



### A CHRISTMAS TOBOGGAN

By MANDA L. CROCKER

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Handing some letters to his mother, he began to plan for a "jolly good time" the next day, while he separated the sprays of the glossy evergreen.

Attracted by his festive manner, his sister volunteered to help, and fell to working the crimson clusters for decorating the table and brightening up the rooms on the morrow.

"Of course he can't care much," she whispered, rebelliously, watching the satisfaction shining on the boy's face.

"We'll have popcorn and chestnuts, and browned birds and—everything," cried Ned, as his plans bubbled over.

"Everything," repeated his sister, bitterly, "and then by and by have nothing."

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"Yes, I know," and the girl turned away toward the next room, tucking up her sleeves with little gingerly thrusts as she went.

The brace of partridges Brother Ned had snared the day before made a pretty picture as they waited, plump and round, for the last turn of the skewer. After they were ready for the morrow's roasting the tall, queenly girl went over to the open doorway a moment to contemplate the picturesque landscape she had loved all her life.

"Even the scrubby oaks are restful up here," she mused, "and I don't see how I am to bring myself to be turned out like a beggar!"

Making a sudden dash at her eyes with her handkerchief, she resumed: "Of course, if mother is bent on having a sunny Christmas in the face of it all, why, I won't be shadowy."

Hearing a cheery whistle outside she continued: "Ned doesn't care about it—boys don't. O yes" (correcting the uncharitable thought), "he does care, but not as I do."

The mother rocked to and fro before the fragrant blaze, humming an old refrain. The dusk gathered

for her unfortunate brother-in-law, with a queer sensation tugging at her heartstrings. He had meant to stop, but not in this manner. Surely there was a Providence in it.

"Here are some papers we picked up," said Mr. Fulton, laying a roll in the widow's hand. "They must belong to him. Examine them and see. I haven't my glasses with me."

In her own room Mrs. Cameron looked the papers over. "Of course they're his," she mused, unfolding the grimy outer wrapper. Unfolding the inside paper she read: "I hereby give and bequeath the Half-way house to my sister-in-law, Prudence Cameron, and—"

She read no further. Down at the bottom of the instrument was the peculiar chirography of her injured brother-in-law.

"It was never lost!" she exclaimed; "but Hermon never meant that I should see this."

Putting the precious document away carefully, she went downstairs with a queer little smile triumphant on her patient face.

The physician and Hermon's family had arrived and the wife was saying: "We went right on tobogganing down to the uneven road at the lower turning. Then the cutter went to pieces against a tree and we were upset, but not hurt."

She ended with a hysterical laugh, as she looked toward the white-faced husband.

"Stunned a considerable, bruised a bit, but fairly ready for his Christmas dinner," said the doctor as he took his leave.

In the kitchen Edith surveyed the brace of partridges and wondered if there was "enough to go round." But while she cogitated the Fultons came in with a bountiful dinner.

"We planned for company," laughed jolly Mrs. Fulton, "and we're bound to have it, even if we meet them half-way." And soon the Christmas cheer filled the lonely old rooms.

In the midst of the merry Christmas dinner Prudence Cameron looked across the table at her brother-in-law who, pillowed up in an arm-chair, was munching a browned bird, and said, playfully: "Christmas gift, Brother Hermon."

"I meant to have brought something," he stammered, in confusion, "but—"

"Thank you, I know you did," interrupted Prudence, her face glowing with victory, "and it is all right. Mr. Fulton gave it to me—the will, I mean—and I thank you again."

Had the house tumbled down the mountain side Hermon Cameron could not have been more surprised. He sank back among the pillows with a suppressed groan. "My heart!" he said, faintly. "My heart!"

"You are hurt more seriously than we thought for!" cried the Fultons, in alarm.

"Oh, no," murmured Hermon. "I am just a little overcome."

And so it proved. But, although he revived and chatted with his friend, Fulton, over the toothsome plum pudding, he did not look Prudence Cameron's way again that day.

And that night Ned sat before the crackling fire on the broad hearth, while the dancing light touched his ruddy face and glistened up along the smoky rafters, and whispered between his palms: "Dear Lord, we are so thankful for the blessed Christmas-tide; but just now we are thankfuler for the upset of Uncle Hermon!"

"Mr. Fulton Gave It to Me."

Cousin Jessie," while a smile lighted up her careworn face.

Then she passed the paper to Edith, murmuring: "All winter long in the dear old house."

"Papa has concluded to let you stay in the house until spring, as he cannot find a tenant before that time. He will stop on his way to Fulton's in the morning and talk with you about the matter," was what Edith read. Then she laid the slip of paper on her brother's palm, wondering if by that time anything would happen that they would not have to go to all.

Ned tossed the note into the maternal lap contemptuously and his sunny face darkened. "Who cares for his charity extension, I'd like to know!" he exclaimed. "It's only because he can't do otherwise and make it pay."

His lip curled disdainfully and quivered into silence. He did "care," after all, poor little brother. And Edith's heart smote her as she kissed his flushed cheek in sisterly sympathy. After all, he had been braver than she.

"It's a veritable toboggan," exclaimed Hermon Cameron's wife as the fine team canted up the treacherous "slide." "Really I am afraid of an accident."

"Fudge, Mrs. Faintheart; what can happen?" laughed her husband, gayly, as he cracked his whip over the sleek bays.

Truly, it did not seem possible for anything to happen out of harmony with the lovely holiday. Nevertheless, a few minutes later the serenity of the day was all broken up for the Camerons. Frightened at something by the roadside, the horses became unmanageable and, in a twinkling, becoming detached from the sleigh, ran wildly around the upper turning, throwing Mr. Cameron heavily to the ground.

