

IN A GERMAN HOSPITAL.

Where the Christmas Angel Visits Suffering Children.

In one of the German hospitals of our country is observed a custom quite in accordance with the beautiful sentiment the Germans weave about Christmas.

Christmas belongs to the children—everybody knows that—but it belongs to them in a deeper, more beautiful sense than "everybody" knows. One is reminded of it, however, if he witnesses such a scene as is portrayed in this hospital on Christmas eve. One of the nurses dresses in a long, soft flowing robe of white, bearing in her hand a fir bough covered with snow. The snow is cotton sprinkled with diamond dust. This is the Christmas angel.

The children are told of the gentle visitor and wait in their little cots. When darkness is outside they hear the strains of sweet music in the distance. The nurses are singing Christmas carols, and the sounds come through open doors. Then the Christmas angel comes. She goes to each little cot, bending over each little form to listen to the whispered secrets. Each one tells her what he wants on Christmas day. Then, with a tender word, she passes out, and to the sound of the carols they all fall asleep—those who can slip away from pain.

When the day dawns all the children are taken into the kindergarten. Some are carried, some are rolled, and some can walk. Sure enough, each finds there what he asks for—drums and dolls and trumpets and books. On a long, low table is a plate for each one, filled with candies and queer little German cakes. On one wall is a tableau of the Nativity made of small wax figures, and a painting on the wall completes the perspective of hills and shepherds and the guiding star. Hanging from the wall in the center of the ward is a large hoop covered with laurel. At intervals around it are set lighted candles. It is suspended from the ceiling by four wide ribbons.

In the fever ward, where the contagious diseases are cared for, the little patients of course cannot leave, but they have their Christmas too. Two large, fine spruce trees stand in each end of the ward, brilliantly illuminated by tiny, many colored electric lights. —Philadelphia North American.

A LOST ILLUSION.

Sadie's Santa Claus Was Only Johnny Smith's Papa.

The loss of part of Santa Claus' disguise at a Christmas Sunday school entertainment and the consequent discovery that "he was only a man after all" caused one little girl at least acute distress.

Santa Claus was one of the cherished ideals of Sadie's childhood, and Sadie parted with her ideals reluctantly. She was sure she heard the reindeers scamper over the roof every Christmas eve, and the fact that even the gas logs were a pretty tight fit for the chimney did not dispel the illusion that somehow Santa Claus, despite his corpulence, managed to slip through the tiny slit with his pack and leave presents on tree and in stocking.

So when she saw on the Sunday school platform his hoary head and beard, fur trimmed coat, fat stomach and short legs—and, above all, his pack—she greeted the familiar figure with enthusiastic applause. Unfortunately for Sadie's peace of mind, however, the hoary hair and beard became entangled in the branches of the Christmas tree when Santa Claus began to hang up the contents of his pack, and when he withdrew his head, sans misrute adornment, he revealed the familiar features of a prominent churchman. Then the assemblage was startled by a desolate wail that suddenly rent the air.

"Oh," sobbed Sadie, "there ain't any Santa Claus! He's only Johnny Smith's papa!"—New York Press.

True Christmas Charity.

Last Christmas, says the Des Moines Register, clad in rich raiment, Mrs. Arthur Hyde, the handsome wife of a Des Moines millionaire, faced a bitter wind from noon until 5 o'clock in the afternoon holding in her hand the regulation Salvation Army turkey contribution box, which she took from the hands of Captain Mary Taylor, after telling the latter to return to the barracks, eat her dinner and remain indoors until sent for. Attracted thither by the strange spectacle, money of all denominations was dropped in the box, and when Captain Taylor came to resume her work at 5 o'clock, besides a well filled contribution box she received a large roll of bills from Mrs. Hyde's own pocketbook.

through the drawing room window, yelled "Yah!" at him. That settled it. He came after me and jumped up at my bit.

"Race you to the station," he said, pretending he hadn't seen Minkie.

"Right," said I, "but, to make a match of it, you ought to get Mole to harness you to his little girl's toy pram."

This remark seemed to hurt his feelings, but I didn't know then about the rat-tatting messenger boy. Anyhow, he met the doctor's poodle in the village, so he joined us at the station in a good temper.

When the train arrived it brought heaps of people. It always puzzles me that folk should gorge more at Christmas time than any other. Every man, woman and child carried half a dozen parcels, and nearly every parcel held something to eat.

