

## OREGON MIST.

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## THE CHILDREN'S BEST FRIEND



SANTA CLAUS is the children's friend. Who has we have little means of knowing, authentic history is almost silent on the subject, merely stating that he was the Bishop of Myra, in Lycia, and died about the year 323. Tradition has woven many a pretty tale about him, and one runs that he appeared in the night time and secretly made valuable presents to the children of the household. What manner of person St. Nicholas was, seems subject to variation, according to the time, place or manner of regarding him. Medieval painters represent him as slender, and clad in full episcopal robes with mitre and crozier. Modern painters and storytellers in England, Germany and America, give us a jovial, rubicund type of a man, with some of the features of the cleric. Kris Kringle is regarded as an alternative name for Santa Claus, but he is a totally different being. Kris Kringle is simply a corruption of the German word "Christ Kindlein," or Christ Child.

Christmas is children's day; it is the day when, as Dickens says, we should remember the time when his great founder was a child himself. It is especially the day for the friendless young, the children in hospitals, the lame, the sick, the weary, the blind. No child should be left alone on Christmas day, for loneliness with children means brooding. A child growing up with no child friend is not a child at all, but a premature man or woman.

The best Christmas present to a boy is a box of tools, the best to a girl any number of dolls. When they get older and can write letters a postoffice is a delightful boon. These are to be bought, but they are far more amusing if made at home. Any good-sized cardboard box will do for this purpose. The lid should be fastened to it so that when it stands up it will open like a door. A slit must be cut out about an inch wide and from five to six inches long, so as to allow the postage of small parcels, yet not large enough even to admit the smallest hand. Children should learn to respect the inviolate character of the post from the earliest age.

Capital scrapbooks can be made by children. Old railway guides may be the foundation of an ever illustrated paper magazine of art. A paste box, next to a paint box, is a most serviceable toy. Hobby horses are profitable steeds and can be made to go through any amount of paces. But mechanical toys are more amusing to his elders than to the child, who wishes to his own mechanism. A boy can be amused by turning him out of the house, giving him a ball or a kite, or letting him dig in the ground for the unhappy mole. Little girls, who must be kept in on a rainy day, or invalid children, in a very hard to amuse, may be amused by had to story telling, to the dear, delightful thousand and one books now written for children, of which "Alice in Wonderland" is the flower of perfection.

BEGINNING at Benton City, on the Union Pacific Road, the telegraph line stretches to the north, leaps across to the Laramie mountains, and at a point where the great mass of earth and rock and tree, called Red Butte, it comes to a sudden stop. From this point to the fort, a distance of twenty-five miles, is the roughest portion of the way, and the skulking bands of Indians make it the most dangerous.

At the terminus of the line is a rude shanty and a soldier operator. Close by the shanty are tents of the soldiers, who are setting the poles and pushing the line along until the fort shall have electric communication with the outside world. It is December now—only two days to Christmas. There have been cold rains, snow storms, severe weather, and the soldiers are wondering why they have not been ordered back to the fort for the winter, when a mounted messenger arrives over the trail bearing the expected order. The Colonel's wife has gone East. The operator is to wire her to remain where she is until spring. When her answer is received the shanty is to be closed up, camp broken, and the party headed for the fort. The afternoon wears away, the night comes down, and some of the soldiers are asleep, when Benton City sends in its call, and follows it by a telegram reading: "The Colonel's wife reading to be there or at the fort now."

Next morning there was an arrival from the South. The Colonel's wife, riding a horse with a blanket for a saddle, dismounted at the front of the shanty, and opened the door with a cheery "Howdy do, boys!" to the operator and the Sergeant. As both men stood at attention, she removed the hood and cloak which enveloped her, shook off the snow, and said to the Sergeant: "I came through with hardly an hour's rest, and I'm hungry as a wolf. Tell one of the men to cook something. I'll give the Colonel a surprise."

## INDOOR CHRISTMAS GAMES.

How the Young Folks May Find Pleasure if the Day Be Stormy.

