



Keys Selfish Christmas

Martha Banning Thomas

**T**OBY BARNES, just home from the office, stood regarding his wife with amusement. "You have the manner, Kay, of being about to leap up and wave a flag. What's happened?"

"I've just discovered something important about myself," Kay's short, light curls were becomingly haphazard. Her eyes were of an intense blue. She was slender and young and vivid. "I'm supremely selfish." She rose to her feet and gesticulated with both hands, "I want to be utterly, gloriously engrossed in ME!"

They both laughed. Then Kay ran forward and dragged her husband



down into a wide, comfortable chair, squeezing in beside him.

"You're a perfectly grand guy," she smiled, "but this Christmas, my man, I'm going to be superbly selfish, as an experiment. Will you try it too, Toby?"

"All right," he agreed, "I'll take you on."

The next morning Kay tilted a pert gray hat on her curls, and walked imperiously to the shopping district. "I'm fed up with being poor, and scrimping and saving so I can be generous in mean, little ways. Today I . . . spend on myself!"

She felt guilty and ridiculous, and she turned her eyes away from a haberdasher's window where gentlemen's furnishings were invitingly displayed. Toby needed masses and masses of things. No, just this once she would spend with a bang all she had on something frivolous for herself. Toby had promised to do the same.

At noon she happened to notice a tall person standing by the next store window. He was absorbed in thought. Kay hardly breathed while the man suddenly plunged into the store door. She crept close to a sheltering pillar while she watched what happened inside.

She saw the man point to a woman's rich, quilted housecoat. She saw him pay for it, and leave, but without a package under his arm. Just the sort of housecoat for which she had yearned helplessly.

She gasped in dismay. For one hot second she was possessed with anger. Toby wasn't playing fair. He had no right to make her feel ashamed and abject on Christmas morning!

When Toby's flapping overcoat was out of sight Kay slipped into the same shop, going straight to the counter her husband had left. "May I inquire," she asked crisply, "if that quilted housecoat just purchased, is to be delivered to Mrs. Toby Barnes?" She gave the house address. The clerk was startled into admitting the fact.

Kay threw up her chin. "I asked my husband, Mr. Barnes, to step in here today to buy that for me. I've changed my mind. May I exchange it for something I prefer?" The clerk weakly nodded.

Christmas eve found Kay a bit cryptic. Toby carelessly inquired if a package had been delivered that afternoon. Kay said yes; it was waiting in the closet. As it was, though not quite what Toby supposed.

Kay was excited as a child on Christmas morning. There were waffles for breakfast and especially good coffee. Afterwards Mrs. Toby Barnes shoved her tall husband into his big chair. "Sit there," she commanded him, and left the room.

"When is this fine exhibition of selfishness going to begin?" he shouted after her. "I want to see it in action!"

Kay returned with a large package elaborately wrapped. Toby looked pleased. "There you are," he said. "I'm sorry, Kay, to fall



down on our agreement, but I knew you wanted the darned thing."

"There you are!" cried Kay hurling the box at him. "I simply will not let you squander your money on expensive things for me, Toby."

Toby opened the box, drawing forth a manly, well-tailored dressing gown for a tall gentleman. "You know," muttered his wife in a small voice, "you haven't a thing to sit around in at home."

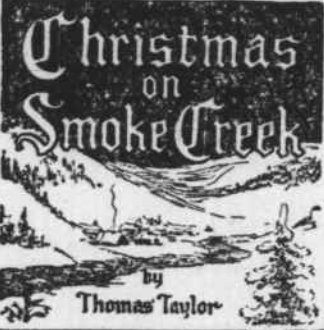
"So this," he raved, "is the great exhibition of selfishness! And where is your housecoat, I'd like to know?"

Kay, in a thin, quivering voice, begged him to be kind while she explained.

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WHEN SANTA COMES



Christmas on Smoke Creek

by Thomas Taylor

THERE was not to be any Christmas tree at the little church at the head of Smoke Creek that year; and of the several families who lived there, not more than half were expecting Santa Claus. The dark days had left the dismal little valley or hollow even more gloomy than it had been in better years, when the mines across the ridge in the next hollow gave some employment to the heads of the families of Smoke Creek.

Jim Knox, who lived at the very head of the stream, was perhaps



He Noticed Something Like a Card Tacked on Hathway's Door.

the most unhappy of all in the little "settlement." His wife and only child, a son of seven, had died, and his nearest neighbor was Joe Hathway, a bitter enemy with whom he had had many difficulties. So that lonely night of Christmas eve as Jim sat before the open wood fire, with the light of blazing hickory logs his only company, he was not without fear for his own safety—he knew Joe Hathway had threatened his life.

