A Night Before Christmas

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long while with his head resting in his hands.

The next day he appeared with a strange look in his eyes, and the money in his hands. "I borrowed it," he explained, and there was a brief interval of joyous hope followed by the crushing blow of the operations' failure—the wife's death away from him, in the great lonely hospital. Then, even before the loved form had been laid away for its long sleep, had come the sudden knock at the door that had whitened John's face, even before the blue-coated officers had marched him away, with a charge of theft, against which he had made no defense.

But before he left, he took the sobbing, frightened little Helen and placed her in his sister's arms.

"Take care of her Mary," he said huskily. "Thank God, she is too young to understand. The money was left in my care that day—it represented my wife's life to me, and I cannot be sorry, but it was of no ter, and when I am free, we will go away to the country, and begin all over again."

With his forlorn promise still ringing in Mary's memory, the child stirred, opened her eyes wide, and sat up smiling.

"Oh, Auntie," she cried happily. "I had such a lovely dream. I saw Santa Claus in my room. He was filling my stocking with candy and a lovely doll and lots of toys. I thought I spoke to him and he came over to my bed and sat down by me, and his face was just like my daddy's—and then I woke up. Santa Claus will surely come, won't he, Aunt Mary?"

"I hope so dear," the low voice answered, and something in the tone made the child look up with quick apprehension.

"Why," the voice quavered, almost sobbed, "he always has come, Aunt Mary; he surely wouldn't forget, would he?"

"No, I don't suppose he will forget, but you must not expect him to bring you as many things as he used to do, there are so many little girls and boys down here in this street, you know, and he has to divide things up. Come, say your prayers now, and go to dreamland again."

"Oh, yes," cried Louise, her face brightening, "of course, I must say my prayers and ask God to be sure to send Santa Claus; then everything will be alright."

"And now dear Lord," she concluded, "please send Santa Claus tonight, and bless my dear daddy, and keep him safe, and let him come home to me very soon."

The moonlight streamed over the grim prison walls some ten miles away, mellowing their harsh outlines. A venturesome ray crept thru a tiny window, high up on the blank wall of a cell. It danced to the opposite wall, and lingered there—a tiny fleck of light from the outside world, but the cell's occupant did not welcome it—the scowl on his handsome face deepened as he looked up at the cheery ray.

"Bright moonlight," he muttered, "ourse the luck. Why a guard can see for miles tonight—why couldn't it have been cloudy? I'm a fool to try it—of course I'll be caught, and that means extra time, but I've just got to see little Louise tonight. She must not lose her Christmas—I've got to get to her—no matter what the consequences."

Glancing cautiously towads the door, he drew from his coat two dolls, fancifully cut from leather, and his eyes grew soft as he looked at them.

"They are poor things," he sighed, "but she will love them, and she may not have a Christmas present if I do not get them to her. I've got to get there—my baby shall not think that her daddy has forgotten her."

The dolls were carefully replaced in his coat. Guiltily, stealthily, he had made them in his prison shop. Fragments of leather hastily concealed, a moment's time snatched here and there, innumerable anxious moments of suspense when discovery seemed imminent, and the clumsy toys had been completed at last—and now it was Christmas eve.

A clock chimed out from a tower. He stood up, squaring his broad shoulders and listening.

"They're changing the watch—it's now or never," he breathed tensely.

Outside on the walls, a new guard took his place, and paced the length discontentedly muttering. "A bloomin' nice job for a man on Christmas eve, parading this wall with a gun—and there's no sense in it, nohow. Nothing never happens here—a man might as well be a tin soldier stuck up here; nobody never gets a chance to use their gun, why the man don't live that could escape from them prison walls, and get this far. Hello, what's that?"

The grumbling guard stopped suddenly, almost dropping his gun in his amazement. For, as he had paced the length of the beat, a dark figure had darted from an angle of the prison, and had run swiftly across the yard. Now, as the guard turned, the figure was climbing the wall, with desperate haste, slipping, half falling, struggling up again, finding footholds in seemingly smooth places, tottering backward, but never falling, he reached the top and stood, for the fraction of a second, clearly outlined in the white moonlight. Then there was a sudden plunge, just as the guard's gun spoke, sharply, and a babel of voices followed, as excited keepers dashed from the prison.

