

Shopping Suggestions



FROM

Lott's Cash Shoe Store

Our store is filled with suitable XMAS

GIFTS for the whole Family

FOR MEN

Socks, 25 and 50c
 Dress Gloves, \$1 to \$2
 Handkerchiefs, 10c, 15c, 25c
 and 50c
 Suspenders, 50c
 Garters, 25 and 50c
 Big Lot Men's Ties in Holiday
 Boxes, 50c, \$1 and \$1.50 each
 Arrow Shirts and Collars
 Bed Room Slippers
 Sweaters, \$3.50 to \$5.00
 Hose and Ties in Xmas
 Boxes for \$1

FOR LADIES'

Sweaters, \$3, \$3.50
 and \$4
 Kid Gloves, \$1.25
 to \$2
 Silk Hose, 50c, \$1 and \$1.50
 Lisle, 25 and 50c
 Bed Room Slippers, \$1.25
 and \$1.50
 Raincoats and Hats for Ladies

Lott's Cash Shoe Store

Call For Sealed Bids For Purchase of City Hall

Pursuant to an order made at a duly called meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Hendersonville, sealed bids for the purchase of the City Hall property on Main street, in Hendersonville are hereby called for, said bids to be filed with C. E. Brooks, Mayor, and opened at 8 p. m. on the 6th day of January, 1916, each bid to be accompanied by a certified check in the sum of \$500. The City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Terms of sale: 25 per cent. cash, balance one, two and three years at 6 per cent. interest, secured by deed in trust on building and lot.

This December 15, 1915.

C. E. BROOKS, Mayor.
 M. M. SHEPHERD, Sec.

Santa Mike— A Christmas Convict Story

By T. C. BRIDGES



AS THE December night closed across the desolate moor, the snow ceased falling, the clouds broke, and a brilliant moon shed its silver light across the wide stretches of rolling whiteness. With the change, it began to freeze fiercely, coating the sodden drifts with a crisp film of ice.

At every step Mike Dempsey's tired feet broke through this coating, and sank deep into soft stuff beneath, making the traveling so terribly hard that, in spite of the bitter cold, perspiration stood in beads on his thin, brown face.

He was breathing hard, and evidently desperately weary, yet he never stopped for a moment, though now and then, as he plowed his way onwards, he would turn his head and cast an apprehensive glance back over his shoulder.

Had anyone been near enough to watch him, they would easily have understood his haste. The drab livery plentifully besprinkled with broad arrows marked him as one of the state's unwilling guests. As a matter of fact, Mike Dempsey had been for the last three years a prison inmate, and it was with the intention of escaping another seven years of unappreciated hospitality that he had, a few hours previously, "done a bunk" under cover of the sudden snowstorm.

"I've puzzled them screws, that's wan thing sure," he muttered to himself, and in spite of his fatigue a slight chuckle escaped his thin lips. "But faith, I've puzzled meself, too, and I don't know where I am no more than Adam.

"If I cud only git a landmark of some sort!" he went on. "Eanst I cud find my road to the railway, I'd win clear. Mike Dempsey wasn't a navy siven years for nothing."

He crunched his slow way across a flat valley, jumped a little brook and pushed up the steep slope beyond.

A gleam of light in the next valley attracted his attention. It came from a lighted window, and there was something comforting to the lonely fugitive in the red glow cast upon the glittering snow. Without hesitation, he started downhill toward it.

Presently he was cautiously approaching a small house, which stood in a tiny garden surrounded by a low dry-stone wall. There was a gate in front, but Mike preferred to approach

"Beggor, if it ain't a Christmas tree! Why, 'tis Christmas eve, I do believe, though, faith, I'd lost thrack of the date in the ould stone jug on the hill. But where's the presents? 'Tis as bare as me own pocket," he went on wonderingly.

At that moment the boy got up, and going forward to the woman, pulled at her dress to attract her attention.

