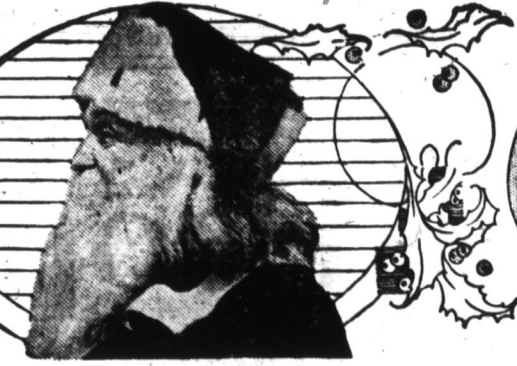


Merry Christmas



A Christmas Riddance

BY WILLIS BROOKS

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OUR village paper had issued a very creditable Christmas edition. I was looking over the news section by the front window. My wife sat near, absorbed in the story part. "What's that?" she asked, listening. She was always on the lookout for more eggs. What she heard certainly did sound like a hen announcing the arrival of one-twelfth of a dozen.

"That," I answered, "is Ezra Barnstable in a state of amusement."

We looked through the window, and sure enough, here he came down the street, an expansive smile illuminating his moonlike face.

"What on earth can the man be laughing so about all alone?" my wife wanted to know. She was that way—never content to let a man be happy unless she knew the reason why.

So I went to the door and sang out to Ezra, "Isn't it kind of stingy to enjoy it all by yourself?"

When he had unwound the wool tip-plet from his neck and taken the rocking chair which the missis had set before the fireplace for him he leaned back and cut gashes in the atmosphere with another flourish of his sharp cacklings. "I've heard o' Santa Claus playin' tricks before now," said he, "but I don't guess he ain't never played none no funnier than this.

"It was like this: Three, four days ago my boy Chet come home with a rabbit—one o' them big white critters with the pink eyes—that he'd swapped off one o' his mittens to the one armed Mayhew boy fer. When he come in, luggin' the thing in his arms, his ma ast him whose it was, an' he said it was his'n an' its name was Jimmy an' Eddie Mayhew give it to him.

"Them Mayhew boys ain't givin' nothin' away fer nothin'," says she. "What'd you give him fer it?"

"Chet knowed he was cornered, so he owned up that he'd give Eddie one o' his wool mittens. 'I don't never wear but one much anyhow,' says he, 'an', besides, Eddie's a poor, one armed boy, an' his hand was cold, an' it was comin' Christ-mus."

"I felt sorry for Chet, so I says, 'Chet, says I, severe-like, 'you come to the barn along of me, like I was goin' to hick him.

"That satisfied his ma. So Chet an' me went to the barn an' made a box to keep the rabbit in. I knowed the thing 'd freeze to death if he kep' it anywheres but in the house, an' I knowed his ma wouldn't listep to his doin' that, so I puts him up to gittin' rid of it by invitin' his Cousin Artie over fer Christ-mus an' givin' it to him fer a Christ-mus present.

"Artie, you know," Ezra explained, "is my wife's brother's boy. You remember my wife's brother, Dan Baker, over in Center township, the one that died an' left a widder with eight children?"

"Waal, when Chet told his ma what he was goin' to do she said he could keep the rabbit in the attic till Christ-mus an' not a minute longer. So he writ to Artie, an' this mornin' bright an' early here comes the hull family—Mis' Baker an' the hull eight children.

"Chet, he hadn't even got up yet, but I roused him out, an' when he come down he tolt Artie about the Jimmy rabbit he was goin' to give him. Then Mis' Baker chips in an' says she never 'lows one o' her children to accept presents unless all the others gits the same thing. 'It makes the others jealous,' says she, 'an' creates dissensions.'

"I seen trouble comin' to Chet in socks an' herds an' I says to myself they's jest one way to settle this thing. You know, if you give a rabbit a little cuff on the back of his neck he never knows what hit him. So I sneaks up to the attic, but ole Santa Claus had got there ahead o' me."

Ezra rocked back and let out a few more staccato notes of merriment.

"What had happened?" my wife asked.

"Wait 'till I tell you," said Ezra. "I called Chet to come up quick, an' he come a-runnin'. 'Look here,' says I to him, 'you give the eight little ones to the children an' the old one to Mis' Baker. If you do it nice she can't refuse 'em, specially when the little rabbits needs the services of Jimmy fer awhile yet.' So Chet he lugged the hull box o' rabbits downstairs an' made sech a eloquent presentin' speech that the widder couldn't do nothin' but thank him an' take the hull wass home with her."

