



The Night before Christmas

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

"Tis the night before Christmas—
I whisper the rhyme
And wander in fancy
To "once on a time."
I see the big fireplace,
The girls and the boys,
The long, heaped-up stockings,
The drums and the toys.

"Tis the night before Christmas"—
So old, and so new!
With all of its dreamings
So good and so true.
I see all the faces
Forgotten so long,
And out of the twilight
There murmurs a song.

"Tis the night before Christmas"—
And here, by my grate,
The past rises, glowing,
The years lose their weight,
The boy-days come trooping
At memory's call,
And gleam in the embers
That flicker and fall.

"Tis the night before Christmas"—
Ah, could I but clutch
The gold of my fancies!
'T would go at my touch!
The shouts and the laughter
Now sweet to my ear
Would shrink to a silence
Too deep and too drear.

"Tis the night before Christmas"—
Remembrances stir
As sweet as the cherished
Frankincense and myrrh.
And, hark! As the visions
Grow dim to the sight,
There comes, "Merry Christmas!
And, boy-days, good night!"



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CHRISTMAS TREE WIDE PLAIN

W. D. Nesbit

WIDE PLAIN is in Saskatchewan. It was so named because it is so. It is wide. The town does not cover the entire plain. Far be it from me to convey such an impression, inasmuch as the plain extends east, west, north and south ostensibly as far as there is anything. No doubt somewhere in the distance there are trees, and hills, or something to stop the plain from spreading any further. And some day it is the intention of the Greater Wide Plain association to have real trees growing in their thriving little city. But just at present they are so busy getting the town established that the trees must wait.

George Freeman was one of the most energetic young men in Wide Plain. He was one of the pioneers. He was almost the Oldest Inhabitant, although he was but twenty-five years of age. You see, George located in Wide Plain when it was practically nothing but width and plain. He foresaw a future for the town, and became its leading dealer in agricultural implements and groceries and hardware, and so on. He became the leading dealer, because he was the only one.

In a few months Wide Plain had a population of 2,500. And so social life became a feature of existence there. Social life requires two factors. One of them is women. The other is men. You may have thought that one feature would be sociability and the other would be life, but that would be drawing it a bit fine. Lucy Cleveland was the belle of Wide Plain. She was not the belle because she was the only young woman there, for there were others. Others—young and beautiful, but while some of the others were as young none of them were as beautiful as Lucy.

Consequently Lucy had suitors a-plenty. In fact, she had eight suitors, that being the available unmarried portion of the population that she would consider. And she managed to give the eight the impression that she was not considering them very much. George Freeman endeavored to induce her to consider him. George's policy in life was to get what he wanted by one of two methods. One was to go where it was and take possession, the other was to ask for it. Inasmuch as Lucy was not a building site nor a quarter section, he could not claim her by right of discovery. So he had asked her. And she had assured him that while she esteemed him highly she did not see her way to be his. George had not asked her if there was some one else to whom she had pledged her affection or plighted her troth. He did not care. He went on selling agricultural implements and striped overalls and brooms and nails and putty and canned goods and other groceries, whistling little melodies to himself and wondering how Lucy would want their house painted when they got married.

Every now and then he would propose again to Lucy. By every now and then I mean that he would propose, say, once a week. Some weeks he proposed twice. He saw that it pleased Lucy to be proposed to and George was a gentleman who believed in making himself agreeable to a young lady when he was fond of her. So it came along toward Christmas. "We must have a Christmas tree for the children," Lucy said.

Lucy was teacher in the Wide Plain Sunday School. Her pupils idolized her. George and the other seven suitors had tried to join her class, but she had insisted that they must attend the Bible class for older students, which was presided over by Mrs. Henry Gillup, a most capable married lady, who had brought one husband and six children to help up-build Wide Plain. The fact that Lucy had demanded a Christmas tree occasioned many smiles, especially from George's rivals. "A Christmas tree!" laughed William Skidmore. "There isn't a tree for a hundred miles in any direction." "Let's get one shipped in by freight, then," suggested Luke Morton. "No time now," Wesley Perkins pointed out. "It's only two days to Christmas."