"Mother, isn't Santa Claus coming? He's awful late. We shan't have no Kismas tree if he doesn't come soon."

"It's the snow, dearie," explained the mother. "Such a bad storm that I expect he was late in starting. But now it's cleared up, I daresay he'll be here soon."

Her words were cheery, but Mike caught the anxious glance she gave her husband.

"Go out and see if William's in sight yet, Alice," said the man. "He ought to have been here an hour ago. I only hope nothing has happened to the poor old fellow."

Mike dropped on hands and knees behind the angle of the wall as the door opened, and the woman stood on the threshold looking out down the empty snow-laden valley.

Somehow the pathos of the bare little Christmas tree and the anxious family appealed to his hardened old soul, and when the door closed again he rose to his feet, and instead of following out his first intention and entering the house to demand food and clothes, climbed the wall again and made off down the valley.

"If William's coming this way, there'll be a road of sorts," he said to himself.

And sure enough there was. Though covered deep in snow, he found that there was a path down the valley, which he had little doubt would lead eventually to the main road to town.

He had gone another mile when a dark patch in the snow straight ahead attracted his attention, and he caught his breath sharply as he stopped beside it.

For it was a man lying flat on his face, and, judging by the snow which almost covered his body, he had been there in the same position for some time. Beside him lay a half-filled sack, also covered with snow.

Mike gave a sharp glance around. The moonlight horizon was still bare. He stooped and turned the man over.

"Dead!" he muttered. "Dead and cold!" as he laid his hand against the chill cheek.

For a moment he stood staring at the dead man's face, which was that of a little old man, wizened and bearded, and very much of Mike's own type and build.

Then, like a flash, it came to the convict that here at last was his chance, and a thrill shot through his weary frame.

"He'll not need them duds any more," he muttered, and, dropping on his knees in the snow, began with trembling fingers to strip the dead man of his clothes.

They were worn and old, but to Mike as precious as broadcloth, for once he was rid of his convict garb he had multiplied his chances of escape a hundredfold.

Not till he had completed the whole change of costume down to boots and hat, and had buried his broad arrows deep in a neighboring drift, did Mike bethink himself of the sack.

He snatched it up eagerly, hoping it might contain food, and turned the contents out upon the snow.

A small drum, a bag of lead soldiers, a cheap doll, a box of wax tapers, and one of crackers, and a couple of packets of sweets. Not an article of the lot which had cost 25 cents, and the value of the whole not five dollars.

Mike stood and stared at them. The box of soldiers had fallen open. He stooped and picked up the little painted figures, and replaced them carefully.

"So 'twas poor ould Santy Claus," he muttered. "And the children will be waiting on him. 'Twas hard luck intoirely."

Again he bent down and quickly bundled everything back into the sack. He laid this by the dead body, and turning on his heel, walked rapidly away.

He could not be more than four or five miles from the town now, and with his knowledge of railway matters it would be easy enough to stow away in a truck, and lying under a tarpaulin be carried scores of miles away from the hated prison. Besides there was money in his trousers pockets. Only a little, but plenty to buy food and drink, a clay pipe, and a plug of tobacco.

Mike's mouth watered as he thought of a square meal.

He tried to keep his thoughts on the prospect of these almost forgotten luxuries, yet, somehow it was difficult. The picture seen through the cottage window kept rising before his mind, and though he did his best to thrust it aside, the effort was unavailing.

Long years ago Mike had a home of his own, a wife, and a baby. Wife and baby both had died, swept away in a wee, by an epidemic of diphtheria, and that had been the beginning of the Irish navy's downfall. But he had never forgotten them, and tonight they seemed strangely near him.

A sound between a grunt and a groan burst from his lips; he stopped and looked back.

"'Tis a fool ye are, Mike Dempsey!" he exclaimed aloud. "Git along wid ye, and don't be delaying for the screws to nab ye!"

