



ON THE THIRD CHRISTMAS

By MARION F. RITTENHOUSE

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YOU are earlier than necessary," remarked Aunt Elsie as I appeared at 10:30 on the night of the third Christmas...

head reprovingly, even as she gazed over the solitaire that I slipped on Elsie's white hand.

"You would better have saved your money. Remember, this is the third Christmas, and I don't believe you will find the hiding place."

"Then we will be married right away," I said. "Please bear in mind I now have a salary with which to propitiate the wolf when he howls at our door."

"And so have I, thanks to dear old uncle!" cried Elsie.

Aunt Elsie, by the way, is neither Elsie's aunt nor mine. Elsie and I are, or, rather, were, the wards of Aunt Elsie's brother, Judge Breen, who died more than three years ago...

My Dear, Irresponsible Children—I have, as Mr. Patterson will tell you, converted my entire estate, with the exception of the old home, into money, which I wish you, Gilbert and Elsie, to share equally.

Now, I will remind you that I have always earnestly deplored the idle, frivolous pursuits which have occupied you and desired you both to make some useful occupation, but you have lamented and flibbled away the time, and thus I have allowed you to grow up without the ability to earn a penny.

Elsie, your artistic daubs and, Gilbert, your long winded poems are all very well for a harmless pastime, but you can neither eat, drink nor wear them. Moreover, it is a disgrace for any able-bodied person to be without the knowledge of some useful vocation.

I suppose that I am to blame for not training the artistic Tommyrot out of you, but I loved you both far too well to exact obedience from you. I now am determined to atone for my weakness as far as lies within my power. I have decided

that you must both acquire a vocation and have chosen my own, telegraphy, for you. My best and happiest days were spent in a lonely little station in Arizona.

You are to master this thoroughly. No mere smattering will answer. You are to prove your ability by securing and acceptably filling positions. You are to begin your studies at once.

Then in memory of me I ask you both to join your Aunt Elsie in a quarter of an hour's visit in my workshop on Christmas night. With my invitation to remain there until the time, and thus I will wind and start the big clock which I have just finished. It will run for the brief time that I ask you to keep trust with my memory in the workshop where I have spent so many, so many happy hours.

If after following my instructions you do not find your inheritance, which I intend to come to you as a Christmas gift, come again for the gift on the second Christmas, and if you have not found it then return again on the third. If you have not found it on the third Christmas you will have forfeited your legacy and will find your knowledge of telegraphy most useful to provide bread and a reasonable amount of butter.

Do not under any circumstances tamper with the contents of my workshop, which I wish to remain just as it is during the lifetime of your Aunt Elsie.

You failed to obey me in life, but your disobedience after my death will be fraught with graver consequences, for unless you meet the requirements set forth here you will never know the whereabouts of your legacy. This letter is written with a heart full of love for my spoiled children. FROM UNCLE AMBROSE.

And now the time of the vigil of the third Christmas had arrived, and we knew no more about the hiding place of our inheritance than on the day that we received the letter. True, we had not followed his instructions in regard to telegraphy until very recently.

It seemed so preposterous that merely mastering a vocation would aid in the unearthing of our legacies. So Elsie and I optimistically painted and post-laced through the first year, serenely confident that the money would turn up without strenuous effort on our part.

On the first Christmas we wound the clock and sat expectantly through the fifteen minutes. Nothing happened. We were slightly disappointed, but not at all uneasy. Then during the next year between the intervals of pictures and poems we ransacked the old place from garret to cellar.

Only a wholesome fear of Aunt Elsie's anger prevented our laying vandals' hands upon that wretched clock and dismembering it in our search for a clue to the hidden treasure.

We met for our session in the workshop without having so much as begun the study of telegraphy. Again we sat through the allotted time, listening to the eccentric, irregular ticking of the clock with no visible results, save that Aunt Elsie caught a fearful cold.

"Gilbert," said Elsie soberly that night when we had adjourned to the

(Continued on page 28.)

Seeing Santa Claus

A Christmas Story For Children

By MARY E. LUNDGREN

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IT WAS a few days before Christmas, and King Winter was preparing the roads for Santa Claus' long drive. The snowflakes were tumbling over one another to do his bidding...

"Is Santa Claus our papa and mamma, Aunt Madie?" "The Santa Claus I saw certainly wasn't, Donnie."

"Let's make it a story. Once upon a time, long, long ago, when I was a little girl, we were poor, so poor that Brother Fred (your papa, Donnie) and I never got much for Christmas."