Christmas Gifts

THE joy that's born of Christmas gifts is not within themselves Or you or I could pick our joys from any merchant's shelves And you could buy more costly things than ever I could give, And though no friend should come your way contented you could live. Yet some poor trinket rich becomes and treasure to the end Because it is the symbol of a true and loyal friend.

The thing is nothing as it lies upon a merchant's shelf, And scarce a thought you'd give to it for what it is itself. There may be thousands like it round about you everywhere, But let a friend bring it to you and straightway it is rare. For something of that friend into his simple gift is wrought And it becomes a precious 'hing—a token of a thought.

We are a sentimental clan, we fight and strive for gold, Yet treasures which we closest guard are never bought or sold; The things we value most are not the gems our money buys. But all those sweet and lovely things that memory bids us prize. The faded slippers of a babe not in themselves are dear, But in the thoughts they bring to us of one no longer here. And so it is with Christmas gifts, 'tis friends who make them rare, The trifle that with love is rich has worth beyond compare; The moment that it passes from some friendly hand to you It has assumed a value that before it never knew. And what was common in itself is now beyond all price Because it represents to you some good friend's sacrifice.

The Christmas Rose.

IT was in Ireland I heard the beautiful legend of the Christmas rose, says a writer in the Philadelphia Ledger. When the great night came and the dark skies were suddenly illuminated with the lights of heaven the shepherds, gathering together their offering, went with haste to find him who had come to be the Light of the world. Great rough men, full of simple faith, they were, and each carried a little lamb in his arms to lay at the feet of the Good Shepherd. But among them was one wee lad who had no gift.

All his life long he had heard of the Messiah who was to come. The earth was full of rumors that the time was near at hand, and lying out on the hillside under the deep blue sky he had dreamed dreams of that day, picturing himself close to him in many roles. And now that the moment was come he raced along, his tiny legs flailing it hard work to keep up with the swift, strong stride of the men.

So full of excitement was he that no thought of self entered into his mind. But as he came to the cave, saw the bright star shining above and heard the songs of the angels he noticed his empty hands. How could he go into the presence of the newborn King when he had nothing to lay at his feet, he who would so willingly lay down his very life for him! He crept close to the opening, and, kneeling down in the cold white snow, he wept as though his little heart would break.

And, lo, the warm tears melted away the hard snow, and from beneath there sprang up the first Christmas rose, the fruit of a little boy's love for the Christ Child!

The Good Old Customs. By all means, so long as they will endure, let us cling to the old customs. Up with the holly, the box and the bay, set the plum pudding ablaze, light the Christmas tree, scatter greetings broadcast through the land, ring out wild bells to the wide sky and give encouragement to the carol singers. Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes it makes us all kin and more or less kind. It is a truly happy festival, the time when we best understand what home means, the children's feast, when the old grow young again. A happy Christmas, then, to all.

Christmas Carols at Nantucket. The custom of singing Christmas carols in the streets still obtains at Nantucket. Every Christmas eve the school children march through the old cobbled streets of the town and sing their songs.

All the ancient houses are illuminated with candles in the windows, and the children always stop and serenade their favorites. It is very pretty to hear them, and they never forget to sing for what they call the "shut ins"—the folks who are ill and unable to get out and join the festivities.

What Have You Got For Me SANTA CLAUS?



Christmas Greens. A quaint old writer thus spiritualizes the practice of Christmas decorations. "So our churches and houses, decked with bays and rosemary, holly and ivy and other plants which are always green, winter and summer, signify and put us in mind of his Delty—that the child that now is born was God and man, who should spring up like a tender plant, should always be green and flourishing and should live forevermore."

Christmas Means Love. We cannot picture it without seeing the spangled Christmas-tree girt with the faces of gleeful youngsters, glad parents and happy bodies returned home from town or far metropolises. It sounds like bells and crackling logs and shouts of children. And even our old, round shouldered, sorrow ridden planet, with his eye knocked out on his cheek, pauses to smile from sea to sea, and love is everywhere rejuvenated.—James Whitcomb Riley.

Christmas FUN

Logical. "Boy!" "Mum!" "Stop that noise with your Christmas drum! Do you want to deafen us?" "Yes'm; then you won't mind the noise."—Life.

