

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

By W. H. PIERCE

**T**HAT, new, idea to Hepple," said Happy Brown, as he got up from his easy chair to wind the clock and put out the cat and lock the back door. "Listen to me. It's two days now till Christmas. Look at that lot of packages over there on the sofa that I've got to play Santa Claus on. Think of the piles and piles of bundles we've sent out already; big bundles and little bundles, to Jim's folks and John's folks, Sairy's folks and Mandy's folks, the preacher, the orphan's home, the old folks, the washwoman and the neighbors. It's got so that Christmas is a nightmare.

Accordingly the next morning Hepple and Happy Brown started out on their last shopping tour before Christmas. As they turned the corner of the main street they came upon two children, a boy and a girl, poorly clad, who stood with their noses pressed against the window of a small shop, wherein were displayed a few cheap dolls and toys. They were so impressed in their inspection of these articles that they did not notice the man and woman who stopped behind them and listened to their childish prattle.

"There's a Noah's ark," said the boy. "The baby could play with that a lot. There's animals inside, and it she'd play with one at a time it would seem like new toys all the time." "Yes, but there ain't no dolly in there," said the girl. "She wants a dolly. How much money you got, Billy?"

Carefully drawing his hands from his pants pocket, the boy opened his fingers and slowly counted the few pieces of change in his palm. "Thirty-two cents, Bissy. I haven't too any of it." "Thirty-two cents! My, that's a lot of money! A lot of money, Billy, and it took a long time to earn it and save it. But—but somehow it isn't going to buy much, is it, Billy?"

"No, but thirty-two cents is better than nothing." "Well, then, you could get the Noah's ark; that's only twenty-five cents. Then you'd still have money left—how much, Billy?" "Fifteen and ten, that's twenty-five," carefully separating a dime and three nickels from the rest of the little pile. "See, Bissy, that leaves only seven cents to get something for you."

"For me! Ho! Never mind, m... I don't want anything. I can dress the dolly, you know, and play it's mine when the baby's asleep. Maybe we can find something for mother. Oh, Billy, if we could get one of those green wreaths with the red berries—wouldn't it be lovely?"

"Mother needs stockings more than anything else. Besides, the green wreaths cost more than seven cents, apiece, I'm afraid. Come on; let's go in and see what they have got." "Wait a minute," said Happy Brown, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Where do you children live?"

"The boy's hand closed tightly on the few pieces of money. "Back on the next street, near the elevator," said Happy, as he took the boy's hand. "I want to see you; mother and the baby." "It ain't much of a place, mister. And mother's washing, I guess. She's most always in."

"Never mind that. Come on, Hepple," turning to his wife, who was just behind, with the girl's hand in hers. Their stay there was not long, but was momentous for Billy's mother and her little brood. Happy Brown had made Billy wildly happy by placing a dollar in his hand and another in Sissy's, and telling them to go on with their Christmas shopping. He had left a yellow-bagging bill on the table under a plate. As he and Hepple turned the corner he pulled out a notebook and noted down as he muttered to himself: "Coal, blankets, potatoes, canned goods, apples—here, Hepple, take this money and get things for those children. You know what they want. I'm getting a few things that they need."

"Yes, but, Happy, I thought you'd worn out." "Hepple Brown, this doesn't count. This is an investment." "An investment!" "The most and most satisfactory investment there is, Happy. It's that gift to the poor lent to the Lord." (Ch. 155, Western Newspaper Union.)

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