

BILL SMITH FINDS HIMSELF

A Story of a Returned Soldier, Hard Times and a Christmas Party.

By M. McIntyre Hood.

(Continued from Page 12.) and gold, and it was covered with little parcels tied with all kinds of ribbon. Here was a huge rocking horse. At the top was a gorgeously dressed doll. He looked around the room, just in time to meet the rush of three little forms which dashed clean across the floor and threw themselves into his arms.

"Oh, Santa, we thought you would never come," he heard three childish voices say at once. "We're so glad to see you." With their arms tight around his neck, his shoulder and his waist the three children clung to him. One was a little boy just able to run around and talk. He was not a bit afraid of the beard and eyebrows of Santa, but put his fingers into them and squirmed deliciously in Bill's arms.

The other two were two little girls, looking like angels to Bill in their pure white frocks, and with their golden curls waving in his eyes. They jumped up on him, and his heart almost stopped beating as he felt their soft little arms around his neck, and felt their lips seeking a clear spot on his cheek to kiss.

"Oh God," he said to himself, "is this what it feels like to have children around a home. Would there ever be such days for Meg and him? He never thought of the others in the room. He could not see past the little children, who were romping around and calling to him to get to work on the Christmas tree. Then, shaking of the spell which their voices and their hearty greeting had cast over him, he realized that he was playing a part, and that he must play it to the end.

Then he saw the others in the room. There was an old man, sitting in a big armchair in front of a roaring log-fire. Beside him was a woman in a glorious gown of blue, and next to her chair stood a tall, soldierly man who was evidently her husband and the father of the three children who had almost swallowed their Santa Claus. Standing in another corner was the young man, with the empty coat sleeve, and near him sat a smiling young girl, looking alternately at the young man and at the children, who were trying their hardest to pull Santa towards the big tree which shone and shimmered over in the corner.

Bill's Inspiration. Then inspiration came to Bill. All the old jokes and jests which he used to know came back to his lips as he took one parcel after another down from the tree and handed them over to their owners. Sometimes it was a toy for the little boy. The next would be a gift for one of the little girls. Then there were parcels for the grown-ups, too, crackers which the children insisted on pulling with Santa, fruit and everything that Bill had dreamed of in his young days.

Two hours passed, and the children began to feel sleepy. A last hug and kiss, bestowed with much fuss and ceremony upon Santa, and a nurse took them off to bed. Bill stood there, wondering what was going to happen next. He had entered this house as a thief and a robber, but what a change had taken place within him. As he had played with these children, he had been thinking of Meg. He had been thinking that some day, when he would have children like these, that he would have them gather around the family Christmas tree, he could still feel their soft arms around his neck, and thought of what it would be like when his own little children were there to do the same for him. Could he ever again be guilty of even thoughts of crime? Could he ever have them know that their father had even thought of stealing? No! He would leave the house as he had come, and would find work by some means or another, and he would never again leave the path of industry.

He was aroused from his thoughts by the young man. "Fine, Santa, fine. And here's your own Christmas present. Let's go upstairs again and get off that outfit." Bill was only too anxious to accept the invitation, so with a brief "good-night," to the other members of the party, he followed his guide.

The Awakening. "Who do you think I am?" were his first words when the two had reached the room. "I don't know," said the young man. "We sent to the caterer for a man to act the part of Santa Claus, and of course, they sent you." "No, they didn't," said Bill. "I just came in to try to help myself to the goose and the pudding in the kitchen when you surprised me, and here I am. I don't know what made me do it, but the thought of my wife ill at home made me desperate. I saw the good things in your kitchen, and in I came. Now, here I am. I don't know what has happened to the

man you were looking for, but what are you going to do with me?" Bill's voice broke. His eyes filled as he thought of how near he had been to crime. He began to take off the Santa Claus disguise and waited for the man to reply. "Tell me some more," said the young man, placing his one good arm on Bill's shoulder. Then Bill told him the whole story, of how he met Meg in Scotland, of how happy they had been when they first settled in their home in Canada, and of how bad luck had dogged his footsteps until he was desperate and almost destitute.

"What regiment were you in?" said the young man. "Bill told him his unit with a throb of pride in his voice. "And what is your name?" was the next question. "Oh, Bill Smith," was the reply. "Bill Smith, M.M., isn't it?" cried the young man, eagerly. "Well," replied Bill, "I did receive the medal, but I'm hanged if I know why, but that doesn't do much good when a man's hungry and penniless." He had hardly time to finish when the young man caught hold of him, and rushed him out of the room and downstairs. Into the big drawing room he pushed the astonished Bill, who wondered if he had taken leave of his senses.

