

THE CHRISTMAS BABY.

Dear little baby, welcome and gay—
 Dear little baby, welcome and gay—
 Little thou knowest, in this world,
 What pain another cannot feel.
 Two thousand years ago this morn-
 ing, manger, babe like thee was born.
 For him no stocking by the fire-side
 Who was to be of ages all the pride;
 For him no gifts, no trivial toys,
 With clapping of hands and happy noise;
 For him dark night and mystery cold,
 With stately praise from wisest men of old;
 For him was danger and a hurried flight
 With Mary, mother, in secret and in night,
 Yet he lived through him is gloried,
 Through him who for thee suffered all and died.
 And thus the mystery shining from your
 eyes—
 The wisdom of babes, who alone are wise.
 —Chicago Times Herald.

BILL'S CHRISTMAS.

Half way up the slope of the mountain, at the edge of the timber line, was a forlorn group of cabins, perhaps a dozen in all, grouped around a somewhat larger shanty, called by courtesy a "hotel." In truth, it was the ever present whisky dive, carrying as a matter of accommodation a side line of such absolutely necessary articles as the primitive character of living in those solitudes called for, and rejecting in a spare room for the use of a chance prospector. Business in any of its branches was not brisk in the winter time. All but three or four of the cabins were empty then, and the population was shifting and uncertain at any time of year. But Black Pete and his half-breed wife tranquilly held on their way, while prospectors came and went, finding their "hotel" a surer source of income than running frantic races after fortune. The ground under their feet and around them was supposed to be rich in ore of various kinds, but of all the desperate, feverish men who climbed those lonely heights in search of the secrets looked in nature's calm bosom few had any luck. Once in a while a shallow vein of silver had been struck, but not enough to justify sinking a shaft. They had kept coming, however, refusing to believe that the abundant signs of mineral wealth which Dame Nature cunningly spread on every side could mean nothing.

And luck had turned at last. Two men, partners, had in the late fall located a rich vein and staked out a considerable claim. They had begun work on it, but finally decided to wait till spring before going farther. The camp all agreed that the find was a sure thing this time, and the stream of men hoping to find similar luck had given Black Pete a great run of custom till winter set in.

In one of the outmost cabins a man stood in his open door gazing forth into the thick yellow gloom of the December twilight. He was rather slight in build, thin and discontented looking. His light brown beard was cropped rather short, and his blue eyes held a world of sadness. He gazed moodily down the white, still side of the mountain and shuddered at the thought of the pains waited in his ears. Then he banged the door and stormed angrily to himself, kicking over the few articles of furniture in the room. The quiet was exasperating.

"I shall go stark mad in this hateful hole. Christmas! Heavens! And a man can't escape from it. If I could make myself believe it was any other day! If I could die just now, which I can't—I'd as soon be in purgatory as here. I won't stay here. Better that drunken, gambling mob down at the station. It don't matter much, I ain't got anything left to be decent for." He bowed his head, with a sharp groan, as he said this, but a moment later he was pulling on his fur coat and leggings, and his face carried its usual half sad, half defiant expression.

Silent Bill's limited circle of acquaintances called him. He was not really popular among the rough set that assembled at Black Pete's. But, on the other hand, he was not disliked. He "didn't put on airs," and it was his own business what he was or where he came from, according to the unwritten etiquette of the west, where a man has a right to tell his name or not, as suits him. It was even possible that he might be an escaped convict, but that, too, was his own business. But little as Silent Bill liked his companions in solitude in return, it was deadly dull when most of them left in the winter for more lively places. Even his "pard" was gone. To be sure, he had urged Silent Bill to accompany him when he set out for Denver, but the effort was of no avail.

"Ye'll be a stark lunny by spring, Bill," he protested.

"I hope so," was the grim reply. But a fortnight of loneliness had made him desperate. It gave him too much time to think, and he felt that any company was preferable to this maddening silence.

"What ye p'nting fur?" called Black Pete as he halted a moment at the hotel.

"Goodby, Pete," he said with a smile. "You're too still here. I'm off for the station." Pete's face fell. One more customer gone.