Parlor games like chess, draughts, dominoes, etc., are too heavy for Christmas. The boys and girls want more rollicking, blip-bip-burrah games. A committee appointed to provide desirable amusement for a well-known charity in New York selected the following program. Ten hours were spent in selecting appropriate indoor games and pastimes, and even then no more than were actually needed were decided upon, says the New York Mail and Express. If the children can get out of doors their amusement is easy, for baseball, leap frog, hide and seek, and other games suffice, but indoors something akin to these games is wanted.

In this class is a game known as "The Country Circus." It consists in making riders, tumblers, clowns, strong men, etc., of all the children and with this improvised company giving a performance. Another good game for the house is called "Jack-of-All-Trades," in which those engaged must perform some work in the particular trade to which they are assigned by the foreman. In this game on Thanksgiving the boys and girls of an institution in Jersey cut and sewed a lot of carpet rags, made a lot of brushes, and split and bundled several cords of wood.

"The Boy Hunters," in which the children learn the name, habits, and peculiarities of the entire animal kingdom, is another popular and enjoyable and here so increased in favor that books written especially to show how to prepare and perform them can be had at any well-stocked book store.

A Financial Transaction. "Say, mister," said a boy who had just overtaken a market wagon after pursuing it for four or five blocks, "do you

know what you're after us, ma'am," said the Sergeant.

"They won't take me prisoner," whispered the Colonel's wife, as she held out the revolver.

"That's right, ma'am. We are headed for the fort right enough, and maybe the red devils will haul off after a bit and let us go in peace. A merry Christmas to you, though I've seen inerrier ones in my time."

For a mile or more the little party breasted the storm. There came a sudden shot, and the rear guard went down. There were seven men and a woman at 8 o'clock. At 9 o'clock there were but five men, at 10 but four, at midnight only two. Two men and a woman—the Sergeant, the soldier-operator, and the Colonel's wife. The others had been picked off one by one, and the Indians still followed. Now and then the trio halted, knelt down, and peering into the snow-whirl, opened a fusillade which checked pursuit if it did not wound or kill.

Instinct must have guided them in that storm—Providence must have shielded them from the bullets, but the storm continued to rage and the venturous foe to pursue, till the report of the firearms reached the ears of the sentinel at the fort. No one had yet learned what was happening, when three figures staggered up to the gate, and on into the fort, and up to the door of the Colonel's headquarters. Two of the figures held up a third between them. As he peered in the Sergeant saluted and said:

"Col. Dawson, I report myself, and I bring you a Christmas present."

And as the Colonel uttered a shout of surprise and rushed forward with outstretched arms, the brave little woman fell into them, and the two men sank down in their tracks, and those who lifted them up wet their fingers with the blood of heroes.

A handsome merry-faced woman, who is five years older—a Sergeant of infantry who limps a bit—a lone grave in which sleeps the soldier-operator—nothing more

wanted know who hit you in the neck with that hard snowball?"

"You bet I do," replied the man, slackening speed.

"Will you gamme a quarter of I ketch him and bring him here?"

"Yes," said the driver, lifting his whip from the socket; "but I don't give you any more'n that."

"Well, git the money ready."

"You haven't got the boy that threw the snowball yet."

"Yes, I hah yet. That boy is me. Dad's sick, and me mother can't get work. The twins is too little to earn anything, an' if I don't hustle there won't be any Christmas tree at our house. I'll take a likin' any day for 30 cents."

Johnny's Woo. Curly headed Johnny had a tear drop in his eye.

Curly-headed Johnny couldn't speak without a sigh.

And the Christmas preparations that were 'round him everywhere

Had not the least effect upon his melancholy air.

"Oh, what's the use of hanging up my stockings," he would say; "There's nothing to look forward to me Christmas Day; He'll scratch us off his program when he litches up his team. For Santy needs a fireplace, and they heat our flat by steam."—Washington Star.

## THE PASSING YEAR



Comt, old year, 'tis time to go. Age, perhaps, has made you slow. But your time of life has flown And I come to claim my own.

You are popular no more. All your triumphs here are gone. With what strength is left to you, Had you better hasten on.

Learning from experience, I have promised much, like you. When another year has flown People will condemn me, too.

