

A CHRISTMAS COFFEE POT.

He was only ten years old, and he ought to have been in school, of course; but his father was dead and his mother almost an invalid, to whose slender and uncertain income from her needle Benny's two dollars a week at Haines' General Store was no mean addition.

Those were always proud moments for Benny; and, oh, how they made him yearn to be earning ten dollars a week in the store, like Hank Sellers! Hank was Benny's ideal of a great man, for he could blow smoke through his nose without coughing; he could lift a barrel of salt; show anybody in town in a wrestling match and break the wildest colts that were ever brought to him.

These were questions that often puzzled Benny's brain as he sat on the high seat of the delivery wagon, with old Ned jogging along in front. Mr. Haines did not notice, to be sure—but he was a little, dried-up old man, whom Hank could have licked with one hand tied behind his back.

Every Saturday night Benny hurried straight home with his two silver dollars, and the kiss his mother invariably gave him was the richest of rewards. In the beginning he also conscientiously carried home the occasional nickel or dime which he picked up in return for some little favor done a customer.

Since September, however—and it was now next to the last week in December—he had not spent a penny. Why, was a secret into which he had let no one but little Elizabeth. He was going to make the first Christmas gift of his life, and it was to be to his mother!

What he wanted was something that his mother really needed and would use every day, but which at the same time would be beautiful and enduring, and would not cost over seventy-five cents. It proved a difficult combination to find, and he was beginning to despair, when one morning at breakfast, just four days before Christmas, his mother said: "Benny, dear, I guess you'll have to take the coffee pot down to Mr. Conrad's again."

"It's awful pretty," she murmured. "How much does it cost?" "I ain't asked yet, but Hank says that no granite-iron coffee pot ever made ought to cost over seventy-five cents; and he knows, 'cause he used to work in a hardware store. We'll go in and ask, if you think it'll do."

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again. But I wish I hadn't seen that silver pot," he added, sadly. He dreams that night that he found a place where quarters and half dollars lay on the ground as thick as leaves, enough to buy many silver pots. But just as he was entering Conrad's store, which didn't seem just the same old place exactly, the bottom of his pockets suddenly dropped out, his silver rolled hither and thither, dodging about as if it had life, and not a single piece could be found again.

On the way to work he could not resist the temptation to stop and look at the silver coffee pot again. Some fairy must have polished it over night, for it reflected the morning sun in a manner that was fairly dazzling. Each time that day that he passed Conrad's with the delivery wagon—and he went out of his way several times to do it—he turned a pair of hungry eyes toward the window. At noon, both coming and going, he stopped again.

"Lizzie," said he, desperately, when the pair once more stood in front of the window. "I ain't thought of anything else yet, and I'm going to ask Mr. Conrad how much it's worth."

Elizabeth's eyes opened wide at this venturesome declaration. "Mebbe he won't like it, Benny. He knows we're too poor to buy it."

"I don't care," answered Benny. "I heard Hank Sellers ask a man the price of a thrashin'-machine once, and he didn't have the money to buy it. And mebbe that pot don't cost but seventy-five cents."

"Mr. Conrad," he began, with a tremor in his voice which he could not quite control, "I want to look at your coffee-pots. I want to get mother one for Christmas. How much is that—that silver one in the window, with the crooked spout?"

"I suppose it's solid silver," said Benny, trying to muster a matter-of-fact tone, but struggling with a lump in his throat. "No, it's nickel-plated; but for all practical purposes it is as good as silver. Do you think you would like it?"

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ting. If Benny peeped into that drawer once in the next two days, he peeped twenty times. But on each occasion the tray lay there as peacefully as if it were only a bundle of brown paper.

Benny's work day ended at six o'clock, by Mrs. Brooks' stipulation, for he was too young to be kept up at night. About half past three o'clock on Christmas Eve, when his heart was already beginning to quicken in anticipation of the exciting venture of getting his present into the house unobserved, the telephone in the store rang vigorously. It was Mrs. Rosecrans, and she wanted to know why the two pounds of raisins she had ordered for her Christmas pudding had not been delivered.

"Benny," said Hank, in a tone not intended for his employer's ear. "Do you suppose you could hitch up old Ned by yourself and take two pounds of raisins out to old lady Rosecrans? I can't possibly leave the store now, and she'll have a fit if those raisins ain't delivered."