"I'll be back in a few days. Hello, Mrs. Pete!" as the woman struck her head out of the door, disappointment in her little, beady, black eyes. "Take a Christmas present, won't you? I shan't be back in time to bring you one." He tossed a goldpiece toward her, and as she caught it her sullen expression changed to a hideous grin of delight.

Silent Bill struck a foot trail straight down through the underbrush and rocks. It was nearer to the station than by the half broken road over which Black Pete headed his supplies. And while he went swiftly on his way in the fast falling night, filled with unutterable thoughts of rebellion and bitterness, a nondescript vehicle, tugged by two sullen bronchos, was toiling up that snow choked road, bearing Christmas and paradise to him, and he knew it not. The heavy wheels creaked and groaned through the snow, and the driver used

expletives so freely as he dared, considering his plight, for beside a great trunk which served him for a seat there at on a packing box, well wrapped in furs, a young, beautiful and well-dressed woman, holding close in her arms a 2-year-old boy. The like of them had never astonished the vicinity before. Therefore Bob Mahaffy drew sparingly on his vocabulary and cracked his whip with unusual force to explain his meaning to the bronchos. Once in a while a sleepy, cross little wail broke on his ears, and to save him, he could not help turning sideways to catch a glimpse of a little yellow head cuddled to its mother's breast.

The lady did not speak during the entire ride. Her face was very pale and rigid when at last they stopped at the "hotel." Through the open door, as Pete hurried out, came a blar of light and a wrangle of voices. It was astonishing how much noise the few worthies who frequented Black Pete's could make, perhaps to defy the eternal stillness of the mountain. The lady struck back with an added pallor, yet in her eyes shone dauntless courage.

"What's Silent Bill?" shouted the driver.

"Roosts down in the last shanty, but he's p'inted for the station to hev his Christmas with ther boys. Jes' gone."

"Oh, when will he come back?" asked the lady, with a breathless gasp. Pete started. He had not made out the passengers before, though he had been vainly peering into the darkness. His husky voice took on, or tried to, a softer tone, and he came eagerly to the edge of the sleigh.

"He'll be in town in a few days, ma'am. No—blame it—he'll be by at onet. Bob kin go right back and tell 'im. Air ye lookin' fer 'im, ma'am?"

"I am his wife," she said faintly.

"No! He know ye was comin'?"

"No."

"Was, that's too darn bad. But you jes' come right in, an' we'll have 'im byar 'fore ye wake up in the mornin'."

She half rose in the wagon and then sank back, overcome by a fainting sensation. How long—how much longer, could she be brave? She fought down her weakness in the moment of silence and girded up her weary person to enter that poisonous room. But before she reached the door the noise was hushed, and she passed, with her baby, through the startled group like an apparition of the Madonna and the Child. Every head was stretched out to catch a glimpse of the sleeping baby. Even Mrs. Pete's hard face softened as she took him in her arms, and she bustled about in her heavy fashion to make them comfortable.

The lady revived somewhat after a cup of coffee and the kindly means of somewhat rough hospitality and as soon as possible went to bed.

Meanwhile the group in the barroom were quenching their thirst and their curiosity at the same time, for Bob Mahaffy staid for refreshments, and indeed staid so long that he was in no condition to drive back that night, and so staid till morning. And he gave minute details of the landing of the lady and child at the station, all of which was welcome as shade in the desert to the news starved longers.

Above in the little attic room Mrs. John Allison dropped to sleep after a long struggle with disappointment and nervousness. The sun was already high in the winter sky when she awoke. She was sad, but still her own brave self again, and quivering with the hope that her long, weary search would be ended today. After a hasty breakfast she left the baby, still sleeping, with the half-breed woman and asked Black Pete to show her the way to Silent Bill's cabin. The crisp, bright air raised her spirits and did her good, and she forgot to be shy of Pete, who was agonizing in his endeavors to be civilized and polite.

Her plans were soon matured and in operation. Action was imperative now or she could not stand the suspense; so Mrs. Pete and a man from the hotel set to work under her orders. The heavy box contained some materials for the renovation, which, though meager, were riches to her now. She had known something of the condition of things which she should be likely to find and had done the best she could to prepare for it.

