



Passenger train No. 2 was whirling its load of humanity over the Mohave desert, a great, wide expanse of mid-mountain country whose parched bosom has exposed many an uncanny secret of death from thirst and Indian devilry. Wreathed with the monstrous view of treeless, waterless plains, the passengers gladly welcomed the approach of twilight. The sun went down in an angry glare, outlining the bare peaks of a far-away range in fantastic forms, and gradually, as night came on, there were more hopeful signs of vegetation. It was the 24th of December, and most of the passengers were building on spending a merry Christmas in the favored spots of the land of sunshine and flowers—California.

Suddenly we heard the warning shriek of the engine, and saw a scattered band of cattle flying away in terror from either side of the track. Again the engine shrieked, the train jerked nervously and seemed to sway uncertainly on its course.

The next moment we were bounding along the ties in an uncomfortable and terrifying manner. The cries of startled women were drowned in the roar of escaping steam, and panic-stricken men looked vainly for means of escape. A group of Mexicans, awakened from sleep by the jar, plunged headlong through an open window as though the devil were after them. The train finally spent its speed, and the thoroughly frightened passengers emerged to learn the number of the dead and wounded, and to tender what aid they could. The engine was completely hidden in a great cloud of steam, which marked its position about half the length of the train. When the steam finally exhausted itself, a sad wreck was exposed. The tender of the engine was upturned, and the engineer sat upon a piece of wreckage dazedly nursing an injured hand. The fireman was some distance away, his hair and whiskers matted by the hot outpour from the engine. Neither was seriously injured, and not a passenger was scratched. Beside the track, shivering in the throes of death, lay a handsome steer—the cause of all the trouble. His neck had been twisted by a mad rush at the cowcatcher. As the engineer's eyes fell upon the form of the animal a smile of satisfaction spread over his sunken face, as he said:

"That critter must have been in the bull fights at some time in his career, for when he spied that red flag yonder he braced and refused to leave the track with the rest of them. I slowed up and whistled several times to give him a chance, but he only snorted defiantly, kicked his heels in the air and kept on his stubborn course. Finally he turned, and I opened the throttle wide, thinking that the best method of throwing him clear of the track. With an angry roar he came full at the engine, his head bent low to the track. We all know the rest."

The steer at once became an object of great interest to the folk here. One man secured a horn and another cut out a tooth, and the next day various camera views were taken of the valiant animal that had wrecked a train. We were twenty miles from the next station, and the eastbound passenger was due within an hour. Luckily a telegraph operator was on the train and the wires were hastily tapped so that the dispatchers could be informed of the accident and hold the trains both ways.

We passed a cheerless night on the desert, and Christmas morning found us a desolate party. There was no dining car attached to the train, and those travelers that were not provided with lunch baskets railed at the ill-luck that had placed them in so miserable a plight. Finally, some of them went on a foraging expedition, and down the track a few miles they located a section house controlled by Mexicans. Here they appeased their hunger on frijoles, chile con carne and the other warm dishes of the natives. A wrecking train at length arrived on the scene, but the work of repair was slow and tedious. Several yards of track had been torn up, and it was necessary to construct a "choy-by" around the wreck. This took the greater part of the day. Meanwhile the passengers looked on in a helpless way, and all vowed that they had never passed a Christmas amid such desolate surroundings.—C. N. Stark.

For Christmas Giving.

The Hopkins family were out of match boxes, and if there is one thing on which the independent and diverse minded Hopkins family stands as a unit it is that a match box be provided for every room. One by one the boxes had disappeared. The tin ones had fallen to pieces and the china ones had broken and for two weeks the Hopkins family troited to the sinner of matches on the parlor mantel or to the paste-board box in the kitchen when they wanted a light. Their gas bill increased perceptibly, for with so much trouble as it took to light the gas-one

could not turn it off so instantaneously as the gas companies have trained householders into doing. Consequently inquisitive neighbors from beneath or above, or across the way, gossiped over the amount of company the Hopkins seemed to be having lately, for a regular glare of illumination streamed out nightly from their windows.