Again he started forward, but more slowly than before, and he had not gone a hundred yards before once more he came to a dead stop.

"'Tis no use," he groaned. "I'll just run back an lave them things at the dure. There'll be time to reach town by midnight."

The bitter wind was in his face as he turned back up the hill, but now Mike did not hesitate for a moment. Head down, he hurried onwards, and presently was again beside the corpse of Santa Claus' frozen messenger. Without a glance at the body he snatched up the sack, flung it over his shoulder, and continued his way up the valley.

The glow from the lighted window threw its red beam across the snow as he rounded the curve and came within sight of the lonely cottage and a corresponding glow warmed Mike's heart as he thought of the pleasure of the children when they found their long-delayed Christmas gifts.

Seeing no sign of life, he slipped in at the front gate, and, stepping very quietly up the path, gained the door, dropped his sack, and giving one sharp tap, turned the bolt.

But he had not counted on the eager children, and before he could get round



"All Right," He Said Sullenly, "I'll Come Quiet."

the angle of the house curly-locks came flying after him.

"William, where is Santy Claus?" piped the childish treble.

"It ain't William, sonny. Tell your mammy as William's got lost, and I brought the things instead. Now I've got to go, for I'm in a mighty hurry."

"I expect you are!" came a jeering voice, and a blue-uniformed man carrying a carbine stepped out from the dark shadow round the corner, followed instantly by a second.

Mike gave one glance around. But he was cornered. The wall cut off escape.

"All right," he said sullenly, "I'll come quiet."

"You'd better," retorted the warder, whose temper long hours in the snow had not improved.

"Mammy, the policemen have took Santy Claus," cried the little lad.

Mike glanced up. The boy's mother was standing by, her face blank with amazement.

"What does this mean?" she cried. "Is it William?"

"Not unless he's changed his name since morning, missus," replied the warder. "He was Michael Dempsey when he bunked from Moorlands just after dinner."

"But I don't understand. He's got William Croker's clothes on, and he's brought the things from Ashampton that William went to fetch."

The other warder—a grizzled, elderly man—shook his head.

"You've got me, missus. I don't know what his little game is no more than you."

"Most like he has murdered William," put in the younger warder sourly.

"He said William was lost, mammy," explained the boy, "so he's brought the things instead. And here they is, all safe."

"Best make a clean breast of it, Dempsey," suggested the elder warder.

"Go and find out yourself," flashed the old convict. "William's down the valley there."

"You take the chap into the house, George," said the older warder. "I'll go down and see."

Half an hour later he returned.

"I've found William," he said briefly. "He's froze to death. Dempsey took his clothes, but he didn't have no hand in killing him."

"Then, in the name of sense, what did he come back here for instead of skimming out?" inquired the younger warder, in blank surprise.

"He came to bring our Kismas presents," explained curly-locks. "He told me so."

"Well, of all the everlasting fools," gasped the junior warder.

His senior wheeled on him sharply. "A good thing if there were a few more fools of that kind in Moorlands. Ay—and outside, too!"

He turned to Mike:

"Come along, Dempsey," he said in a more kindly tone. "I'll see as the governor knows how it was we come to take you. And I reckon your playing Santy Claus won't do you no harm in his eyes, any more than it has in mine!"



It Was a Man Lying Flat on His Face, from the back, and clambering gingerly over the wall crept up to the window from which the light came.

Raising himself till his head was on a level with the sill, he peered through the uncurtained window into a barely furnished living room, lighted by a great fire of glowing turf.

A couch stood in one corner, on which lay a youngish man whose bandaged head showed him to be the victim of some accident. On a chair beside him sat a sweet-faced woman, and on the bare earthen floor played two children—a curly-haired boy of about seven, and a chubby girl a year or so younger.

But what arrested Mike's attention was a little fir tree, not more than four feet high, which stood planted in an old bucket, on the table in the middle of the room.

For a moment it puzzled Mike. Then he gave a little gasp.