It was an astonished cabin, that hardly knew itself, late that afternoon. When all was done, the kindly helpers had left her, at her own request, and she gave one more comprehensive look about, well pleased with the result. First it was clean. That was the most astonishing thing. She had brought a quantity of pretty prints and red calico. The bed, made of pine posts, was curtained off from the room. She had made inroads into Pete's stock of baled hay for ticks and pillows, and her box had furnished linen and quilts. The hard bunk had been draped with chins and made into the softest couch for baby that the means at hand could provide.

A rude but artistic mantle over the fireplace held some pictures and a little clock, ticking away as cheerily as in the New England home from which it came. There was a broad, red lounge with cushions in one corner and a big armchair—a wonder of contrivance, with calico concealing its dry goods box origin. Other boxes bloomed forth as cupboards and bookcases. The old table was covered with a crimson spread and had a hanging lamp above it. There were shades and white curtains at the windows. The floor was scoured and had rugs laid down, some of bearskins and some that she had brought with her. She had obtained a number of bright blue blankets of Pete, with which she had draped the rude walls wherever possible, and pine boughs and sprigs of evergreen were everywhere in honor of the Christmas she had come so far to keep. There were books and papers in plenty. Her cupboard had an abundance of food in it, and to the eyes of the admiring inhabitants at Black Pete's the place was a tower of luxury. But when at last she was alone the sickening fear which had dogged her all day overcame her, for Jack had not come. What if he did not want to see her? What depths

of shame and anguish had not been opened to her!

Then her eyes fell on a small wooden box, still unopened, which she had brought with her. She broke into hysterical laughter. What a fond fool she had been, for in that box was a Christmas turkey, ready roasted, which she had bought the day before in Denver! What crazy ideas had filled her brain that she could descend on him with peace and plenty, just as if he were expecting her! "Forgiveness in one hand and a turkey in the other," she cried between her bursts of laughter. Then the anguish of the whole thing was borne in on her again, and she turned from her laughter to sob till the baby pulled at her dress in alarm and added his wail to hers.

She caught the boy in her arms—the boy he had never seen. Surely his heart could not hold out against his son.

"Never mind, baby darling," she cried softly; "he's got to come some time, and we'll have everything ready for him so."

She unpacked the turkey and put it in a cold place. The baby eyes followed it longingly, and over and anon he piped out:

"Mamma, div boy some schickin'."

"Tomorrow, tomorrow, boy," she answered gaily, for she can't bear to see his face, her only son, cloud over. She diverts him at last, though he is hungry and sleepy, and—last touch of satire—hangs up his stocking. It had been part of her plan.

How she lived through that long lonely evening she never could realize afterward. It seemed as if the concentrated misery of almost three years rent and crushed her soul as she sat there before the fire waiting. It grew to be 9 o'clock—10—11. And still she sat and listened—listened, fearing not the strange and unaccustomed sounds about her, but listening for a step at the door. Half past 11. She had fallen into a doze, when there was a sound, and she sprang from her chair.

Down at the station Silent Bill had passed a day utterly revolting to his tamable nature. It was a small town and more brutally degraded than most of the camps of the west. People who expected any good never came there. A missionary had tried it once or twice and had been obliged to leave, sadly, with no good accomplished that he could see.

When Silent Bill had reached there, he had felt a deliberate, reckless longing to efface himself as the man he had known. He almost felt that in coming there he had entered into some compact with the devil, but he could not throw off the training and traditions of his life in a day. Misfortune, not crime, had made him a wanderer on the face of the earth, and in the midst of the debauchery in which he had placed himself, his conscience and tastes uttered continual protest. Before morning dawned he had lost in gambling every cent of the \$300 which he had brought with him. He never left the table at which he first seated himself till it was gone. He did not greatly care whether he won or not. He was playing for the fierce fever of the game and stimulated his interest by hard drinking. He was not used to this, and never knew how he got to bed, or whether he had lost his money fairly or had it stolen from him. But when he woke late next morning his whole soul was protesting against his degradation. He could not endure it, and as soon as he could he drank more whisky. He had no trouble in getting trusted. Was he not the man who had discovered the Poor Man's Luck? And before night he had won back half as much money as he had lost. He did not lose his head again. He did not mean to. He drank only enough to keep his odious conscience from stinging him too deeply.

