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KATHRYN'S
CHRISTMAS
TIE

by DAISY WRIGHT FIELD

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ONE, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Kathryn counted twice on her slim brown fingers, and each time she sighed a doleful sigh. "Seven unlooked for guests coming to eat Christmas dinner with us and not a sign of any Christmas dinner or of the where-withal to procure it. There isn't a thing but bacon and potatoes and turnips in the house unless it is an onion or two."

"You forget the squash, Kathryn," mildly interposed her brother Tom, with mock serious visage and dancing eyes.

Kathryn, fresh from boarding school, had attempted an elaborate and ultra-scientific garden the summer before with tangible results in the form of a single well grown squash, drought, ill management and various pests having played havoc with the other things.

Kathryn's dreams of a tidy income from the sale of fresh vegetables and of a possible prize at the fall fair vanished into thin air. But the squash was tenderly borne to the cellar by Tom and carefully guarded as a memento of Kathryn's brave if futile attempt to stave off the evil day when the dreaded mortgage, like a dark bird of prey, should swoop down and carry off the little home.

Kathryn was considered a very clever girl at boarding school and by all her long friends at home. She could paint strange birds that a naturalist would have been at a loss to classify and flowers unknown to the science of botany, do fancy sewing and marvelous embroidery and write charming verse, though, alas, the editors were surprisingly obtuse to the latter fact! Besides which she was able to talk volubly in French and could rattle off some lively two steps and schottisches on the piano—if she had possessed such an instrument.

But none of these accomplishments were exchangeable for coin of the realm in the little country village on the outskirts of which they lived, and as they had only Tom's meager salary as a grocer's clerk to fall back on, it soon came to pass that shabby garments and the plainest of plain fare were the order of the day, in their household. Kathryn's fingers itched to help her brother bear the burden of support. She longed to add her mite to the family income, but as yet had not struck her "niche." She did not know quite enough to teach, and there was no vacancy in either of the two village dry goods stores.

On this Christmas eve there was less than a dollar in the house, and besides herself, her mother and Tom, they had received notice that seven guests would be with them for the Christmas holiday—distant relatives, who had standing invitations to "come up to our house for Christmas sometime," and who by a coincidence had chosen the same date to accept the invitation. There was Aunt Mattie and her twin boys, Cousin Wilbur and his new wife, Aunt Sue and Uncle Hiram—quite a tableful at any time, and certainly an enormous crowd to be provided with Christmas dainties with a fund of less than a dollar.

It began to look as if they must break their rigid rule never to go in debt, even for the necessities of life, and ask the village grocer to trust them, a very humiliating alternative.

After Tom's brilliant remark, which she had been expected to take as a rarely humorous hit, Kathryn gazed at him admiringly for a moment.

"You think you're funny, Tom Wrennet, but you're not," she told him. "Squash pie will be a grateful addition to our boiled potatoes and turnips and onions and other Christmas dainties. Surely no one can say that I blistered my fingers and freckled my nose in vain over that garden, since its one and lonely product is to feed the Christmas guest."

"Never mind, children," broke in their mother, laying down the letter that had just come from Aunt Mattie, announcing the arrival on the morning train of herself and her twin boys, "we can at least do our best to make our guests feel at home and try to enjoy their visit. It is hard not to be able to entertain them as they have us in the past, but what can't be cured, you know, must be endured."

"Mother's a brick!" exclaimed impulsive Tom. "And I move that we tender her a vote of thanks for her little Christmas speech." Whereupon he gave her a rousing kiss and a bear hug and went out into the yard and down into the cellar after the squash.

When he came up from the depths of the darksome cellar to where Kathryn stood expectantly waiting, he dropped limply on to an upturned box near by and fanned himself weakly with his old hat. He opened his mouth twice in a vain and apparently desperate attempt to speak and then subsided into silence.

"Tom Wrennet," demanded his sister, giving him an impatient shake. "drop your nonsense and speak. What's the matter?"

