

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!

POLLY MISSES HER TRAIN

Becomes Prey of a Wicked Abductor,
Is Rescued and Spends a Very
Cheery Christmas Eve.

THERE was scarlet fever near the Allen's home in San Francisco, and the week before Christmas Mrs. Allen took Baby Nell and Dick and went out to the cottage at Glen Ellen, while Polly went to stay with another aunt, Mrs. Clinton, on Pacific avenue. There it was planned, as a jolly surprise to the Rose cottage exiles, that she should go up to Glen Ellen on Christmas eve and take the presents which she had for them, besides the collection of gifts from the rest of the family. Polly was delighted to go, for there were no children of her age at Aunt Nellie's; her uncle was always busy, and her aunt had a great many visitors. Her cousin, Tom, was hardly ever at home, and her pretty cousin, Edith, moped all the time over what Polly considered a very tiresome love affair.

Polly was so excited with the prospect of her visit, and so afraid of missing the boat, that she prevailed on her cousin, Tom, to go down to the ferry with her at half-past 4, which was half an hour too early, the scheduled time being 5:30 o'clock.

Tom didn't see any use of waiting around all that time, and, accordingly, after buying Polly's ticket and seeing her comfortably established on a bench in the big waiting-room, he wished her a merry Christmas and departed on the Berkeley boat to see the finish of a football game that was being played that afternoon.

Deserted Polly.
After Tom had kissed her good-by Polly sat contentedly, watching the crowds of people for a few minutes, but soon she began to feel deserted and lonesome. "I'd just like to know why boys can't stay in one place more than five minutes," she thought.

Presently she left her seat and walked outside, prudently carrying with her the precious Santa Claus handbag. It was only five minutes to 5, and Polly concluded to take a little walk before ferry time. The shipping in the bay was very interesting to her, as her father was a steamboat man, so she went a block or two north of the ferryhouse and walked out on one of the piers to get a better view. She was rather homesick, and as she looked out at the ships on the sparkling, opal-tinted bay, she thought how delightful it would be if she were on one of them and could go sailing out through the Golden Gate and home to papa at St. Michael.

By and by she saw an Italian fisherman come down and get into his boat, and she wished she could have a little sail, too, even in an old fishing-boat, for Polly had always loved the water. The Italian saw her looking at him, and called, politely, "Would missa like to take a ride?"

Polly considered for one breathless minute. "How far?" she asked. "Will you take me just a little way, and bring me back in time for the ferry?"

He assured her that he would, and Polly instantly stepped into the boat, laughing to think what a jolly lark it was, and how Tom would wish he had stayed to have a ride, too, if he knew.

Polly Misses the Ferry.
The Italian heaved the sail, and the boat was soon speeding over the waves, with the old familiar notion that Polly loved. She enjoyed it so much that she did not notice that it was ferry time until she saw the ferry-boat leaving the slip.

"Oh, there's my ferry!" cried Polly, in dismay. "It's the Tiburon, and I can't catch the Glen Ellen train!"

"No missa, dat's da Berkeley," said the Italian.

"I'll bet the Berkeley! It's the Tiburon—T-I-B-U-R-O-N—I can read it from here, plain!" insisted Polly. "Oh, dear, what ever made me come!"

"You can go tomorrow," said the man; "I take-a you home, and I take-a you home to see my wife an' Anita an' Antonio."

"But I want to go home to aunt's; I don't want to see your wife, not Anita, nor Antonio! You said you'd take me just a little ride; I want you to take me ashore this minute!" pleaded Polly.

"The Italian showed his teeth, in a smile that made little Polly tremble, in a smile that made little Polly tremble, she could not tell why.

"Fren's come got little missa tomorrow. Oh, yes! Fren's will come!" he said, and stubbornly kept on his course. Perhaps he thought of hiding Polly until some one offered a reward for her, but she could not guess what dreadful thing he meant to do.

