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THE WEATHER

Oregon, Washington and Idaho—Rain.

WHO OWNS THE EARTH?

When "Coal Oil Johnny" bought all the champagne in New York and emptied it into a plunge bath, so that he might take a swim in the sparkling wine, he was by comparison a mean and penurious miser. The only real, genuine, open-handed and free-hearted spendthrift in the tides of time is the government of the United States. For instance:

When Jay Cooke and his colleagues were projecting the Northern Pacific railroad they took off their hats and made a bow to Congress.

"We're thinking of building to the Pacific Coast," they said. "Can't you give us a little help?"

"Why, certainly," the Congress replied enthusiastically. "Just take the state of New York and go to work."

"Oh!" said the railroad promoters in a pained voice, "is that all? Why, we really expected something substantial."

"Well," Congress answered, swelling with philanthropy and putting its hand into the public pocket "of course if you feel that way about it you can put Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Delaware on the string, too. Now run along and get busy."

Still the promoters stood and looked pathetically at that tender-hearted aggregation of statesmen.

"Why, certainly," sobbed Congress finally, vainly endeavoring to conceal its emotion, "we'll have the people lend you what money you need, too. Please don't look at us in that tone of voice any longer."

In other words, the land-grant of 47 millions of acres made as a free gift to the Northern Pacific Railroad Co. by the national Congress more than equals in extent the total area of the states of New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Delaware.

Up to 12 years ago Congress had given away the public domain to railroad and other corporations to the extent of 266,000,000 acres, a bit of territory the total area of France and Germany, two countries which support between them a population much greater than the whole population of the United States when the last census was taken.—Technical World Magazine.

THE DAY OF DAYS.

Christian civilization has set this day apart, happily, distinctively, universally; and the farther it gets from its blessed origin the more essential and potential it becomes to all classes of human society. Aside from the deep religious promptings of the season, it sends forth wider and richer inspirations to generosity and fellow-feeling, qualified and simplified by the experiences of the hundreds of years devoted to its indulgence. There is no day like it in the calendar of any country; it is peculiarly the season in which centers the kindliness of our nature, the gentlest promptings and warmest impulses of humanity; when the grosser things of life are forgotten and set aside, in deference to the call to happiness of which the Christmas season, of all others, is significant.

One profound reason for the sanctity and beauty of the holiday is its intimate and inseparable relation to the children. As they are the best and most innocent element we have to deal with, so the period given over to them, primarily, takes on the qualities suggested by their purity and joyousness, reflecting it back into the hearts and lives of the elders and making for the peace and pleasure of all.

Like all other good things, the season is made undue use of by those in search of a pretext for doing things they should not do; but even this license does not, in the least, disturb the real import and tendency of the hour. It is ours to make the most of, and fortunately, the most of us do make the most and the best of it, and are better for the observance. Christmas in Astoria should be a wonderful period considering the child life here to suggest its happiest exploitation; and it usually is; everyone laying aside the carking calls of business, or no business and all other dismal agencies in order not to mar the supreme claim of day, the light and joy of those whose own day it is!

TO BE DEPLORED.

The whole country deplores the turn that has been given to the labor controversy between the Federation of Labor and the Buck Stove & Range Company's suit, and the imprisonment of Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison, the leaders of that great body, for contempt. And there is a very general hope that President Roosevelt will ease the situation a bit by releasing these men and using his good offices to ameliorate the strain that is becoming all too tense.

We are not pleading any particular cause. We are simply anxious to see an abatement of these long drawn troubles and a better understanding between all elements concerned; this for the sake of labor itself, and its better employment and pay, and for the sake the business of the country at large; two reasons quite ample to inspire the wish.

To our thinking, the welfare of a couple of millions of workingmen is of infinitely greater concern than the status of a single business concern on the register of a labor union, and the opinion of a court on the subject, the largest and most vital issue being the organic prosperity of the people which is always disturbed and nimified as long as these contentions exist.

Last year the State of New York built 820 miles of good road. The New Yorkers are beginning to get back some of the $50,000,000 they voted for this laudable and profitable purpose.

Reckless stories about the Panama Canal have been unlucky ever since the United States took hold in that region. The simple facts have knocked out the yellow fraternity every time.