It was a queer thing that no one seemed able to think of the family necessity till twilight came. Then regular remarks would be made, and Marion would blame Alice, and Alice would ask Tom why in the world he couldn't take a little responsibility, and Mr. Hopkins would inquire of his wife if there was no one in the family who could go surety for the appearance of some match boxes by the next evening. And then next day Alice would come home from down town and her mother would ask her if she had remembered the match boxes, and blank is too feeble a word to describe the expression of her face on those several occasions.

For two weeks they said things under their breaths in the lanky darkness, or burned gas recklessly. Then one morning Marion departed for her semi-weekly music lesson down town and said the same old thing—"I'm going to get some match boxes today"—and her mother smiled patiently and replied: "If you should happen to remember it, dear, you might get the whole number—eight."

That noon Alice came home from the north side, where she had been staying for a few days, and laid a parcel triumphantly in her mother's lap. "I didn't even have them sent out," she said, gleefully. "I was so determined to have them here tonight. I was just getting on a car and happened to think of them by seeing a man light his cigar, so I got off. There are eight of them."

Mrs. Hopkins was properly glad and they laughed together over Marion's declaration that morning, and of how for the last time they would call that black-expression into play before they showed her that some one in the family had at last remembered. By and by Marion came.

"I've got them," she called. "The whole eight."

"Sixteen match boxes," said Mrs. Hopkins, with resignation. "Choose the prettiest, girls, and we'll put the rest away for another such emergency."

That evening Mr. Hopkins came in with his face wreathed in smiles.

"The young fry are so hot-headed these days," he remarked, as he complacently laid a knobby bundle in his wife's lap. "I'm sorry for Tom."

"What about Tom?" asked Mrs. Hopkins, as she felt suspiciously of the package.

"We had started home together," said Tom's father, the keenest enjoyment in his voice, "and were up to Van Buren, when Tom jumped up and made for the platform. I called to him and he yelled back 'Match boxes!' and shot out the door. I tried to get to

him to tell him that I'd got the batch, but he was gone. What's the matter? Didn't I get enough?"

Alice exerted herself feverishly to get the twenty-four receptacles arranged on a table before Tom's arrival, and when Tom came he didn't for a minute understand his reception. Then his eye fell on the tableful of distorted shapes and he slowly added his quota to the general contribution, while his father gave an impromptu lecture on waste. The Hopkins family have concluded to give match boxes for Christmas presents this year.

A Lover's Wish.

Since you cannot, will not, dear,
Give your trickery heart,
Let me murmur in your ear
Joy you may impart.
Write to kind old Santa Claus—
Plead—as I would woo—
Beg him just to send to me
Christmas dream of you.

Some people are willing to be good if paid for it and others are good for nothing.

Scaring Santa Claus.

You afraid of Santa Claus? Goodness ma, I'm not!
I'm lots too big to let him make me scare!
Sides, a year ago I saw him, right on Christmas eve.
So now he wouldn't scold me if he dared!

Yes, sirree! He's big an' fat, like his pictures are;
An' I was sittin' by the chimney, too
When he lit right on the hearth, shook the snow flakes off.
An' turned to me, an' says: "Why, howdy do!"

Nen I run back to the door—so's to lock him in—
"I'm pretty well," I says; an' nen we sat.
An' talked a lot about his work, an' he told me, he did,
'Twas hard to get around when you're so fat.

Blime-by I says, "I hope you won't forget me Christmas day,
Although I'm not the best of children, 'cause
If you should do so, I'm afraid I'd have to tell the boys
That b'lieve in you 'There ain't no Santa Claus!"

My! Didn't he turn pale! He caught hold o' my hand;
Says "Don't do that, please, for—I like you.
I'll give you heaps o' things you want,
'Y you'll believe in me,
An' let the other children do so too!"

So we made a 'greement, an' I will have some things
At Christmas time, you bet! What's that you say?
Don't b'lieve I ever scared old Santa Claus? Well now,
Just ask him, if you see him Christmas day!

