



Merry Christmas To All.

SANTA CLAUS AT GRIMM'S RANCH.

THOUSAND pardon but could the senator change give for two gold pieces of \$20?

John Wells jerked his newly-urged horse to a standstill and glared his annoyance at the heavily bearded Mexican who, with doffed sombrero, had suddenly confronted him at a point where the Menardville road extricated itself from the scattered jacals of Fort McKavett.

Without making his usual noonday halt, he drove steadily on, occasionally glancing back over his shoulder, in momentary expectation of finding himself pursued.

As he unhooked the tugs of the off horse, a towheaded urchin of eight or nine years came strolling up from the nearby corral, except into the buggy seat and drew the blankets over his head until only his hoish face and sparkling eyes were visible.

his collections had been heavy during the last few days, and at least \$3,000, in bills and coins, were stowed away in his pockets and in the buckskin bag at his feet.

There was a fierce curse grittingly muttered; the sharp crack of a pistol; and then—boom! boom!—two thunderous reports almost as one, shaking the adobe walls of the ranch to their foundations.

Little Hank lay beneath the huge table, groaning dimly and rubbing his shoulder. Otherwise the room was unoccupied; but a window near the door was open, and on the hard dirt floor lay a freshly discharged pistol and a Mexican sombrero.

Wells turned to the excited boy and approached the open window. Below it, and directly to the right, the whitewashed walls were torn and disfigured with shot, and there were great splashes and dark, trickling streams of something like red paint shining in the light of the lamp.

He turned to the old German; his features pale but collected. "You will not need the dog," said he. "The man who tumbled through that window is lying where he fell—and I think I will recognize him when I see him."

Wells was right in both his surmises. In "laying" for Santa Claus, Little Hank had taken a step that no midnight murderer could have foreseen. In forcing an entry to Grimm's ranch, the Mexican goat-herder, who had trailed Wells all the way from McKavett, had gone directly to his death.

than ever. At length his grandsire suspended for a moment a morsel of beef half raised to his mouth, and uttered a word of reproof.

"Henry, my boy, it is not right that the children should talk and the grown ones listen. Remember, you should be very good to-night. They say that Santa Claus to bad boys is not kind."

"But see," recanted the lad, quickly. "I was good before and what did he bring me? Nothing. I wanted a windcheater and he brought me a tin wagon."

"I would be a brave soldier—like my father," said the boy, his eyes filling with tears.

"And he killed by the Indians, as was he," responded the old ranchman. "My child, the grimmings have been soldiers since the earliest days. I have fought, in my time, with brave men to lead me on to battle, and I tell you there is nothing in soldiering—nothing but hard work and slavery and bloodshed and death. It is a dog's life; nothing more."

Later in the night, when Wells and Little Hank were snugly stowed away in the latter's bed, the question of Santa Claus and the "windcheater" came up again, but no lengthy discussion followed.

It must have been sometime after midnight when Wells was partially aroused by the knowledge that some one was moving in the room, and called out to know who it might be.

"Nobody but me—Hank Grimm. Not gran'paw, but the little one. You know—"

But that was quite enough for the somnolent gentleman from San Antonio. If the sentence was finished he failed to hear its conclusion. Sometime afterwards, however, he was aroused again; and this time so thoroughly that he heard and understood the words that awoke him.

CHRISTMAS GIVING.

IS not enough to fill the day with feasting, With merry laughter and with happy song. Unto this blessed day some deed of kindness, And word of sweet encouragement belong.

MR. PAYSON'S SATIRE VERSUS CHRISTMAS GOODWILL.

MR SIDNEY PAYSON was full of the bitterness of Christmas. The Paysons had been reared to Christmas giving, and every Payson knew that he or she might expect a present from each of the other Paysons, and so here was Mr. Sidney Payson (bachelor, misanthrope and cynic) elbowing his way along State street with the other shoppers.

Mr. Payson would have been utterly miserable had it not been for the fact that he found a selfish joy in knowing that the Christmas season brought neither peace nor good will.

He had reached that stage of soul distemper at which there can be no happiness except by the discovery of misery in others. Mr. Sidney Payson was the kind of man who loved to tell invalids that they were not looking as well as usual, and who frightened young husbands by predicting that they would regret having married.

Imagine the surly wrath and the sense of humiliation with which Mr. Sidney Payson set about his Christmas shopping! In the first place, to go shopping for Christmas presents was the most conventional thing that anyone could do, and Mr. Payson hated conventionalities.

If he could have assembled his relatives at a Christmas gathering and opened a few old family wounds, reminding his brother and his two sisters of some of their youthful follies, thus shaming them before the children, Mr. Sidney Payson might have managed to make out a rather merry Christmas.

At that moment he had an inspiration. It was an inspiration which could have come to no one except Mr. Sidney Payson. It promised a speedy end to shopping difficulties. It guaranteed him a Christmas to his own liking.

their hatred of him. At any rate, it would be a satire on a silly tradition, and, thank goodness, it wouldn't be conventional.

Mr. Sidney Payson went into the first department store and found himself at the book counter.

"Have you any work which would be appropriate for an elderly gentleman of studious habits and deep religious convictions?" he asked.

"All right, I'll take it," he said. "I want them for my nephew Fred. He likes Indian stories."

"I have a brother who is 46 years old and rather fat," he said to the salesman. "I don't suppose he's been on the ice in 25 years. He wears a No. 9 shoe. Give me a pair of skates for him."

"What are those things?" he asked, pointing to some gayly colored silks folded in boxes.

"Those are scarfs." "Well, if you've got one that has all the colors of the rainbow in it I'll take it. I want one with lots of yellow and red and green in it. I want something that you can hear across the street. You see, I have a sister who prides herself on her quiet taste. Her costumes are marked by what you call 'unobtrusive elegance.' Well, I think she'd die rather than wear one of those things, so I want the biggest and noisiest one in the whole lot."

