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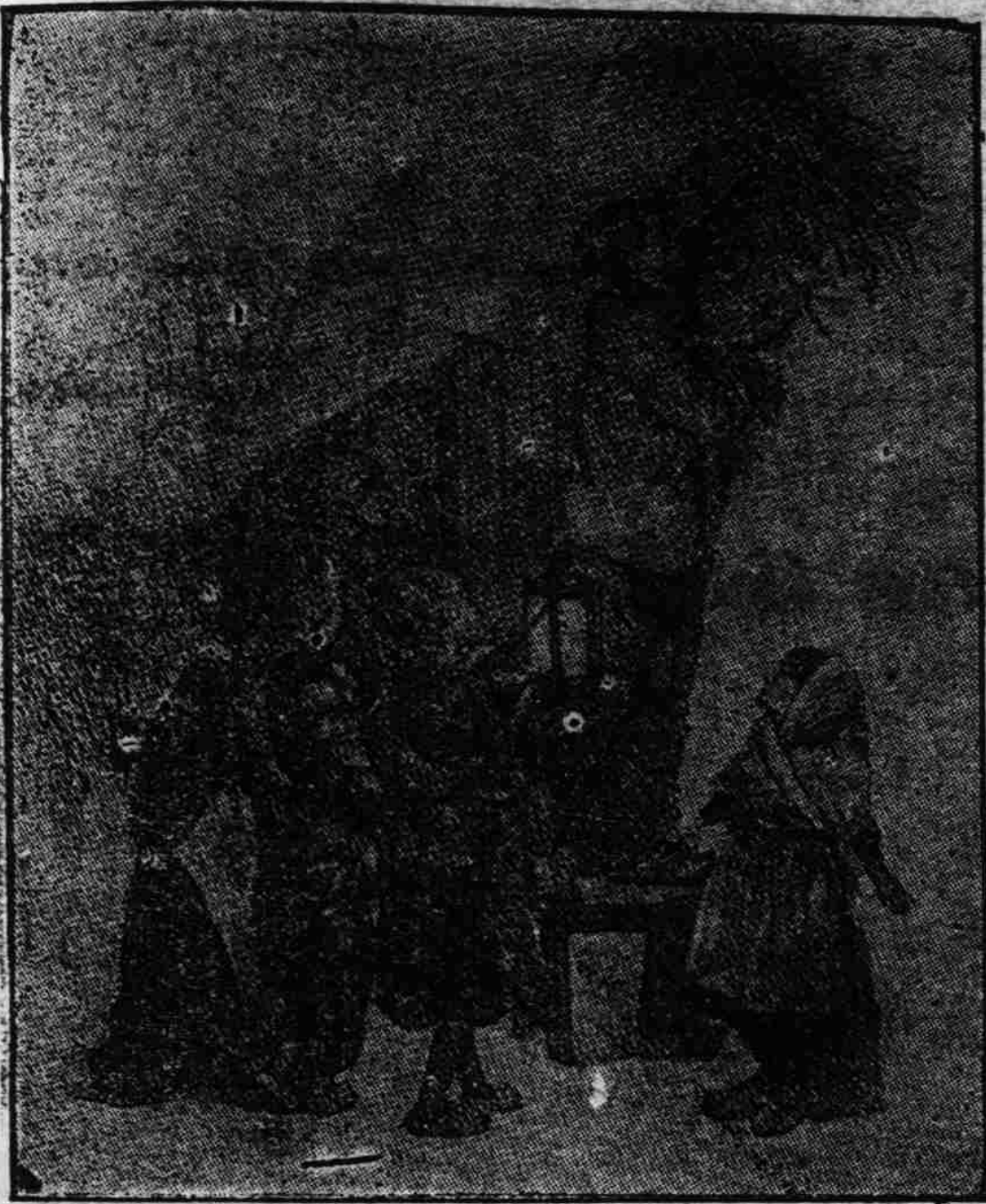
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This beautiful Christmas card was selected by the Queen, and depicts the old Danish custom of hanging up a bundle of hay by peasants for the birds to nest in. Like his Majesty's card, it is charmingly reproduced in water colors.