—Selected.

DAD AND MOTHER AND ME



Nobody's like old Santa Claus
With his red and jolly face;
There's not another around the globe
Can travel so swift a pace.
His twinkling eyes, and his merry laugh,
His chuckle of bubbling glee—
Nobody else is so dear by half
To Dad and Mother and Me.

He doesn't forget the baby sweet
As she rocks in her cradle white;
He has time to wait for the lagging feet
Of his old, by candle-light.
He has gifts and gifts for the young and old,
Who encircle the Christmas Tree;
And he has the love to his latest day
Of Dad and Mother and Me.

The frost is chill in the nipping blast,
Smooth is the icy mere;
The short fleet days go hurrying past
To the last of the waning year.
And never was nose of the summer's prime
So royally fair to see
As the rose that blooms in the winter's time
For Dad and Mother and Me.

—Collier's Weekly.

The Christmas Tree.

The Christmas tree which enters very largely into our festival comes to us from Germany, where, on the eve of the anniversary, a tree is set up in nearly every household, bright with candles and paper decorations of various colors. Underneath the tree are put the presents that each member of the family is to give to the others, and when the tree is still burning, amid the laughter and shouting of the children, the presents are distributed.

In Germany, too, St. Nicholas comes around three weeks before Christmas. It is St. Nicholas' day, and the children on this day make known their wants for the Christmas season. Then he is supposed to drive away to an unknown land and get his loads of goods, bringing them back for the Christmas stockings.

A Child's Query.

In all the Santa Claus pictures,
I've seen in my little day,
He's traveling across the snow-drifts
With a reindeer before a sleigh.

And this is the thing about it,
I'd really like to know—
Does he travel in a wagon
When there isn't any snow?

—Newspaper Clipping.

Answer.

There ain't no dies on Santa Claus,
He's neither old-fashioned nor slow,
I know how he comes to our houses,
When there isn't any snow.

He comes not in any old wagon,
He's smart and as sharp as an icicle,
He straps his pack tight on his back
And wheels into town on his bicycle.

—Carrie E. Hutton.

Only the life that has mountain heights to tap the clouds can have fruitful valleys.



There were two of us and we had between us a surplus of three or four dollars. We cast about for something to do with our money. Suddenly an idea occurred to the Three-Spot. It isn't very often that this happens, but the surplus probably did it on this occasion.

"I have it," he said. He didn't mean the money, for the Two-Spot was careful to keep that in his pocket. "I have it," he repeated. "Let's go along the street until we find some poor, ragged children looking eagerly in the shop windows. Then we'll find out what they want most and go in and buy it."

"Good," replied the Two-Spot, "but what shall we do with the rest of the money?"

"We'll go till we're tired, and I guess they'll be no 'rest' for the weary."

And so we started out. And let it be recorded here that we had visions of swarms of ragged children gazing into every window along the business streets. But in this we were doomed to disappointment. Early in the afternoon there was not one poor looking child who was not trading along beside its mother. The latter generally had an armful of parcels and was evidently intent on purchasing more. Up and down the entire length of Woodward avenue we went without spying one child who was a likely looking candidate for our magnanimity. Then we tried Gratiot avenue. Surely there would be lots of them, we thought, on Gratiot avenue, little Poles and German children. But we walked nearly out to the railroad tracks, up one side and down the other, and set eyes on never a one.

The Three-Spot was beginning to cast eyes on some new pipes in the store windows and made several remarks about the desirability of having a stein on one's mantel.

"Do you know," said he to the Two-Spot, "I don't believe there are any poor, ragged children looking into store windows."

The Two-Spot replied that it wasn't time, yet; that their hours for looking into windows did not begin until three-thirty or four. Then we came to the front of a very big store, with a Santa Claus scene up over the great entrance and stagh bells jingling away pleasantly. Here we stood for some minutes.

"There they are!" ejaculated the Two-Spot.

"Where, where?" asked the Three-Spot.

"Right there in the corner of the window."