"It's—it's gone!" gasped Tom, quite as if "it" had been a diamond neck lace instead of a warty and plebeian vegetable.

"Gone?" echoed his sister incredulously. "Who would steal a squash? Light the lantern and come with me. It is never worth while to waste time

sending little boys on errands," with a magnificent disregard of the fact that Tom was three years her senior.

Tom obediently procured the lantern from the woodshed, and together they explored the cellar. She had spent a lot of time there when she had first returned from boarding school digging about with the vain hope of locating grandfather Kane's money. He had come to make his home with them a few weeks previous to his death from old age only the year before, and once they had caught him playing with a handful of gold pieces as a child would amuse himself with a lot of pebbles. He had quickly hidden them from sight, however, with his nervous, childish laugh, and though he sometimes babbled of his "treasure" and his "fortune" no one ever saw them again.

Once Kathryn had surprised him coming out of the cellar with a shovel in his hand, the damp earth still clinging to it, and he had slipped away guiltily. After his death she remembered the incident and surmised that he had buried his money in there for safe keeping. It could not be much, of course, not more than \$100 or so, but that would be a fortune to them in their present straitened circumstances, and she felt it no wrong to the dead man, who had been but little more than a child, to unearth the money and put it to good use, for it did no one any good in its hiding place.

But months of vain searching had dispelled the hope of ever finding it, if it had been concealed there, and now she gazed a little disdainfully at the deep holes and heaps of dirt which marked her former efforts. Suddenly she underwent a revulsion of feeling. The little excavations and corresponding mounds of earth seemed to her overwrought mind symbolical of her constant effort and constant failure to be of use to herself or those she loved.

"Oh, Tom!" she moaned, burying her face in his coat sleeve and trying to smother her sobs. "I wish I could do something—anything—to help you. It's a shame you and Betty have to put off your wedding just because you have us to take care of, and me young

and strong. Just as soon as Christmas is over I am going to try to get a place to do common housework. I just can't stand for you to have to bear all the burden."

"Hush, little sister!" Tom drew her close, with big brotherly sympathy. "It hasn't quite come to that yet, and you mustn't think of leaving home. You are not strong enough for such work."

Drying her eyes as best she could she began looking around for the squash. She found it at last—it had only rolled into one of the holes that she had dug near the wall. Tom held the lantern near and she pulled it out of the hole, in doing which she dislodged the earth from the wall above and down came a rain of damp dirt. With down came a small glass jar which had evidently been imbedded in the wall.

With a wild cry Kathryn seized it and held it up to the light of the lantern.

"Money!" she gasped. "Gold pieces and greenbacks. Grandfather's fortune. Tom! Come upstairs, quick! Never mind the squash!"

A moment later she poured the money into her astonished mother's lap and was counting it over, trembling with joy and excitement.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven," she counted as she laid down the money in the evening, only this time there was no frown on her face. "Seven hundred dollars—a hundred for each guest! Surely that ought to feed 'em, guess! Surely that ought to feed 'em, guess! Was there ever such luck? Why, Tom, it will pay the mortgage and give you a best egg in the bank, and we can have mince pie, and now you can marry Betty, and we can have her to dinner tomorrow and a big fat turkey, and we won't have to go in debt, and we'll stuff the turkey with oysters and we'll stuff the turkey in Aunt Mattie's room, 'cause the old one's disgraceful, and have plum pudding and cranberry sauce!"

And then she collapsed for want of breath and hid her face on Tom's shoulder and burst into tears. But a moment later she looked up to smile triumphantly through her tears and say:

"There, now, Tom Wrennet! What if I hadn't raised that squash?"

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* * * SANTA'S CALL * * *

By JAMES A. EDGERTON

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WHEN Bobby wrote to Santa Claus,
Inviting him to call,
Bob's mother said that Santa would
If Bobby only would be good,
Which is the way that mothers should
Reply to urchins small
Who write a note to Santa Claus,
Expecting him to call.