"Mr. Grosvenor hasn't come, miss," said Jim when the crowd thinned.

"Who said he was coming?" asked Minkie.

"Well, Evangeline thought"—

"Evangeline never thinks. The doctor has warned her against it. If ever she tries to do anything of the kind the excitement will kill her. No, Jim. Dad has told a Mr. Schwartz to come on by this train and make himself at home until he joins him later. Schwartz is German for black. Most Germans are dumpy. But things often go by contraries. Our greengrocer is named Brown, so Mr. Schwartz should be a tall, thin man, with straw hair and white eyebrows."

Nail my shoes, she wasn't far out of it! A humpbacked porter came along with a couple of portmanteaus, followed by a heavy swell who was up to specification except as to the color of his hair, which was chestnut.

"This is Mr. Grosvenor's carriage, sir," said the porter.

"Oh, indeed! And you are Miss Millicent, I suppose?" said the newcomer, grinning at Minkie.

"Are you Mr. Schwartz?" she asked, and Dan inspected his calf, because Minkie's tone told us she had taken a violent dislike to the visitor at first sight.

"Yes," he smirked, being so busy looking at her that he paid no heed to the porter, who was waiting for his tip.

"Well, if you give the porter a shilling I'll drive you to our place. Mother is expecting you."

"Are you particular as to the exact amount?" he inquired, still grinning. In fact, he was one of those silly men who believe that you must laugh when you want to be amiable, so please imagine Mr. Schwartz always guffawing—at least not always, because he could scowl very unpleasantly at times. Tickle my withers, we made him scowl all right before we were through with him.

"No," said Minkie, giving the porter just one little look. "As it is Christmas time you might make it half a crown."

Schwartz got his hand down quick. Because he was a rich man he thought tuppence would be ample. He produced a florin, but Minkie spotted it.

"If you haven't another sixpence I can lend you one," she said sweetly, and I saw Dan licking his lips when he heard her speak in that way.

"Don't trouble," said Schwartz rather shortly, and he handed the porter 3 shillings. That was another of his queer ways. He liked to impress people, but cheaply. He wanted a girl of fourteen to realize what a grand person he was, yet he was afraid she would spring him up to a crown or even half a sovereign if he didn't make haste.

Then Minkie made room for him by her side, and Dan hopped in too.

"Is that dog yours?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"And does your father permit a beast with muddy paws to sit in his carriage?"

"Not often," said Minkie, looking at his boots.

"Dandy, you wicked imp, get out at once."

Dan took a header into the roadway and ran up alongside me, barking for all he was worth.

"Tell you what, Bob," he cried, nearly choking himself with joy, "this red headed chap is going to find trouble. He is sure to drop into the stable tomorrow. I'll keep you posted in affairs inside the house, and when I give you the office you'll let him have both heels in the right place, eh?"

"I'll do my best," I coughed, and Jim wondered what was the matter, as there are no flies about in winter time.

Meanwhile Minkie took Schwartz in hand, and my long ears were not given me for amusement.

"We thought you were not coming until next week," she said, by way of being polite.

"I finished some business in Paris sooner than I expected, and Mr. Grosvenor was good enough to ask me to spend Christmas and New Year at Dale End. I shall enjoy the visit immensely, I am sure. I have not had a Christmas at home for many years."

"At home?" Minkie raised her large blue eyes so innocently. I knew exactly how she looked, and I rattled my harness to tell her I was listening.

"Yes; in England, I mean."

"Ah!"

"Don't you call England 'home' too?"

"Of course, but I live here."

"So do I."

"Sorry. I fancied you just said you had been in some other country for a long time."

"Well, I'm a bit of a cosmopolitan, I admit. Do you know what a cosmopolitan is?"

"It means anything but English."

Mr. Schwartz roared. "Gad," he cried, "that is not so far wrong." An old gentleman passed us in a mail phaeton drawn by a pair of fat cobs, your bellows to mend and step short sort. They don't like me

because I always make a point of giving them the dust in summer, so one of them snorted, "Station hack!"

"Going to have a shave?" I asked quite civilly, he being all of a lather.

Minkie gave the old gentleman a smile and a bow. He was rather surprised, which was reasonable enough, seeing that she usually sails along without seeing anybody, but he got his hat off in good time.

"Who is that?" inquired Schwartz.

"Jack's uncle," said Minkie.

"Jack is a friend of yours, eh?"