"I've found him," he shouted. "I've found him at last." "Why, bless my soul," said the older man, "What have you found?" "Bill Smith," he shouted. "The man who saved my life at Passchendaele." Then he turned to Bill. "You remember, don't you, that you were awarded the military medal because you carried a wounded officer of another Battalion from an exposed position back to the dressing station. Well, I'm that officer. This is all the handicap I received," he said, touching his empty sleeve. "But if you hadn't found me and brought me in, I would now be lying in an unknown grave in Belgium."

Bill stared at the man in amazement. The others crowded around him, eager to shake his hand and to pour forth their thanks. But only for a moment, for the young man waved them all back to their chairs. Then he told them all Bill's story, of how he struggled against fate and was desperate when he entered their house. When he had finished, the tall, soldierly man, who had so far said nothing walked over to Bill, and held out his hand. "Do you really want to make good?" Bill could only mumble a reply.

The Future Assured. "Well," said the other, "we can never thank you enough for having saved your young brother's life. We will see to it that you and your wife want for nothing in the future. I happen to want a good strong man, who is not afraid of work, and upon whom I can depend, to assist in looking after my farm about twelve miles from the city. You will live in a little cottage out there, and you will never lack for provisions, and I will pay you a good living salary. I have not yet been able to find a man upon whom I can depend. But, Smith, I think you will do. We know we can't reward you sufficiently for the gallant act you performed in saving our brother, but we can at least give you a chance to make good. What do you say?"

Tears filled Bill's eyes. "What can I say," he said, with a dry sob in his throat. "This is the first real chance I have ever had in life, and as soon as my dear little Meg is well enough, we will move out to your farm." "All right, Smith, that's just what I want," he said, and see me at my office down town tomorrow and I will fix things up for you so that it will be all right with you until you are able to move."

Quietly Bill went upstairs again, followed by the young man. "Don't forget your present," he said, "for in it you will find invitation to make your wife comfortable for a little while. The big brother of mine is a bit strict, but he's a real good sort and he'll do the right thing. And come on down to the kitchen. I want to give you some of these supplies to take home." With a new born strength Bill left the house, and walked quickly homewards. He knew that it would seem dull and empty, but he knew that there was love waiting for him that would rejoice in the good fortune which had so unexpectedly and in such a strange manner come upon him. He had been gone since morning, and now it was nearly ten o'clock at night. He hoped Meg would be all right. She had seemed so ill when he went out. This good news would brighten her up. She would love to go out to the country, where they

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

(Luke 2: 1-14)

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenus was governor of Syria.) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished, that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there was in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

TO CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS Annual Appeal Sent Out Not to Delay Buying. "Buy your Christmas presents EARLY—early in the day—and do it now. That will be your biggest gift of the holidays to the workers behind the counters and on the delivery wagons."

That is the reminder that comes from the National Consumers' League, which, with its fifty-six branches in nineteen states, grew out of the case of a little cashboy more than twenty Christmases ago. This little boy spent January on a hospital cot, sick with pneumonia, because he had worked six days from sun up to midnight in foul air and with irregular meals. One day he had neither luncheon nor dinner, and this was all because the idea of early Christmas shopping had not been spread over the land. Out of the conference over his case and the lesson it taught grew the National Consumers' League, which, as the Christmas season approaches is out again coaxing the early shoppers to the stores.

In the new literature of the recurrent campaign the limericks are in evidence. Here are a few of them: Two days before Christmas, came Kate Started out on her shopping in state, But in all the muck She found nothing but trash; Kate, why did you wait till so late? We hear much about the bad Turk, Why should we our own duty shirk? If we shop long and late We show the same trait. And act like a Turk to the clerk. Miss Folly her shopping did late, Now mark her unfortunate state; She was worn to a thread, And spent Christmas in bed, Thus shared she the shop girls' own fate.

Here is the question put by Florence Kelly, general secretary of the league: "Why should the holiday season be a time of torturing overwork for any man, woman, or child?" Is That So? A prominent suffragist announces that women are now filling men's shoes. Well, we'll admit that some of them have pretty big feet—Luke McLuke. Yes, women are now filling men's shoes, but continue emptying men's pockets.

