

Christmas Promises.

FAIR morn in whose far sky is firmly set
The steadfast star of Faith our feet to guide;
Sweet day wherein are Love and Sorrow met
To challenge Hatred and to level Pride;
We welcome you with palms upturned in praise
Of Him whose gift has gladdened all our days.

HOW manifold His works to-day appear,
How multiplied His blessings everywhere;
All we have seen and know throughout the year
Comes back to prove His tenderness and care;
And clearer visions in all signs we see
The purpose of the Man of Galilee.

EACH perfect snowflake, trustful of His power,
That finds its way adown the trackless air,
Brings its glad message in this gladtime hour,
"I shall return," it sings, "no matter where
I chance to fall; within my crystal shell
Is that which triumphs over death and hell."

AS this pure blossom of the upper air,
So chants the soul of man upon this day,
What though the year has been a round of care,
The hidden wings will find the upward way
As surely as the flake to mist shall run,
And so return all joyous to the sun.

EACH gracious flower that made the Summer sweet
Has gone alone into the house of Death;
But somewhere hidden 'neath the Winter's sheet,
Itself lies waiting for the south wind's breath.
So He who bore the cross for all men lay
Till angels came to roll the stone away.

O BLESSED promise of that blessed birth!
O sweet fulfillment of that promise made!
What is there springing from air-enclosed earth
But proves the Lord who in the grave lay laid?
Oh, winged winds, to rouse the voiceless sea
To sing the praise of Him of Galilee!

CHARLES EUGENE BANKS.

not on the hills—he approached the fairy, and in the same rough voice exclaimed: "You are to go with me on my travels to-night. Come."

For a moment she stood irresolute, not knowing if this were part of the programme. Then, thinking it must be, she took the heavily-gloved hand, and, with a bow to the audience, stepped back and back, until both were swallowed up in the vast depth of the chimney.

But they did not go upward. Santa Claus opened a door in the rear, and they were outside the noisy hall and in the dressing-room.

Suddenly Santa Claus stripped off the heavy wings and crown from the fairy, and handed her her furs. "Come with me," he said, masterfully.

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"This," and he threw down the mask and wig, the fur coat and heavy gloves—before



THE SANTA CLAUS OF THEIR DREAMS.

her stood Frank Marvin. "I asked you to come with me on my travels, and you consented, as you did once before—but this time it is for life."

Alice Reisen laughed a little hysterically. "But you know what happened before, Frank." The last word was a caress, so tenderly it was spoken.

"Yes, I know from what you said a little while ago—you thought my sister was another girl in whom I was interested. There was and can be no other girl but you." And then they talked it all over, for good.

The candy and toys were distributed from the green-paper-wrapped tree when they returned to the hall. They did not remain long, but went out under the stars and to the little parsonage across the way. Frank had sent a friend for a license, and in a trice they were married.

A team and carriage were at the door, and away they were whirled through the beautiful but crisp prairie night.

"To the ranch," ordered Frank, and then added: "It was a miracle that the train stopped right here in my own town. The big ranch-house is ablaze with light out there, and all is ready for you."

So the train went on toward the mountains without two of its passengers.

"Do you know," whispered Frank, as the team drew up to the ranch-house, almost a mansion out there on the plains, "that I received the best Christmas present of all to-night?"

"But you had to be your own Santa Claus to get it," laughed Alice.

THE POLITICAL MAIDEN.



"I hear that you and George have quarreled."

"Well, I guess not. It's altogether too near Christmas."

An Eye for the Present.

Miss Smoothie—No, I cannot give you my answer until the first of next year.

Mr. Softleigh—But, why? You say you love me, and—

Miss Smoothie—Why, you silly thing! If our engagement were announced now, none of the other men would send me a single Christmas gift.—Baltimore American.

Christmas Forestry.

All trees man should love, but his life's dearest joys
Should circle that tree which blooms
Candles and toys.
—Chicago Record.

An Afterthought.

"John," asked Mrs. Torkins, tearfully, "do you remember the present Mrs. Page gave me last Christmas?"

"Yes," replied her husband; "what of it?"