The seven rivals were not particular about the tree. Each knew that Lucy would be disappointed a bit, but each of them felt that the gift he had selected for her would help to overcome her disappointment. For, in any event, there was to be a Christmas Eve party at the church. On the evening of December 23, George called on Lucy. She was still

unhappy because the dear children could not have a tree. "Now, Lucy," he said, "I've arranged it all for you. There'll be a Christmas tree." "Oh, have you got it? Where is it? I didn't know you could get one." "It isn't here yet, but there'll be one Christmas eve. Now, don't ask questions. Mrs. Gillup and I will fix it up all right." "But I must trim it up." "No. Mrs. Gillup and I have arranged for it all. You are not to worry yourself about anything. Just you gather your class together and be at the church at 8 o'clock that evening, and the tree will be there."

So Lucy, scenting mystery, and too diplomatic to ask anything more, was compelled to content herself with that much information. Towards dusk of the day before Christmas George was seen carrying several bulky bundles into the church. Mrs. Gillup had spent some time in conference with him that day. The seven rivals had attempted to quiz her, but she would not gratify their curiosity further than to say that there would be a tree. They had asked her—separately—if she would hang their presents for Lucy on the tree, and she had agreed to do so. She and George, behind the drawn curtains of the church, labored long with curtain poles and string and a profusion of green paper, to say nothing of several bundles of artificial palms and the like, which George had unearthed among his stock.

When the audience was assembled for the Christmas eve exercises Mrs. Gillup slowly drew back a curtain which concealed one corner of the room, and there, with candles glowing and green paper and green palm branches rustling, stood a Christmas tree. It was not an evergreen tree.



"We Must Have a Christmas Tree."

It was not a genuine fir or cedar, but it looked like a tree. And the candles and the strings of popcorn and glittering ornaments hid many of its faults. To the surprise of Lucy, George was not in sight. She looked all about for him, in her delight, wishing to thank him for his ingenious way of providing this make-believe tree for the little ones.

Mrs. Gillup went blithely on, taking presents from the tree and distributing them. After passing out the gifts for the children she picked off packages and bundles for the older folk. It was noted that the tree sort of shook every time she took off one of the gifts which had been provided by the seven rivals for Lucy. But at last the final package had been disposed of. Mrs. Gillup drew the curtain in front of the tree again and the audience filed out, laughing and chatting over the success of the entertainment. Lucy did not hurry away with the rest. She stepped back of the curtain with Mrs. Gillup.

"It was just lovely, Mrs. Gillup!" she exclaimed. "But why wasn't Mr. Freeman here? After his hard work and cleverness in helping you, I should have thought he would have wanted to see how the tree looked." "I expect he was pretty busy." "And—of course, I haven't any right to expect such a thing—but he was such a good friend of mine, Mrs. Gillup—I really thought it a little odd that he didn't make me some kind of a present—just a remembrance, or—" "I didn't forget you, Lucy," said the tree. "You can have me." And Mrs. Gillup says that Lucy knew all about it all the time, because she had sharp eyes, and no tree that wore shoes could fool her.



A Costly Gift.
"Those Billynnares have been awful proud since Christmas," said the Envious Neighbor. "What makes them so?" inquired the Curious Friend. "Oh, their parents filled their stockings with eggs."
A Hanging Matter.
Folk—Hang up your stocking this Christmas?
Dolk—Nepo—hung up overcoat.

"JUST LOOKING TODAY"



All day doth the Christmas shopper
Rush madly here and there,
And all she spendeth is one dime,
And that is for street car fare.

TAUGHT A MORAL LESSON

Two Christmas Presents, Neither of Which Brought Satisfactory Results.

There once was a rich old uncle who had two poor nephews. And when Christmas came the two poor nephews were anxious to show the rich old uncle how much they thought of him.

Now the first poor nephew reasoned that he should impress his rich old uncle with the great affection he bore him by some tangible means. So he drew out his savings and purchased for his rich old uncle a magnificent gold watch, and had it neatly engraved. To it he attached a gorgeous chain, put the whole affair in a lavishly decorated box and sent it to his rich old uncle with his best wishes.