But what matters that to us? Years, like men, must come and go. We are fast with promises, With fulfillments we are slow.

A Race Track Fiend Cured. The following story is told by one who for years was an inveterate better on horses: "It was Christmas eve. My 4-year-old stood by my knee in his 'nighty' just before being tucked in his crib, and in his infantile manner was praying to Santa Claus to bring him the treasure upon which he had fixed his heart. When he had finished I asked the master of the house? He bowed his little head on my

voice, and innocently pleaded: "And, dear Santa Claus, please bring papa a race horse that can win sometimes. That was his mother's wish, I suppose, but I went. I bought a tree that night, loaded it down with toys the boy had asked for, and then trimmed it with the tickets that hadn't won in the races. The unique festooning represented hundreds of hard dollars that had been scattered in the wake of a race-track 'skate.' I have not played a horse since that time, and I have made up my mind that I never will again. It's a delusion and a snare."

Her Heart's Desire. There comes a time once in every year, when children may without impropriety give their loving friends a hint in season.

Uncle William was talking with Lucy, his best little niece, about Christmas. He wished to know her mind upon a certain highly interesting object, but preferred to get at it indirectly.

"Now, Lucy," said he, in a casual manner, "if I were going to buy a doll for a little girl, what kind of a one do you think she would like?"

"O, Uncle William," answered Lucy, with undesigning interest, "there is nothing like twins!"

The Boarding-House Turkey. "Is the fust laid?" inquired the landlady of the head waiter.

"It is, madame."

"Then fire it."

"I have, madame."

"But the turkey is still whole."

"Yes, madame, the powder had no effect on it."

"Then send for some dynamite, and tell the boarders the turkey is so tender it takes time to carve it."

His Reason. It was drawing near to a very interesting season of the year. Willy was getting ready for bed. His mother looked happy.

"My dear," she said, "an glad to see that you do not hurry through your prayers as you used to do."

"No, ma'am," said Willy; "Christmas is week after next, and I have a good many things to ask for."

He Was Surprised. Mrs. Gazzam—I've got a box of cigars for my husband's Christmas present, which will surprise him.

Mrs. Maddox—Women don't know how to buy cigars for men.

Mrs. Gazzam—I know that, so I got Brother Jack to get them for me.—Judge.

Nothing Slow About Johnnie. Tommy—Did yer have a good time Christmas, Johnnie? Johnnie—Don't ver see dat I did?—Life.

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE STATE.

Great Demand Is Annually Made on the Forests of Maine.

Not all who desire a Christmas-tree for the holiday merry-makings can sally forth, armed with a hatchet, and hew from their own acres. Therefore at each Christmas season great demand is made on the forests of Maine for young spruces.

No tree but an evergreen will do, and no evergreen but the spruce presents the delicate, feather-flat, clean-lined branches of dark perennial shade, which throw out by contrast the brightness of the suspended presents and favors.

On Sunday, the fifth of December, 1891, ten car-loads of Christmas trees for New York were detained in the Portland yard because they were loaded so that it was impossible to work the brakes. This objection was overruled, and the sweating freight was allowed to proceed to its destination. How the cars were loaded can easily be described, but the fragrance of twenty-five thousand freshly cut evergreen trees must be left to the reader's imagination.

The ten cars, all "flats," or platform cars, were each thirty-four feet long, loaded eight feet high, and all came from the small station of Wisconsin, which lies at the head of one of the numerous bays on the coast of Maine.

At regular intervals about each car, four on each side and two at each end, were stout spruce stakes, originally Christmas trees which might have done duty at the Castle De Blunderbore. These rose to the top of the load, which was limited to a height that would clear all overhead bridges on the road.

In this space the trees were packed lengthwise, butts to the front and rear tops to the center, so compactly that the loaded car was one solid block of green.

Each car held about twenty-five hundred trees, large and small, tied in bundles of four. From six hundred and fifty to seven hundred bundles were packed in a car, so that the ten car-load lot contained twenty-five thousand trees at least.

The marketing of Christmas trees is a Maine specialty. Every year speculators purchase the right to cut trees from the land owners, paying half a cent, one cent, and two cents apiece for trees from eight to twelve years old on the stump. They then the natives are hired to cut and bring them to the shipping point, where they cost the speculator from ten to twelve cents each, loaded on their ship.