"I am almost sure I have sent it to her this year."—Brooklyn Life.

Aftermath.

We learn to know at Christmas
Life still is full of life;
To-day we get the presents,
Next week we get the bills.
—Judge.

One Token Barred.

"Dearie, what do you want me to give you for Christmas?"

"Well, precious, I've got 11 framed photographs of you now."—Detroit Free Press.

Wall from the Old Boy.

Don't offer costly gifts with which
That Christmas tree is hung;
Just give me back the appetite
I had when I was young.
—Chicago Record.

Incredulous.

Mamma—Santa Claus only comes to good boys.
Johnny—Huh! If he did he wouldn't have to hustle much to get around.—Puck.

THERE ARE TIMES—

When self-accusations stand as a mark of honor.
When the heart turns against even the luxuries of life.
When life's burdens are borne with a sense of cheerfulness.
When imagination leads astray even a generally truthful person.
When extravagance carries a ray of sunshine into an aching heart.
When words spoken in a merry mood strike the chord of affection.
When common sense fills the void made by the absence of education.
When wisdom's whispers force thoughts of the unknown hereafter.
When company manners are only a hollow mockery.—Philadelphia Bulletin.

COUNSEL TO SMOKERS.

"Do not smoke a pipe which has a short stem."
"Do not smoke either while fasting or a short time before meals."
From the Royal academy of Belgium comes the sage advice to smokers:
"Do not use moist tobacco, since nicotine then escapes with the vapor and is not decomposed."
"When smoking cigars or cigarettes always use an amber, meerschaum, horn or cherry holder."
"Nicotine vaporizes at 250 degrees, and that portion of it which is not decomposed in the center is attracted toward the tip and accumulates there; it is, therefore, prudent to throw away the last quarter of a cigar."



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A Wise Man's Ignorance.
"Why is it that so few people seem anxious to talk to Mr. Carlington? He seems very well informed."
"That's just the difficulty," answered Miss Dimpleton. "He's one of those dreadful men who know enough to correct your mistakes when you quote the classics and who don't know enough not to do it."—Washington Star.

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A Dangerous Man.
"Papa has forbidden you to come to the house. He says you are a dangerous man."
"Dangerous! What can he mean?"
"He says you are the kind of a man who will hang around a girl all her life and never marry her."—Life.

Those Foolish Questions!
Benevolent Old Lady—How old are you, sir?
The Youngster—Thirty-five.
Benevolent Old Lady—Bachelor?
The Youngster—Alas, yes.
Benevolent Old Lady—Ah, too bad. How long?
—N. Y. Times.

A Sage Guess.
Mrs. Finnigan (reading)—The average man spends twenty years of his life in bed.
Mr. Finnigan—O'll bet th' lobster that wrote that nivvir hod a baby.—Puck

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...A...
Christmas Love Story
By
CHARLES MOREAU HARGER

FIFTY miles, sixty miles, seventy miles—seventy-three miles! The indicator in the roadmaster's car attached to the overland flyer showed that the train was making swift time across the level plains. Ahead, in the Pullman, passengers scarcely noticed the speed. They were wishing the long winter night were over and were thinking of cozy firesides back east.

Frank Martin left the indicator without a word to the roadmaster, whose guest he was for the trip to his ranch, went forward for the tenth time that evening. He looked anxiously up the aisle of the Pullman. There she was—petite, dark-haired, pensive, alone.

After a moment of indecision he approached her. "May I bring you something from the dining car?"

"Nothing, thank you; I am doing very well."

What was the use? She had only nodded when he encountered her on the train.



"MAY I BRING YOU SOMETHING?"

It was quite an accident that they met thus after their intimacy at the seashore. He did not know that she was going to a new home with her uncle in California. She would not let him explain the past. It was almost time for him to get off at his ranch—for the train was making 73 miles an hour! How he wished it would slow up!

Hardly had the thought passed through his mind when there was a jolt—a crunching grinding sensation, a lurch—and then suddenly stopping. No one who has been in a wreck will ever forget it. The Pullman tipped sidewise, and that was the end.