"Where is he—did he make it?—didn't you hit him?"

"I couldn't have missed him; I fired twice." The guard thought it was not necessary to explain that his shots had been delayed by his temporary paralysis of amazement. "And he jumped headlong from that wall—we'll find him on the other side with half his bloomin' bones broken."

There was a rush for the gates—a tumult of excited voices around the spot where hard heels had stuck deeply into the soft soil, but the man who had taken the desperate leap was not lying there, with crushed bones. He was running swiftly, steadily, along a friendly sheltering hedge, across the fields, towards the railroad, where a freight was due. His hight hand was clasped tightly against his left arm, and between his fingers the blood oozed.

"God help me to reach my little girl," he prayed, as he ran.

And miles away where the lights of the city flared against the sky, a baby voice was pleading: "Bless my dear daddy, and keep him safe."

"The night has a thousand eyes" might wll have been written by an escaped criminal instead of an enraptured lover. It is always easy to trail the fugitive, particularly when the men in pursuit know that there is a home drawing the hunted one with an irresistible lure. Still, there were accidents and delays, and it was several hours before the leader of the chase knocked heavily upon the door of the tiny tnement, to be confronted by Mary, white-faced and shuddering, holding up pleading, silencing hands.

"Oh, hush," she begged, "just a moment please, for the child's sake. Don't let her see you; come, hush, low now."

Officers of the law have hearts beneath their blue uniforms, and when a woman lifts her eyes to them they can read virtue and truth, if it is there. Bareheaded, with light tread, they stepped into the tiny room.

Over the fireplace the wee, red stocking hung, and pinned to each one was a clumsy leather doll. "See," Mary whispered, "he made them for her—he ran away to bring them—oh, give him a few minutes with his baby girl. Look thru the door at them. She thinks he is Santa Claus. He ran in all faint and wounded, and I bound up him arm, and he dressed himself in the old Santa Claus suit that he has worn every Christmas since Mary came. Let her have her Christmas before you take him."

Tiptoeing softly they looked into the bare little bedroom. On the floor, besides the child's cot, the father knelt, his convict's clothes covered by a scarlet white-furred suit. A shaggy white beard hid his face, but the eyes that gazed down at the sleeping child were full of blended love and pain. As the watchers looked, the little sleeper stirred, suddenly, and sat up, her eyes opening wide.

"Oh," she cried, "you've come, Santa Claus. I knew you would, 'cause I prayed for you."

She threw her arms around his neck, her golden hair mingling with the white fur, her eyes starry with excitement.

"I just love you Santa," she said. "I love you better than anyone, 'cept my daddy. I prayed for him too; he's been away such a long time—ever since mama went to Heaven. Couldn't you bring him back to me, Santa Claus? I do want him so bad."

"He'll come back little one", the answering voice trembled, choked, but went bravely on. "It will be quite a long time yet, but when he comes everything will be allright. And listen, he sent his love to you by me—you know Santa Claus sees everybody—and he sent this kiss."

Little Louise lifted her face, and as their eyes met, she gave a happy cry.

"Why your eyes lookd just like my daddy's," she exclaimed. "I guess all the nice men's eyes look just alike, don't they?"

The watchers outside turned hastily away, wiping their eyes, ashamed of the emotion that was mastering them. They did not see the petting in the little bedroom, they only heard a deep voice say: "Now go to sleep again, like a good little girl and don't forget to pray for daddy until he comes." Then he slipped thru the door, closing it softly, and looked straight into the eyes of his captors.

"It's alright," he said quietly; "just wait until I get this disguise off. Don't cry, Mary, the child has had her Christmas and I'm happy."

When the Christmas sunrise touched the spires and roofs of the great city into a sparkling glory, a gold-enhaired child set up in her tiny bed, hugging two clumsy, leather dolls tightly, and rocking softly as she sang in a sweet, childish voice:

Carol, sweetly carol,
Christmas morn has come.

