

THE BISHOP'S GUEST.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

The snow had settled on the western country like a white cloud, and the keen north wind had frozen it over crisply.

"Mary is ill. I am going to see her. Send mail to office. How is Willie?"

He addressed it to William Martin, Medora, N. D. It read easily to the men who received it:

"I go to Denver. Money O. K. Train No. 2. Three in express car. Bill Thompson on engine."

Then he went back over the slippery platform and climbed in on the end of the sleeper. He was well above the average height, and broad and square through the shoulders.

He was a man of impulses, and he

able; and once on a visit in the east I spoke of it in a sermon, and afterward two men whom I knew came to me and said they would build it, and they made it as complete as they could, bless them. I take it from town to town, and have service in it.

"I shall be indebted to you if you will," said the bishop. "Shall we begin, or will you finish your cigar here first? I have never smoked in the chapel."

"Surely not," said Mr. Brown. "I will throw it away, or we will begin at once. It interests me more than I can tell you, this car. It seems more like practical Christianity, and that is what the world needs."

Brown fastened a tin trumpet firmly. "I fancy your Christmas will be a happy one, for you will be surrounded by those with whom you have worked and lived. And I shall have no one to even give a Christmas present to, unless you will let me give this gold."

"Now I am quite content," he said. "I needed one more gift, and I wanted it a very nice one. It is for a little girl who is very ill and who cannot walk, and she longs for a large dolly, with flaxen curls and eyes that open and shut, and this will give it her—poor little Florence—"

"Florence," he said, "is that her name? I should like to give you this too, for her. Will you get her something else she wants?"

"I am afraid you are robbing yourself," said the bishop. Brown smiled. "I am not robbing myself," he said. "I earned that quite honestly by writing a story for one of the papers, and I would like the little girl to have it, because—Florence is the name of that one woman who has tried vainly to make a better man of me."

"My dear sir," said the bishop, "Florence was the name of that one woman who died long years ago." They looked at each other silently, and then Brown said:

ly," he said, "that's quite an idea; you shoe by all means."

"The bishop unlaced his shoe and laid the flat package against his foot. "I wonder," Brown said, "whether you will ever know how glad I am that I met you, bishop? You will, at all events, never know how much I have learned to like you."

"My dear boy," said the bishop, "how nice of you. It's so pleasant to be liked, and I am often lonely enough. As for you—if I were as young as you are, I would not be alone at Christmas time."

"I think you would if you were me," Brown said, slowly.

The train had stopped for water and the conversation of the Bishop and his guest ran along in a desultory way for some moments.

"The train is stopping for a long time," said the bishop. Brown nodded; his throat was parched and dry.

"I wonder why," said the bishop, and just then the conductor of the rear sleeper came in.

"It's a hold-up," he said. "They have gotten the engine and express away. We must make an effort to follow them."

"The bishop's face was full of anxiety. "How terrible," he said, "and to happen right here in my working line. Let us go at once to the aid of those poor fellows; they may be killing them."

"They've no time for that," the conductor said. "We were carrying a big sum of money—they evidently knew that—and that is what they want."

"We ought to hurry," Brown said. "Wait just a moment until I can get my revolver—it's in my valise." He delayed them a moment or two easily. Leaderless and excited, no one knew just what to do, and when the little body of men got started he knew the others were safe. But as they saw the missing train, the engine moved slowly backward to meet them. They were soon talking wildly, shaking their heads over the shattered remains of the once stately express car, and lending a helping hand to the dazed express messenger. Maney was able to sit up, but he was speechless, and of the robbers there were only the marks of their horses' hoofs heading for the river. The train moved toward Medora, and Brown went back to the bishop's car with him. The bishop was much overcome.

"My dear boy," he said, "what a dreadful thing, and how nearly I lost my little all. How can I ever be grateful enough that you made me keep the money?"

"That is one of the few good impulses I ever had," Brown said. "It is the beginning," said the bishop, "will you not say so?"

"I will remember," Brown said. At Medora they parted. The bishop's car was laid off.

"Do not forget me," the bishop said, "and thank you for the Christmas tree and everything."

"Good-by," Brown said; "buy a very large doll for that little maid." And he watched the bishop's car eagerly until it was out of sight.

And some days later, in one of their numerous retreats, he met with the others to divide the spoil. Their plan was to go over to England or Australia, where the notes would not be recognized, and could be easily exchanged. They were loud in their praises of his shadowing, proud of their own success. They divided the money up fairly and put each portion in a flat canvas bag.

Brown looked at his slowly and then he counted out some notes and threw them on the table. They stared at him.

"That's yours," he said; "divide it up among you."

"Two thousand dollars," he said, "for what? We divided up square."

"It's yours, I said," he continued, "because there was \$2,000 you might have had but for a bit of foolishness on my part. It makes little difference just how you missed it, but you did. Of course, you would never have known it, but you remember the old saying, 'honor among—' And now there is one more thing. I am booked to help you in your Virginia raid. I want to be let off. And as a fair exchange, I offer this."

He threw the bag with his share of the booty on the table.

"Let that buy me off. I haven't gone crazy, as you may think, but I've had all I want of this, and I am thinking of turning honest for a change. There isn't any need of my making promises to secrecy. You all know me well enough, and you've been good pals to me, and I shan't forget it. Go your way, and let me go mine. Perhaps some day I may come back again."

After he had gotten away from them he thrust his hands into his pockets joyfully.