Vice-President Fairbanks may be appointed to a place on the commission for the study and improvement of the nation's waterways. This will also entitle him to a seat on the wagon with Judge Taft.

Among the needs of the farmers of Wisconsin, as reported by the Roosevelt Farm Commission, is "the promotion of theory of the intellectual understanding." What has Senator La Follette been doing all these years?

To be given away at the

.... BAKERONIAN ....

CHRISTMAS MATINEE

Every lady and child attending the matinee from now to Christmas will be given a coupon which will entitle them to a drawing on a free present. The presents will be displayed in the show window of the Bee Hive Store on Commercial street. Special matinee prizes for children from now till Christmas, 5c. Who are the lucky ones?

ADMISSION 10 CENTS - - - - - SEATS FREE

Three Cheers For Dear Old, Queer Old Santa Claus

Santa Claus on "The Limited"

By FRANK H. SWEET.

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THE Chicago Limited was pulling out of the Grand Central station in New York as Dr. Henry Van Valkenberg submitted his ticket to the gateman. He dashed through, pushing that indignant official to one side, made a leap for the railing of the last car of the train and a friendly brakeman dragged him "on board." Dr. Van Valkenberg smiled a little ruefully as he thanked the man and rubbed the aching surface of his hand. Then he pulled himself together, picked up the books and newspapers he had dropped and which the bystanders had enthusiastically hurled after him and sought his haven in the sleeping car.

"O-oh! Were you hurt?" said a voice behind him. "I was so 'fraid you were going to fall."

Dr. Van Valkenberg, who was a tall man of sixty, turned and looked down from his great height. At his feet stood a baby. At least she seemed a baby to him, although she was very dignified and wholly self possessed and fully four years old. She was looking up at him with dark brown eyes and was so delicious in her almost maternal solicitude that he smiled irrepressibly.

"WERE YOU HURT?"

"Why, no, thank you," he said. "I am not hurt. Didn't you see the kind man help me on to the car?"

"I'm very glad," she said, with dignity. "I was 'fraid he hurt you." She turned as she spoke and toddled into the section opposite his, where a plain but kindly faced elderly woman sat.

"Won't you come over and visit me?" he asked. "I am very lonely, and I have no one to take care of me."

She slid off the seat at once, with great alacrity.

"I'd like to," she said, "but I must ask Nana. I must always ask Nana now," she added, with dutiful emphasis, "'fore I do anything."

She laid her hand on the gloved fingers of the nurse as she spoke, and the woman opened her eyes, shot a quick glance at the man and nodded. She had not been asleep. Dr. Van Valkenberg rose and lifted his visitor to the seat beside him, where her short legs stuck out in uncompromising rigidity.

"I can take care of you," she said brightly. "I taked care of mamma a great deal, and I gave her her med'cin'."

"Very well," he said, with the smile women loved; "if you really are going to take care of me I must know your name. You see," he explained, "I might need you in the night to get me a glass of water or something. Just think how disappointed it would be if I should call you by the wrong name and some other little girl came!"

"You say funny things," she said contentedly. "But there isn't any other little girl in the car. I looked soon as I came in, 'cos I wanted one to play with. I like little girls. I like little boys, too," she added, with innocent expansiveness.

"Then we'll play I'm a little boy. You'd never believe it, but I used to be. You haven't told me your name."

"Hope," she said promptly. "Do you think it is a nice name?" She made the inquiry with anxious interest.

"I think Hope is the nicest name a little girl could have except one," he said. "The nicest little girl I ever knew was named Katharine. She grew to be a nice big girl, too, and has little girls of her own now, no doubt," he added, half to himself.

"Were you a little boy when she was a little girl?" asked his visitor.

"Oh, no; I was a big man, just as I am now. Her father was my friend, and she lived in a white house with an old garden where there were all kinds of flowers. She used to play there when she was a tiny baby, and I would carry her around and hold her high up so she could pull the apples and pears off the trees. When she grew larger I gave her a horse and taught her to ride. She seemed like my very own little girl, but by and by she grew up and became a young lady, and—well, she went away from me, and I never had another little girl."

"Did she go to heaven?" asked the little girl softly.

"Oh, dear, no!" answered the doctor, with brisk cheerfulness.

"Then why didn't she keep on being your little girl always?"

