

The Tramp

ON THE

Park Bench

A Christmas Story by
ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS

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It was Christmas night, and the Philanthropists' club was holding its usual celebration of the festival. The Christmas dinner had arrived at the stage of the demi-tasse and remarks.

Naturally the president was the first to speak.

"Reynolds," said he, indicating by the gesture of a massive hand the member of the club situated on his left, "you may relate your experience last night in helping the poor. According to our agreement, if you remember, we were to expend a certain amount in charity on Christmas eve, not only for the purpose of giving immediate relief so far as our funds went, but in order to ascertain something of the extent of the poverty existing in this great city of New York, in which we live."

The club members, among whom was an artist rendered somewhat con-



"MY GOOD MAN, HOW COME YOU TO BE HERE?"

spicuous by the length of his locks and the exceeding breadth of his soft black tie, lit their cigars as Reynolds rose.

"It was snowing," he began.
"Skip all that," hastily put in a newspaper man. "Of course, if it was Christmas eve, it was snowing."

"The hapless outcasts in the park had ranged themselves as nearly as possible according to the tree branches; but, being large in number, they overlapped them, some to the length of two branches or more, so that these sat unprotected from the snow, which softly soaked them."

The newspaper man raised his hand admonishingly.

"Will you permit me, Mr. President," interrupted he, "to suggest that all description be eliminated? Otherwise we'll be sitting here in broad daylight."

"It may be as well," assented the president suavely, "to omit descriptions of scenery, for, as the gentleman has just stated, it may have the effect of detaining us longer than is absolutely necessary."

Reynolds, reaching for a glass of water, wet his lips before he began again.

"I buttoned my overcoat to the throat," he said then, "for the wind was raw and keen, and walked up to the first tramp I came to. He sat near the fountain on the corner seat of a long bench. I touched him gently on the sleeve and said to him:

"My good man, how come you to be here?"

The newspaper man leaned forward absorbedly, his eyes aglaze.

"Were those your exact words?" he inquired in so rapt a manner that the president once more let fall the fork.

Reynolds, glancing the question, sought in several pockets for a pocket handkerchief, and, finding one at length, delicately mopped his lids.

"The story he told," he stammered, "would have brought tears to the eyes of the coldest hearted."

"It was not so different from the usual run of such stories," faltered Reynolds. "He had seen better days; he had not always been obliged to sleep in a park, etc.; he had a wife and two children; he had been unable to support them; they were all three with his wife's mother. As I say, it was not so much the story as his manner of telling it. It affected you beyond description. It couldn't help but affect you. I took a five dollar bill from my vest pocket and thrust it into his hand."

"And then," queried the president, "what did he do?"

"He became so deeply affected," returned Reynolds, "that I whirled about and left him, unwilling to witness the

self-dramatizing nature of his gratitude."

He sat down. The artist coughed lightly, covered his mouth with his hand a moment, refit his cigar, which had gone quite out, and blew the smoke to the ceiling.

The president motioned to his neighbor to rise. His name was Caruthers. He secured his listeners attentively, frowning as he talked.

"My experience," said he, "resembled to a certain degree that of my friend Reynolds there. I must have visited the same park. Union park, was it?"

"Yes," replied Reynolds; "Union park."

"I circled the fountain," he went on, "and proceeded to a long bench, where I stopped near a sleek looking individual who in spite of the steady fall of snow sat napping there. I tapped him on the shoulder, roused him from his sleep and asked his story. It was rambling, as that related by Reynolds. He had seen better days. Most of us have. He had not always slept in parks. Few have. And, like Reynolds' tramp, he had a wife and two children, whom he had been obliged long before to send home to the wife's mother. Like the story of Reynolds' tramp, there was nothing out of the ordinary with the exception of the manner in which he stammered and shook telling 't."

At this point Caruthers appeared to experience some little difficulty in articulating. When he had recovered, "Really," he finished, "it was distressing; most distressing. It grieved me deeply. I thrust a five dollar bill into his hand and hurried away."

He had hardly time to resume his seat when three members of the club rose simultaneously.

"There's some fraud about this," they cried. "We went together. We saw the same man. He had the same wife and two children who were living with the same old mother-in-law."

"We were so distressed we gave him \$5 apiece, and that made fifteen good old solid dollars between us."

They flung themselves back in their chairs and gazed in an excited and indignant way from one face to another in search of some reasonable explanation of the phenomenon.

The newspaper man suddenly stood. It was as if he had just waked up.