CHRISTMAS IN SWEDEN.

They tell a lovely story, in lands beyond the sea,
How, when the King of Glory lay on His mother's knee,
Before the Prophet-prince came, bringing gifts in hand,
The dumb beasts felt the miracle men could not understand!

The gentle, patient donkey and the ox that trod the corn
Kneel down beside the manger, and knew that Christ was born.
And so they say in Sweden, at twelve each Christmas night,
The dumb beasts kneel to worship and see the Christmas light!

This fancy makes men kinder to creatures needing care,
They give them Christmas greetings, and dainty Christmas fare;
The cat and dog nap gaily, and a sheaf of golden corn
Is raised above the roof-tree for the birds on Christmas morn!

We do not live in Sweden, but we can feed the birds,
And make dumb creatures happy by kindly deeds and words.
No animal so bumble, no creeping worm so small,
But that the God who made us has made and loves them all!

If we to them are cruel, like Christ we cannot be!
And this shall be our lesson from our dear Christmas tree!

VIDA'S GRAY MUFF

Story of an Answered Letter
and a Little Girl's Happy Christmas



IT had begun way back in November—the Sunday after Thanksgiving, when Sallie Carter came in late to church with a gray astrakhan muff. The sermon was too "deep" for Vida, who had her hand at her face and was almost asleep, when a flash of gray in the next pew caused her to turn her head ever so slightly and peep through her chubby fingers. There it stood on the velvet cushion beside Sallie, trim, warm and lined with pearly gray satin, exactly like Mrs. Carter's own beautiful big one, but smaller by half. A great longing began to grow in Vida's heart, and she peeped again, this time at Sallie. Sallie's golden curls had fallen riotously over her shoulders, hiding much of her face, but Vida could see enough. And just then the sermon came to an end.

But from that day on till the 17th of December Vida thought of nothing but a gray muff—how she would look carrying it, how it would feel, and

how every Sunday afternoon she would let poor Dorothy Haines carry it for a whole block, just as she had seen Sallie lend hers to the little lame girl in their Sunday-school class.

On the 17th of December a great snow fell and all the earth was white. At night the stars came out and the moon was full. It was the first snowstorm of the winter, and Vida, by the light of the blazing logs in the nursery fireplace, wrote her annual letter to Santa Claus, posting it in the window-sill. In the morning, sure enough, it was gone, and Vida's heart was light. She smiled at Sallie from her pew, feeling that still another bond was soon to be established between them, and, on the way home, found and praised new beauties in the gray astrakhan muff. And so amidst greater good fellowship and happy expectations; the anxiously awaited Christmas drew on apace.

The 25th fell on Sunday that year, and Saturday morning dawned bright and clear. The long, fat icicles hanging above the nursery window glistened in the sunlight, and the hemlock boughs swept the ground under their weight of snow. Vida and her mother were standing together at the nursery window as, with a jingle of merry bells, the Carters' sleigh drove by. Vida sighed contentedly.

"To-morrow," she said, "I shall be carrying a gray astrakhan muff."

Her mother looked at her questioningly.

"Santa Claus will bring it to me," Vida said in answer to the look.

Her mother laughed merrily. "Why, Vida, dear," she said, "you asked Santa Claus for seven other things—you said so only this morning. You couldn't expect him to remember them all, and he's as likely to forget the muff as the French doll or the tea set. It's foolish to count on any one thing when you made so long a list. I told you to be moderate." And her busy mother hurried off in answer to a call from Aunt Jane.

Not count on it! Why, she had done nothing but count on it since Santa Claus had found her note. Not count on it! Why, Christmas would be nothing without it!

But her mother was right—he might forget it among so many things! Why hadn't she asked for only that one present? She didn't want those other things, anyway, and this was the day before Christmas—no word could reach Santa now.

