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S NOW had been falling in the mountains many days before Christmas. Down in the sunbright valley mother and little Nina gazed up at the shining peaks and were homesick. They would gladly have forgotten snow, but father was in a mountain cabin all alone.

"Will he hang his stockings by the stone fireplace?" asked Nina, "and don't you s'pose he'll be 'vited somewhere to dinner?"

"I wish we had stayed with him," said mother. "If he can live through the winter in the mountains, so could we."

"But he told us 'no,' don't you remember? He said he brought us to southern California on purpose so we could live always in a summer land."

Mother sighed. The little family had been west only a few weeks when father was offered a position as book-keeper for a lumber company away up in the Sierras. Living in the mountains had been delightful through the summer, but at the first hint of cold weather the tent home was packed, father bought a cabin and sent mother and the little daughter to the valley.

Father was an artist and he declared that he should like nothing better than to paint pictures of snowy peaks with no one to interrupt him and nothing else to do but to guard the company's property.

"It is a wonderful chance," he had insisted.

Mother and Nina had tried to believe he was right; but the little bungalow which they rented already furnished, seemed but a poor excuse for a house.

"I wish I could see him hang up his stocking," continued Nina. "Oh, I wish I could put this penwiper I'm making in the very toe of it!"

Mother made no reply. She wished so much that she, too, might help fill that lonely stocking in the mountain cabin.

"Oh, mother, mother!" exclaimed Nina, dropping her spool and scissors and springing to her feet. "I have a beautiful idea! You always have to keep your Christmas presents, don't you? You never can send them back, can you?"

"Surely not," was the answer.

"But, mother, s'pose you wish your Christmas present hadn't come. Would it be very polite to tell the ones that gave it to you that you were getting along nicely without their Christmas present and that you really didn't want it?"

"Why, of course not, Nina. We must think of the loving thought behind the gift, even if Uncle John should send no skates this very winter!"

Two arms flew swiftly around mother's neck.

"Oh, I have such a beautiful idea," repeated Nina. "We'll ride on the stage with the Christmas box and give ourselves to father for a Christmas present. He wouldn't return his Christmas present, now, would he?"

"Would you be contented, Nina, to live up there all winter?" asked mother. "You must remember that we will be four miles from Fredalba. You will have no little girls to play with, no school, no Sunday school, no—"

"But, mother, can't we have a school with you for the teacher, and a Sunday school? Can't I have a whole row of snow men to play with? And, mother! we'll have a real Christmas!"

Thus it happened that two passengers went up the trail on the last stage of the old year.

"Anybody going to meet you in Fredalba?" asked the stage driver. "The weather is pretty severe up here a few thousand feet higher. Had lots of rain in the valley and that means snow storms in the mountains."

"No one will meet us," said mother, "but we know the trail from Fredalba and our burros are here, although we didn't expect to see them again until next summer."

"You can telephone from Fredalba," suggested the stage driver. "They tell me your husband has a telephone out at camp."

"But we're Christmas presents," explained Nina; "so we must surprise him. Don't you know that to-night will be Christmas eve?"

"If the wind doesn't come up, you'll be all right," the man replied, but unless I'm mistaken, there's a heavy snow falling in the mountains this minute."

At Fredalba every one advised mother and Nina not to attempt the trail until morning. This time it was mother who would push on. "We know the trail so well," said she, "and the burros know it better. In two hours we can reach camp."

"It seems to me," said the stage driver as he watched the two disappear around the curve, "it seems to me that some folks haven't any sense," and shutting his lips in a determined fashion he went to the telephone and called for Nina's father. "I'll tell him his folks are coming and to go out to meet them," he explained to the men standing near. "Otherwise the poor fellow may have a surprise he won't like on Christmas day."

To the stage driver's dismay there was no answer to his call. Father's cabin in the Sierras was evidently deserted.

"See here," said he to a friend, "you call Brown up in half an hour and tell him that his wife and daughter are on the trail."

"The wires are down," declared a big man who came in at that moment from outside. "No use trying to telephone."

With fear for the safety of his passengers, the stage driver drove down the trail to the valley.

In the meantime the two plodded along on the sure footed burros, calling merrily to each other as they passed the well-known landmarks.

On and on, up and up they toiled, the snow falling faster and faster, the wind more furious every minute. One mile, two miles. By that time the snow blinded them and but for the faithful burros they could not have kept the trail. It grew colder and colder, and the short afternoon was ended. That meant sudden darkness among those solemn, snow-clad peaks. It meant too, that mother and Nina

But for the faithful burros they could not have kept the trail.



But for the Faithful Burros They Could Not Have Kept the Trail.