And all this time Bob Mahaffy was lying unconscious in the corner of a saloon, his message untold. And up the mountain, in the lonely cabin, a woman was setting her heart out with anxiety and fear.

It was night again, the night before Christmas, when Mahaffy emerged from his corner and partially from his stupor. And finally he ran against Silent Bill in the shadow of a building. As he righted himself after the collision he stood and stared at Silent Bill.

"D—d poor taste," he said at last thickly, "when a man's got pretty wife waitin' for 'im to home. Why d'you go home?"

Silent Bill looked at Bob fiercely, with his hands clinched and the veins standing out on his face.

"You brute, how dare you speak like that to me? What d'ye mean?"

Mahaffy slid back a couple of steps and tried to assume an air of dignity.

"Be' look out, Bill, 'n not bridle wi' me. Mean wha' say. Why d'you go home? I jes' goback. Pete tol me 't tell ye."

Something in his tipsy gravity sobered Bill a little. He seized the other by his shoulders and shook him. "If you don't tell me what you mean," he said sternly, "I'll choke your d—d breath out."

Mahaffy tried to strike him, but did not succeed.

"Go home to yer wife," he snarled. "She's to Pete's. I tol' her. Now jamme 'long."

John Allison turned as if he were shot and plunged on his homeward way. There is no other word for it. He only half believed Mahaffy. He asked himself why he should hurry to meet the woman who had not trusted him, who had not cared to write the few words which would have held them together? He kept muttering that there was no hurry about it. If she was there, she could wait. He had waited. It was late in the day to come to him now. And all the time he was feeling as if for his life up the rough mountain side.

He reached the camp at last, near his old cabin, and dropped exhausted on the snow for a few moments. He was afraid now that she was not there, and mixed with that fear was an intolerable sense that if she were he could not forgive her of sight for her fancied fault. Strange that he could cherish bitterness at such a moment, when paradise was opening to him, but in spite of his effort to smother it the grievance of years would not down.

"At Pete's," Mahaffy had said. He would go to the cabin first and rest and consider. His haste had changed to a nervous timidity. The shaded windows still gave a hint of light within, but he did not notice it. He flung open the door and as it closed behind him staggered up against it. What dream, what vision of a maddened brain was that? The hovel which he had left, dark and mean and desolate, was changed into a home. The blazing logs in the fireplace sent out a glow that brightened every corner of the room. The bits of crimson color, the books, the comfort, the Christmas greens, and, ah, the little figure in the red armchair by the fire that starts up in alarm and then springs toward him with arms outstretched—it is not a dream.

She cannot speak at first. She waits to hear his voice, but his look chills her, and her arms drop.

"Jack," she murmured at last desperately, "aren't you glad to see me? Don't you care for me any more?"

He takes a step toward her.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he says huskily, yet with a chilling inflection. "It has taken you a long time to make up your mind that I was fit for you to associate with."

She trembles so that she cannot stand and sinks back into the chair. He comes nearer, his eyes devouring her like a flame, his face working convulsively, but she does not know that he is fighting with all his pitiful pride the mad desire to clasp her in his arms. Her voice is cold and controlled when she speaks.

"This is indeed a fit welcome to the wife you deserted, and yet she has been only true to you. I never doubted your innocence, never tested all your name was cleared of all stain. I have suffered and toiled and sought for you all these years, and this is my reward."

Her quiet words, her listless attitude, bore conviction to him, and self reproach welled up in his heart.

"Margaret," he said more pleadingly, "why didn't you write to me? It would have made so much difference when I was wild with misery and begged of you to believe me, and I had never a word from you. Maybe I was a coward to run away—but I couldn't stay and be dragged through the mire of a scandal."

