

HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

BY JOHN FOX, JR.

Illustrated by Reinhold Palenske.

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The sergeant got the wounded man to his feet and threw one arm around his waist. Then he all but carried him, stumbling along, with both hands clasped across his eyes, down the ravine that looked at night like some pit of hell. For along their path a thousand coke ovens spat forth red tongues that licked northward with the wind, shot red arrows into the choking black smoke that surged up the mountainside, and lighted with fire the bellies of the clouds rolling overhead.



John Fox, Jr.

"Whar you takin' me?" "Hospital." The mountain-eeper stopped suddenly. "Why I can't see them ovens!" "You come on, Jim." Next morning Jim lay on a cot with a sheet drawn to his chin and a grayish-yellow bandage covering forehead and eyes down to the tip of his nose. When the surgeon lifted that bandage the nurse turned her face aside, and what was under it, or rather what was not under it, shall not be told. Only out in the operating room the smooth-faced young assistant was curiously counting over some round leaden pellets, and he gave one low whistle when he pushed into a pile a full fourscore.

"He said he was a-lookin' through a keyhole," the sergeant reported, "an' somebody let him have it with both barrels—but that don't go. Jim wouldn't be lookin' through no keyhole—he'd bust the door down."

Nor could the sergeant learn more. He had found the man stumbling down Possum Hollow, and up that hollow the men and women of the mining camp did not give one another away.

"It might'a been any one of a dozen fellers I know," the sergeant said, for Jim was a feudsman and had his enemies by the score.

The man on the cot said nothing. Once, to be sure, when he was crossing the border to Etherland, and once only, he muttered: "Yes, she was a cat, no doubt about that. Yes, sir, the old girl was a cat." But when he was conscious, that much even he never would say again. He simply lay grim, quiet, uncomplaining, and not even the surgeon, whose step he got quickly to know, could get him to tell who had done the deed.

On the fourth day he showed some cheer. "Look here, Doc," he said, "when you goin' to take this rag off o' my eyes. I hain't seen a wink since I come in here."

"Oh, pretty soon," said the surgeon, and the nurse turned away again with drops in her eyes that would never be for his eyes to shed again.

On the sixth day his pulse was fast and his blood was high—and that night the nurse knew precisely what meant the look in the surgeon's face when he motioned her to leave the room. Then he bent to lift the bandage once more.

"Why don't you take 'em all off, Doc? I'd like to see the old girl again. Won't she come to see me?"

"Yes, she'll come, but she can't now—she's sick abed." The man grinned.

"Yes, I know them spells."

"Jim," said the surgeon suddenly, "I'm going to be very busy tomorrow, and if you've got any message to send to anybody or anything to say to me, you'd better say it before I go." He spoke carelessly, but with a little too much care.

The sheet moved over the hands clasped across Jim's breast. "Wh, Doc, you don't mean to say—" He stopped and drew in one breath slowly.

"Oh, no, but you can't always tell, and I might not get back till late, and I thought you might have something to tell me about—" He paused helplessly and the man on the cot began moving his lips. The surgeon bent low.

"Why, Doc," he said very slowly, "you—don't—really—mean—to—say—that—the—old—" his voice dropped to a whisper, "has finished me this time?"

"Who finished you, Jim—who'd you say finished you?"

A curious smile flitted over the coarse lips and passed. Then the lips tightened and the thought behind the bandage made its way to the surgeon's quick brain, and there was a long silence.

At last. "D'you ever hear tell, Doc, of a woman bein' hung?"

"Yes, Jim."

And then: "Doc, am I goin' shore?" This question the surgeon answered with another, bending low.

"Jim, what message shall I give your wife?" The curious smile came back.

"Doc, this is Christmas, ain't it?"

"Yes, Jim."

"Doc, you're shore, air ye, that nobody knows who done it?"

"Nobody but you, Jim."