The Christmas Spirit

Christmas is the season of kindness. For Christmas celebrates the coming of Christ into the world, and the heart of the Christ message is love—love expressing itself in homely channels of friendliness and good will, love that "suffereth long and is kind." If we have kindly emotions, let them have their way and blossom into kindly thoughts and kindly deeds. Let the free child spirit of open-hearted friendliness prevail. For this is the child's festival, celebrating the birth of a child, the wonderful Giver who gave Himself for mankind. Let us carry the Christmas spirit through all the following days that come and go with all their measure of care or pain or pleasure, and bear in our hearts the inspiration and hope of the blessed Christmas festival of love, bearing ever ringing above the sounds of earth and sense, the song of the angels heralding in the birth of the Saviour of mankind.

MR. STAYBOLT AS SANTA CLAUS

Some Things He Would Like to Give If He Could.

"Do you know the Christmas present I'd like to make if I could?" said Mr. Staybolt. "I'd like to give cheerfulness to the downhearted; courage to the timid, and strength to the weak; the power of self-denial to those who yield too easily, and a desire to work to the lazy."

"I have often thought what a pity it is that you can't buy all these things, these helpful qualities, already put up and at such a price as to put them within the reach of all; canned cheerfulness, bottled hopefulness, courage in tablets, and strength, say, in the form of a powder, and so on; or you might, I suppose, put 'em all up canned, for that matter."

"But in the absence of such market preparations and our consequent inability to buy such things and send them as gifts to those whom they might most benefit perhaps you will permit me to offer to each a word of suggestion."

"To the dispirited take a cheerful view. To the downhearted, don't dwell on the doleful side. To the timid, don't be afraid. To the weak, or those who fancy themselves so, try your strength. You'll be surprised to find how much you've got."

To those who yield too easily, deny yourself once, and again, and feel the joy and strength that will come back to you. To the lazy, get a job with a shovel, in a gang of laborers, under a driving boss; and if you are not glad to get back to your present job to do the best you know how at it, I miss my guess."

"I can't send you these things in cans or bottles; but if anyone of you will take my advice and stick to it, you'll think that Mr. Staybolt was a very kind Santa Claus."

At the Manger.

When first, her Christmas watch to keep, Came down the silent Angel, Sleep, With snowy sandals shod, Beholding what his mother's hands Had wrought, with softer swaddling-bands She swathed the Son of God. Then, skilled in mysteries of Night, With tender visions of delight She wretched his resting-place, Till, awakened by a warmer glow Than heaven itself had yet to show, He saw his mother's face.

—John B. Tabb, in Atlantic.

Huletide Musings

The joyous time is drawing nigh, the time of turkey, pudding, pie; nor do we dream of after bills, of squills, and pills, and Christmas bills.

A girl begins to hang up the mistletoe at about the age when she stops hanging up her stocking.

A pessimist is a fellow who wouldn't hang up his stocking for fear old Santa Claus might swipe it.

Christmas cigars are not always puffed up with pride.

There's many a slip 'twixt the Miss and the mistletoe.

Don't make it too strong. Many a man has been knocked out by one good, stiff punch.

Ask a truthful woman what she enjoys most about Christmas, and she will tell you the bargain sales afterward.

To sing a rhyme of Christmas time (that line is but the first of it), here's hoping you may not feel blue because you get the worst of it.

When a child writes a letter of thanks to Santa Claus, it should be cherished like a rare plant. That kid isn't long for this world.

No Christmas present is so useless that you can't pass it on to some one else next year.

Remember that it is better to give than to receive—the things you don't want.

Take off the tags. Many a friendship has been severed by the price mark on a Christmas present.

I have often wondered wherein consisted the wisdom of Solomon when he had a thousand wives. I am now convinced that it must have been in living in the days before Christmas was celebrated.

It's all right to pity the poor at this peace-on-earth season, but it is also well to remember that sympathy doesn't fill an empty stomach.

RULES FOR CHRISTMAS GIVING

- Give willingly.
- Give tactfully.
- Put thought into your giving.
- Don't consider return gifts.
- Never give to others what you wouldn't want yourself.
- The unexpected gift insures a special appreciation.
- To give ostentatiously is the height of bad taste.
- Give to the sick and the sorrowful if you would know the true joy of giving.
- Never give more than you can afford. Your friends know your circumstances as well as you do yourself and the pleasure of both giving and receiving is lost.

A Question in Finance.

"Are you good at arithmetic, my dear?" asked Mr. Perkase of his wife. "I was accounted the very best arithmetician at school," replied Mrs. Perkase, with a touch of pride in her voice. "I have a problem for you." "State it." "How can I buy \$50 worth of Christmas presents with \$10 in cash and no credit?"

Prominent Men Indicted.

New Roads, La., Dec. 3.—Five prominent men were indicted here on the charge of killing Poile Hawkins, a negro near Morganza, La. They are E. C. Henderson, Robert Reynolds, Dr. Alexander Gore, Rogillio Dawson and Charles Dawson.

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