

AN EFFICIENT CHRISTMAS.

By Berton Braley.

St. Nicholas said
With a shake of his head:
"This job of mine's growing too hard, on
the dead!"
It's tough as can be
On my reindeer and me.
A fact which the dullest will readily see;
Especially now when humanity dwells
In tenements, flats and apartment hotels
Which tower and soar
Forty stories or more
With scarcely a chimney or flue to a floor.
I'm old and I'm nervous
From long years of service;
My not very slim knees
Are pretty near broke
From scrambling down chimneys
All choked up with smoke;
I'm tired of bearing
My lumpy old pack—
It's frightfully wearing
And hard on my back.
This Christmastide burden
Is irking my soul,
I'd give a huge guerdon,
A pathetic roll,
Of bright new simoons, cases and beans
To some one who'd show me the ways and
the means
To lighten my labors. He'd have to be
wise.
With pep to his step and fire in his eyes,
And gifted with sort of a business omni-
scency—
Oh, for a manager trained in Efficiency!"
Then came a rap on his door, and a chap
Bounded right in with a vim and a snap,
Easily, breezily swooped on a chair,
And
"Santa, Old Top,"
He observed with a grin
"I'm the fellow to cop
If you want to begin
Running your work on the up-to-date
principle
Which has made many a business invin-
cible.
I am," he caroled in jubilant tones,
"I am the famous Efficiency Jones.
You have had a word of me?
You must have heard of me!
Booster of Profits and Doctor of Trade,
Rejuvenator of Business Senility;
Basing my dope on the study I've made
I know you need my peculiar ability.
I'll run your job—we'll consider I'm hired;
Watch me put jazz in the work around
here!
Santa, I see you are jaded and tired,
Take a vacation, you need it, old dear.
Now I am busy—don't let me detain you;
Go play around with no cares to restrain
you
Try out the beaches,
Palm Beach or Miami,
Sport with the Peaches
Afar from this clammy
Climate up here near the boreal pole.
Try South America, say, or the Isthmus.
Loaf and take time for inviting your soul
While I get busy preparing for Christ-
mas."
"Twas the night before Christmas—"
(You know how it goes)
And every one hung up the longest of hose
And some in their urgency,
Ripe for emergency,
Borrowed from others
(Their sisters and mothers)
Just to be sure that when Santa Claus
blew
Up through the steam pipes or down
through the flue
Nothing so shocking
Should bother his skill
As lack of a stocking
Or something to fill.
"Twas the night before Christmas—"
(We've said that before)
When a ringing was heard at each fami-
ly's door,
And when it was opened and blithely
flung wide
There, standing outside,
Was an affable chap
With a natty red cap
Who said: "How de do!
I've a package for you
With a message of happiness, pleasure and
cheer.
There isn't a bill,
The charges are—all
Yes, here's the receipt book, you'll kindly
sign here.
Ah, thank you, that's right—
Merry Christmas—good night!"
The purr of a motor, an aeroplane's flight,
The messenger vanishes out of our sight.
There were those who would kick
At this businesslike way
And who wanted St. Nick
With his reindeer and sleigh,
And who stoutly maintained in a tone
broken-hearted
That Christmas time glamour had wholly
departed.
They viewed the new scheme as a thing
reprehensible,
But most people found it efficient and
sensible.
And as for the poor—in no uncertain tones
They fell for the scheme of Efficiency
Jones.
"You see," said Jones, "the trouble was
That this old fellow, Santa Claus,
Had grown so stale and out of date
He couldn't keep his business straight.
"He loved the poor, yet Christmas Day
He'd scarcely ever heed 'em,
But carry presents by the dray
To folks who didn't need 'em.
He carted bales and bales of truck
To those who had no bent for it
From other folks who cursed the luck
To think what they had spent for it.
And oh, the junk, the useless junk,
The objects tawdry, ugly, punk,
Which Santa carried by the trunk!
The paper weights and tabourets,
The bric-a-brac that clutters places,
The note-books and the writing sets,
The blotters and the collar-cases,
The cheap cigars, the flimsy toys,
The awful books in padded covers,
The scented soap no man enjoys,
The hideous 'prints' from picture-lovers!
The socks and ties
That blind the eyes,
The match embroidered smoking jackets,
The fancy dish
For soap or fish,
The calendars and copper plaquettes!
The silver and cut glass monstrosities,
The flimsy cigarette containers,
The various hammered brass atrocities,
The sugar tongs and coffee strainers!
The shirts that could be banned by law,
The meerschaum pipes that wouldn't
draw!
Such stuff as this he'd cart around
And leave behind him everywhere.

