

## The Green Christmas

by  
**Christopher G. Hazard**  
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Western Newspaper Union

IT WAS not a very cheerful boy that was looking out of the window at what little dirty ice the winter thaw had left upon the hill in front of the house. Through the fine coating days he had heard the happy noise of the sledding while the doctor had said that he could not go out and join in it, and now, though he might soon be out of doors again, there was no surety of as good a hill again and small prospect of sport.

It wasn't a very cheerful house, either. Mr. Bondage was a chainmaker, and when he came home from his iron works he always seemed to bring his business with him. The house of Bondage was big and strong, but it was hard, and still, and dark, and too orderly. From the outside it looked like a fort, and inside, the chairs stood at attention, like soldiers. The parlor was a solemn place, where the stiff furniture was seldom prevented from looking at itself in the gilded mirror. The dining room didn't get the sun until towards evening, when the motto, "Be Good and You Will Be Happy" could be as plainly seen as the one on the opposite wall, "Children Should Be Seen but Not Heard." When the boy put on his hated bib there, it exhorted him with, "Don't Eat Too Much."

Chained to the front porch was an iron dog, whose fixed and ferocious snarl was a standing insult to all the village dogs that could get through the iron fence to dispute with him. There was some fun about the place; it was when a surprised dog retired from the attack with a new respect for the tough guardian of the Bondage interests. Even the iron-clad knight in the front hall seemed to laugh through his visor then.

Besides all this, Ishmael had had no Christmas. Mr. Bondage did not believe in Christmas; to him Santa Claus was a foolish imagination and a hurtful superstition. He had joined "The Society for the Prevention of Useless Giving," and was glad to be called a Spug. On December 25th he had presented to his son a picture of himself, standing in front of his office with the scowl upon his face that represented his idea of the expression of greatness, but the only comfort of the day for the boy had been the sweet contents of the small package that his mother had smuggled into his room just before daylight.

But Ishmael Bondage had an Aunt Sarah! And Aunt Sarah had the pleasantest home in the country. It was a low, wide, rambling old house, in the midst of the trees and hugged by the climbing vines that loved it. There wasn't a place in it too good to be used and in its snowy whiteness it seemed to shine out upon the fenceless grounds with an invitation to the hospitality of its gardens and the good



Aunt Sarah Carried Ishmael Off.

cheer of its friendly owners. That was the bright spot for Ishmael. When he went out there his aunt would hang his Faunteroy suit up in the closet and give him a leather suit that could not be torn and tell him to go it. He could eat without a bib and there was not a motto in sight. By the time that vacation was over he was a real boy. The other boys stopped calling him "Sissy" and no longer asked him if his mother knew he was out. Indeed, he up and thrashed a bullying boy who had knocked over one of his companions who was about half his size. After this there was nothing that he could not have among his crowd. So, every vacation sent a prim but joyful boy to Aunt Sarah and closed with a more robust but rather dejected one on his way home.

But Aunt Sarah also had a mind of her own. She had so much mind that she had concluded that winter to go and give Benjamin Bondage a piece of it. She considered Ishmael's state and situation and resolved to give his father "a good talking to." When she

appeared Mr. Bondage felt that his time had probably come. When she had finished he knew it had. She told him that he had forgotten that he was ever a boy, if, indeed, he had ever been one, that he had made himself into an iron man, that he was blind-eyed and hard-hearted, that he seemed determined to fasten all his chains upon Ishmael and make his son as stiff and cold as an icicle.

Mrs. Bondage, behind the door, expected her husband to object in loud and angry tones, but, to her astonishment, he was silent. He seemed to remember an old motto, "Discretion Is the Better Part of Valor," profitably, and did not interfere, even when Aunt Sarah, flushed, but triumphant, carried Ishmael off.

There was some winter play left and to come at Sweetfield, but Aunt Sarah wasn't satisfied as easily as that, for she had made up the rest of her mind into an idea that Ishmael should have the Christmas that he hadn't had, after all. It wasn't much of a Christmas day when the belated Christmas tree blossomed and bore fruit, but it was a fine tree. The snow and ice had disappeared and a warm wind made the late winter seem like early spring, but Aunt Sarah said that evergreen trees kept Christmas all the year round, and that every day was their day. Cer-



"A Wonderful Pocketknife."

tainly it was the most interesting tree that Ishmael had ever seen, from the bundle at the bottom, through all the ornaments, lights and gifts, to the mysterious package at the top of it shown with kind and thoughtful love and sparkled with merry wishes and glad promise. They and the children from the neighborhood who had come to share the joy and the presents that Aunt Sarah had prepared were wondering what would be found in that last parcel at the top, until it was taken down, and then a part of the party, at least, was surprised when the wrapping was taken off and a wonderful pocketknife, beside a first-class football, conveyed merry wishes from Mr. Bondage to his son. Aunt Sarah said afterwards that at this she nearly "went off the handle."

When May came it seemed time for Ishmael to go home, but he was not very happy at the prospect. Indeed, he was rather unhappy about it. He felt something like one on his way to jail, and even shed tears at the thought of leaving Sweetfield, so that a squirrel, seeing him wiping his eyes under a tree, exclaimed "Oh, what a rainy boy!" but the day came and Ishmael went.

Another surprise awaited him, however, for, as he neared home and entered it, everything seemed changed. The house looked sunny and pleasant in its new colors, the fence had disappeared, the iron dog had been moved to the barn, and the mailed knight had gone down to the ironworks to be turned into plowshares.

When Mr. Bondage went out to Sweetfield to visit his sister and to report upon Ishmael's progress, Aunt Sarah had her reward. "It is all you doing, Sarah," said he. "I needed someone to show me up to myself." "Well, brother," said Aunt Sarah, "A Stitch in Time Saves Nine," as the proverb has it, and you certainly will be proud of our boy yet, as proud of him as I am of my big, new brother."