"OH, LOOK AT THAT FIRE ENGINE!"

And sure enough, there were four poorly clad, cold-looking little urchins, three little boys and a girl somewhat larger, gazing as earnestly at the gay things within as if they were priceless jewels. We crossed the street and came near to them from behind.

"Oh, look at that fire engine," the biggest boy was saying, and the others were pointing out so many things that they were all talking at once.

"What are you going to get for Christmas?" asked the Three-Spot of the littlest one. The lad glanced up, smiled, and looked into the window again without speaking. The question was repeated.

"I—don't—know," came the answer slowly and softly.

"Well, what would you like to get for Christmas?"

The little one smiled and looked hard into the window again without answering.

Finally he whispered softly, "A horse."

"And what would you like, my little man?" asked the Two-Spot of the next largest boy. This boy had beautiful big brown eyes and a clean face, though evidently plucked by hunger.

"A book and ladder," was the answer.

And the third wanted a fire engine and the little girl would like to get a doll. So the spots took the cover in tow and led them into the entrance of

the big building, where the crowds were surging to and fro, and the elevator took the whole party to the floor where toys were dispensed to purchasers. Then the march up the long aisles between tables covered with bright and tempting things was begun, until the "horse" department was reached. The littlest one was hanging on to the Two-Spot's thumb with a grip that made sure he wasn't going to lose the chance, unless the thumb gave way.

"Oh, gimme that!" exclaimed the biggest boy, pointing to a fire engine with real hose. But it cost as many dollars as the spots had with them, and it was out of the question.

"Wouldn't this do?" asked the Three-Spot, with a considerate tenderness in his tones that was unusual, as he took up a toy horse and sulky.

"Yes, sor," said the boy, and one purchase was made.

The next boy was satisfied with a harvesting machine and the biggest wanted a drum, not being able to get the fire engine. Then he set eyes on a policeman's uniform which he thought would be fine. But his brother scorned a policeman's uniform when "you don't get no club," and the other dropped the idea and took the drum. There was very little difficulty in picking out the little girl's doll.



She was shown several samples, some with golden hair, some with dark hair.

"Does it go to sleep?" she asked, as one was handed to her. She was assured it did go to sleep when it lay on its back, for then the eyes were closed. Then she took it in her arms and fairly hugged it and her eyes were dancing with joy. By this time all four were standing in open mouthed astonishment to see themselves the possessors of so many things. Each was holding his selection tightly in his arms.

"Don't we get them right now?" they asked. And they laughed outright when they were told that this was to be the case. The Two-Spot handed the money to the clerk, who took the things and had them wrapped up. Two of the little ones were looking up at the Two-Spot, two at the Three-Spot. Almost simultaneously from four little mouths came the question, "Who are you?" And the answer was the same in both cases—"Oh, I am a friend of Santa Claus."

"Is this the store where Santa Claus lives?"

"Yes."

Then the tables were turned and the spots found out from the children that they lived on Woodbridge street and had ten brothers and sisters. The littlest fellow clung to the Two-Spot's thumb on the way out, as he had coming in. Finally the party came to the big entrance again.

"Now you'll go home and be good children, won't you?"

"Yes," they all said in chorus. And they all turned and smiled good-bye. As the little girl passed the Two-Spot she came close to him and whispered the smiling words, "Thank you." Then they crossed the street, hand in hand a happy little caravan, each hugging his precious bundle.

The Christmas Dinner.

The Christmas dinner is generally a repetition of that served on Thanksgiving day, save that turkey may give place to goose or chicken, or both, the latter served in "chicken pie," and that mince pie give place to plum pudding. As I have so recently given direction for cooking turkey, etc., I will devote space to a few suggestions as to how some dishes should be served.

A Greeting to the Distant.

A merry Christmas to "Our Boys"
On sapphire sea and yellow sand.
No chill of winter greets them there—
The winds are warm, the skies are fair.
God bless the heroes everywhere
Who honor Yankee land!

A Christmas Courtship.