To cause discomfort most profound
And grief and sorrow and despair;
To rouse disgust
And gather dust
And all up room—as such things must.
"Now when you see that sort of crime
Done by St. Nick at Christmas time
You want to weep, you want to sob,
You want to stop him playing lobb;
And so, when I was able,
I simply grabbed the old man's job
And sent his reindeer to the stable,
Reorganized the plant complete,
And hired a bunch of bright assist-
ants
And got a nifty aero fleet
To carry things to any distance.
We catalogued the presents
For millionaires or peasants
And made a note of every one's desire
From jewels in variety
For dames in high society
To little things a baby might require.
And so in time, you may believe,
We had the dope for Christmas Eve
The gifts that had real love behind 'em
We sent them as directed,
But where the givers had designed 'em
To land some favor they expected
We very slyly ceded 'em
To some one else who needed 'em.
And as for junk and such-like booty
Which goes to people as a 'dud,'
We simply pawned that type of clutter
And spent the cash for bread and butter
And eggs and meat in generous hummocks
For starving people's empty stomachs.
The rich folks got a little less,
The poor a little more, I guess,
But take it by and large, me lad,
A 'very pleasant time was had!'
We got not thanks
From selfish cranks,
But from Alaska to the Isthmus
In thunderous tones
Folks cheered for Jones
Who brought efficiency to X-mas!"
And Santa Claus—what did he think of all
this?
Well, no one could say that he took it
amiss,
Unburdened of all the Christmastide
stunts,
Like being some ten million places at
once,
Relieved of his onerous responsibility,
Old Santa rejoiced in a glad juvenility;
He shaved off his beard and he moth-
bagged his furs,
He reveled in traveling triple incognito,
And down where the tropic breeze drowsi-
ly stirs
He frolicked and danced with a light and
a feet too,
And when a reporter pursued him and
found him
Old Santa had seventeen flappers around
him.
"Well, kid," said the Saint with a nod and
a wink,
"You tell 'em I'm flourishing, healthy
and happy,
And grateful to Jones, that efficiency gink.
For jazzing up Christmas and is making
it snappy;
For I had grown rusty
And aged and fusty,
Young blood in my business was direfully
needed.
I'm wondering now how I got on with-
out it.
Since Jones, in my place, has so fully suc-
ceeded—
Oh boy, I should sit up and worry about
it!
So, kid, have a heart
And do not impart
The news of my whereabouts—leave me
in peace.
I feel like a jailbird who's had his re-
lease.
Yet think how these flappers would turn
me down cold
Should they learn I'm over two thousand
years old.
Oh, think what it means
And don't spill the beans!
You want? Attaboy! Have a drink with
me, do!
Meet Dolly and Polly and Angie and Prue,
And Mary and Carrie—they're nice girls
and sweet.
With gay, laughing eyes and with feath-
ers for feet;
And when you get back to the labor and
strife
You tell the world Santa says, 'This is the
life.'
While Jones runs my job with efficiency
sheer
I'm having my Christmas twelve
months in the year!"
**PUT SHERIFF IN PRISON PAR-
LOR AND THEN FLEE.**
With sheriff A. C. Kemberling se-
curely locked in the jail parlor by a
trusty inmate, three boys, none over
eighteen years of age, escaped from
the jail at Lewistown last Thursday
night.
The sheriff, who acts as warden,
was in the parlor while the inmates
were romping in the corridor of the
jail for their evening exercise. The
delivery, apparently well planned in
advance, got under way when Harold
Adams, aged 18, a trusty, slipped to
the parlor and turned the lock on the
door.
The three boys led by Adams, went
through the prison kitchen to the
prison yard. From there they "boost-
ed" each other to the roof of a small
stable used as a garage. A rope
made of two blankets was used to en-
able the boys to scale the prison wall
and drop into an alley at the rear of
the prison.
The jail is located in the heart of
Lewistown's business district and the
delivery was carried out without no-
tice.
John Valman, aged 18, and Adams,
were paroled from the industrial re-
formatory at Huntingdon, and were
awaiting trial on a charge of burglar-
y of a store in Burnham. William
Baker, aged 13, the other fugitive,
was sentenced last month for stealing
an automobile.
These three boys were recaptured
at Portage on Friday and taken back
to jail.
His First Donation.
Two Scotchmen were discussing the
tenants of the neighboring shooting
boxes.
"D'ye ken the Englishman that's
ta'en the shooting box up on the
glen?" said one. "Weel, he promis-
ed to send all he shot the hospi-
tal, an' he's certainly a mon o' his
wurrd."
"Why? What's he sent?"
"A guest and two keepers are his
first donation."