Miles away the sunlight broke thru the stained windows of a prison chapel and touched the face of convict 111, who sat at the end of a long row of graysuited men, waiting for the service to begin. He looked up as the sunlight danced in and smiled.

"I'm glad it's a nice day—she loves the sunshine."

Thru the chapel a chorus of clear, boyish voices rang:

Carol, sweetly, carol,
Christmas morn has come.

"Yes, it's come and little Louise wasn't disappointed," murmured No. 111.

ANOTHER BATON ROUGE WOMAN ENTERS BUSINESS

Mrs. V. A. Sachse has joined the rank of business women and is now associated with the Grand Insurance Company, Ltd., with offices in the old Reymond Bldg. With Mr. Grand and Mr. Victor Sachse, the firm has now a trio of splendid workers. Mrs. Sachse is a hustler and is getting a good deal of business and the Grand's agency is to be congratulated upon having her connected with the firm. When you want insurance call on Mrs. Sachse and your business will be attended to with promptness and efficiency.

Practicing Mothercraft.

Four high schools in Oakland, California, are sponsoring day nurseries where a hundrel babies are cared for daily while their mothers work. This gives practical experience to a hundred high school girls who study in a real laboratory the science of child care, home stanlards, and sanitation.

In England, the London County Council has established evening schools for persons over eighteen. They carry out the suggestions and ideas of the students and teach such studies as music, dancing, astronomy biology, horticulture, history, languages, and literature. They also make educational visits to places of

Higher Education.

There are in the United Ctates more than six hundred colleges and universities. In these there are about thirty thousand women teachers, and about 380,000 students, two-fifths of whom are women.

HOUSEWIVES' LEAGUE.

(Continued from page 1)

Business Session.
Roll Call—Jokes.
Leader—Mrs. W. H. Cox.
Subject—Making the Spring Hat.
Demonstration—Miss E. Deshotels, Mrs. Mary B. Giesen.

March 29th.
Business Session.
Community Singing (men and women).
Leader—Mr. A. F. Boyd.
Subject—Recreation: Permanent playground of sufficient size to accommodate plays, games, picnic and annual gatherings.
Discussion.

April 12th.
Business Session.
Roll Call—Reports on Kitchen Improvement.
Leader—Mrs. A. F. Boyd.
Subject—Child Feeding—Miss Mabel Chapman.

April 26th.
Business Session.
Roll Call—Thoughts of Mother (Mother's Day, May 1st).
Leader—Mrs. H. J. McCool.
Demonstration—Jelly Making—Mrs. H. A. Gesell, district agent.

May 10th.
Business Session.
Roll Call—How do I dispose of my household wastes (dishwater and garbage).
Subjects—1, The House Fly (sanitary outhouses and breeding places); 2, How to eliminate water bugs and other pests.

May 24th.
Business Session.
Roll Call.
Subject—Canning of Fruits and Vegetables. Cooperative buying, containers, rubbers, canners.
Exhibits at community, parish and state fairs.

No Mail Orders, Exchanges, Refunds, C. O. D., During This Sale

The Store That Sells The Same For Less.
SOMMERS
312-314 Main St. Baton Rouge, La.

No Mail Orders, Exchanges, Refunds, C. O. D., During This Sale

CHRISTMAS SALE
NOW ON

With our Christmas Sale now on and the season at its height, it is well to look your wardrobe over. Will it do justice to the many occasions; social, sporting, travelling, business, still on the season's program? Probably not with the distinction you should like and yet probably all it needs is the brightening up of an extra costume or two. A new coat and a new frock will put new life into your wardrobe, and these may be added most reasonably now that important Christmas sales values are being presented.