The day passed feverishly for Vida. Up stairs and down she wandered from window to window, from person to person—nervous, unhappy, impatient. Would the long hours never go!

At last twilight came and the darkness fell. And in the corner of the great hall sofa, facing the clock on the stairs, Vida, a disconsolate little body, fell asleep.

Her mother awakened her when it was time to hang up her stockings, and then, in spite of her warning, and in spite of her long hours of worry, hope was born again, and when Vida kissed her mother good night visions of gray astrakhan muffs danced in her head.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!"

It seemed to Vida she had but closed her eyes, and there stood mother and Aunt Jane beside her bed, one with her little worsted shoes and the other with her red elderdown wrapper to hurry her over to the nursery,

from the edge of the roof and back to—

"Oh, papa, papa," she cried, excitedly, "come here, come here right away. See, there is something out on the roof!"

Her father opened the window quickly and climbed out. Vida's heart beat so wildly she could scarcely speak. Her father was peering up a box—it was about the size of Aunt Jane's cookie jar, and it was round.

"Well," her father said, as he climbed back laughing into the nursery. "Here is something old St. Nick dropped, and from its size I guess it's meant for you."

Vida's hands trembled so she could scarcely tug off the round top of the box. Just as it was about to yield a sudden fear fell upon her heart.

"Papa, perhaps—perhaps he didn't mean it for me. Perhaps he dropped it and it belongs to some other little girl."

Her father's eyes twinkled.

"Look at the bottom of the box, little one," he said.

Vida turned the box upside down. There was her name—Vida Sumner Lane, as plain as plain could be, and while she was staring at it open mouthed, out dropped—not a little gray astrakhan muff, but a beautiful

A Merry Christmas



where her father stood awaiting her at the door.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Oh, papa, I said it first!" she cried, laughingly, as her father caught her in his arms.

But what had Santa Claus done to the nursery? He had decorated the four walls and the chandelier with greens, and in the corner opposite the fireplace he had stood a giant Christmas tree, bedecked with glittering knickknacks of every description. It was wonderful!

Vida drew a quiet breath, and gave a little happy exclamation. Then she flew straight to the fireplace—the muff should be there.

Of the seven presents six were not forgotten, and there were others she had not asked for: a pearl-handled knife in the toe of her stocking (she had remembered how much she needed a knife only yesterday morning); an album for her postal cards—why hadn't she thought of that? She had over a hundred postal cards that Uncle Jack had sent her—of course she wanted an album. A cuckoo clock, that even as she looked, flung open its little carved doors and shot out the cuckoo. It was 7 o'clock. Surely no little girl ever had a more beautiful Christmas!

But Vida's lips were quivering, and a great lump swelled in her throat. The muff—the beautiful gray astrakhan muff was nowhere. Santa Claus had forgotten it.

But Vida was brave. And she would not let those who loved her see her cry or suspect her disappointment. She turned away from them and went to the north window, fighting with her tears.

The kitchen roof stretched out under this window, and for days not even the print of a bird's claw had broken its mantle of white. But now Vida looked at it in wonderment, for the beautiful crust was sadly broken, and a long line of tracks ran

soft chinchilla one and a little collar to match! And Sallie Carter peeped through her fingers that Christmas morning at the happiest little girl in all Christendom.—Kendrick Ferris in St. Nicholas.

ARE YOU GOING HOME?



Are you going back for Christmas to the valley where the stars rise clear above the mountains, crowned with timber lattice-bars; Where the farmsteads nestle closely up against the hills' ascent; And the brook creeps hither—thither—in its maze of wilderment?