The man had been among men the terror of the hills for years, but on the last words that passed his gray lips his soul must have swung upward to the soul of



"Doc, am I goin', shore?" This question the surgeon answered with another, bending low—"Jim, what message shall I give your wife?"

The man who lived and died for the peace of those hills.

"Doc," he said thickly, "you jus' tell the old girl Jim says, 'Happy Christmas!'"

The surgeon started back at the grim cheer of that message, but he took it like a priest and carried it back through the little hell that flared down the ravine on Jim now through the window. And like a priest he told it to but one living soul.

"Doc," he said, "I was goin' to git the old girl a Christmas gift. Tell her I'm—a-givin'—her—one—now, Doc," he repeated thickly; "tell the old girl Jim says—'Happy Christmas!'"

(THE END)

You'll Find It Here

Albert Feddersen, 12, was evidently hit by an automobile while carrying a Christmas tree home last night and was found probably fatally injured in the gutter an hour later unconscious.

FREE—10-20 picture, Christ at 12, other subjects, with any 50-cent purchase. Art Emporium, 929 Tac. av. "Advertisement."

If the city can find any work it needs done and any money to pay for it the unemployed will be given work at \$2.50 a day.

Call Western Union for messenger boys; low rates. Phone Main 4321. "Advertisement"

Tacoma Scots will celebrate the 155th anniversary of the birth of Bobby Burns with a banquet and ball at Masonic temple January 23.

Artistic decorations. Watson's "Advertisement"

All jail prisoners got a bag of candy yesterday and will eat a turkey dinner today, which is more than lots of honest people will get.

Artistic decorations. Hinz, Florist, So. 7th and K sts. Main 2655. "Advertisement."

Naomi Myers Wishop, who married William K. Wishop last summer after a short matrimonial bureau correspondence, to later discover her hubby had some more wives, whereupon she had him arrested at Spokane, was a teacher at Cushman Indian school.

Anything in the plant line at Hinz, the Florist, So. 7th and K sts. "Advertisement."

Detectives Recob and Kincaid heard R. M. Donahue telling his pal how they would rob chicken coops to-night and both the thieves are in jail now.

Diamond rings from \$5.00 up. An everlasting Christmas gift. Pfaff, jeweler, 1147 C st. Open evenings. "Advertisement."

The old school board held its last session yesterday afternoon and sold \$25,000 Central school heating plant and all to C. H. Beers for \$225.

Local immigration officers leave tomorrow for San Francisco with seven Hindus who will be deported.

Salt Rising Bread Saturday. Ducawald's, 318 11th st. "Advertisement."

Eatonville has completed her wiring system and will begin burning Nisqually electric current from Tacoma's municipal plant tonight.

Moeller & Dawson got the \$40,000 contract for erecting the Dave Gross building on South C between 11th and 13th.

President J. W. Brokaw announced the Northwestern Wood-ware company plant about rebuilt and all old employees have been summoned to appear before January 12 to go to work.

Tacoma Playhouses

Tacoma Theater—Kinemacolor pictures, one week, commencing today.

Princess Theater—"Alias Jimmy Valentine," all week. Matinees today and Saturday.

Pantages Theater—Taylor's eight African lions, with holiday bill of comedy features.

Melbourne Theater—"Daniel," famous religious film, until Friday.

MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL ON THE STAGE TODAY

The most beautiful girl on the American stage has been found—Miss Vera Maxwell!

She has just been voted to the pinnacle of the American beauty column in Paris, the home of the connoisseur.

A full-page colored portrait of Miss Maxwell appeared in one of the Paris newspapers lately. It was after a painting by Paul Helieu, the noted artist, who unqualifiedly declares she is the star of all American stage beauties.



MISS VERA MAXWELL.

FALLS; IS LUCKY

LYONS, N. Y., Dec. 25.—It is not the lot of many men to fall 60 feet, drop on a high voltage wire, become badly burned, finish the fall to the roof of a nearby building and live to tell the story. Such, however, is the experience of George Foster of Geneva, N. Y., who is employed here on a new smokestack being erected by a gas and electric company. The wire, while burning him badly about the back, undoubtedly saved his life in the descent.