Christmas Sale of Men's and Boys' Clothing and Furnishings

Young Men's Overcoats
Our entire stock of Young Men's Overcoats, consisting of Broadcloths, and Chinchillas; values to $45.00. Your choice at **$15.00**

Pants
Our entire stock of MEN'S PANTS at a big discount of **25%**

Men's Hats
One lot of Men's Sample Felt Hats, all quality makes; values to $4.00, at **$1.95**

Men's Underwear
MEN'S RIBBED UNDERSHIRTS, extra quality; $1.00 values, at **65c**
MEN'S RIBBED DRAWERS, extra quality; $1.00 values, at **65c**
MEN'S RIBBED UNION SUITS, extra quality; $1.50 values at **$1.00**

Men's Suits
MEN'S AND YOUNG MEN'S FANCY SUITS, consisting of tweeds in sport models; $30.00 values, at **$10.00**
YOUNG MEN'S SUITS, consisting of fancy Cassimeres, form fitting models; $35.00 values, at **$22.50**

Men's Shirts
MEN'S PRINTED PERCALE SHIRTS; fancy patterns; $1.50 values, at **95c**
MEN'S PRINTED PERCALE AND MADRAS SHIRTS, fancy patterns; $2.00 values, at **$1.50**
MEN'S PERCALE AND MADRAS SHIRTS, fancy patterns; $2.50 values, at **$1.95**
MEN'S FANCY SILK STRIPE MADRAS SHIRTS; $3.50 values, at **$2.95**

Crepe De Chine Shirts
Our entire stock of Fancy Crepe de Chine SHIRTS; $8.50 values, at **$5.00**

Boys' Suits
Our entire stock of BOYS' SUITS, two pairs of pants to each suit, all high-grade makes—
Values up to $15.00, $10.00.
Values up to $12.50, $8.50
Values up to $10.00, $7.50
BOYS' SUITS—One pair of pants to suit, $8.50 values, at **$5.00**

Sweaters
One lot of MEN'S JERSEY FLEECE LINED JACKETS, in brown and black, $2.50 values, at **$1.95**
SWEATERS—Men's Gray Coat Sweaters, full size, $1.50 values, at **$1.00**

Christmas Sale of Ladies' and Misses' Ready-to-Wear

Materials are Velours, Bolivias, and Fancy Mixtures; values to $25.00, at **$15.00**

Materials are Bolivias, Velours, Broadcloths, silk linings; values to $50.00, at **$25.00**

Materials are Velours, Tricotines, Serges, values to $40.00, at **$25.00**

Our Entire Stock of Fine Ladies' Suits at a discount of 25%

Ladies, and Misses' All-Wool Serge Dresses, embroidered effects; $7.50 values, at **$3.95**

Dresses of Tricotines, Crepe de Chines, Jerseys, Serges, values to $15.00, at **$8.75**

Dresses of Canton Crepe, Poiret Twills, Tricotines, Crepe de Chines and Jerseys; values to $35.00, at, ... **$15.00**

Dresses on Canton Crepe, Poiret Twills, Crepe de Chines, Wool Crepes and Tricotines; values to $45.00, at **$25.00**

FLANNEL MIDDIES—Ladies' and Misses' All-Wool Flannel Regulation Middies, emblem on sleeves; colors are red, green and navy; values to $6.50, at **$2.69**

ROBES—Ladies' Blanket Robes, in a large variety of patterns, $4.00 values, at **$2.00**

ROBES—Ladies' Corduroy Robes, in solid color; $4.00 values, at **$2.00**

LADIES' SWEATERS—Ladies' Tuxedo, Coat and Slip-On Sweaters, in solid colors and color combinations; values to $5.00, at **$2.98**

CHILDREN'S SWEATERS—Children's Slip-On and Coat Style Sweaters, all colors and combinations; values to $3.50, at **$1.00**

BLOUSES—Ladies' Satin Blouses, metallic stitching in gold and silver; colors are black brown an dnavy; values to $4.00, at **$2.00**

ALL CHILDREN'S AND MISSES COATS at a discount of 25%

SKIRTS—Ladies' Skirts in novelty box pleated and plain models, in striped effects $3.50 values, at **$2.00**

SWEATERS—Novelty Slip-On Sweaters in a large range of color combinations; $3.50 values, at **$1.00**