Strange! This little rhyme will cause no mirth, It may create a sigh; With corn the cheapest thing on earth, Why is our pork so high? — Luke McLuke. This query may increase your fears, Though you do not know why; With cotton cheaper than for years, Why are wool suits so high? — Canton (Ohio) News.

Haw, Haw! The giraffe is the only creature that never makes a sound," said Smith. "Not the only creature," replied Jones. "How about the lady you give your seat to when you are in a crowded street car?"

GO TO CHURCH The man who refuses to go to church or take any interest in religion is deliberately committing spiritual suicide, says the Sentinel (Toronto). The non-church goer suffers more than the church. The church of Christ will eventually triumph as sure as there is a God, no matter how many refuse to enter. Her doors are open to whomsoever will. Those who refuse are deliberately depriving themselves of inspiration and strength which they need to fight the battles of life. Communion with fellow-Christians and communion with God makes life worth living. By assuming their religious obligations men and women become better neighbors and better citizens. Without the inspiration and strength that comes from Divine fellowship life becomes a burden, and men and women become a menace to society, no matter what system of government may be in operation. It is impossible to live a full life and render

any real, lasting service aside from Christianity. Ex-President Taft recently expressed himself in a convincing way on the need of religion to make a well-balanced and useful life. "The study of man's relation to his Creator and his responsibility for his life to God energizes his self-sacrifice and restraint, prompts his sense of fraternal obligation to his fellow-men, and makes him the good citizen without whom popular government would be a failure." Basing his observation on his long study of the life of the people, Mr. Taft says: "The longer and more intimate my knowledge of their political and social lives, the more deeply impressed I have become with the critical importance of the part that church and religion must play in making popular government what it ought to be, and in vindicating it as the best kind of a government that an intelligent people can establish. A people without religion are lacking in the greatest aid to the progress of society through the moral elevation of individuals and the community." Go to church!

SOME GOOD REASONS FOR NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING

Newspaper reading is a universal daily habit; newspaper advertising therefore reaches each day virtually all who buy. Newspaper advertising is the life-blood of local trade because it touches all consumer sources in every community. It gives the national advertiser the same opportunity for complete consumer appeal in any locality. Newspaper advertising cuts selling costs because it entails no waste in locality of circulation. Manufacturers use it to cover markets where it is profitable to do business. Newspaper advertising insures quick, thorough and economical dealer distribution and dealer good will, because retailers are willing to sell products advertised direct to their own customers. Newspaper advertising enables manufacturers to tell where their products may be bought. Newspaper advertising can be started or stopped overnight, can be prepared between days to meet sudden developments and to obtain immediate results. Newspaper advertising enables manufacturers to check advertising results and costs in every market which they enter. Newspaper advertising costs less than any other medium.



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A \$1.00 bottle free to any horseman sending 25c for mailing, packing, etc.

TO MOTHER

Thinkin' of Christmas and givin' things, And, somehow, it ever and allus brings The old times back and their quiet ways In the dreams and the drift of the yesterday. An' specially the thought of the lovely joy That every chick of us—girl an' boy— Took in the package that 'mid the stir— We'd marked "To Mother," an' fixed for her.

All of us give her other things, And they were her days, indeed, of wings That lifted above us and sheltered all In their love like they knew there was grief to fall, An' partin's to come, and sorrow to quell, The cheer of the old time Christmas spell, But none of the givin' was just like this, The gift "To Mother," with all its bliss!

Weeks of wonderin' what we should buy An' talkin' an' figurin', tryin' to try To get together as much as we Could dare to spend; an' the softest glee An' sweetest whisperin'; now an' then Openin' the package to peep again, Marked "To Mother," beside her chair.

Alluz opened our own things first— To show around, er we might have burst; But alluz saved to the very last— In them Christmas-morns that have vanished fast— The gift for mother; because 'twas fine To watch her smile, and her eyes shine, An' keep her guessin' an' wonderin' clear Till the last cord fell and she cried: "Oh, dear!"

Heard uv tears that were shed, no doubt, Fer happiness? When hern rolled out We knew what it meant fer one to cry Fer joy—an' it made not only the eye But the heart to weep, like a gladness come With a flood through the mark of life, its scum, And flow all round in a crystal stream Through that gift "To Mother" in days of dream! —The Bentstow Bard.

Good Measure. "An' now, ladies and gents," began the English showman, "there's this ere halligater. Note the length. Fifteen feet from the tip o' the nose to the tip o' the tail and fifteen feet from the tip o' the tail to the tip o' the nose—thirty feet in all!"