When Santa Claus got Bobby's note,
He chuckled quite a lot;
Down at his typewriter he sat
And wrote an answer, saying that
He'd love to call and have a chat,
He'd be there on the dot;
For somehow Bobby's little note
Had hit his tender spot.

I know not why a typewriter
Was put to such a use.
To answer thus a social note
Would get 'most anybody's goat.
For rank, bad form it has my vote;
'Twas socially obtuse;
But Santa is a busy man
And that was his excuse.

On Christmas Santa Claus dropped in,
Down through the chimney flue.
He told such tales of land and sea
That Bobby often murmured "Gee!"
And Bobby's sister laughed in glee—
I'm sure that you would, too;
And if you'd write to Santa Claus,
Perhaps he'd call on you.

PUSSY AND THE
CHRISTMAS TURKEY

FROM the moment the kitten knew anything he was aware he was a beauty. His father and mother were lovely, long haired Angoras.

Although so good looking, he was a very spoiled and ill mannered kitten. His mother and father said in his hearing that with his looks he could do as he liked.

One day, when the kitten was about three months old, a telegram came to the house where he lived. It said, "Send little Angora to Miss Nellie Dale, Fifth Avenue, New York."

The butler came to with a box, put the unsuspecting kitten in and nailed down the lid.

What followed is too confusing to tell. There was much rattling over rough streets, much jolting over tracks, much shrieking of engines, much bumping against boxes. At last it was over. The box was carried into a warm, softly lighted room. A child's voice was heard exclaiming: "For me! Why, I wonder what it can be."

A tiny mew soon told her, and in a few minutes the kitten was out of its prison and tightly snuggled in the arms of a little girl. A saucer of milk was soon lapped up, and pussy's life in his new home began.

Nellie named her new pet Bizzard because he was white and soft like drifted snow.

Bizzard thought this name all right, but did not for an instant mean to answer to it. He had never learned to mind or do anything else but he could get. He knew everything he could get. He knew an expensive case because he would play tag with himself on the parlor carpet. He counted up the handsome new curtains at the hall windows with the result that they soon looked like streamers. He cried all the time people were eating, waiting meat and other things not good for kittens.

Twice the night before Christmas, and the servants were busy preparing for the big dinner tomorrow.

All the relatives were invited, and Bizzard, the rock, knew that the only way to have her dinner on time was to get things ready for it the day before.

She had just got the big turkey out and picked it clean of pinfeathers. She put it in the poultry while she graded bread with which to stuff it.

Company came in, and Bizzard did not get her turkey fixed as she had hoped. She went to bed, setting her alarm for 5 o'clock, expecting to stuff the turkey before breakfast. When bedtime came no Bizzard was to be found.

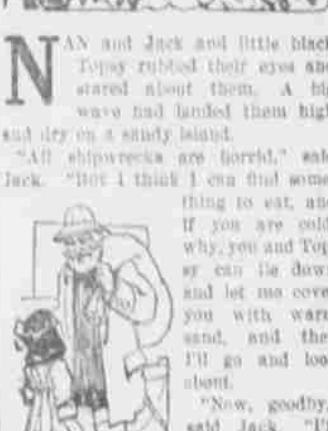
The household was awakened at 5 in the morning by a scream from Bizzard, which brought the family to the kitchen all armed and expecting to see a burglar. They found Bizzard in a faint on the floor of the poultry, and beside her was the big turkey. On looking closer and hearing Bizzard blabber with joy, "The cat," all eyes turned to look for the cat. No one could locate him, until a smothered cry resounded from the middle of the turkey. Nellie poked in and saw Bizzard's head sticking out where the stuffing is usually packed in. He was looking out. His nose was stuck and Bizzard, and his stomach was full of the stuffing in the turkey. He was not alone in the turkey, after he had dined off the new little bird.