"Um—yes, but he—perhaps I shouldn't say anything about it. Jack is twenty-five, you see."

"Oh, is he?" Schwartz was not smiling now. It was easy to guess that by his voice. "I suppose he is better acquainted with your sister than with you?"

"Yes, heaps."

"What is his other name?"

"Perceval Stanhope."

"Mr. John Perceval Stanhope, in fact? Odd that I should not have heard of him if he is such a great friend of the family."

"Dolly doesn't say much about him. He's in India, and India is such a long way off."

"Jolly good job, too, or you would be frizzling today." Mr. Schwartz was brightening up again.

"I think you are mistaken," said Minkie quietly. "Jack says it is ever so cold in the Punjab at Christmas time."

"Does he write to you, then?" demanded Schwartz.

"No; that was in a letter to Dolly."

"A recent letter?"

"He was talking about Christmas two years ago. But please don't mention him to her. We have no right to discuss her affairs, have we?"

"No, no; of course not. It was just by way of conversation, eh?"

"That is the cemetery," said Minkie, pointing to a low tree lined wall in the distance. "Some day, if you like, I shall take you there and show you his mother's grave."

"Thanks, but I am not fond of cemeteries, as a rule."

"Perhaps you would prefer to be cremated?"

"I haven't considered the matter."

"But you ought to. You are quite old, nearly forty, and I saw in a pill advertisement the other day that forty is a dangerous age if your liver is out of order."

"Here, young lady, not quite so fast, please. How do you know I am forty, and why do you think I have a diseased liver?"

"It said so in the paper."

"The deuce it did."

"Yes; in one of those little spicy bits, telling you all about people, you know. It said, 'Mr. Montague Schwartz is one of the coming men.' You are Mr. Montague Schwartz, aren't you?"

"Go on—do."

"Well, it went on: 'His rise has been meteoric. At twenty he quitted the paternal fried fish shop in the Mile End road, at thirty he was running a saloon and other industries at Kimberley, and at forty he is building a mansion in Mayfair.' There was a lot more, but now you see how I know your age."

"It is perfectly clear. There only remains the liver."

"I got that from the pill advertisement. There are several sure signs of congestion, and you have all of them in your face and eyes. Shall I show it to you? Those pills might cure you."

"Really, you are too kind for words. May I ask if your sister shares your knowledge of my career and state of health?"

"Did I show her the paper, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"No; I had forgotten all about it, but if you would like her to see it—"

"Look here, Miss Millicent, you are a sharp girl. Now, I'll make a bargain with you. Find that paper, say no more about the paragraph—which, I may tell you, is rank nonsense from start to finish—and your Christmas box will be 5 sovereigns."

"Done," said Minkie coolly. "And here we are at Dale End. Mile End—Dale End. Funny, isn't it, how names run together that way occasionally?"

Before Jim led me around to the stable I heard Mam express her surprise that Mr. Schwartz had come alone. She had expected her husband by the same train. And she did not know Millicent had gone in the victoria. How on earth did the child recognize Mr. Schwartz, as she had never seen him?

"I rather fancy your younger daughter would pick me out in the Strand if she were so minded," explained the visitor cheerfully.

"I hope she did not bore you by her chatter," said dear, innocent Mam. "Or perhaps she was in one of her silent moods?"

"No. We got along famously. Didn't we, Millicent?"

"It was a nice drive," said Minkie; "not too cold, and the village is quite gay."

"Well, I find the air rather chilly," said Mam. "Why are we all standing here? Come into the drawing room, Mr. Schwartz. Dorothy is there, and we shall have tea brought a little earlier than usual. Evangeline, tell James to take Mr. Schwartz's portmanteaus to the blue room."

Of course I should not have heard what happened next if Tibbie had not looked in to see me that night. As a matter of fact, the gang does not miss much in the way of gossip. One or the other of us is always on hand. And that parrot, though he is no friend of mine, is a terror for picking up news. Jim hangs his cage on a tree opposite my door every fine morning, and the things he tells me are surprising. He has hardly a good word for anybody, but, then, what a dull world it would be if we only told the nice things about our friends. Why, we should all be dumb soon.

Dan tried to sneak in behind Minkie, but Mam had her eye on him.



MINKIE

A Christmas Story by Louis Tracy

Illustrated by Henderson and Jones

Read It

You will be delighted with the story and the way we have gotten it up.

Continued from last week. Will be concluded next week.