Benny had never hitched up the horse, but he was not the boy to admit, especially to his idol, his inability to do a thing before he had tried it. So a few minutes later he trudged over to Haines' barn with the bag of raisins under one arm. Hank had told him that he needn't come back again that day, so under the other arm—and this was really the important thing—he carried the precious coffee pot.

Arriving at the barn, he deposited his packages in a safe place; then he climbed on a box and lifted the heavy harness down from a wooden peg. Mounting the manger with the bridle over one arm, he seized old Ned's forelock firmly, with a reassuring "Ho, ho, ho!" at the same time, and unhooked the halter. But old Ned, having done his day's stint of work, had no mind to be harnessed again, especially by this pigmy. So he snorted, threw up his head with a force which nearly wrenched Benny's arm from the socket, and then derisively cantered out into the barnyard.

"My dear little boy!" she exclaimed, bending over and kissing him, while the tears glistened on her long, beautiful lashes—the most beautiful in the world to Benny. He was still very tired, and it was some time before he opened his eyes wide enough for his mother to perceive that he was awake.

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there should have been—only a smooth expanse of snow, like another meadow. By this time the last of the pulpy brown paper had been rubbed from the coffee-pot; Benny's face, hair and clothes were wet with melted snow and his feet numb with cold. His brave little heart now failed him, and he began to cry in short, hard, bitter sobs. He had scarcely strength enough left to drag himself through the fence, yet he carefully screened his beloved gift from the bars on the wire.

But even the virtue of this incantation spent in time. His strength was almost gone. Holding the coffee-pot by the handle, in a rigid, half-frozen grip, he stumbled aimlessly about in the gathering darkness, with no course in mind, and instinctively following the line of least resistance—where the ground sloped down or where the snow was thinnest. Every few yards he fell, and when he rose he staggered helplessly. Both mittens were gone, but he was scarcely conscious of the fact; and to his benumbed faculties the loss seemed like a trivial one, even though the mittens were not his own.

The lethargy which cold and excessive fatigue produced was fast overcoming him, when he was rudely jarred by bumping squarely into something. Although utterly indifferent to his surroundings now, he knew from the feel and smell of the object that it was a straw stack. It had been eaten away on the sides by the cattle until it somewhat resembled a gigantic toadstool; and in the center, formed by its overhanging edge he sank down in the litter of straw with a strange but delightful sense of languor, such as he had sometimes felt in the morning when he had waked before it was time to get up. His hands and feet also had ceased to pain him, although the former were so stiff that he could not move a finger. So closing his eyes with a smile, and hugging his treasure to his wet, frozen breast, he began to repeat:

"It was the night before Christmas, and all through the house, Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

He knew the whole poem by heart, and had recited it the year before at the Christmas entertainment; but these two verses were all he could remember to-night, and he repeated them drowsily several times. Then muttering in a fitful way a part of the little prayer which he was accustomed to make each night at his mother's knee, he fell asleep.

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Good Games to Play. Pleasant Amusements for Boys and Girls During the Xmas Tide.

Here is a jolly game. Pass around to each of the players a sheet of paper with these sentences written on it. Tell the players to find a river hidden in each sentence, and not only to write down the name of the river, but to state some one thing that he knows about that river.

- 1. Yes, Adam, a zone is a belt passing around the earth. 2. Miss Elsie Davol gave a party. 3. That lawless gang escaped from prison. 4. Oh, Eugene, see my new book! 5. Will you rally round the flag? 6. Industry brings its own reward. 7. "Hullo!" he shouted. "Hullo!" I replied. 8. We must sever now our friendship. 9. Whatever happens, don't forget to be polite. 10. Ned drew a plat and a chart. 11. Hurry, or we shall miss our ride. 12. The cucumber landed on the ground. 13. Baby is taking a little nap. 14. Oh, I overlooked that picture. 15. Bees gather honey from the flowers.

- ANSWERS. 1. Amazon; crosses northern part of South America. 2. Volg; eastern part of Russia. 3. Gauges; northeastern part of British India. 4. Genesee; crosses western part of New York. 5. Ural; separates Europe and Asia. 6. Indus; western part of British India. 7. Loire; central part of France. 8. Severn; central part of Canada. 9. Po; northern part of Italy. 10. Plata; eastern part of South America. 11. Missouri; crosses northwestern and central parts of United States. 12. Cumberland; crosses Kentucky and Tennessee. 13. Lena; northern part of Siberia. 14. Ohio; eastern part of United States. 15. Rhone; eastern part of France.