As he sat dreaming his eyes happened to rest upon his rifle standing in the corner of the log room. "That gun or Joe Hathway's will some day tell the tale," he said to himself. He meant that one day, like so many others down the lonesome stream, either he or Joe would go—and using a common mountain expression, "with his boots on." He did not care—life had come to mean but little for him.

While Jim was thus dreaming, Joe Hathway sat in another log cabin but a few yards down the stream. By chance Joe's attention was called to a book on a shelf. The school teacher had given it to his daughter who had died from the epidemic on the creek. The title appealed to him—"The Christmas Carol." He took the book and began to read. Page after page and chapter after chapter, he read on. It was the first book Joe had ever read. It filled him with new visions and new ways of thinking. He read on till midnight and had been so impressed that he decided to read a chapter from the Bible before going to bed. By mere accident the chapter was one on the birth at Bethlehem. Its teaching overpowered him—he had found the more abundant life.

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On Christmas morning when Jim Knox went out to the spring for a

pail of water he noticed something like a card tacked on Joe Hathway's door. He saw no smoke from the chimney. Taking in the water, cautiously he approached Joe's cabin door, and read the note which said:

"Dear Jim: You will find me gone. I was reading some last night in 'The Christmas Carol' and in the Bible. I read that verse that told of peace and good will to man. Said to myself, 'My family is all gone—the last was Mary. She left the book to get me on the right track. There's nothing in this hollow for me any more. Maybe I can find work by New Year's over on Cedar Creek.' You and I never could get along. So to make things better for us both hereafter I am leaving at daybreak. And Jim as I say 'Good-bye.' I also wish to say, 'Peace on earth good will to men.'"

And as another result of "The Christmas Carol" two mountaineers were better men, and though they had no Christmas cards or presents, and no holiday programs, the pines on the hillsides seemed a bit greener and the music of the streams seemed sweeter.

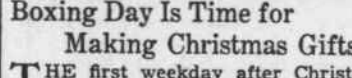
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**Boxing Day Is Time for Making Christmas Gifts**

**T**HE first weekday after Christmas, Boxing day, is a legal and bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in Scotland. This is the day on which "Christmas boxes" or gifts are expected by, and given to, errand boys, servants, letter carriers, etc., observes a writer in the Detroit News.

The name "Christmas box" is often applied there to the ordinary gift at this season of the year, apart from this usage. References to the "apprentice's box" and "butler's box" as far back as the Sixteenth century indicate that these gratuities were at one time placed in an earthenware box, which could be opened on Boxing day only by breaking it. It appears also that the early church had alms-boxes which were opened only on that date.

Chambers' Book of Days states that the institution of "Christmas boxes" evidently is akin to that of New Year's gifts and, like it, has descended from the times of the ancient Romans who at the season of the Saturnalia, practiced universally the custom of giving and receiving presents.



**The Yule Sing**

That had been three long months ago. An eternity for him. He had been too hasty; had been governed by his prejudices. One couldn't measure the present generation by the one of his day. Tom, Jr., was no fool; he should have trusted him to do the right thing; what right had he to interfere; to say how any life should be lived?

Suddenly he wanted to have a share in the joyfulness. He reached for his hat, but remembered it was too late for shopping, but there was his check book. What if Tom refused his tardy offering? The eager look died. There was a loud ringing of the door bell and the sound of rushing feet—the door was flung open. There was Tom, looking just like he used to when he came to him for comfort. "Dad, we just have to have you. Sally sent me to bring you. It's Christmas." Tom, Sr., held out his arms. "We won't disappoint Sally, son."

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**Bells of Christmas**

by Jocile Webb Pearson

**T**OM MADSEN sat beside the fireplace and gazed moodily at the blazing logs, as the sparks spiraled upward. Outside flakes of snow beat against the window pane to the chime of the church bells ringing peace and good will to all the earth.

"Peace," Tom muttered. "Was there such a thing on earth? Not for him, anyway." He had staked everything on his boy. Been both father and mother to him—given him the advantage of the best schools, with a law partnership waiting for him in his own office; and what did he get? "Sorry to disappoint you, Dad, but I don't seem to be cut out for law. Sally and I want to find happiness in our own way. I mean to buy the old Wormley farm and Sally and I will be married there, in our own home, Dad, on Christmas eve."

Young Tom had choked a bit as he saw the look on his father's face. "I'm sorry, Dad; I do appreciate all you've done for me, but the hand writes and moves on, and it's all settled. Be a good sport, Dad, and come to our wedding and give us your blessing." But he had turned on his boy. "Never!" he cried. "See my son married to a cheap dancer; a common"—Young Tom's face was white. "Stop, Dad, or I might forget you are my father"—and he had rushed out of the house.