When December came blustering around again and brought Santa Claus and all his load of love and jollity, there was no place that more warmly welcomed him than Mount Freedom, as Mr. Bondage's home had come to be called, and of all the happy Christmas parties of that year, none was fuller of mirth and good cheer than the one at Mount Freedom. They danced about the tree and under the motto that hung from the top of it with its message of good will to everybody, the football was kicked all over the floor and they shouted in their glee. The squeaking toys, the tooting whistles, the happy songs, all made the time as merry as it ought always to be, while the gifts spoke messages of love.

Ishmael had prospered enough in his studies to make a picture of Sweetfield. It hung over the mantel shelf in the living room and under it he had written, "The Home of the Green Christmas." When anyone asked him about it he would tell them how spring once came in a wintry time; he would say that while Christmas comes but once a year, it sometimes comes twice, and that whenever it comes it brings good cheer; but he was never able to make a picture of his Aunt Sarah that seemed to him good enough.

### Real Estate Transfers.

Elizabeth Haines to John W. Corman, tract in Howard township; \$150.  
Ellie Wolf to William Wolf, tract in Bellefonte; \$1.

Daniel Irvin Johnson's Exrs., to George C. Meyer, tract in Patton township; \$450.

T. B. Ulrich, et al, to F. S. Ulrich, tract in Millheim; \$1.

Charles Ulrich, et al, to T. B. Ulrich, tract in Millheim; \$1.

F. S. Ulrich, et ux, to T. B. Ulrich, tract in Millheim; \$1.

Wm. W. Keller, et ux, to Jacob W. Sunday, et al, trustee, tract in Pine Grove Mills; \$700.

Harry G. Sunday, et ux, to Jacob W.

Sunday, tract in Ferguson township; \$2,000.

Annie P. Lucas, et bar, to Mrs. Annie Cartwright, tract in Moshannon; \$400.

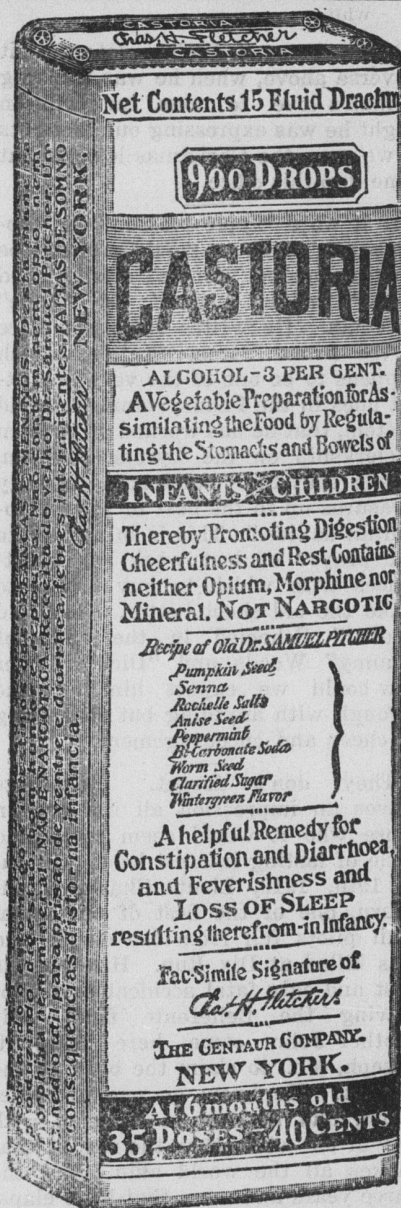
A. A. Stover, et ux, to Baird Stover, tract in Haines township; \$550.

Harry Dukeman, sheriff, to A. E. Budinger, tract in Snow Shoe township; \$300.

John M. Hartswick, et al, to Rebecca R. Smith, tract in Ferguson township; \$450.

Annie Finberg, et al, to Moshannon National Bank, tract in Philipsburg; \$46,000.

Philipsburg Coal & Land Co., to Esther Bostright Frank, tract in Philipsburg; \$700.



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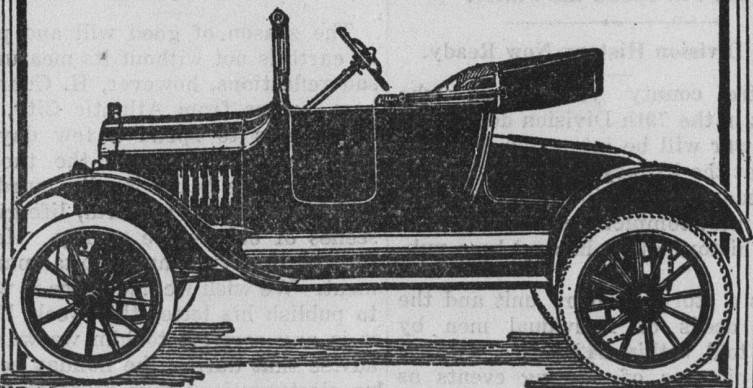
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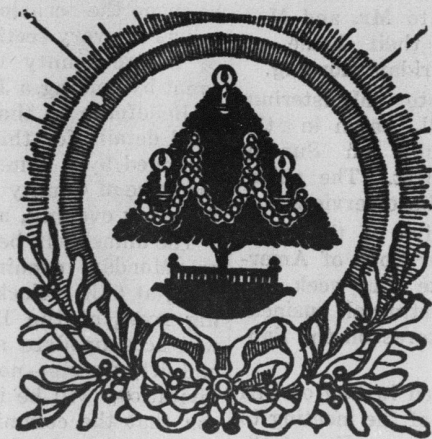
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