TREE GAME—GOOD FUN. You boys and girls can have lots of fun some evening playing the following game from the Normal Instructor.

The grown folks in your family will enjoy it just as much as you will. Some of the questions are not very easy to answer, either. 1. What is the most level tree? Plane. 2. Which is the brightest colored tree? Redwood. 3. Which tree suggests thoughts of the ocean? Beech. 4. What tree would we prefer on a very cold day? Fir. 5. What tree contains a domestic animal? Mahogany. 6. What tree might very properly wear a glove? Palm. 7. What tree is a pronoun? Yew. 8. Which is the most melancholy tree? Blue gum. 9. Which tree is a tale teller? Peach. 10. Which tree is an insect? Locust. 11. Which is the dandy among trees? Spruce. 12. Which tree is an invalid? Pine. 13. What tree never is barefooted? Sandal-wood. 14. Which tree can best remember numbers? Date. 15. Which tree has passed through fire? Ash. 16. Which is the most ancient tree? Elder.

Two Arctic Babies. On the 4th of July, 1899, in a broad level valley in the heart of Ellesmere Land, I came upon a herd of five musk oxen. When they saw us they ran together and stood back to back in star form, with heads outward. This is their usual method of defense against walrus, their only enemies in this land. After they were shot I discovered two tiny calves, which till then had been hidden under their mother's long hair.

Such funny little coal-black creatures they were, with a gray patch on their foreheads, great, soft black eyes, enormously large, bony knock-kneed legs and no tails at all. With the falling of the last musk ox my dogs made a rush for the little animals which, though wide-eyed and trembling with fear, showed a bold front to the savage unknown creatures which surrounded them. Fortunately I was too quick for the dogs and rescued the little fellows. Then I hardly knew what to do. I had not the heart to kill them myself nor tell my Eskimos to. Finally I thought I would try and get them to the ship, fifty miles away, though I did not know how. I was to do this over the miles of mountains and rough ice.

After the dogs were fastened the little fellows stood quietly by the bodies of their mothers till all the animals were skinned and cut up; but when they were ready to start for camp, and put a line about their necks to lead them away, they struggled so violently at the touch of the rope that I knew they would soon strangle themselves to death, and had the ropes taken off. Then we tried to drive them, but could not. Then I remembered by experience years before at far-off Independence Bay, and the Ahngmekklok to throw one of the musk ox skins over his back and walk off.

With a ha-a-a the little fellows were at his heels in an instant, and with noses buried in the long hair trailing behind him followed contentedly, while the rest of us kept off the dogs.

In this way everything went nicely, and we scrambled along over the rocks, waded across two or three streams and walked through an exquisitely soft, green little patch of meadow, out by a gurgling crystal brook, until we reached the ice-heat where the sledge had been left—Robert E. Peary's, in the December St. Nicholas.

Had Them All. A well known writer of humorous prose and verse was talking with a bibliomaniac when the latter said: "By the way, I am collecting first editions of American authors. I want to add your first book to my collection. Have you any copies of the first edition?" "Yes," answered the author. "I have all of them."

"Yes," said Stormington Barnes, "we did well in the West. At a one-night stand in Arizona we played to a \$10,000 house."

"Say, what are you giving me?" queried Walker Ties. "Facts," answered the footsore tragedian. "The one man who comprised the audience was said to be worth fully that amount."—Kennebec (Me.) Journal.

End of the Fair. Great Exposition at St. Louis Closed.

With ideal winter weather prevailing, the gates of the winter open to children and to those who were weary but had been unable to attend from pecuniary reasons, with crowds pouring through the turnstiles from the opening of the gates until far into the day, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held forth its last day last Friday.

President David R. Francis was the guest of honor, and ceremonies were conducted commemorating the services he had rendered in making the Exposition a success, and at the same time bidding farewell to the world's fair, the magnificence and greatness of which have been heralded and acknowledged throughout the entire world.

It is estimated that the attendance was in the neighborhood of a record-breaker. An official announcement Sunday night showed that 18,377,475 paid admissions have been recorded since the Exposition opened on April 30th. The banner month's attendance was in September, when the total attendance was 3,651,573. The highest single day's attendance was on September 15th, when "St. Louis Day" was observed.

