

# A Story That Launched a Campaign of Mercy



Miss Emily Bissell

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

ONCE upon a time a Danish newspaper man wrote a magazine story about some queer little stamps that were pasted on a letter which he had received from his native country. That was more than a quarter of a century ago but as a result of his story there was launched a nation-wide campaign of mercy which is still being carried on and which, during the years, has been increasingly effective in combating one of the most dread diseases that ever afflicted mankind.

The man was Jacob A. Riis whose work as a reporter took him into one of the worst slum districts in New York City, the terrible Five Points, who became famous as a social welfare worker and whose autobiography, "The Making of an American," is one of the classics of modern literature. The story which he wrote was published in the Outlook magazine on July 6, 1907, and appeared under the title of "The Christmas Stamp."

It read as follows: "In my Christmas mail, three years ago, there came a letter with a story to tell that was queer in this, that it was all on the outside of it, where no postmaster, not even Uncle Sam himself, could prevent everybody from reading and telling of it. And I guess everybody who saw it did just that and was heartily welcome. For, in truth, that was the intention, or part of it. And yet there was but a single word to read, the word Christmas—Jul, as they still call it where they speak Santa Claus' own tongue. At least that is the way it sounds to me when I think of my childhood under those northern skies. Ever since, the holiday mail from Denmark has rehearsed to me that story with the clear intent that I should pass it on. And here it is now, at last. I did not mean to wait so long.

"It was in October, 1904, that a Committee of Fifteen met in Copenhagen to devise ways of putting in practice the idea of a Christmas stamp, advanced by a postal official, Mr. Holboell. I do not know how much of it was original with him. There had been charity stamps before. They are used in Australia, and in Holland whence there came recently a wall begging people to buy them for stamp collections. And I know that they were considered in Germany, but for some reason, I believe, did not find favor. I think I can guess the reason. They didn't have the right spokesman. It remained for Hans Christian Andersen's countryman to enlist Santa Claus. With him as their companion they don't have to ask anybody to buy the stamps in Denmark. Their only trouble is how to print enough. The people, the king, and the post office—think of nothing else than how they can best help along the cause.

"This was the upshot of the committee's work: that two million stamps were to be printed, and sold through the post offices at two oere each (about half a cent) during the Christmas season—to be exact, from December 9 to January 6—the proceeds to be used in building a hospital for tuberculous children, something like our Sea Breeze in New York. The government stipulated only that the stamps should be different in size and shape from the ordinary postage stamps, so as to be easily distinguished from them. The Christmas stamp is not good for postage; every other way it is good, for the man who buys it and puts it on his letter; for the clerk who cancels it with a glad thought for the little waifs with every whack; for the postman who delivers the letter with a smile as broad as his good as Christmas itself. The proof that they like it is this: That they refused to a man to take anything for their work. In the plan of the committee there was provided a small profit of ten oere on each sheet of fifty stamps, for the local post offices, but it was refused. They all wanted to help.

"The newspapers joined hands; that was another part of the plan. Posters telling of it were put up everywhere. Denmark is a small country, and a thing gets quickly to be talked of from one end of it to the other. There was a run on the post office as soon as the stamps were out. Two million became four, then six. Business houses asked the privilege of retelling the stamps; but that was refused. They were told to buy them at the post offices, and they did. Many business houses let no letter or package pass out in the holiday season without the Christmas stamp. The executive committee of four that was appointed to manage things had their hands full giving out stamps. They were not allowed to give out much else. Labor, office rent, furniture—everything outside of the actual printing of the stamps—was given to them.

"When it was all over, it was shown that

4,113,000 stamps had been sold and paid for—about two for every man, woman and child in the country. The children's hospital had to its account in the savings bank 68,000 kroner through this penny subscription.

"That was the first year's showing, when the matter had been talked of only a month or two. I saw in the Danish papers that last year's receipts—the third season's—were nearly four times as big. The hospital is built, I suppose, by this time, or under way, and out of a small beginning has grown a great benefaction. But that is not the greatest thing about it, to my mind. The thought itself, with its power of setting everybody to thinking of a great wrong that can only be righted through everybody's thinking of it deserves that place. What else is the tuberculosis scourge than such a wrong?

"Nothing in all the world is better proven today than that it is a preventable disease, and therefore needless. And yet in our own country, to bring the matter home, it goes on year after year killing an army of one hundred and fifty thousand persons, and desolating countless homes in which half a million men and women are always wearily dragging themselves to graves dug by this single enemy. Perhaps I feel strongly about it, and no wonder. It killed six of my brothers, and I guess I know. That was in the days when there was no help for it. There is now.

"What I want to know is why we cannot borrow a leaf from Santa Claus' Danish year-book, and do as they have done. Why should we not have a Christmas stamp, printed by a tuberculosis association, not for the purpose of building a hospital—let each state or town build its own—but for the purpose of rousing up and educating the people on this most important matter?