Obedient Child.
Teacher glanced at the clock and
saw that the hand pointed to five min-
utes before ten o'clock.
Looking around the class he noticed
that Freddie Franks, the bad boy,
was late again, as usual.
"Has anybody seen Freddie this
morning?" he inquired, and at that
moment the truant, looking rather
flustered, entered the room.
"Why are you late again, Freddie?"
asked the teacher in stern tones.
"Well sir," replied Freddie, the in-
genious, "just as I was coming along
to school at half-past 8 a policeman
shouted out to me: 'Hi, sonny, mind
that steam roller!' So, of course, I
stayed there and did as he told me."

**Centre of State's Population Fixed in
Juniata County.**
Pennsylvania's exact center of popu-
lation, as determined by the four-
teenth census, was located in latitude
40 degrees, 32 minutes and 5 seconds,
north, and longitude 77 degrees, 18
minutes and 30 seconds, west, the
Census Bureau announced.
The approximate location of the
population center of the State is 5.2
miles southeast of Mifflintown, Juniata
county.
The movement of the center from
1910 to 1920 was 1.1 miles in a direct
line from point to point, while the di-
rection of the movement was .9 miles
southward and .6 mile westward.
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..Scenic Theatre..

Week-Ahead Program

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15:
TOM MIX in "THE LONE STAR RANGER," a series of riding and oth-
er thrills by this intrepid dare devil of the screen. Also, Fox comedy,
"Why Pay Rent."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17:
All Star Cast in "ONLY 38," a six reel human little story that occurs in
everyday life. A minister's widow goes in for a good time and shocks her
children. Lois Wilson, Elliot Dexter, George Fawcett, and others, star.
Also, Pathe News and Topics.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18:
JACK HOLT in "TIGER CLAWS," is a feature in six reels starting in In-
dia, and revolves around an American engineer on an irrigation project
who marries a half-cast wife, who is killed by a bullet intended for him.
Also, 2 reel Comedy.

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19 AND 20:
Special Cast in "THE SLAVE OF DESIRE," is a seven reel Goldwyn pic-
ture adapted from the story of "The Magic Skin," by Balzac, with George
Walsh, Bessie Love, Carmel Myers and others. A story of the mysteries of
Paris, with all their mystic charm. A picture that you don't want to miss.
Also, a two reel Sunshine Comedy.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21:
GLADYS WALTON in "THE WILD PARTY," is a good evening's enter-
tainment. An ambitious heroine becomes a society reporter which, by mis-
takes, brings complications and amusement. Also, the third episode of
"THE STEEL TRAIL."

OPERA HOUSE.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15:
TOM MIX in "THE LONE STAR RANGER." Enuff sed. Also, Metro com-
edy, "When Knights were Cold."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25:
NEAL HART in "THE FORBIDDEN RANGE." Larry Semon Comedy and
The Leather Pushers.

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