"Was he tall and thin?" he questioned. "Did he wear a shaggy red beard, long hair, an old shawl hat and a ragged gray overcoat out at the elbows and fringed with a mighty fringe around the bottom? I say, were his shoes old, and did he go barefooted in the snow?"

"Yes, yes," answered the rest in a chorus, "all that, and more."

"Then," declared the newspaper man, "I too, took out a five dollar bill and made him a present of it." And, falling limply back in his chair, he took to tapping the arm of it with impatient fingers.

The artist had slipped out of the room.

After a period he returned, transformed.

His beard was shaggy and red, his shoes were worn at the toes and down the heels, his hat was one of the



"THAT," SHOUTED TEN VOICES, "IS THE MAN!"

slouch variety, and his overcoat was gray and long and so fringed at the hem as to assume the appearance of having been fringed intentionally.

Ten fingers pointed at him.

"That," shouted ten voices, "is the man!"

The artist bent a humble and apologetic head.

"Yes," acknowledged he, "I am the man."

"But you are a member of the club," they stormed. "You knew all about our plan of relieving the poor. You had part of the money yourself. Why did you take ours?"

The artist shrugged weary shoulders. He spread out two deprecating hands.

"I am an artist," he explained simply. "I needed it."

Federated Church is Formed Here

One of the best religious meetings ever held in this county occurred at Scio Monday night says the Albany Democrat, when members of the congregations of the Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian and Methodist churches and other scattering denominations met to form a federated church. The step was one in complete accord with common sense, and Scio, unlike so many other communities will now have one strong church instead of several very inefficient congregations as formerly.

Sunday night Rev E. H. Edgar, an evangelist, and his singer, Mr. Stockton, closed a most successful two weeks evangelistic campaign and added 36 converts to the side of Christianity. At the Sunday meeting it was voted to hold a business meeting Monday night to form an organization. Two auto loads of Albany people came over and participated in one of the best meetings they ever attended. The meeting was marked by harmony, enthusiasm and accord in everything.

Rev G. H. Young of Albany presided as chairman of the meeting. Among the speakers were A. C. Schmitt, Rev Young, G. W. Rorbaugh, and Rev W. L. Hayes of the Eugene Bible University. Mr. Stockton again pleased the congregation with his beautiful solos.

After the discussion a federated church was organized with 35 charter members and at least twice that number will be enrolled within the next few days. Seven trustees were elected, articles of faith were adopted, and basis for membership agreed upon, besides other business being transacted. A capable pastor is now being sought and the prospects for a fine church in a country town were never brighter.

For the present either the old Baptist or Christian church will be used far a meeting place.

RESOLUTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

Hall of Richardson Gap Local No. 102, F. E. & C. U. of A.

Whereas: The Great Ruler of the Universe has removed from our local one of our lady members, Mrs. Charlotte Peery, by the messenger of death, we bow our heads in sorrow as we submit to the mandates of Him, who holds the destinies of us all as balances in His hands; and patiently submit to this, "His will be done."

This local has lost a valuable member, the community a kind and obliging neighbor, and the children a kind, loving and affectionate mother, represented in the synonyms of the three most sacred words in the language of earth, "Mother, Home and Heaven." As long as our heads are cool and our hearts are warm we will cherish the memory of her as a sister in our Union.

May her children keep in sweet memory that sacred name, Mother, the light and life given by her in the home in which they were raised. Hoping that the heaven she sought, shall be theirs, and ours, for evermore, when we pass that way.

Sister, Mother, thou wast lovely, Gentle as the summer breeze, Gentle as the air of evening When it floats among the trees.

Peaceful be thy silent slumber, In thy lonely grave so low, Thou no more shall join our number, Thou no more our sorrows know.

While dear Mother, thou hast left us, Here thy loss we deeply feel, But 'tis God who hath bereft us, And He will all our sorrows heal.

For again we hope to meet thee, When our cares of life hath fled; Then in heaven our spirits greet thee, Where all farewell tears have fled.

Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be placed upon the records of our local and printed in the Santiam News.

Respectfully submitted,

S. W. Gaines,
Willson Richardson,
Geo. L. Sutherland,
Committee.

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Don'ts

Don't hang that cow hide or sheep pelt on the fence. Bring it to the Scio Produce Co. and get a top price for it.

New Year's Dance

A New Year's dance will be given at the Richardson Gap hall by the Bohemian Societies on Friday, December 31. Dance will continue all night. Oyster supper will be served at midnight. Everybody is cordially invited.

By the Committee.

Look over our list of clubbing offers on page 2, and if you don't see what you want come in and talk it over. We have many others just as good.