"I'm Sorry, Dad; I Do Appreciate All You've Done for Me."

When they were brought in looking rather scared, but glad, I was so happy I almost shook my baubles off. Then Mother made music on a big box with shining keys and everyone sang Christmas carols. Then Father told the old story of the Shepherds and the Star that led to the Christ Child. Then a jolly man with a red coat and a pack on his back gave everyone presents, including the little strangers. There were candies and nuts, plenty for all, and such a babble of happy voices. I felt the thrill of it myself and the big star glowed in sympathy.

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Sharing Christmas

by Jocile Webb Pearson

**I** AM a happy little tree. I stand beside the front entrance of a white cottage on a quiet street. Each Christmas time I bloom out in beautiful colored lights, and all who pass share my beauty and catch something of the joy of Christmas.

But I was not always happy like this. Once I lived in a great forest, surrounded by trees so tall I could only catch a glimpse of the blue sky above me, and I felt very small and lonely. I, too, wanted to be tall; to look out on the big world like the others and feel the sun shining through my branches. I would stretch out my limbs as far as I could, and send my roots deeper into the earth, but my progress was so slow I grew discouraged.

One day I saw a man and a boy coming through the forest. The man carried something over his shoulder and they seemed to be looking for something. Then the boy saw me and cried: "Look, father, there is just the tree we want." He ran over to me and fairly hugged me in his eagerness. The man looked me over. "Fine," he said. But when he began digging with the thing he had carried on his shoulder I began to tremble. I felt my roots snap one by one and soon I lay a tumbled heap on the ground. Life seemed over for me.

Next I was tied to a funny looking thing on wheels, that sputtered and growled when the man and boy climbed in and we started off down a twisty little road that wound through the forest, then out on a big shining highway until we came to a wide driveway that led through a sloping lawn to a white cottage.

Here I was untied and put into a large earthen jar filled with sand and carried into the house, and set in a corner of a big room beside a sunny window. Oh, the joy of having the sun on my branches. I began to feel less scared and to look about me.

In a big mirror opposite I could watch the man as he fastened me upright. Then he put a string of



Two Little Faces Pressed Against the Window Pane.

lights from my top to my toe, whistling softly as he worked. Then I heard a door open and a rush of feet—a little boy and a girl dashed into the room crying: "Mamma, come quick, and see our Christmas tree." They clapped their hands and danced about me. Soon the mother came with a box filled with shining lovely things and my plain green dress was covered with sparkling jewels. I hardly dared look in the mirror for I remembered I was only a humble tree after all, and what I saw could not be me at all; but the great silver star on my topmost branch made me feel very happy. I seemed to draw courage from just looking at it.

After a time I was left to myself. I was glad, as I needed to rest up a bit and get used to my strange surroundings. It grew dark outside and snow was falling; but inside my star shone and a quiet peace came over me.

Then once more the doors opened and a merry group of people came in. This time there were Father and Grandfather and Grandmother, too; and Mother leading the little boy and girl. Everyone was saying how lovely I was; but I did not want them to look at me. I wanted them to see two little faces outside pressed against the window pane. The boy saw them first. "Look, Daddy, Mamma!" he shouted and pointed to the window. "There are two children out there. Bring them in, Daddy; give them some of our Christmas." And the little girl clapped her hands and cried: "Oh, do, Daddy, it's cold out there!"

"I want to give you one of them, Bonny Jean; which do you like?" With unbelievable surprise, her eyes fairly dancing with joy, she clasped the beautiful doll in her arms and asked, "Is it—really—mine—for—keeps?"

"Really and truly for keeps," said Dot.

Dorothy May explained it all to her mother after the happy little girl had left, that somehow she just did not miss Eleanor Blue very much when she saw how happy she had made Bonny Jean.

In her heart she felt that it was truly "more blessed to give than to receive," and hugging the one little doll closely, she whispered, "Merry Christmas, Alice Blue."

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Two Little Dolls in Blue

by Alice B. Palmer

**"A**RENT the dolls beautiful?" exclaimed Joan to her mother, as she gazed upon the finished product of the "Two Little Dolls in Blue" which Dorothy May had ordered from Santa Claus.

"They are quite the loveliest I have ever seen," spoke mother. "I do believe that you have put your very heart and soul into their fashioning."

Joan had spent many days and nights, too, stitching a loving holiday thought into each tiny garment. The dainty materials had been transformed into things of beauty. The dresses of pale blue silk with bonnets and slippers to match, had proclaimed them the "Two Little Dolls in Blue!"

"Oh, won't Dot love them!" beamed Joan, as she again eyed the dolls from head to foot with a happy smile of complete satisfaction.