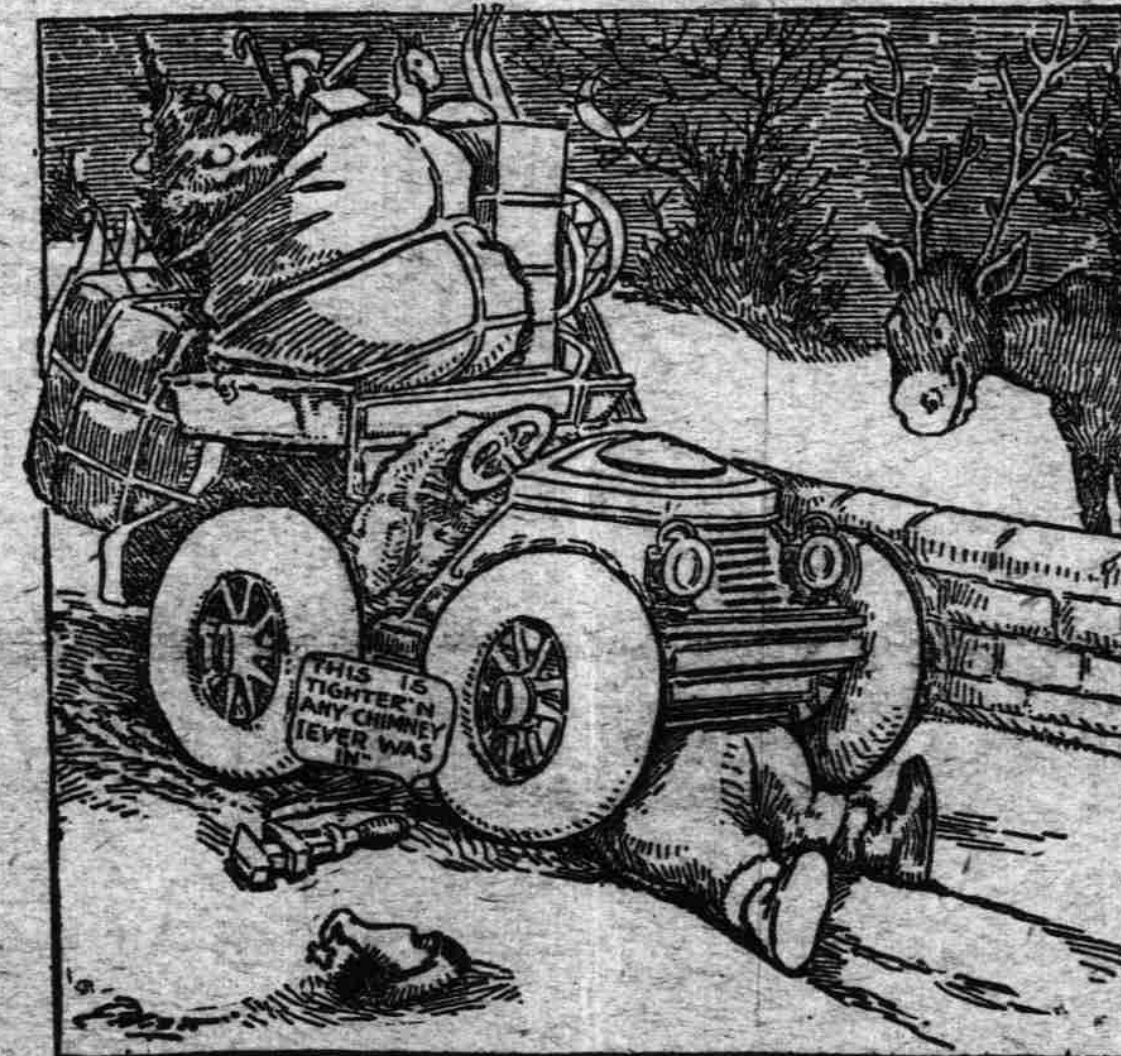
Are you going home for Christmas to the old house by the trees? To the old folks waiting—waiting—through the many years that be; To the faces and the memories and phantoms that recall the music of the summers before you left it all?

The eyes are growing dimmer that look down the valley side, Evermore a watching—watching—for a swinging boyish stride; The hair is growing whiter and the face thin and drawn Of those who 'mid the twilight stand waiting for the dawn.