He pays also for their shipment to New York—sixty-seven dollars per car, or about two and one-half cents per tree.

The trees retail in New York for from one to five dollars each, according to their size. The same quality of tree can be purchased on the street, in the city of Portland, at from twenty-five to fifty cents each, while in other parts of the State boys who wish for Christmas trees sally forth and cut them for themselves.

Yuletide Customs. It is customary to give a quarter present and expect a \$5 one in return.

With the usual perverseness of nature, Christmas comes in the middle of a hard winter.

The modern highwayman doesn't say "money or your life" he wishes you "a merry Christmas."

The small boy who tries to make too much noise is apt to blame Santa Claus for not giving him an extra head for his drum.

Some people wish you a merry Christmas instead of giving you a present, because it's easier to pay the compliment of the season than it is to settle with Santa Claus.

Your wife expects you to look pleased when she gives you a \$40 smoking jacket and tells you she has had it charged.—Truth.

For Christmas, with its lots of candies, cakes and toys.

Wuz made, they say, fr' proper kids, and not fr' naughty boys.

So wash yer face, and bresh yer hair, an' min' yer p's and q's.

An' don't bust out yer pantaloons, an' don't wear cut yer shoes;

Say yessum to the ladies, an' yessir to the men.

An' when they's company don't pass yer plate fr' pie agin;

But thinkin' uv things you'd like to see upon that tree.

Je's 'fore Christmas be as good as you kin be.—Eugene Field, in Ladies' Home Journal.

A Christmas Entertainment. A novel idea for a children's Christmas entertainment is a butterfly's ball, writes Elizabeth Robinson Scovil, in the Ladies' Home Journal.

This need not mean late hours nor expensive dresses. The boys wear tight-fitting suits of black or dark-brown, the girl any pretty, fanciful dresses. The framework of the wings is deftly fashioned of wire and covered with paper or the cotton crepon that comes in such vivid colors; these are spangled with gold or painted to represent the tinting of the butterfly's wings. A light yoke of wire is constructed to fit the shoulders, fastening under the arms, and to this the wings are attached. The effect is very brilliant and graceful. Another pretty fancy is an archery fest.

The children carry small bows dressed with flowers, and sheafs of arrows in flower-bedded quivers.

"You haven't got \$5 about you, Jones?" "No, I haven't. Wife borrowed the ball, to buy my Christmas present."—Atlanta Constitution.

## LES' FORT CHRISTMAS



Father calls me William, sister calls me Will. Mother calls me Willie—but the fellows call me Bill!

Mighty glad I ain't a girl—rather be a boy. Without them sash, curls and things that were worn by Fauntleroy!

Love to chawnk green apples an' go swimmin' in the lake—

Hate to take the castor-ile they give fr' belly-ache and cold.

Most all the time the hull year 'roun' their ain't no flies on me.

But jes' 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Got a yaller dog named Sport—sick 'im on the cat!

Fust thing she knows she doesn't know where she is at!

Got a clipper-sted, an' when us boys goes out to slide

'Long comes the grocery cart an' we all look a rife!

But, sometimes, when the grocery man is worried and cross,

He reaches at me with his whip and larrups up his nose;

An' then I aah and boiler: "Oh, you never teched me!"

But jes' 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Gran'ma says she hopes that when I get to be a man

I'll be a missioner like her oides' brother Dan.

As wuz et up by the cannibals that lives in Caylon's Isle,

When every prospect pleases an' only man is 'is!

But gran'ma she had never been to see a Wild West show.

Or read the life uv Daniel Boone, or else I guess she'd know

That Buffalo Bill an' cowboys is good enough

Except jes' 'fore Christmas, when I'm good as I kin be!

Then of Sport he hangs around, so solemn like and still—

His eyes he aah and say: "What's er matter, little Bill!"

The cat she sneaks down off her perch, a-wonderin' what's become

Uv them two enemies uv hern that use ter make things hum!

But I am so perille and stick so earnestlike to bis,