"Free," he said, softly. "And now—Florence! That good old man said women always forgave. I will go back and learn to repent and to care, and I will stop drifting, and perhaps after a while she will forget those past days and venture with me into the future. To think of it (his face lighted up radiantly) those days that I have before me, all my own."

As he stood there thinking, behind him was the darkness, and ahead of him the glare of the city; the future, its possibilities, its chances, its peace. And between them a shadowy path. But as he looked uncertainly, the moon came out from under a cloud and shone brilliantly, throwing a flood of silver light everywhere. As the shadows faded, the road to the city lay clear and unswerving, and he turned and walked ahead into the light.

Above a Storm Cloud.

An American aeronaut thus describes, in Popular Science News, a storm as seen from a balloon:

"The storm viewed from above the clouds has the appearance of ebullition. The upper surface of the cloud is bulged upward and outward, and has the resemblance of a vast sea of boiling, upheaving snow. Immediately above the storm cloud the air is not so cold as it is in the clearer atmosphere above or in the cloud itself. The falling of the rain can be distinctly heard making a noise like a waterfall over a precipice. The thunder heard above a storm cloud is not loud, and the flashes of lightning appear like streaks of intensely white light on the surface of the gray-colored vapor."

Mahanoy City Undermined.

Great excitement prevails at Mahanoy City, owing to the settling of the earth in the vicinity of Third and Centre streets, one of the most valuable and prominent sections of the city, due to the fact that the mine workings have honeycombed the earth. Reading Railroad officials held a meeting and made extensive preparations to prevent a catastrophe, and decided that the only preventative would be to slush all the underground workings of Elmwood colliery, which are located under that section of the city. An immense scraper line will be constructed from the dirt banks near Mahanoy colliery. From this point the culm in large quantities will be conveyed to the underground workings by means of chutes.

It will be a costly undertaking to the Philadelphia & Reading company, but will be the means of probably saving the company many thousand dollars damages and prevent the destruction of a large portion of Mahanoy City. Work will be immediately commenced.—Phila. Record.

An exchange says:

"A farmer named Berkhous, of near Reynoldsville, was in his barn with a lighted lantern Sunday night, and observed two boys stealing his apples. He dropped his lantern and ran after the boys, and upon returning found that the lantern had tipped over and set fire to the barn, which, together with its contents, was destroyed. Loss \$2,000."

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crossed over and opened the car door. The bishop turned and faced him. The car of the bishop was famous throughout that western country, and as well known to the trainmen as the bishop himself. Through the courtesy of the road it was taken along the line free of charge wherever the bishop wished to hold his services. It was the bishop's own idea, and a novel one.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the man said, "but I was so interested in the Christmas tree, and I thought, perhaps, I might lend a hand."

"That's very good of you," he said. "It is quite an undertaking alone."

"What a curious car," his companion said. "Is it a movable church?"

"You have never heard of my car?" the bishop said. "That takes my vanity down a peg or two. So many newspaper men have written of it and so many magazines quoted it, that I had begun to feel myself quite famous. Ah, well, pride goes before a fall."

"I am probably the one man who hasn't," he said. "Won't you tell me about it? I feel interested to know about it and you."

"Come back into my little study," said the bishop, as he led the way. "You see when I first came out to this western country I was a young man, and too full of hope to recognize discouragement; otherwise I should have failed. But God be thanked, I weathered those years; and terrible years they were, before these cities and towns had sprung up like mushrooms and this great railroad laid its path. Travel was well-nigh impossible in those days, and travel I had to, and as best I might. Do you know I had then 100 points to reach within the year, and I walked and rode in the saddle and drove my ponies to them all? So I have grown old with these people. I have eaten and slept and awakened with them. Smoked their cigars and drank their whiskey and eaten their bacon, and, perhaps, I may say they are a bit fond of me. They seem a huge family of unruly children to me, and I try to be a lenient parent. This car was the dream of my heart in those early days, and I never dared hope it would be realized. Then, when the railroad came, it seemed pos-

"Those tin soldiers weigh that limb down; shall I change them?"

The bishop was charmed with his new-found friend. He proved intelligent and sympathetic, and a famous listener—so he talked to him of his work.

"This will be a happy Christmas for me," he said, "because I have such a splendid Christmas present for my people at Medora. The money to build their church, \$2,000. I have raised it all myself, and I am very proud to have it. This summer while I was east I begged it from my richer friends, and they were good enough to be interested. And just last week I got the last of it, and I have it all. I suppose it would have been wiser to have taken them a check for it. But I had a fancy to put the money itself on the altar, and so I had them give it to me at the bank in a few large bills. And I will confess to you that I feel uneasy to have it about me. So when we stop again I think I shall go forward to the express car and ask Maney, the express messenger, to keep it for me until we reach Medora. Maney is a vestryman of mine and a good fellow. It will be safer with him."

A curious new sensation shot through Brown—a sensation that made him dizzy for a second. He had grown so interested in the bishop and his Christmas tree that he had forgotten the rest. "Perhaps you are right," he said, "but if my opinion would carry any weight with you, I would advise you strongly to keep it yourself. You hint at train robbery; it is always the express car that suffers, and nowadays trains are wrecked and robbed frequently."

"My dear fellow," said the bishop, "you alarm me. Of course, if you really think so, I will keep it here. It would break my heart to lose that money; it was so hard to get."

"You aren't going to lose it," Brown said; "of course not. The people are going to have their church and the children their tree, and the little maid—Florence—her dolly. But keep the money here with you. This is a wild country, a rough country, and who knows?"

"Perhaps I had better hide it," said the bishop. "In my shoe, eh?"

Brown smiled indulgently. "Sure-