Marvin was at Alice's side when it was over. He took her arm, and, looking into her white face, calmed her fears: "It is all right now—off the track—no more danger."

He left her, to help the passengers in the smoker who were imprisoned and somewhat injured, then returned.

He returned her baggage, and, without permission, told her to follow. With the remainder of the passengers they took up a cold and sorrowful tramp along the track across the bleak prairies to the little town, three miles away, where lights twinkled a friendly greeting.

Frank tried to be sociable. "It was a narrow escape," he ventured.

"Yes." Nothing more. She would not

even turn her face toward his in the moonlight. They trudged on in silence.

The town was glad to see them. It gave them the best it had, and none suffered. But its heart was not wholly in the work. One long-gaited citizen, evidently originally from the south, explained it:

"Yeh see, we 's-a-goin' ter hev' the Christmas doin's t'night at th' hall."

"What? I'd forgot that it was Christmas eve," broke in Marvin. "Let's all go over. The passengers from the Pullman car, finding that they could not continue their journey until the following day, as well as many of the others, agreed. Well bundled up, they took their walk through the chilly streets, where blew the bitter north wind of the plan.

The air was nothing more than the upper room over a store. It was filled to the brim, but the exercises had not yet begun. The southerner, who was master of ceremonies, tiptoed back to Marvin.

"We need two more to help in the doin's," he whispered. "Won't you un's come?"

Frank laughingly arose, and the dainty Miss Reisen, having no other choice, followed him.

Behind the curtain, what a sight met their gaze! A Christmas tree it was, to be sure. There were no evergreens nearer than the mountains, and to make up for the deficiency the plainmen had secured a dry cottonwood and wound its straggling branches with green paper. The appearance would have been ludicrous had it not been a little pathetic.

"Not much like the pines of the beach where we used to rest last summer," whispered Frank to his companion.

"You and the other—I presume you mean"—was the withering response.

"Alice—Miss Reisen, what do you mean?" but the gaunt captain interrupted.

"You, young lady, I'd like you to be the fairy. Our leadin' lady is sick, an' you look like her."

Entering into the spirit of the occasion, Miss Reisen accepted the task.

"You'll have to wear some wings, and there will be a little scene, but notin' fer you to do but look pretty—you don't need no coachin'," he added, gallantly.

"Great admirer of yours," suggested Frank, as the functionary moved away. Alice did not reply.

The wings were brought, and they seemed almost large enough for the wearer to soar with. She put on the costume and danced a two-step across the rude stage.

"Yeh mustn't do that, lady; this is for th' benefit of th' churches, an' th' folks wouldn't like it," said the manager, with a grin.

Then came up one of the women of the town, who seemed to have a part of the management. She gave some instructions as to what would happen, and Miss Reisen listened intently. Another listened, but she did not know it.

The programme of the evening opened with a number of songs and recitations, to which the passengers from the train gave the most earnest attention and hearty applause. Marvin seemed wonderfully at home, Miss Reisen thought, and was calling men by their first names as if he knew them. He was behind the scenes a good deal; too much, she thought, also, and it worried her, for he was the only one in all the house that she counted on as a friend—no, was he a friend? She wished she knew if the story her chum told her were false or true.

Then came the time for the Christmas tree "doin's," as the manager called the exercises. The big curtain was dropped, and the children of the prairie farms and ranches gave an audible "Oh!" as the beautiful green-paper-wrapped cottonwood, lighted with candles and glistening with tinsel, all brought from the city 400 miles away, burst on their eyes. Many of them had never seen an evergreen, and this was a fulfillment of all their anticipations.

Before the tree stood the fairy, her wings and robe making her almost ethereal in the sight of the little ones. Behind was the open mouth of a chimney, and far off rang the horn of Saint Nicholas as he approached over the housetops on his sleigh. It was cold enough outside for his biggest furs, and when he came laboriously down the chimney and stood amid the group on the stage he was the very picture of the Santa Claus of their dreams.

Swiftly he made the rounds of the tree, and in guttural tones told the little folks to help themselves. Then he did what was

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