"Look at the photograph of the three-year-old letter here. It is just as it came to me, except that in the upper row, whence collectors had pirated three stamps, three of last year's have been pasted in instead, while in the lower right-hand corner I have placed one of the 1905 kind, so that all the three years are there represented.

"Assume that the practice became general of putting on letters even one or two Christmas stamps and think of Uncle Sam's mail in the same breath! What might it not mean in revenue to finance the cause that creeps along where it ought to run? But, much more than that, what might it not be made to mean as an educating medium in fighting the white plague?

"Practically every man who saw this stamp on a letter, or on a postal card—it is pasted on both in Denmark—would want to know what it meant. And when people want to know, half the fight is won. It is because they do not know a few amazingly simple things that people die of tuberculosis.

"Why should it not be done? Is the country too big? The bigger the mortality from this pestilence, the bigger the results to be got from that kind of education. Are the mails too heavy? There would not be any more letters because of it, and even if the number of stamps per letter were limited to save labor in cancelling, the object would be attained. Would there be a rush on the government by all the charities in the land for a like privilege? That could be prevented by giving notice at the outset that permission to use the mails for this purpose was only for the one cause because its appeal is incomparably the greatest. The object attained, it should be dropped. At any time it might be revived in the face of a national emergency, for which alone it should be used.

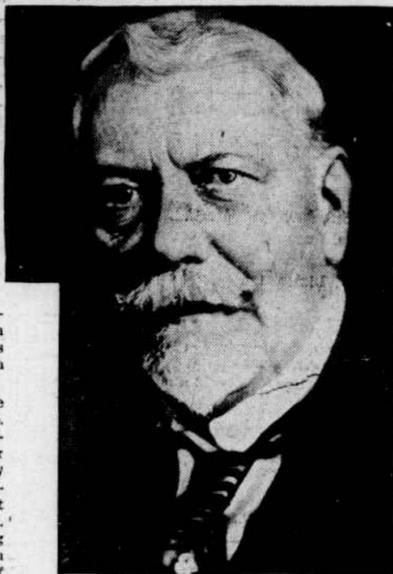
"At the very time, three years ago, when the Christmas stamp was invented in Denmark to provide a hospital for tuberculous children, the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis was formed in New York. Upon basis of careful and conservative computation, its president estimated that the mere loss of revenue to the country in nursing and burying tuberculosis victims was three hundred and thirty millions of dollars.

"The society often spoken of as 'the Tuberculosis Committee,' has today 1,400 members, doctors and laymen. Education is its shibboleth. The three points it tries early and late to impress upon the consciousness of the people are: (1) that tuberculosis is infectious; (2) that, if infectious, it is preventable; and (3) that, in the early stages, it is, as a rule, curable.

"It has organized associations in 15 states and 74 towns and maintains a tuberculosis exhibition that travels about the country, from city to city, leaving a wave of aroused, intelligent interest in its wake. A campaign is now being planned for the South, where it is badly needed, but



The 1935 Christmas Seal



Einar Holboell

money is lacking. The secretary tells me that if instead of one there were a dozen, two dozen, such exhibitions, the country might be aroused from one end to the other to action that would result in the passing of proper sanitary laws and the building of sanatoria and dispensaries for the sufferers, and so speed a greatly diminished mortality from this cause. Last year the funds at the disposition of the association aggregated \$12,000, no more. It might have spent \$100,000 to advantage, but no millionaire came forth to endow it.

"No millionaire is wanted to do it. It were far better done by the people themselves, for only in doing it will they learn that which is of more value than preaching and doctoring—namely, how to help themselves. Why not try the Danish plan next Christmas? Or at any other season, if it were thought best, though I do not think that would be best. The season of good will opens hearts and minds and pocketbooks as nothing else can, and takes the growl out of it, if there is any. Five years of that sort of campaigning, and we ought to be on the home-stretch.

"I hold no brief for the 'Tuberculosis Committee,' and I am not pleading for it. But I am pleading for the half-million poor souls all over the land whose faces are set today toward an inevitable grave because of ignorance, heedless ignorance, and for the friends who grieve with them and for them."

Among those who read Riis's story was Miss Emily Bissell, secretary of the Delaware Red Cross, who was trying to raise money for a tuberculosis pavilion for children in her state and who saw in the sale of Christmas seals a solution to her problem. Through the aid of publicity in the now-extinct Philadelphia North American the sale of seals at Christmas time that year was so successful that \$3,000 was raised, enough to build the pavilion.

As a result of this success, Miss Bissell was able to induce the authorities of the American Red Cross to undertake a nation-wide sale of tuberculosis Christmas stamps in 1908. Influenced by her leadership, women's clubs, religious groups, various publications, as well as local Red Cross chapters gave their support to the sale. By such united and enthusiastic effort more than \$135,000 was raised in the first national sale.