Risky. "I'd like to give my wife fifty dollars for Christmas." "Well, why not?" "I ain't certain that I could coax it away from her again."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

A Sign of Age. "Just when does a woman grow old?" "When she ceases to regard the hanging of the mistletoe as an event."—Buffalo Express.

All He Remembered. The Preacher—And did you remember the poor on Christmas? Little Albert—No. I didn't remember nothin' much, except about pa catchin' me with my hand in the box where ma had the raisins hid.

Up-to-Date Xmas Maxims. Never look a Christmas gift in the price tag. There is nothing so rare as a present you wanted. A ton of coal is rather to be chosen than gaudy jewels. Beware of mistletoe; it grows on the border of matrimonial jungles. Better broken toy drums than broken cardrums. Christmas spirit seldom intoxicates, but it generally bankrupts. Christmas belles manage to ring in quite a few gifts. Just now the most popular book seems to be the pocketbook. Never put a gift cigar in the mouth.

Christmas gifts are somewhat like babies—you can't always get what you want, but wisely be contented with what came.—New York American.

Good Old Soul. "Why haven't you gone," they asked him, "to your snowy mountain ranges?" "I'm waiting," said Santa Claus, "to make The regular exchanges."

Christmas Anticipation. "I don't believe the approach of Christmas brings you a single joyous anticipation," said the sweet young thing. "Don't chf" replied the savage bachelor. "Listen to my secret. That youngster on the third floor is sure to get a tin trumpet for a present."

"Yes." "Then he will get careless and leave it on the hall floor. And then I shall step on it with both feet. Don't you call that a joyous anticipation?"

A Long List. Parke—Have you decided what to give your wife for Christmas? Lane—Not yet. There are so many things I can't afford.—Judge.

The Canny Scot at Yule. A commercial traveler had taken a large order in Scotland for a consignment of hardware and endeavored to press upon the canny Scottish manager who had given the order a Christmas gift of a box of Havana cigars.

"Naw," he replied, "Don't try to bribe a man. I cudna tak them, and I am a member of the kirk." "But will you not accept them as a Christmas present?" "I cudna," said the Scot. "Well, then," said the traveler, "suppose I sell you the cigars for a merely nominal sum—say, sixpence?" "Weel, in that case," replied the Scot, "since you press me, and not liking tae refuse an offer weel meant, I think I'll be taking two boxes."

The Spirit Of Giving

AT Christmastide, O be thou tender, true; Thy friends make glad and all thy foes forgive; With its sweet light begin to live anew, Ungrudgingly give, and giving, much receive.

Make thy glad life grow large, thy soul expand; Let there be one full day within the year When love shall open wide thy waiting hand To lessen want and dry some bitter tear.

Souls are there many, heavy laden, sore, And eyes that weep and hearts that often bleed. And squalor knocking, tattered, at thy door, And cold and hunger crying in their need.

Give wisely, freely, of thy bounty give, And, most of all, do not forget, give love; Since giving is the truest way to live, And richest treasure laying up above.

Make glad thy home, let sunshine reign within; Bless every hearthstone with thy largess fair; Share with pale want thine overflowing bin, By kindness save some brother from despair.

Be saviors, O my brothers, every one! Let the true Christ in your own soul be born; Thus thou canst be God's well beloved son And make each dawn a joyous Christmas morn!

—Minneapolis Journal.

Test Your Gifts.

CHRISTMAS gifts should be free from frillery, mere temporary worth, the solely worldly or material value. This is the first test—generousness.

The second, a Christmas gift should be in keeping with one's purse—unostentation.

A Christmas gift should display good taste—carefulness.

A Christmas gift should confer a real benefit—thoughtfulness.

A Christmas gift should produce unfeigned pleasure—interest.

A Christmas gift should be something you would wish associated with thoughts of yourself—friendship.

A Christmas gift should, if possible, be something that can be shared with others—kindliness.

A Christmas gift should, as long as it lasts, give as much delight as on Christmas morning—quality.

A Christmas gift should be something you yourself would be glad to possess—sincerity.

A Christmas gift should be something you have selected, not something picked up here and there—heartiness.

A Christmas gift should be something you take pleasure in thinking of afterward as having been given by you to your friend—satisfaction.—Christian Herald.

All the Year Round. Christmas comes all the year. Christmas is giving.