The doctor hesitated a moment. He was making the discovery that after many years old wounds can reopen and throb. No one had ever been brave enough to broach to him the subject of this single love affair which he was now discussing.

"Well, you see," he explained, "other boys liked her too. And when she became a young lady other men liked her. So finally—one of them took her away from me."

He uttered the last words wearily, and the sensitive atom at his side seemed to understand why. Her little hand slipped into his.

"Why didn't you ask her to please stay with you?" she persisted pityingly.

"I did," he told her. "But, you see, she liked the other man better."

"Oh-h-h!" The word came out long drawn and breathless. "I don't see how she possibly could."

There were such sorrow for the victim and scorn for the offender in the tone that, combined with the none too subtle compliment, it was too much for Dr. Van Valkenberg's self control. He threw back his gray head and burst into an almost boyish shout of laughter, which effectually cleared the atmosphere of sentimental memories.

DRAGGING CARTS AND WOOLLY LAMBS.

"Where are you going to hang up your stockings tonight?" he asked.

"I can't hang them up," she answered soberly. "Santa Claus doesn't travel on trains, Nana says."

"Nana is always right," said the doctor oracularly, "and of course you must do exactly as she says. But I heard that Santa Claus was going to get on the train tonight at Buffalo, and I believe that if he found a pair of small black stockings hanging from that section he'd fill them."

Her eyes sparkled.

"Then I'll ask Nana," she said. "And if she says I may hang them I will. But one," she added conscientiously, "has a teeny, weeny hole in the toe. Do you think he would mind that?"

He reassured her on this point and turned to the nurse.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I've taken a great fancy to your little charge, and I want your help to carry out a plan of mine. I have suggested to Hope that she hang up her stockings tonight. I have every reason to believe that Santa Claus will get on this train at Buffalo. In fact," he added, "I mean to telegraph him."

The nurse hesitated a moment. He drew his cardcase from his pocket and handed her one of the bits of pasteboard it contained.

"I have no evil designs," he added cheerfully. "If you are a New Yorker, you may possibly know who I am."

The woman's face lit up as she read the name. She turned toward him impulsively, with a very pleasant smile.

"Indeed I do, doctor," she said. "Who does not? Dr. Abbey sent for you last week," she added, "for a consultation over the last case I had—this child's mother. But you were out of town. We were all so disappointed."

"Patient died?" asked the physician, with professional brevity.

"Yes, doctor."

He rose from his seat.

"Now that you have my credentials," he said cordially, "I want you and Hope to dine with me. You will, won't you?"

Later, in the feverish excitement of hanging up her stockings, going to bed and peeping through the curtains to catch Santa Claus, a part of Hope's extraordinary repose of manner deserted her, but she fell asleep at last, with great reluctance.

"I'LL BE YOUR OWN LITTLE GIRL."

When the curtains round her berth had ceased trembling a most unusual procession wended its silent way toward Dr. Van Valkenberg's section. In some occult manner the news had gone from one end to the other of the "limited" that a little girl in section 9, car Florodora, had hung up her stockings for Santa Claus. The hearts of fathers, mothers and doting uncles responded at once. Dressing cases were unlocked, great valises were opened, mysterious bundles were unwrapped, and from all these sources came gifts of surprising fitness.

A succession of long drawn, ecstatic breaths and happy gurgles awoke the passengers on the car Florodora at an unseemly hour Christmas morning, and a small white figure, clad informally in a single garment, danced up and down the aisle, dragging carts and woolly lambs behind it. Occasionally there was the squeak of a talking doll, and always there were the patter of small feet and soft cooing of a child's laughter. Dawn was just approaching, and the lamps, still burning, flared pale in the gray light. But in the length of that car there was no soul so base as to long for silence and the pillow. Crabbed old faces looked out between the curtains and smiled. Eyes long unused to tears felt a sudden, strange moisture.

Throughout the day the snow still fell, and the outside world seemed far away and dreamlike to Dr. Van Valkenberg. The real things were this train, cutting its way through the snow, and this little child, growing deeper into his heart with each moment that passed. The situation was unique, but easy enough to understand, he told himself. He had merely gone back twenty-five years to that other child whom he had petted in infancy and loved and lost in womanhood. He had been very lonely—how lonely he had only recently begun to realize—and he was becoming an old man whose life lay behind him. He crossed the aisle suddenly and sat down beside the nurse, leaving Hope singing her doll to sleep in his section.