The impetus of the accident sent the vehicle spinning down the glassy incline, its occupants perfectly helpless to stay their mad flight.

The Fultons, startled to see a runaway team dash into their grounds, ran out to recognize it as that of their friend, Cameron, and in a short time they were bending solicitously over the unlucky man who, prone on the Christmas snow, was moaning unconsciously.

"We will take him up to the widow's," said Mr. Fulton, glancing in the direction of the friendly gables, "while you go for the doctor," addressing his son, "and then we will look for the rest of them."

Prudence Cameron prepared a couch

day and that head clerk he called me aside and let out that Mr. Busby was going to buy me one of those nice fur-trimmed coats, and wouldn't I like to choose it, without him knowing it? So I chose—and won't I have a joke on Mr. Busby to-morrow?"

"That was real nice of that clerk."

"It was, and seeing how I could trust him, I asked him to advise me which one of those nice warm bathrobes to choose for Mr. Busby—I just couldn't decide between the red one and the green one. He said—"

"Oh, by the way, he told me a real funny story about a bath robe. He says a lady wanted to buy her husband one for Christmas and asked his advice. He told her to wait until tomorrow, as some new ones were coming in then, and—"

"Why, that must have been the very day I was in; though I didn't see any new ones when I went back the—"

"M'h'm. And he just called her husband in that night and told him to choose for himself, so he wouldn't have to exchange it the day after Christmas. Her husband thought it the best joke yet to think what a laugh he'd have on her when she gave it to him. So he chose a blue one and—why, what's the matter, Mrs. Busby?"

Without a word, Mrs. Busby fled up the stairs, returning a moment later with a blue bath robe in her trembling grasp.

"Did you ever in your life know anybody as mean as that clerk?" she gasped.

ELISA ARMSTRONG BENGOUGH.

Bill That Beats 'Em All.

"You may talk of Bill Jones and Bill Walker, Bill Brown; but there is one somewhere in town; a bill that beats all of them somewhere in town; a bill that is waiting for all of us still. And the name of this great one is Christmas Bill!"



"Well, I'm thankful Thanksgiving's past," soliloquized Mr. Gobbler, "but here comes December."

### Mr. Busby's Christmas Gift

MR. BUSBY was finishing a pair of "bootees" for her daughter's newest baby, screwing up her mull, with the intricacy of the pattern. Mrs. Griggs in the opposite rocker watched her.

"I guess I must be going," she announced, finally. "I only ran in to wish you Merry Christmas. I won't see you to-morrow. Call Christmas a holiday! I've two people to cook for usually—Christmas it's twenty!"

"And you'd not be content on other days, if you hadn't many then," returned Mrs. Busby. "We'll go to Tom's, as usual. He married a college girl, and I told him: 'These college girls may know a sight more about the structure of the human body than the rest of us, but they don't know half as much about making it comfortable!'"

"And now she has you come over every Christmas and see what a good housekeeper she is!" finished Mrs. Griggs, knowing the story as well as her hostess.

"M'h'm. Can't you stay?"

"Thank you, no. I hoped you'd show me Mr. Busby's Christmas gift."

"It's upstairs, and I'm afraid he'll come in. He hasn't seen it, though."

"So you've got ahead of him, finally?"

"I have. It beats all the way that man finds things out and then teases. Last year I got him a set of Dickens, and kept it hidden three weeks between the mattresses of the spare room bed. The night before Christmas I was thinking how I'd surprise him when he said, smiling like: 'That's a mighty nice set of books in the spare room bed, Cynthia; it's a pity to keep 'em there, with the bookcase so handy,' he says."

"But he hasn't found out this year?"

"No; I guess he was ashamed of being so mean. I've seen my present, though."

"But I thought you said it was kind of mean to try to find out—"

"Oh, that's different. My present is the handsomest kind of a wrap, Mrs. Griggs. I was over at Parker's one



"Choose for Yourself."

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MORE DANGER AHEAD.

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12-10-17

### THE MARKETS.

BLOOMSBURG MARKETS.

CORRECTED WEEKLY. RETAIL PRICES.

Butter, per pound.....	26
Eggs, per dozen.....	30
Lard, per pound.....	14
Ham, per pound.....	15 to 16
Beef (quarter), per pound.....	6 to 8
Wheat, per bushel.....	1 00
Oats, do.....	40
Rye, do.....	60
Flour per bbl.....	4-40 to 4 80
Hay, per ton.....	18 00
Potatoes, per bushel.....	75
Turnips, do.....	40
Tallow, per pound.....	06
Shoulder, do.....	10
Bacon, do.....	16
Vinegar, per qt.....	05
Dried apples, per pound.....	07
Cow hides, do.....	38
Steer do.....	05
Calf skin.....	80
Sheep pelts.....	75
Shelled corn, per bushel.....	75
Corn meal, cwt.....	2 00
Bran, cwt.....	1 20
Chop, cwt.....	1 00
Middlings, cwt.....	1 40
Chickens, spring, per pound.....	12
do do old.....	10
Turkeys do.....	18
Geese, do.....	11
Ducks, do.....	14

COAL.

Number 6, delivered..... 5 50

do 4 and 5 delivered..... 4 25

do 6, at yard..... 4 25

do 4 and 5, at yard.....



"Who Cares for His Charity?"

gloomily in the corners of the room while the dancing light glistened along the smoky rafters as if eager to dispel all thought of loneliness.

Mrs. Cameron glanced upward. In the years ago, when the rafters were not so smoky and the dear old rooms not so dingy as now, the Half-way house was the social hub of the mountain side. But now—

A sturdy lad of 12 years came bustling in with his arms full of holly and his pockets full of mail.