Christmas is losing one's life and finding it again in the heart of another. Wherever we find good will, humanity, fellow feeling, there we find a heart celebrating Christmas. The most delicate pleasures of Christmas spring from the gifts we make to others, from the happiness we can impart to others, from the abandonment of ourselves to another's joy.

The more utterly we lose ourselves in the lives of others the more we are keeping Christmas. The losing of our own life, to find it in another, is forever the Christmas token. It was of this the herald angels sang.

It was this the good shepherds worshipped. And this is the best way of spending Christmas.

Origin of the Carol. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.—Luke 2:14.

Such was the first carol, sung by the holy angels amid the thrilling scene so vividly described by the evangelist. This song is happily used in the communion service as the opening of "Gloria in Excelsis Deo." The word carol seems to be derived from the Italian verb carolare—to sing—implying a joy song, an outburst of exuberance. In the time of Chaucer, who died in 1400, this word usually meant simultaneous dancing and singing. Gradually its secular origin was beclouded, and nowadays a carol generally means a Christmas song of thanksgiving, though there were formerly not only Easter carols, but also winter and even summer carols.—Living Church.

A Really Truly Christmas Tree



BY CHARLES S. PEASE

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OF course you want to know at once how a Christmas tree can be any more real than the one you had last year, so I shall explain that the tree Ralph and Rhoda had by accident one winter was rooted in the ground in the Lake Superior woods.

First you must be told that the town children up there had the good times in both summer and winter, but the miners' boys and girls had the hard times all the year around, and that's the reason why mother said to Ralph and Rhoda the day before Christmas: "I don't see how you two are going to have a happy holiday when the children up at the mines do not expect to have any tree at all. How would you like to go up the mountain and take them a lot of presents and things? You can get back before dark. I will telephone the mine captain that you are coming."

"Just the very thing," said the children. And away they went soon after with a sled loaded with everything you can think of for a jolly Christmas, just lots of gifts and royal trimmings for a tree.

They were making good time along the mountain side when Rhoda stumbled over a root.

When she tried to stand up again her ankle would not work.

Of course Rhoda would not hear of leaving the miners' children's "Christmas" in the snow and constring back home. So Ralph went back to the Halfway store for some help, but the place was locked and barred. Before they decided on what to do next a flock of the mine children came racing down the road. It seemed as though the telephone message had emptied the settlement of youngsters.

"We've come to help take the 'Christmas' up the mountain. It's a hard pull farther along," they explained. When they found that Rhoda was hurt they wanted to take her home, but she wouldn't listen to a word of it.

"I'm going right up to see that tree properly trimmed and hung with these things," announced that young lady and, being of the sturdy and determined kind, tried to forget the pain.

So the swiftest runners of the mine boys started back to get a sled to carry Rhoda to the summit.

Before the ambulance corps could return, down came one of those howling blizzards so dreaded in the rough northern country, and there was nothing for it but to retreat and take refuge in the Halfway store. This old log house proved a hard nut to crack, but Ralph finally managed to get in through a rear window and soon had a roaring fire going in the big stove. The plucky lads got back from the mountain, and everybody thanked his lucky stars to be safe and warm. Outside the storm roared and the trees bent low in the gale. All the evening Rhoda stood the ache bravely and said it was nothing, but Mary Martha Murphy knew better. When all was quiet she brought a pail of water so hot that Rhoda squealed when her nurse put the swollen ankle into it, and these two girls, one who had a lovely home and rich furs and many other fine things and the little poor girl with a warm Irish heart, sat up till "all hours."

During the night the storm turned to rain and then it became cold, so very cold that the forest was covered with an icy coat. In the morning the blizzard drifts were many feet deep.

So the only thing to be done was to wait till a rescue party came out for them with shovels and horses and snowplows. And then a great thought occurred to Rhoda.

A giant hemlock tree stood right in front of the store, in a place swept clear by the wind—that is, it had been a hemlock before it became one great, dazzling emerald with pearly icicles hanging all over it.

When night came, clear and perfectly still and inky black the rescue party found a celebration going on the like of which had never been known. The children had taken hundreds of miners' candles from the store and had wired them all over the hemlock. All the presents and the gift ropes and the other ornaments had been hung about the branches, and the candles lighted.

Rhoda, half smothered in furs and tucked up on a high seat, was mistress of ceremonies, while a ring of singing, dancing children circled around the tree, and in the background, all about the dense forest, shot back millions of sparks of light.