That every citizen of St. Louis might participate in the last day of the Exposition and help observe Francis Day, it was proclaimed a holiday by Mayor Wells. Gov. Dockery likewise had proclaimed throughout the State that the day was especially set apart for paying final homage to the Exposition, and the crowds that poured into the city on the early trains attested to the fact that the proclamation was widely observed. A large number of business houses ceased operations and the public schools were closed. Additional forces of officers and guards were stationed over the Exposition grounds to preserve order in handling the crowds, but every visitor was handed on having a last good time and there was little need of guards, except for giving directions and looking after the comfort of the visitors generally.

Promptly at midnight the electric illumination that has amazed millions of visitors was turned off and the World's Fair was formally ended.

Inauguration of President Diaz. The inauguration of Gen. Porfirio Diaz, as President of the Republic of Mexico for the seventh time, and of Senor Don Ramon Corral as First Vice President, took place Thursday in the Hall of the Chamber of Deputies under most auspicious circumstances. At sunrise all the artillery stationed in the Federal district and also the infantry here and at barracks throughout the Republic fired a presidential salute and flags were hoisted over all public buildings.

The principal streets and edifices and residences were decorated profusely with arches and National flags freely interspersed with flags of foreign nations. One of the features of the street decorations was two allegorical arches over the Paseo de la Reforma, the principal street of the capital, representing "Peace" and "Glory." These arches were greatly admired on account of their artistic construction.

There was a huge procession, at the head of which rode many members of the local police force. The pageant was made up of thousands of Federal troops, the reserves, bands, societies, political organizations, and many prominent political personages, including the President-elect, who presided in the union. The procession proceeded to the Hall of Congress, where amid great enthusiasm, the President and Vice President were formally notified of their election and took the oath of allegiance. After an exchange of felicitation between the President and Governors, the foreign diplomatic representatives and prominent citizens who had received invitations, the assemblage went to a reviewing stand, where they witnessed the passing of the procession en route to the Castle of Chapultepec, where it was disbanded.

"The Christmas Presence." I couldn't seem to contemplate a continuous Christmas of peace, now-a-days, when suddenly I seemed to see the words before me, differently spelled. Instead of "e-n-s" I saw "e-n-o-e," an "righs-befo" my spiritual vision saw like sky-writing, "The Christmas Presence"—"this is so."

Maybe it won't strike you, but it was a great thought to me, doctor, an "Christmas all the year" had a new sound to my ears. Think of that, doctor—of livin' along in the azure blue, beholdin' the face of the Little One of the manager by the near light of the Bethlehem star! Or maybe seein' the Beloved leavin' on a pinewing stand, illuminin' our listenin' faces with the gleam of his countenance whilst he'd maybe repeat the Sermon on the Mount from the book of his eternal memory. Think of what an author's readin' that would be—an' what an audience!

An' it this Christmas Presence that inspires all our love thoughts, here below, whether we discern it or not. An' what we'll get on the other side 'll be realization—a clear vision with all the mists of doubt dissolved. This is the thought that came to me yesterday, doctor, out o' the cyclone of playful good will that got me so rattled. An' it's come to stay. An' with it, stay. An' what, with a smile to welcome the candurin' Christmas that 'll last 'all the year' an' forever—Ruth McEnery Stuart's, in the December Century.

Wealth in Tiny Particles of Gold. "The United States government assigned the old mint at Denver recently," said R. W. Burroughs, of that city, "and got \$30,000 in the clean-up. That sounds like a peculiar statement, but it is the truth. The new coinage mint, which has been in course of construction there for about seven years, was completed recently, and the government moved from the old mint, which had been occupied for about thirty years. When they got ready to clean out the old place every particle of dust and dirt was carefully saved. This was then run through the assay furnace, and it was found that the tiny particles of gold which had accumulated about the building in all those years had amounted to the snug sum I have mentioned. The particles had been carried through the air during the refining process, and were so minute that they had not affected the weight of the metal assayed. But the total accumulation was extremely large. It was all velvet for Uncle Sam, and more than paid the expenses of moving to the new mint."

Jars and bottles that smell of onions will be quite sweet and odorless if left out of doors filled with sand or garden mold. —Subscribe for the WATCHMAN.