Think he had dined in the main dry until he should thoroughly repeat another turkey had to be prepared and Bizzard was forgotten until the day after Christmas. When Nellie went to take him out of his prison in such went with her.

"Will you ever do such a naughty thing again Bizzard?" she asked him. Bizzard looked right at her and said "Mew."

"Mew," said Bizzard; "he says he never will, Bizzard."

Bizzard answered, "I guess that now means he will never do such a thing again—this Christmas."

A SANTA CLAUS
FROM THE SEA

NAN and Jack and little black Topsy rubbed their eyes and stared about them. A big wave had landed them high and dry on a sandy island.

"All shipwrecks are horrid," said Jack. "But I think I can find something to eat, and if you are cold, why, you and Topsy can lie down and let me cover you with warm sand, and then I'll go and look about."

"Now, goodby," said Jack. "I'm going to look for food." And he marched off like a man, with his hands in his pockets.

"Topsy," said Nan after he had gone, "do you know it is the day before Christmas and we won't get a single present tomorrow?"

But Topsy was not despondent. "What's do matter wid Marse Santa Claus?" she demanded. "Ain't he comin' to dis island? Dat's what I ask."

"Why, Topsy," explained little Nan patiently, "how could he? His reindeer couldn't cross the water."

"Let him come in a boat, den. Dat's what I say. Let him come in a boat," said Topsy fervently.

"Oh," said Nan, "but I am afraid he can't."

Suddenly Topsy sat up and pointed a skinny black finger toward the sea. "It's a boat," she said, "a little boat, and it's coming here."

Nearer and nearer came the little boat, and presently Topsy shrieked: "It's Marse Santa Claus, Miss Nannie, it's Marse Santa Claus, and he's comin' straight to dis yer island. Didn't I tell yer? Didn't I tell yer he'd come?"

The man in the boat had a nice white beard. He had on a red sweater and wore a soft hat pulled well down over his ears. As he climbed out of the boat they saw that he was very round and fat and had a jolly red face.

When he had pulled the boat up out of the water he leaned over and picked up a great bag and slung it over his shoulder and came trotting up the beach.

"It truly is Santa," said Nan breathlessly, "and he is coming straight toward us. I am going to run right down and meet him."

Away she sped, her golden curls flying behind her, and when she reached the old man she slipped her hand into his confidently.

"I'm awfully glad you came, Santa," she said. "We were so frightened and lonely, and maybe you can tell us what to do."

The old man stood still and stared at her. Then he chuckled. "Well, well!" he said. "Where did you come from?"

Just then Jack came running down the beach. "It's Santa Claus," called Nan as soon as he was within hearing.

But Jack was older than Topsy and Nan, and he had his doubts. "Are you really Santa Claus?" he asked gravely. "The old man winked. 'Don't I look like him?'" he said.

"Yes," said Jack, "you do."

"Ain't I got a pack on my back?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jack, "but it looks like potatoes and not toys."

Then the old man leaned down and whispered in his ear: "That's 'cos what it is, but if them little devils wants to think I'm Santa, why, let 'em think it. It won't hurt anybody, will it?"

"No," said Jack, "it won't."

"Well, then," said he, "that being decided, we will go and have dinner."

"Hiccup!" said Jack, in surprise. "Why, where do you live?"

"Follow me," said the man, and they trotted gaily after him.

Away among the sand hills they came suddenly upon a little house. Within was a glowing fire, and a great pot was bubbling on the stove, and each of the little folk had a hot bowl of soup and a big piece of bread, and when they had finished their supper they

"Now bring up your stockings!" said their host, "and go to bed."

How the old man found things to do! Those stockings were a wonderful find for Nan, a pair of Chinese slippers for Jack and a Japanese doll for Topsy. Then he filled up the corners with beautiful shells and with little boxes of dried fruit and with things as nature put up in many varieties.

Such a jolly Christmas morning as it was! The children were delighted with their gifts and afterward Santa showed them over to the mainland and put them on the road for home.