Yuletide Greetings

The Christmas Holly Girl

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A Christmas Eve In Camp

By F. H. Sweet

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HALF a dozen unshaven, red-shirted miners were gathered about the dingy counter of Bilger's, the one store in camp. It was Christmas eve, and they wanted something extra for their dinner on the morrow—just to keep them in mind of the day, they said. But there was little novelty in the forlorn remnant of cans upon the shelves, or in the half-empty barrels and boxes under the counter and massed in the corners of the room. One man found a stray box of sardines, and took possession of it with the remark that, while it was not "Christmasy," he could have the satisfaction of knowing he was eating the only sardines in camp; another drew out a can of Boston baked beans from behind a squadron of tomatoes; while a third, of more investigating and determined turn of mind, hunted among the boxes and barrels until he actually discovered a can of Cape Cod cranberries.

This brought the entire group of Christmas hunters into a compact, envying circle; and while they were anxiously debating the pro and con—especially the con—of a division of spoils, the door opened quietly and a stoop-shouldered, watery-eyed man entered.

"Have you got any toys?" he asked, hesitatingly.

The storekeeper stared, and unanimously, as though by preconcerted arrangement, the group around the canned representatives from Cape Cod turned and stared also.

"Any—what?" the storekeeper asked blankly.

"Toys," the man repeated looking at the encircling faces with abashed embarrassment—"things to play with, I mean, like children have at Christmas. You see," with a curious mingling of apology and pride in his voice, "my little ten-year-old boy came in on the stage just now—clean from his grandma's, back to Missouri. I've been sendin' for him these two years, but couldn't seem to get to it till I struck a vein last month."

He lurched heavily against the counter. His watery eyes began to fill, partly through his condition and partly from some long dormant tenderness which was beginning to reawaken.

"The boy's consider'ble childish," he went on, rousing himself a little at the consciousness of being listened to by men who usually passed him without recognition, "an' likes things to play with. So, bein' it's Christmas, an' he jest comin', why, I thought mebbe I'd better hunt some toys."

"Of course," cried Dobson, the sheriff, heartily; and "Of course," "Of course," came promptly from others of the group.

And then they looked about the store inquiringly, eagerly, in search of something that would please a ten-year-old boy who was childish. But there was little they saw; only huge miners' boots, pyramids of picks and shovels and blankets, barrels of flour and beans and pork; and on the shelves, tobacco and canned goods, and a small assortment of earthen and tinware; and then, at the far end of the store, a bar for the accommodation of those who were thirsty.

There were no dry and fancy goods and notions upon the shelves, no showcases upon the counter, no display in the one dingy window. Such things would begin to make their appearance only with the coming of the first woman, and that was not yet.

"Rather a slim show for playthings, Dobson," said the owner of the cranberries, after a fruitless search with his eyes from one end of the store to the other. Don't s'pose a pack o' playin' cards would do?" as his gaze passed hopefully on an extensive assortment of that popular article. "They has pictures on 'em."

"Wouldn't do at all," answered Dobson decidedly. "They ain't moral; an' the first kid who patronizes us has got to be brought up moral. Say, you," to the watery-eyed man, who was edging towards the bar at the far end of the store—"none o' that!"

"None o' what?" asked the man querulously. "I ain't steppin' on your toes."

"No, but you are on the kid's. See here." His voice had an incisive ring which had made many stronger men tremble. "You ain't walkin' the same line you was twenty-four hours ago. Then you was a poor, no-count drunkard, who'd a right to dig his grave without opposition from nobody; now you're markin' out a trail for that kid to foller. See? Me an' my friends here ain't no call to interfere between father an' son," dropping his voice to an easy, familiar tone, and placing a hand encouragingly upon the tremulous shoulder, "so long as the father makes a good deal; but when he slumps,"—his voice was still soft, but the steely glint returned to his eyes—"then me an' my friends step in. Sabe? Bein' the first kid in camp, we've constitooted ourselves his guardian—just like every man in the place will do soon's they hear of his bein' here."

He turned back to his companions. The watery-eyed man, after one long, wistful,farewell glance toward the bar, resumed his fruitless search of the goods. There was nothing now to divide his attention; he knew the men with whom he had to deal, and realized that henceforth the bar was to be as far removed from him as though a wall of granite intervened. But, to his credit be it said, even with the realization came a new firmness to his eyes.

"What's that on the top shelf?" he asked suddenly.

"That? Oh, that is—I dunno," hesitated the storekeeper, as he took down the object in question and examined it critically. "It got in with some goods a year ago, an' has been up there ever since."