"Will you tell me all you know about the child?" he asked. "She appeals to me very strongly, probably because she's so much like some one I used to know."

The nurse closed her book and looked at him curiously. She had heard much of him, but nothing would explain this interest in a strange child. He himself could not have explained it. He knew only that he felt it powerfully and compellingly.

"Her name is Hope Armitage," she said. "Her mother, who has just died, was a widow, Mrs. Katharine Armitage. They were poor, and Mrs. Armitage seemed to have no relatives. She had saved a little, enough to pay most of her expenses at the hospital. We all loved the woman. She was very unusual and patient and charming. All the nurses who had anything to do with her cried when she died. We felt that she might have been saved if she had come in time, but she was worked out. She had earned her living by sewing after her husband's death three years ago, and she kept at it day and night. She was so sweet, so brave, yet so desperately miserable over leaving her little girl alone in the world."

Dr. Van Valkenberg sat silent. It was true, then. This was Katharine's child. He had not known of the death of Armitage nor of the subsequent poverty of his widow, but he had known Katharine's baby, he now told himself, the moment he saw her.

"Well," the nurse resumed, "after she died we raised a small fund to buy some clothes for Hope and take her to Chicago to her new home. Mrs. Armitage has a cousin there who has agreed to take her in. None of the relatives came to the funeral. There are not many of them, and the Chicago people haven't much money, I fancy."

Dr. Van Valkenberg was hardly surprised. Life was full of extraordinary situations, and his profession had brought him face to face with many of them. Nevertheless a deep solemnity filled him, and a strange peace settled over him.

"I want her," he said briefly. "Her mother and father were old friends of mine, and this thing looks like fate. Will they give her to me—these Chicago people—do you think?"

Tears filled the woman's eyes.

"Indeed they will," she said, "and gladly. There was"—she hesitated—"there was even some talk of sending her to an institution before they finally decided to take her. Dear little Hope! How happy she will be with you!"

He left her and went back to the seat where Hope sat crooning to the doll. Sitting down, he gathered them both up in his arms, and a thrill shot through him as he looked at the yellow curls resting against his breast. Her child—her little, helpless baby—now his child to love and care for! He was not a religious man. Nevertheless a prayer rose spontaneously in his heart.

"Hope," he said gently, "once long ago I asked a little girl to come and live with me, and she would not come. Now I want to ask you to come and stay with me always and be my own little girl and let me take care of you and make you happy. Will you come?"

The radiance of June sunshine broke out upon her face and shone in the brown eyes upturned to his. How well he knew that look! Hope did not turn toward Nana, and that significant omission touched him deeply. She seemed to feel that here was a question she alone must decide. She drew a long breath as she looked up at him.

"Really, truly?" she asked. Then, as he nodded without speaking, she saw something in his face that was new to her. It was nothing to frighten a little girl, for it was very sweet and tender, but for one second she thought her new friend was going to cry. She put both arms around his neck and replied softly, with the exquisite maternal cadences her voice had taken on in her first words to him when she entered the car:

"I'll be your own little girl, and I'll take care of you too. You know, you said I could."

Dr. Van Valkenberg turned to the nurse.

"I shall go with you to her cousin's from the train," he announced. "I'm ready to give them all the proofs they need that I'm a suitable guardian for the child, but," he added, with a touch of the boyishness that had never left him, "I want this matter settled now."

The long train pounded its way into the station at Chicago, and Dr. Van Valkenberg summoned a porter.

"Take care of these things," he said, indicating both sets of possessions with a sweep of his arm. "I shall have my hands full with my little daughter."

He gathered her into his arms as he spoke, and she nestled against his broad chest with a child's unconscious satisfaction in the strength and firmness of his clasp.

SHE NESTLED AGAINST HIS BROAD CHEST.

"Merry Christmas!" sounded on every side. Everybody was absorbed and excited, yet there were few who did not find time to turn a last look on a singularly attractive little child held above the crowd in the arms of a tall man. She was laughing triumphantly as he bore her through the throng, and his heart was in his eyes as he smiled back at her.

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