It had often been said that nothing could make Polly cry, and she did not cry now. But she sat trembling, with her dimpled face growing very white, as the familiar ferry landing faded out of sight, and the shores of the bay and the forests of shipping became more and more unfamiliar and strange. Would she ever see dear St. Michael's again, or Rose Cottage and Baby Nell, or anybody that she loved?

Suddenly, around the bend of Telegraph Hill, there appeared the graceful, white outlines of a United States revenue cutter. Polly drew in her breath.

"It's the Eagle," she thought, joyfully,

as she recognized the ship on which she had visited many times at St. Michael, but, outwardly, she gave no sign. As the cutter drew nearer, Polly, quick as a flash, stood up in the boat, frantically waving her handkerchief, and screaming, "Captain Edson! Help! Help! Oh, come and get me, Captain Edson!"

The Italian was utterly taken by surprise, but instantly pushed her down into the bottom of the boat and threw an old coat over her, with a savage oath. It all happened in half a second, but not before the officer on the bridge of the Eagle had heard Polly's call and caught a glimpse of her wildly waving handkerchief and those tossing yellow curls beneath the blue Tam o' Shanter. There was something strangely familiar, too, about the blue dress and the gold locks. "That's mighty queer," he said, as he put down his glass. Then he signaled to stop and ordered a boat lowered. When Polly heard the dip of the oars and the sound of the men's voices, she jumped up with a cry of joy, and, in 10 minutes, the discomfited fisherman had been sent about his business with a vigorous "rowing down," and Polly was safe in the captain's cabin, her precious Christmas bag clutched in her hand.

Captain Edson was confined to his cabin with a badly sprained ankle, and he was so glad to see his old friend Polly as he was to see him. Even the Japanese cabin boy looked beautiful to Polly, when he entered the cabin, and she greeted him with a merry, "Oh, Tapoca! I'm so glad to see you. I haven't forgotten you, Tapoca!" His name was really Tomoka, but Polly thought "Tapoca" a great deal more suitable.

Polly Objects.
After a merry dinner, Captain Edson said, "Now, Polly, I suppose I'll have to send you home to your aunt."

"Oh, no, Captain! Please don't send me home yet," pleaded Polly. "I'm having such a lovely time! Aunt Nellie thinks I'm at Glen Ellen, and at Glen Ellen they think I'm on Pacific avenue, so nobody'll worry about me. I was going to Glen Ellen for a surprise, you know."

This seemed quite reasonable, and the captain yielded. It was Christmas eve, and he was lonesome and homesick himself, for his family were all far away, and he had just been longing for a good frolic with his own little ones at home. Besides, it was dreadfully tiresome, shut up in his cabin with a sprained ankle.

Polly unpacked her bag with much glee and exhibited the presents. A blue sofa pillow cover, embroidered with white sea gulls, for auntie; a jumping-jack for Dick, and two pigs for Baby Nell.

Her jumping-jack was a marvel—Polly had made him herself; the pigs were limp, lifeless things until you inflated them with air. Then, as long as you blew, they would swell up, bigger and bigger, but when you stopped blowing they would equal and begin to "die," and, at last, collapse.

Polly and the captain conducted this performance till they were tired, and then she gave him a kindergarten lesson—a finger song which she had taught Baby Nell, with great success. The captain was so clumsy at first that Polly was almost in despair.

Polly's Despair.
"Can't you wiggle your thumbs any better than that—really?" she said, sweetly. "The try, now." And he did try until Polly said, "Thumbkin" could dance very well, and might stop.

Finally, even Polly agreed that she ought to go, and the captain said he would ask Lieutenant Oakley to take her home.

"Lieutenant Oakley?" exclaimed Polly. "He's the man my cousin Edith's making such a fuss about—not so much of a fuss, either, only she don't take any interest in anything. Aunt Nellie says, but just sits and looks out at the bay. Aunt Nellie's dressmaker, Mrs. Biggers, says that before the Eagle sailed, he came and wanted Edith to go riding in the Park, and that she wanted to go to the matinee. He'd never come to see her any more. I guess maybe she's sorry now for you, really, she did like him better than the matinee."