"I dare say this will be her happiest Christmas, one that she will never forget," said mother.

Christmas eve, with its bright lights and cheer, was in full progress and the two little dolls in blue were being fondled by one of the happiest little girls in the world. Rocking in her own tiny chair Dorothy May began singing a lullaby to the dollies, wholly oblivious of the attendant surroundings. It was such an adorable sight that the others had stopped their celebrations and were beaming upon her with transformed emotion.

The spell was broken when Dorothy May suddenly stopped singing and called out, "What shall I name the 'two little dolls in blue'?"

"Well," said Joan, smiling thoughtfully, "since they are dressed in blue and are two very important little ladies, why not call one Alice Blue and the other Elinor Blue?" And so the dolls were named.

On Christmas morning in another house around the corner, Bonny Jean awoke with the joy of the holiday and shouted, "Mother, did Santa come and did he bring me a big baby doll with curls and eyes that open and shut?"

"Yes, dearie, Santa came and brought you a very pretty doll."

Then spying it, seated beneath the tree dressed in scarlet finery, Bonny Jean clasped it to her breast. Upon close inspection she soon learned that it was the same sort of doll she had always received, only with new features.

Just as she was about to burst into protest at her bitter disappointment there came a rap upon the door and a kindly neighbor was saying, "Merry Christmas." Then with a happy smile—

"What is the matter, little girl? Hasn't Santa Claus come yet?"

"Oh, yes, he came, but he brought me the same old rag doll again. I thought sure it would be a real one this year, because I'm nine, you see."

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Dorothy May, with true feeling and thinking of the two beautiful dolls which Santa had left for her. Then with a happy Christmas thought, she whispered something very lovely to her mother.

"They all went right over to the big house on the hill nestled under its burden of Christmas snow. Bonny Jean forgot all about the rag doll when she glimpsed the great tree through the holly wreaths in the window. But when she saw the two little dolls in blue sitting beneath it her joy was unbounded. She clasped her hands and danced with glee. "Such darling dolls!" she gasped, breathlessly.

"Their names are Alice Blue and Eleanor Blue," said their little mistress, proudly.

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Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

1. How many bachelor Presidents has the United States had?
2. What does the abbreviation "non sec" stand for?
3. How does a twelve-year-old dog correspond to age in a human being?
4. What is wind?
5. Who was the Greek cynic philosopher who lived in a tub?
6. What is the procedure when a bank certifies a check?
7. What was the last federal territory to be admitted into the Union as a state?
8. What states have women as secretaries of state?

Answers

1. Two—James Buchanan and Grover Cleveland, but Cleveland was married while he was in the Presidential office.
2. Non sequitur (it does not follow).
3. A dog twelve years old is as old as a man at eighty-four.
4. Air naturally and horizontally in motion with a certain degree of velocity.
5. Diogenes.
6. It withdraws the amount of the check from the drawer's account, and holds it for the purpose of paying the check which it guarantees.
7. Arizona.
8. There are two women who are secretaries of state, the Hon. Goldie Wells of South Dakota and the Hon. Elizabeth F. Gonzales of New Mexico.



**Smiles**

On the Block

Boss (stomping)—You're fired. Stenog—Fired. How you talk. I supposed they sold slaves.

**Backward**

A high school girl, seated next to a famous astronomer at a dinner party, struck up a conversation with him by asking, "What do you do in life?"

He replied, "I study astronomy."

"Dear me," said the girl, "I finished astronomy last year."

**Not One of 'Em**

Mrs. Duff—Some things go without saying.

Duff—Yes, my dear, but not your tongue.

**Eye slowness of blondes makes them less safe as drivers, but most men will just wink at it.**

**In Figures**

Mother-in-law—Why don't you and Nellie stop scragging? A man and his wife should be as one.

Hankins—But we really are 10.

Mother-in-law—How's that?

Hankins—Well, in Nellie's mind she's the one and I'm the naught.

HELP KIDNEYS

To Get Rid of Acid and Poisonous Waste

Your kidneys help to keep you well by constantly filtering waste matter from the blood. If your kidneys get functionally disordered and fail to remove excess impurities, there may be poisoning of the whole system and body-wide distress.

Burning, scanty or too frequent urination may be a warning of some kidney or bladder disturbance.

You may suffer nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—feet weak, nervous, all played out.

In such cases it is better to rely on a medicine that has won country-wide acclaim than on something less favorably known. Use Doan's Pills. A multitude of grateful people recommend Doan's. Ask your neighbor!

DOAN'S PILLS

**THE CHEERFUL CHERUB**

I love to watch the snowflakes fall So slowly through the cold gray air I fain would float around like them And never hurry anywhere.

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