary evidence from the Bozeman Agricultural college, attesting to the Hall achievement.

The accompanying halftone is from a photograph taken when Hall was harvesting this flax crop which has attracted so much attention. The numerous shocks attest to the heaviness of the stand. Following the cutting of the flax the land was immediately seeded to winter wheat, and the picture shows the drills in operation.

Hundreds of farmers have written Hall, asking him for some of the flax

for seed, and offering him any price for it. He could have sold his entire crop at probably twice the market price.



John Hall, Champion Flax Grower.