The second poor nephew figured that any extreme financial outlay would convince his rich old uncle that he was trying to jolly him a bit too much, so he invested a nickel in a neat but tasty Christmas card, which he mailed to the rich old uncle.

So the rich old uncle received the two remembrances, and said of the first nephew:

"Humph! A man who will spend all he has for a gold watch to give a man who already has all the watches he ever will need hasn't got enough judgment to be trusted with money. I will leave him my blessing and a few words of good advice."

When he looked at the card he nodded his head approvingly and said:

"There's a man after my own heart. He knew I would not care for an expensive gift, and he knew that I would value his good wishes, so he very wisely sent them to me in this inexpensive manner. He shows a marked economical trait and I am sure he will get along in the world without any aid from me."

So he made a new will and left all his money to fund an institution for the study of prehistoric manifestations of microbic diseases in fossilized animalculae.

WILBUR D. NESBIT.

The Letter and the Spirit.

Ankum—Do you approve of abbreviating "Christmas" to "X-mas"?

Tellum—I wish I could. It usually costs me a "C" or an "L." I'd be willing to abbreviate it to "V"-mas if my wife would agree.

Is there a Santa Claus?

Wilbur D. Nesbit
Is there a Santa Claus?
You with the truth in your eyes,
Bidding me ponder and pause,
You that sift truth from the lies,
Whispering faith in your heart,
Remembering that on my knee—
I have no canon's art;
Truly, the Saint used to be!

Is there a Santa Claus?
You ask again and again.
Now must I answer, because
You have the trust I had then.
You have the trusting belief
That once my spirit possessed
Ere there came worry and grief
Bidding their while in my breast.

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WINE and WALNUTS

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

A DAILY CONVERSATION.

"Papa?"
"Well?"
"Say, papa, is there a Santa Claus?"
"I reckon so. Don't bother me. I'm reading."
"Willie Smith, he said, there ain't any."
"Is that the kind of grammar you learn at school?"
"But how does Santa Claus get in?"
"He comes down the chimney."
"We ain't got no chimney."
"Ain't got! Where do you learn such talk?"
"Willie Jones, he say—Say papa, is there really a Santa Claus?"
"There used to be one."
"Has he quit?"
"I guess not. If you're a good boy."
"Am I a good boy?"
"Not always."
"How does Santa Claus get in?"
"Oh, he knows how."
"He can't squeeze in the steam pipe, can he?"
"Maybe."
"Wouldn't his whiskers, wouldn't

Would Fill the Bill.
Mr. Bighart—Wiggins, old boy, we've raised \$50 to get the boss a Christmas present, and we want something that will make a great show for the money—something that will look big, you know. Can't you suggest something?
Wiggins—Sure. Buy \$50 worth of rice and then boil it.

Saves Her Feelings.
Miss Askit—Does your husband smoke those cigars you gave him Christmas?
Mrs. Nuwed—He smoked one and said he would keep the rest to remind him of my kindness.

Now She's Convinced.
Askit—Where is that Miss Oldgirl, who was expressing herself so strongly against foolish Christmas customs the other day?
Tellit—She's laid up with a bad cold—caught it while she was out gathering mistletoe.

STRATEGY.



Mr. Softloigh—Miss Homeleight seems to have that corner all to herself.
Miss Gabby—Yes, the mistletoe hangs there, and she has spent the evening in that spot.
Preparing for Christmas.
Deacon Goodly—What are you building that addition to your house for, Parson Sainly?
Parson S.—Got to have a place to store the carpet slippers and book-

The Christmas Shopper

The Christmas shopper makes her list
And holds it tightly in her fist
And starts to get her shopping done
She thinks she is the only one
Beginning at this early date
And that her progress will be straight
She sallies forth with pleasant smiles
But soon is jammed up in the aisles
And when she tries to cleave the fray
She has to wind around this way
Though earnestly she's on the job,
She bumps into a rushing mob
By speeding shoppers she is borne
Until her skirt and waist are torn;
She leaves a doll and jumping jack
And struggles back
And has she gets home, weary, worn and blue—
And finds the cook gone shopping, too!

Wilbur D. Nesbit