The captain rang for Tapoca to take Polly to see the pet bear cub they had brought down from the North, and then sent for Lieutenant Oakley, who was his nephew, and of whose tragic love affair the captain had a pretty good idea.

Before Polly left, she wanted very much to make the captain a present, and asked him which he would rather have—a pig or a jumping-jack.

"Of course, I'd like the jumping-jack, because you made it," said the captain, gallantly, "but Dick will like it for that reason, too. So I'll take one of the pigs, as there will then be one left for Baby Nell."

Polly Makes a Present.
When Polly and the lieutenant reached home, it was Edith who opened the door. "Why, Polly! Where did you come from?" she demanded.

"I missed the boat," said Polly, "but here's Lieutenant Oakley; I brought him for a Christmas present, Edith."

Tom's voice! "Polly Edson! Missed the boat, did you? Didn't I take you down there at half-past four?"

"Yes, and you went off and left me at half-past four," returned Polly. She did not wait to see what Edith and the lieutenant did next, but sped away to settle her differences with Tom.

In the morning, Polly took the first train to Glen Ellen, and while she was waiting for the Tiburon ferry, with Tom, a messenger arrived with two small packages, addressed, "Miss Polly Edson." When she opened them, she found, first, a beautiful little gold watch, with an inscription on the back, "To Polly, from her friend, Jack Horner, Xmas, '00," and next, a dear little ring, set with pearls from Captain Edson, with kind wishes for the merriest Christmas in the world. —JUANITA.

HAPPY XMAS HOMECOMING

"Jimmy" Returns, After the Lapse of Many Years, and Buys Back the Old Home for Mother.

Jimmy made up a little bundle of a few necessary articles of clothing, in his room in the attic of the pioneer home where he was born, and which had been built by his grandparents in 1850, upon their arrival in Oregon. He softly opened the door, walked quietly down the stairs out into the darkness, and along the road. Ten years later Jimmy came back, but to conditions greatly changed.

Christmas was but a month away, but its approach brought no happy prospects to Mrs. Watson and her three little daughters, Mary, Ethel and Elizabeth. Mrs. Watson had lived on the old pioneer homestead, several miles east of Portland, with the aged grandmother, for more than 40 years. Hard times had come, and the old home was covered with a mortgage. Mr. Watson, discouraged by a hopeless struggle and saddened by the sorrow of his son Jimmy's disappearance, nearly 10 years before, had died. Mrs. Watson was the sole support of the three girls and his aged mother. The widow had struggled unsuccessfully to pay the mortgage, and the place was soon to be sold under the hammer—the home which had been their shelter for so many years, and where so many happy Christmases had been spent.

Why Jimmy Left.

When Mrs. Watson, on the December morning following Jimmy's departure, entered the room which had been occupied by her son, she found a note from him on the pillow, telling her "good-bye," and saying that he would be absent 10 years. Mr. Watson was a severe man, and had reproached Jimmy in strong language for some shortcoming. Thereat the boy had taken offense, and had gone out into the night with a bundle on his back and just enough money to pay his passage to San Francisco. He felt that his father had been unjust and thought he never could forgive him.

"It will be all right," said Elizabeth, the eldest daughter, cheerfully, when the mother yearned for her boy. "Jimmy will come home; I just know he will. It's now nearly 10 years since he left us, and he said he would come back."

Elizabeth was a little child when her brother went away, and she pictured him as a man grown now. But the time for the sale was at hand, and in spite of her faith in promise, Jimmy had not arrived. The widow was unable to stay the foreclosure, and the auctioneer sold house and grounds and nearly everything, leaving Mrs. Watson with a single cow and some worn-out furniture. Touched by the sad spectacle, the purchaser permitted her to stay in the house until she could find another place. It was a fine farm and worth \$10,000, but it brought barely enough to cover the mortgage.

New Quarters.
Mrs. Watson found a little house on the West Side into which she moved. The poor old grandmother was heartbroken, but she only sighed patiently and took up life again in the new home. Elizabeth's earnings, a cash gift in a department store, formed the main support of the family. In two weeks it would be Christmas, and also 10 years since Jimmy went out into the world. His mother rarely spoke of him now; indeed, she thought him dead, as he had never written.