"Mamma don't mind so much not having things if their boys and girls are good, but I am afraid Fred and I worried her sometimes and made her much trouble. Anyway, that Christmas eve I slept with mamma, and I remember we had hardly enough covering to keep us warm."

"I think some kind of noise awoke me. It was a beautiful night. The moonbeams that crept between the curtains sat close to the shadows, silently watching, just like the shepherds the first Christmas eve."

SANTA PLAYING WITH HIS TOYS



was pelting me with my funny, bumpy stockings. "And was that all you saw of Santa Claus?" asked Donald disappointedly.

"I looked over toward the corner. Would you believe it?—there was that man yet. I jumped and pretty nearly screamed and then laughed and laughed and laughed."

"Why, who was it? Oh, I know. It was your papa, and he had been filling your stockings in the night."

"No, sir-ee! My Santa Claus wasn't either papa or mamma." "Then it was my papa, your brother Fred, Aunt Madie!"

"Wrong again, roving man. It was mamma's broom dressed in Fred's new suit of clothes and new stockings, boots, cap, scarf and mittens. The whole thing was hung up in a dark corner on the clothesline."

A Lucky Christmas. Prognostications are made in England and also in this country, concerning the coming year, its prosperity, weather, etc., depending upon the day on which Christmas falls.

Big Demand For New Coins. Great demands are always made on Uncle Sam for new coins at the Christmas season. Last year \$25,000 in halves, quarters and dimes was washed and brightened by the treasury department.

Holly Used as Christmas Tree. In the southern states holly is used almost exclusively for Christmas trees. This tree abounds in the forests, and frequently boys earn their Christmas money by cutting and selling them in the larger towns.

The Ever Lucky Boy. The Christmas tree all summer long is grown in the wood, but only so my teacher says.

Why She Is Waiting. Ethel—if you are not going to accept Mr. Kelly why don't you tell him to stop calling on you?

Give Him a Walking Stick. A walking stick is always acceptable for a man whether he is young or elderly. He likes a collection, so that he may have different kinds for various occasions.

Mistletoe is plentiful in the south, but is difficult to gather, as it usually grows at the very top of the highest oak trees. Fir trees are seldom found in the southern states.

Our grocerman he brings it round An' leaves it at the door. My father carries it inside An' plants it in the floor.

Aw, what the teacher tells I know She only says to scare. That trees are meant for goodly kids Is mostly old hot air.

There are many predictions concerning the luck of those born on Christmas day. It depends somewhat on the day of the week. An old belief was that those born on this day, when it fell on Sunday, would live to be great lords.

Some Riddles For the Fireside Christmas Night

Which are the most contented birds? Answer—Crows, because they never complain without cause. What is the difference between a spendthrift and a pillow? Answer—One is hard up and the other soft down.

When is a candle in a passion? Answer—When it is put out or flares up. When has a man four hands? Answer—When he doubles his fists.

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY. While there are few civilized countries in which the plan of giving presents at Christmas time is not almost universal nowadays, this was not always the case.

It is to them perhaps that we owe the inauguration of the gift giving as well as the beautiful institution of the Christmas tree. The presents equally with the tree have been popular among the Germans from medieval times.

IS YOUR BIRTHDAY ON CHRISTMAS? There are many predictions concerning the luck of those born on Christmas day. It depends somewhat on the day of the week.

Why She Is Waiting. Ethel—if you are not going to accept Mr. Kelly why don't you tell him to stop calling on you?

Clarie—I will, right after Christmas.

My Christmas Doggie

By W. B. HOLLAND.

I've the bestest Christmas present Any little girl could get. I like dollies, but I'd rather Have a real live pet to get.



And I've got the pet I wanted; Got him with me here right now. How'd I get him? Well, I'll tell you, I asked Santa, that is how.

Where Christmas Things Come From

CHILDREN all enjoy the evergreens and ornaments that are seen each Christmas, but how many of them know what parts of the country are ransacked in order to furnish these things for their pleasure and delight?

Practically all of the evergreens appearing in American homes for the holiday season are grown in the United States. The Christmas trees come from the most part from northern New England, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Christmas Boxes an Old Custom. The bestowing of Christmas boxes is of great antiquity and was formerly the bounty of well disposed persons who were willing to contribute something toward the industrious. Later the gift came to be demanded as a right and became somewhat of a nuisance.

"Spug" Movement Spreading. The "spug" movement originated several years ago and has grown very rapidly recently. This name is derived by using the initials of an organization formed in Chicago. It is the Society for the Prevention of Unnecessary Giving.

"Santa Claus'll Get Us."