I tied my stocking to a string
And lowered it down outside,
Was I expecting anything?
Well, somehow I thought a golden ring
Such exquisite joy to me would bring;
This much I will confide.

I dreamed all night that a neighbor
Came over the trackless snow;
His face ablaze with love-lit joy,
And he held in his hand a pretty toy,
Which he softly dropped into my de-
coy,
Then back through the night did go.

Next morning when the rooster crew,
I awoke with a sudden start;
I seized the string and my stocking
drew
Up from below, and the window
through;
And there behold my presents—two!
A ring and a candy heart.

And the message said, "If you wear
this ring,
And accept this heart of mine,
When you go to church this evening,
And rise to your feet at the opening,
Hold your hymn book when you sing
So that the ring will shine."

I looked out over the broken snow,
All a-tremble, I must confess;
I recognize each hob-nail shoe,
Over the fields where the footsteps
go.
Shall I wear this ring? My lips said
"No."
But my heart was whispering "Yes!"

As we sat in the church I let him see
A glint of that golden band;
And in the starlight he walked with
me
Over the snow, and so close walked we
That hope the wiser will ever be
How often he squeezed—my hand.
—Zelda Radcoons.

Rosie Wilcox's Turkey.

Rosie Wilcox was a little girl of 12 years. She lived with her parents on a thrifty farm in the Mississippi valley. She had one turkey of which she thought a great deal. He had always been very tame and was a great pet with all the children who lived on the surrounding farms. His name was Bronsie. Rosie named all of her pets, according to their most striking feature and his color was striking. As all Mr. Wilcox's turkeys were young, Rosie never feared for hers.

One day near Christmas Mr. Wilcox said:

"I'm rather sorry, little one, but I'm a goner sell yer turkey next week."

Rosie was dumfounded, and her father, seeing the pained expression on her face turned away.

When Rosie had partially recovered her senses she sat down on the bottom rung of the ladder that led to the granary and thought. At last a bright thought struck her. She would sell him to Farmer Max. She knew he would take good care of him, as he was making a collection of beautiful fowls of all kinds, and was not Bronsie beautiful? Certainly.

Arriving at this conclusion, which greatly comforted her, she got up and walked slowly toward the house, where mamma had been calling her for at least 15 minutes. Next morning after a troubled night, Rosie arose, and dressing quickly, hurried down the road with her turkey. She paused in front of the large white farm house to recover her breath, and then went on to the barn, where she saw the farmer milking his cows. He was very glad to take the turkey and promised Rosie a good price for him.

Mr. Wilcox did not see his daughter until that noon, when he said:

"Yer turkey didn't like his new home, so he come a-trottin' inter the yard 'afternoon 's though he owned the whole world."

Rosie could have cried, but she only hung her head.

"Never mind, Rosie," said her father, "I guess yer two good friends fer sure, and I guess, too, that I won't part you."

The Christmas Drum.

Children are very keen these days. An eight-year-old boy who was arousing the house with his drum last Christmas day stopped in front of his mother and said "fixed her with his glittering eye."

"Mamma, did Santa Claus bring me this drum?"

"Why, yes; you heard your father say so."

"Where did Santa Claus get it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Well, Jones' shop has got a lot of drums just like this."

"Indeed?"

"Did Santa Claus buy it there?"

"Perhaps."

"But isn't Santa Claus a kind of a fairy?"

"I suppose he must be?"

"Well, how can fairies go into Jones' shop and trade there?"

"Oh, don't ask so many questions!"

"But he'd have to pay with fairy money. Would Mr. Jones take fairy money?"

"He might."

"How could he?"

"Harold Clifford Hodgkins, don't let me hear another word out of you."

"But, mamma, I want to know. And how could Santa Claus, who is so fat, get down our little bit of a chimney?"

"He's a fairy."

"But how can fairies be fat?"

His mother turned purple and round her husband from his newspaper.

"Henry," she gasped, "take this boy down town tomorrow and apprentice him to a lawyer."

It is not how much the wise man knows that gives him a stock on you-maturity, but because you-maturity knows so werry little.