"No," she said bitterly, "but you could leave me to be dragged through it. And I wrote to you, Jack, several times, and got no reply. Yet," more kindly, "I did not accuse you and hate you, as you have done by me. I have worked hard to support myself, to clear your name, to find you for I believed in you still. Only three months ago my detective found the right clue, and I have journeyed in search of you ever since. I could not start sooner; I had no money and—there were other reasons."

Her face flushed a little here, but her tone and attitude were still wearily different. She felt as if her heartstrings had broken. Even if he believed her now she could not be happy. The strain and disappointment had been too great.

"I will go back again," she continued. But she did not know herself. The next instant there was a wildly repentant man at her feet. Overwhelmed by the sin of his previous injustice to her and by his great unworthiness, he abased himself to the depths. He poured out his love, his misery, his remorse, with sob that he could not control. The revulsion of feeling was like a flood, sweeping everything before it. He dared not even touch her with his unworthy hands, but he kissed her feet. And her heart was not broken. It was giving great throbs of joy. What did anything matter if he still loved her? She raised his bowed head and pressed it against her breast.

A few moments later, as the stroke of the little clock on the chimney shelf had just entered in Christmas day, into a moment of peaceful silence dropped a little sleepy, piping voice from the bed:

"Mamma, div boy some schickin' now."

Jack Allison started to his feet. Something choked him so that he could not speak. His wife ran to the bed, where the baby was sitting up, blinking sleepily, his yellow hair all in a fuss about his head.

"Come here, Jack," she said shyly.

"Oh, Margaret, I didn't know!" was all he could say as he knelt by the bed and gazed reverently on the chubby face of his firstborn.

"Unto us," murmured Margaret tenderly, "a son is given."

So Christmas found Silent Bill—Mrs. Paxton Duard in Romance.

Spain's National Dish.

Two special dishes mark the Christmas dinner of Spain—almond soup, obtained by boiling sweet almonds in milk and passing them through a sieve, and, above all, a dish called *bacallao*, which is nothing more than a large goldfish garnished with lemon, chopped garlic and oil and roasted before the fire.—Selected.

Christmas Greens.

The leaves proper to use in Christmas decorations are those of the holly, bay, mistletoe, laurel and rosemary.

French Christmas Carol.

Noël! Noël!
 At darkest night on top was shed
 Thy heavenly brightness, Blessed Child.
 No! this night fair about thy bed,
 And around it may the winds howl wild.
 Noël! Noël!

Fast fall our tears as here we see
 Thy cradle rude, thy chamber bare.
 For us thou choosest poverty.
 For us all mortal woes didst share.
 Noël! Noël!

An angel band, with harp of gold,
 Descend, O Child, to give thee praise.
 Thy manger with their wings unfold
 And chant for thee their heavenly lays.
 Noël! Noël!

O Christ, upon my grateful heart
 Pour out the fullness of thy grace.
 In life to love thee be my part,
 And after death to see thy face.
 Noël! Noël! —Selected.

A Business Sensation



Was caused by announcement we are going to business on New Paul Street within the next few weeks. That means the immediate closing of the entire stock every department. The ladies of Rochester were quick to appreciate the fact that this sale is GENUINE and the store has been thronged with eager buyers.

This week we offer the pick of 1,500 Jackets, ranging from \$4 to \$40.

300 Cloth Capes, \$1.25 to \$2.50.

300 Fur Capes, \$10 to \$75.

500 Misses' Garments at 25 per cent. off.

50 New Fall Suits at 33 1/3 per cent. off.

300 Children's Robes at greatly reduced prices.

Don't wait if you wish to get one of the bargains at this sale.

WIGHTMAN

84-86 North St. Feet 1000

PIANOS

Large Assortment
 Chickering, Mason Bros.
 Boston, New York
 Bullseye

MARTIN & M
 (NEW QUARTER)
 17 N. FITZHUGH ST.

A Splendid Christmas Gift

Would Be a Work Bench and
 We have them. Also Tool Chests and different assortments at all prices.

Everybody Has to Use
 of some kind. We sell the very best
 ing Knives, Table Cutlery, Silverware, Plated Spoons, Forks, Fruit Knives.

Hamilton