"Why, you chump!" cried the cranberry owner derisively, "not to know a jumpin' jack when you see one! I've bought lots of 'em to home for the children. See!" and he pulled a string which sent the acrobat tumbling up over the top of his red pole. "Just the thing for a kid."

"Just the thing," repeated the watery-eyed man, drawing a small bag of gold dust from his pocket: "it'll make the boy laugh."

As he was going out, the owner of the cranberries stepped to his side.

"Here, take this along with you," he said, relinquishing the can to which he had been clinging so fondly. "It'll help to make out a Christmas for the boy."

"And this, too." "And this," added the owner of the sardines and the owner of the baked beans; and then Sheriff Dobson pushed before them and slipped something bright and heavy into the hand which held the jumping-jack.

"It's a nest-egg for the kid," he said gravely. "Now you better go home an' fill up his stockin'; an' to-morrer you can tell him Merry Christmas from us all."

Great Savers.

How our mothers and grandmothers would have appreciated the wonderfully efficient electrical appliances of the present day. Probably most of all the electric washer and ironer, because, if the proper machines are selected, they represent the greatest economy. Not only do they save money, time and backbreaking drudgery, but the very clothes themselves.

The Christmas Dolly

Christmas Morning

Underwood & Underwood

A Pair of Stockings

By Christopher G. Hazard

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BUDDY SMITH had three ideas about his stockings—they were full of feet, full of holes, and they could be full of presents. It was with regard to the third idea that he was paying attention to the second. Willing to go barefoot under the circumstances, he was tieing up the holes in his best stocking, with a view to the Christmas possibilities. His sister, Agnes, had already hung up a much longer stocking, with a note attached in which she informed all who might be concerned that this one was hers. But Agnes, like the monkey that used a rabbit for a muff and kept himself warm by hugging it, was a little selfish. Not only had she hung up one of her mother's stockings, but she had got an advantage over Buddy in the matter of the chocolate cake in the cupboard, for there were holes all round it the size of her little finger.

So it was that on Christmas morning the shorter stocking had the most in it.

Santa Fetched Him

Courtesy Eastman Kodak Co.

The Evergreen Tree

By Christopher G. Hazard

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THE servants had retired and left the old lady alone. She sat before the decorated and lighted tree that was burdened with gifts that seemed to have no destinations. For Mrs. Stone was long past the wanting of gifts and no companions, young or old, sat with her, because she wished to be alone with her memories.

She was not as alone as she seemed to be, for, in the great chair opposite to hers memory placed the fairy figure of the child who had glanced and danced about the house and under the Christmas tree of long ago. Beside her there sat one who seemed to lay his hand again upon hers in happy and satisfied affection, while there bent over her the strong and tender youth who was once her hope for later years. Again the old house seemed full of joy, and noisy merriment drove out the deathly stillness, while the tree that is always green spoke of the immortality of happiness.

The next day, when the servants dismantled the evergreen tree, it was found that every gift was marked with a name, and they were busy that Christmas morning in distributing new happiness about the neighborhood.

His Luck

(©, 1922, Western Newspaper Union.)

"WELL, I'll be getting lots of presents soon," he said. He had just met some pleasant new friends.

"Yes," he continued, "Christmas is a good time for me. You see I'm popular with wives. I get notes from hundreds of them; there are any number who write to me, and when Christmas comes they knit ties for me or buy a handsome silk handkerchief or two, or a fine muffler—a little thought of me at any rate. And I've never been in a divorce case yet," he ended.

"You must be a diplomat or luckier than you deserve," someone remarked.

"Neither," he answered. "I'm a milkman and a milkman's Christmas is apt to be full of cheer and the good-hearted wishes of the ladies!"

THE MAIL CARRIER

FOR many years, in good weather or bad, day after day, he had followed his chosen job faithfully and well. He had carried many, many Christmas presents in his day, too. This year one of the families he had served so regularly prepared a Christmas box for him and for his wife and for his children.

"It is the first Christmas box I ever received from one of my families," he said. "Wasn't it thoughtful of them to have remembered their mail carrier?"

But the people were saying, "To think that we haven't done something of this sort every year. The mail carrier does so much for us and we, at times, almost seem to forget he's even human!"

Easily Managed

YOU must believe in Santa Claus
If in neglect you would not pause
And see the holidays drift by
And bring you nothing but a sigh.

He may not greet you if you wait
In idleness and selfish state
For him upon his way to start
To grant the wishes of your heart.

For he his ways makes known to men
By means that are beyond our ken,
And as his journeying vast is made
He uses many a masquerade.

So if a scarcity you fear
In the supply of Christmas cheer,
Just hustle, like a willing elf,
And be old Santa Claus yourself.