From 1907 to 1910, the National Tuberculosis association had been organizing a nationwide warfare against tuberculosis. These pioneers had the support of the foremost scientists, but very few funds for their work. To strengthen the organization's effort, the American Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis association joined forces to conduct the Christmas seal sale together.

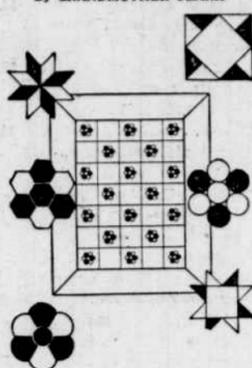
The partnership between the American Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis association lasted 10 years. During that time the scarlet emblem of the American Red Cross appeared on the annual issues of Christmas seals. In 1919, however, the double-barred cross, international emblem of the anti-tuberculosis campaign and trade mark of the National Tuberculosis association, was also embodied in the design of the seal. Since 1920, the seals have been "Tuberculosis Christmas seals."

The use of these seals has become an accepted part of the holiday celebration in this country—a veritable Christmas tradition. But more important is the fact that the proceeds from the sale of these seals during the last 27 years have mounted up into the millions and have become a vital factor in checking the onslaughts of the once-dreaded "white plague." And it all began in this country when a Danish newspaper man wrote a magazine story!

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## Inexpensive, Easy Patchwork Quilts

By GRANDMOTHER CLARK



Patchwork quilts as a rule are elaborate, cost quite a bit and represent many days of tedious work. This work and cost can be cut down to a minimum as shown in the illustration. Any of these designs can be used on eighteen nine-inch blocks and so arranged to make a full size quilt. About three ounces or one yard of prints is all that is required for the patchwork. Folder No. 536 in colors illustrates four ways to assemble these different designs, also cut out diagrams for six different patches like the picture. Information about yardage required for back, border and blocks is also given.

The folder No. 536 and folder No. 6 with other quilting information will be mailed upon receipt of 10 cents, or send us 19 cents and we will send folder and sufficient beautiful patches to make up the patchwork on one of these simple quilts.

Address Home Craft Co., Dept. D, Nineteenth and St. Louis Ave., St. Louis. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply when writing for any information.

### Man of Tongues

The world's greatest linguist is an Englishman. He is Sir George Grierson, O. M., who is eighty-four and knows 300 languages. His chief interest lies in India, where some of the dialects of the backward communities have never been written down. Before he could study these dialects properly, Sir George had to invent an alphabet for them, and write down words which the natives had often used but never written themselves.

## Child Will Read Story That He Thinks Is Good

"Who shall define interest for another person, compounded as it is of the raw material of which personality is made?" queries a writer in the Parents' Magazine, declaring that there is apt to be one of two reasons why a child does not like to read. Either he has not mastered the technique of reading to an extent where no voluntary effort must be exerted or else he has not had access in sufficient numbers to books which correspond to his idea of a good story.

"Your child will read if he but discovers the books particularly right for his interests and tastes," declares the writer whose experiences with children and books has convinced her that there does not live the youngster who will not listen to a good story, and since reading is only a method of listening to a good story, will not read if the book is about something in which he is either actually or potentially interested; is written in words and style suitable to his reading ability; has the degree of advancement suitable to both his emotional and intellectual age levels. Those two developments, by the way, are at entirely different rates of speed. As the writer adroitly puts it: "Children do the strangest juggling and somersaulting as regards these ages, going into a hand-spring a poised adolescent, coming up at the end, an emotional eight-year-old."

### Involved

He does not dislike scandal who listens to it.

## No Monotony for Him to Whom All Ways Are New

There is no monotony in living to him who walks even the quietest and farest paths with open and perceptive eyes. The monotony of life, is monotonous to you, is in you, not in the world. It may be that you think all days alike, and grow weary with their sameness, and get none of the stimulus and solemnity which comes from constantly reaching unexpected places and experiences. You cannot think what a different, what a more solemn and delightful place this world is to a man who goes out every morning into a new world, who starts each day with the certainty that he "has not passed that way heretofore." — Phillips Brooks.

## Beware Coughs from common colds That Hang On

No matter how many medicines you have tried for your cough, chest cold or bronchial irritation, you can get relief now with Creomulsion. Serious trouble may be brewing and you cannot afford to take a chance with anything less than Creomulsion, which goes right to the seat of the trouble to aid nature to soothe and heal the inflamed membranes as the germ-laden phlegm is loosened and expelled. Even if other remedies have failed, don't be discouraged, your druggist is authorized to guarantee Creomulsion and to refund your money if you are not satisfied with results from the very first bottle. Get Creomulsion right now. (Adv.)

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