My story turns now to the absent one. As he left the old home that winter night, so long ago, his youthful blood hot with anger, Jimmy turned and looked back at the house where he had spent 10 happy years, and he was tempted to return. But the remembrance of his father's severity overcame the impulse, and he went on down the road to Portland. Next morning he took a steamer passage on the steamer for San Francisco.

There he worked at whatever he could find to do. He was a resolute lad, not afraid of work, and he was not discouraged at having to sleep on docks and in dry goods boxes. He sold papers and did all kinds of odd jobs. Sturdy, full of industry and pluck and absolutely honest, such a boy was bound to succeed. Finally he was employed as errand boy in a bank. By attending night school he acquired a business education, and was promoted at the bank to a clerkship. Then he went up higher, through thrift and industry.

One day the president called him into his private office and told him he wanted him to take charge of the important enterprise in Australia. Jimmy accepted at once, and was soon on his way to his new field of duty. This was but six years after he had left home, and he was still quite young. He had thought of going

home before starting on his mission, but the president gave him only time enough to catch the outgoing steamer. So he went away without a word. Although he had never written, he had not forgotten the old home. Its memories often held him from some downward plunge. Still he had not then forgiven his father.

But at last the Australian mission was successfully accomplished, and Jimmy was going home. He had become a member of the banking firm of —, at Sidney, and was able to buy the old homestead several times over. He timed his departure for Portland that he might reach home several weeks before Christmas. He never dreamed of the disaster which had come during his absence. He thought of the mother, the grandmother and the little sisters, as he had left them now nearly 10 years ago. He had, at last, forgiven his father, and he even thought that he himself had been too hasty and rash.

After the long absence, he was eager for the homecoming, and he pictured the pleasure of it, as he filled two new trunks with presents for father, mother, grandmother and sisters. The 10 years of separation were forgotten, and he thought of his sisters still as children. As he packed the presents he had bought for them into his trunk at the hotel, he considered how he should ask his father's forgiveness.

Changes of Years.

Arriving in Portland, Jimmy was surprised at the changes the years had made in the city. He stayed at a hotel that night; he did not know that there was a motor line to the old home. Next morning he learned of the improvement and boarded the Mount Scott car. He was picturing to himself how he would slip up behind mother and kiss her before she knew he was back, and how delighted the little sisters would be, when the motor man called out the name of the station where he was to get off.

Yes, there was the old home, but Jimmy's heart stood still, as he noted the silence and desolation of the place. He went around to the rear, finding there. No father, no mother, no sister. All was stillness. What did it mean? Were all dead? Was he left alone in the world?

While he was walking slowly back to the station, a stranger came along. From him Jimmy heard the story of the sale of the old place. He learned also that his mother and sisters had moved away to Portland, but where was not known, and for the first time he heard of his father's death. The stranger was an old resident, and he told Jimmy of the son who had run away from home 10 years before.

"A graceless scamp he must have been," said the stranger. "I knew him, but thought better of him than that."

Jimmy quickly formed his plan. He would buy the old home back, and on Christmas eve, would take his mother and sister out there. Returning to Portland, he had, by noon that day, redeemed the old homestead, paying an advance of \$2000 over the selling price for it. Then he spent nearly a week in hunting up his family.

Finds Elizabeth.
Dropping into a department store one day, he saw Elizabeth at one of the counters. He knew her at once, but she did not recognize him. He made a trifling purchase at her counter and subsequently discovered where she lived.

Meanwhile he quietly refurbished the old home, the neighbors thinking that the new owner was getting ready to move into it, and all the time he had not made himself known to his family. One night he went to their home and looked through the window at them, longing to rush in and take them into his arms, but the time had not come.

How to get them to the old place was a hard question. It was solved by his calling on an old resident of the neighborhood, Mr. Kelly. He, after recovering from his astonishment at his caller's story, undertook to have the family at his own home the day before Christmas.