Foster was climbing the 75-foot chimney and when about 60 feet in the air he lost his balance and fell. For some hours he was unconscious but the physicians now say he has a good chance for recovery.

GIVEN AUTHORITY

Authority was granted at Washington for King county to build a road across the abandoned military reservation on Vashon Island.



NO CHARGE FOR ALTERATIONS!



Here Comes Tacoma's Greatest Ready Wear Sale

Prices on Men's and Women's Finest Suits, splendid coats, highest quality garments cut down one-half and more in a tremendous end-of-the-year cleanup. This store will stand back of every garment disposed of during this sale, just as firmly as at any other time, and you may be positively certain your purchase is absolutely as represented. We will sell, as at all times, on the merit of our goods and satisfaction is a part of every sale made. This great sale reaches every corner of the store. What we list here will show the depth of the price-cutting.

190 Women's and Misses' Suits at Half Price and Less

Up to \$35.00 suits at \$15.45
Up to \$22.50 suits at \$ 9.89

All Dresses Sacrificed to Clear

Up to \$35.00 dresses at \$16.88
Up to \$22.50 dresses at \$10.88
Up to \$17.50 dresses at \$ 8.88
Up to \$ 8.75 dresses at \$ 4.88

Winter Coats for Women and Misses at Immense Reductions

\$7.50 coats at \$ 3.84
Up to \$10.00 coats at \$ 4.84
Up to \$18.50 coats at \$ 9.87
\$22.50 coats at \$12.44
\$25.00 coats at \$14.84
Up to \$30.00 coats at \$16.88
\$15.00 sport coats at \$ 7.89

YEAR END MILLINERY CLEARANCE!

\$7.00 up to \$7.50 values reduced to 69c. Beautifully trimmed velvets, felts, beavers and silks. All splendid hats.

Warner's and Redfern's Entire Sample Line of Corsets Priced at One-Half!

\$1.50 corsets at 75c | \$3.00 corsets at \$1.50
\$2.00 corsets at \$1.00 | \$5.00 corsets at \$2.50



Men's Suits Ruthlessly Cut

\$15.00 suits at \$ 7.45
\$20.00 suits at \$10.00
\$30.00 suits at \$15.00
\$15.00 to \$18.00 slippers at \$ 9.00
\$12.50 slippers at \$ 6.45
500 pairs men's cashmere and herring-bone trousers, \$2.00 value at \$1.00

Men's Overcoats Cut

\$15.00 overcoats at \$ 7.45
\$20.00 overcoats at \$10.00
\$30.00 overcoats at \$15.00

Outfit Your Boy Now

Boys' suits up to \$6.00 values (2 pairs pants) at \$3.29
Boys' slippers, to \$3.50 values at ... \$2.49
Boys' overcoats and reefer coats to \$5.00 values at \$2.89

All Children's Coats Greatly Reduced.

ROBBER MUST FACE MURDER CHARGE NOW

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 25.— Formal charges of murder were lodged against John Bostick, the Southern Pacific robber suspect, today. He is charged with shooting and killing Passenger Agent Montague on December 1, the day the train was held up near Los Angeles. The alibi Bostick relied upon for the establishment of his innocence was shattered. He claimed he was working at the S. P. roundhouse here the day of the holdup. H. H. Carman, foreman of the shops, declared after looking at Bostick that he never saw him before.

Try "Drum's Special" Whiskey for Quality
DRUM'S
1806 So. C. Main 1778.

The National Bank of Tacoma

MISS WAGE EARNER:

The money you earn is worth too much to you to be risked unwisely. It must be kept safe from any kind of loss. There is only one place for it—a good bank. Open a checking account and pay your bills by check. This is the best bank for you for safety and courtesy.

Twenty-eight years of banking integrity.

SOLID AS THE MOUNTAIN