Lock up the shop—the office! Go back your thousand ways Along the lines of living to boyhood; dawning days! Go set the old home ringing with laughter's music-bars, And find your lost youth waiting in the valley 'neath the stars.

Christmas Shopping. The bargain counter rush is here, And folks, in accents sober, Are vowing that another year They'll start out in October. —Washington Star.

PUZZLE PICTURE.



Why does the reindeer smile? —Lincoln (Neb.) News.

THE WORKINGS OF CONGRESS.

Proceedings in Both Houses of a Routine Nature Only.

Senator Culberson Tuesday introduced a bill to prohibit corporations from making contributions in connection with elections and to provide for the publication of lawful contributions in connection with elections.

The bill is in the nature of an amendment to the law of January 26, 1907, prohibiting national banks and other corporations making contributions in connection with elections and in addition to the law as it stands he proposes a provision making it "the duty of every chairman, campaign manager or treasurer of any political committee or other person who received contributions in money or other things of value for or on behalf of such political committee, or in the interest of any candidate for a political office for the purpose of aiding or promoting the election or defeat of candidates for presidential and vice presidential electors to file with the clerk of the House of Representatives of the United States a statement in writing showing the amount of money or other things of value contributed by each person, firm, corporation, co-partnership or association, not prohibited by law, for the purpose aforesaid."

Mr. Culberson stated that the act of January 26, 1907, provides that it shall be unlawful to make money contributions for political campaigns, but he thought the law should go further and require specific statements, as otherwise it might be evaded. He hoped that the committee on privileges and elections would use his bill as the basis of an improved measure.

Congress Doing Little.

It is evident now that Congress will not do very much before Christmas. The House of Representatives has been adjourning from Monday to Thursday and from Thursday to Monday and will keep it up until it adjourns for the holidays, which will mean until about the 6th of January. The Senate is doing a littler better.

The Senate is looking forward to a fight on the money question. Senator Tillman is spoiling for a row with the Republicans, especially representatives of the administration. Clay, of Georgia, and Culberson, of Texas, are ready for a debate. Aldrich, the king of the Senate, blocked the game of the Southern Senators the other day by promising to have the finance committee, of which he is chairman, bring in the information desired and make proper recommendations. But, barring a lively discussion, nothing is likely to happen between now and the day of adjournment.

The Senate was in session a little more than an hour Monday and at 1:15 o'clock adjourned.

Very little business was transacted beyond the introduction of bills. The resolutions of Senators Clay and Culberson calling upon the Secretary of the Treasury for information concerning the recent bond issue of the government came up and in the absence of Senator Aldrich

their consideration was postponed until another day.

Senator Tillman presented resolutions instructing the committee on finance to investigate the recent bond issues, but the absence of Mr. Aldrich was urged as a reason why they should not be acted upon.

A resolution calling upon the Secretary of Agriculture for information concerning the reclamation of swamp land in the United States and abroad was adopted.

The House adjourned at 12:34 without transacting any business beyond the introduction of bills. It was stated authoritatively that the house committees will not be announced this week.

NAKED TRUTH.

Francis Wilson tells of an encounter of wits that took place between the late Eugene Field and a New York woman.

It was at dinner, and the woman was in evening dress, which was rather décolleté. After a skirmish between the two relative to the respective merits of a well known author, it would seem that Field came off second best.

"Oh, Mr. Field," exclaimed the woman exultantly, "you must admit that you are fairly beaten at your own game!"

Field bowed politely, and with a smile promptly rejoined: "At any rate, Miss Blank, I have one consolation: you can't laugh at me in your sleeve.—Lippincott's."

The Louisville Courier-Journal thinks it is worthy of inquiry whether the agricultural interests have not been the subject of unjust discrimination. If they have been, as many contend, subjected to taxation for the purpose of helping other branches of industry, it is not surprising that men should be deserting the occupations that are under the ban and crowding into those that have been specially favored by legislation.

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