When given the invitation, Mrs. Watson readily accepted. It would give them all an opportunity of seeing their old home, anyway. As they walked past it on their way to Mr. Kelly's house, they noted, with a pang, the changes which had been made. They saw how it had been repaired and refurbished, for the blinds were up, and they could get a view of the rooms. At the entrance of the large front parlor, near the fireplace, they even saw a big tree, beautifully decorated and seemingly loaded with gifts.

At the home of Mr. Kelly they were kindly greeted and spent the day with the old pioneer and his family. Memories of other Christmases filled their minds,

and Mrs. Watson found herself thinking sadly of the absent boy. Even Elizabeth had given up her cherished dream of his return. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Kelly took them over to look at the old home. The door was opened for the visitors by a young man, who invited them to inspect the premises.

Finally, after they had gone through all the rooms and were ready to depart, the young man stepped forward and uttered a single word, "Mother!"

Then the truth was revealed. Surely no happier gathering was ever known than that which greeted the homecoming of Jimmy.

Later the neighbors gathered in the restored home, and the Christmas tree gave of its plenty to the children among them. When the last guest had gone, Jimmy handed his mother a deed in fee simple for the old home place.

—ALICE M. WELLS.

FAMED LADDIES OF SONG

Some Facts About New York's Grace Church Boy Choir of Interest to Singers Elsewhere.

From the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, are recruited the boys—15 all told—who make up the choir of Grace Church, New York. Every time there is a vacancy in this famous choir, the fact becomes known all through the musical world, and anywhere from 50 to 100 applications for the position are filed.

A boy from Chicago or Boston, for example, wishing to apply, fills out a blank sent him and which has to be indorsed by some well-known musical authority in his city. If he is regarded favorably, and good character counts as much as good voice, he is asked to go to New York to have his voice tried. If he is successful, he is at once installed in the Choir House, which is situated just back of the church, and his life there is very much as it would be at boarding school. He has a small but pleasant room, which he can fix up with a few home things to make it cozy. There he pursues his secular, as well as his musical education, and he is made manly and robust through work in their own little gymnasium and in military drill, the choir forming a uniformed company which is regularly drilled twice a week by an Army officer.

Under No Expense.
With the exception of paying for his uniform, the choir boy is absolutely under no expense, and yet he does not feel that he is an object of charity, for he gives as well as receives. He gives his voice for the service of the church, and the church, in turn, takes care of him.

"Going through the door at the south transept of the church," says the New York Herald, in the course of a description of the Grace Church choir, "you find yourself in a fine old room, known as the 'Honor Room.' In this room, on the stonework around the door, you will find engraved several names, followed by inscriptions. Each one of these names represents an honor boy. So far but five names have been so perpetuated, and there is room for 10 more. One boy is selected each year for this high honor, and in making the selection, his studiousness and good behavior count quite as much as his musical worth."

"Of course, choir boys are often in demand for concerts and the like, and they sometimes command big pay. In such cases, provided it does not interfere with their church work, they are enabled to lay by quite a sum—though, often, to take them through college. Money made in this way is held in trust till the boy leaves the choir or is handed over to his parents."

Voices Change.
"The number of vacancies which may occur in the choir, of course, depends on how well the boys who are already in the choir get along. Every once in a while a boy's voice will suddenly change. These choir boys are pretty busy fellows. There are three services on Sunday and services every week day besides. Then, aside from their regular studies, there are daily vocal lessons, and many of them learn to play on the piano and the violin."

"Their daily routine is strict enough, though not at all harsh. They must rise at a certain time, and each hour of the day gives them some task to perform, with, of course, some time for rest and play."

"Little Town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie;
A boy, my deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by—
Yer in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light—
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight!"



Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And he took out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy
am I!"



"I think I hear the sleigh bells ringing—
The bells of Santa Claus!
It is, it is the sleigh bells ringing—
The bells of Santa Claus!
The bells of Santa Claus!
The bells of Santa Claus!"
—Rita Bill