The girl didn't know what to make of Mr. Payson's strange remarks, but she was too busy to be kept wondering.

"Chicago, Ill., Dec. 27.—Dear Brother: Pardon me for not having acknowledged the receipt of your Christmas present. The fact is that since the skates came I have been devoting so much of my time to the reacquiring of one of my early accomplishments that I have not had much time for writing. I wish I could express to you the delight I felt when I opened the box and saw that you had sent me a pair of skates. It was just as if you had said to me: 'Will, my boy, some people may think that you are getting on in years, but I know that you're just the same as ever.' I suddenly remembered that the presents which I had been receiving for several Christmases were intended for an old man. I have received easy-chairs, slippers, mufflers, smoking jackets and the like. When I received the pair of skates from you I felt that 20 years had been lifted off of my shoulders. How in the world did you ever happen to think of them? Did you really believe that my skating days were not over? Well, they're not. I went to the pond in Washington park on Christmas day and had more fun for two hours than I've had in six months. My ankles were rather weak as I fell, but I was not hurt at all. I never would have ventured on skates again if it had not been for the beautiful pair which you sent me. I was a little stiff yesterday, but this morning I went out again and had a dandy time. I owe the renewal of my youth to you. Thank you very much for the gift. Be as ever, your affectionate brother, 'WILLIAM.'"

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"I knew, Sidney dear, that you would remember me at Christmas. You have always been the soul of thoughtfulness, especially to those of us who understood you. I must confess, however, that I expected you to do the deadly conventional thing and send me something heavy and serious. I knew it would be a book. All of my friends send me books. That comes of being president of a literary club. But you are the only one, Sidney, who had the rare and kindly judgment to appeal to the woman and not to the club president. Because I am interested in a serious literary movement it need not follow that I want my whole life to be overshadowed by the giants of the literary kingdom. Although I would not dare confess it to Mrs. Peabody or Mrs. Hutchens, there are times when I like to spend an afternoon with an old-fashioned love story.

"You are a bachelor, Sidney, and I have long since ceased to flush at the casual mention of 'old maid.' It was not for us to know the bitter-sweet experiences of courtship and marriage, and you will remember that we have sometimes pitted the infatuation of sweethearts and have felt rather superior in our freedom. And yet, Sidney, if we chose to be perfectly candid with each other, I dare say that both of us would confess to having known something about that which men call love. We might confess that we had felt its subtle influence. We might even admit that sometimes we pause in our lonely lives and wonder what might have been and whether it would not have been better, after all. I am afraid that I am writing like a sentimental schoolgirl, but you must know that I have been reading your charming little book, and it has come to me as a message from you. Is it not really a confession, Sidney?"

"Chicago, Ill., Dec. 25.—Dear Brother: Greetings to you from the happiest household in Chicago, thanks to a generous Santa Claus in the guise of Uncle Sidney. I must begin by thanking you on my own account. How in the world did you ever learn that Roman colors had come in again? I have always heard that men did not follow the fashion, and could not be trusted to select anything for a woman, but it is a libel, a base libel, for the scarf which you sent is quite the most beautiful thing I have received this Christmas. I have it draped over the large picture in the parlor, and it is the envy of every one who has been in to-day. A thousand, thousand thanks, dear Sidney. It was perfectly sweet of you to remember me, and I call it nothing less than a stroke of genius to think of anything so appropriate and yet so much out of the ordinary.

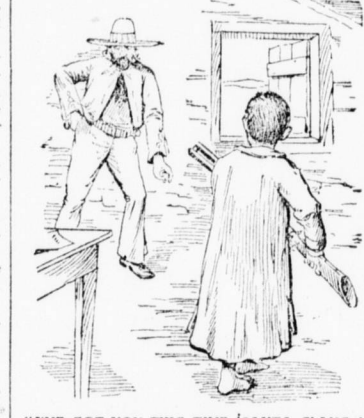
"John asks me to thank you—but I must tell you the story. One evening last week we had a little chafing dish party after prayer meeting, and I asked John to open a bottle of olives for me. Well, he broke the small blade of his knife trying to get the cork out. He said: 'If I live to get downtown again I'm going to buy a corkscrew.' Fortunately, he had neglected to buy one, and so your gift seemed to come straight from Providence. John is very much pleased. Already he has found use for it, as it happens. He wanted to open a bottle of household ammonia the very first thing this morning.

"As for Fred's lovely books, thank goodness you didn't send him any more story books. John and I have been trying to induce him to take up a more serious line of reading. The Josephus ought to help him in the study of his Sunday school lessons. We were pleased to observe that he read it for about an hour this morning.

"When you were out here last fall did Genevieve tell you that she was collecting silk for a doll quilt? She insists that she did not, but she must have done so, for how could you have guessed that she wanted pieces of silk above anything else in the whole world? The perfectly lovely cravats which you sent will more than complete the quilt, and I think that mamma will get some of the extra pieces for herself. Fred and Genevieve send love and kisses. John insists that you come out to dinner some Sunday very soon—next Sunday if you can. After we received your presents we were quite ashamed of the box we had sent over to your hotel, but we will try to make up the difference by heartfelt gratitude. Don't forget, any Sunday. Your loving sister, 'KATHERINE.'"

It would be needless to tell what Mr. Sidney Payson thought of himself after he received these letters—George Ade in Chicago Daily Record.

Seasonable. Teacher (in Sunday school class)—Now, boys, see if you can remember what I taught you last time. What does B. C. stand for? "Before Christmas!"—Judge.



"I'VE GOT YOU THIS TIME, SANTA CLAUS."



FOUND HIMSELF AT THE BOOK COUNTER.