

The Smallwoods' Christmas
By W. D. Pennypacker

PURCHING wind swept the dry snow into snarled knots and eddying circles, and continued its moaning all through the night. Drifts were light and here and there the bare ground could be seen. An almost similar condition prevailed in the heavens. Dark, forboding clouds from which the flakes fell lightly like goose feathers, now and again parted, to reveal brilliant constellations.

That was the mood in which Christmas eve found the out-of-doors in Smithville.

The Smallwoods had had a busy day. They were not natives of Smithville, but arrived late that afternoon after a tedious run by train and motor bus. They usually spent Christmas in Smithville, where Mrs. Smallwood's sister lived. They enjoyed the romps and frolics with the children and always asserted that no day could be Christmas unless blessed with the rolicking laughter of little ones. Having none of their own they enjoyed the holidays with their Smithville relatives.

Embers in the big fireplace were still bright, but losing their brilliance because of neglect. The pungent odor of burning pine brought soothing consciousness to tired eyes. Books and papers lay untouched. They relaxed. They all but slept.

When the great hall clock struck two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten—eleven—and when the chimneys ceased to reverberate, they rose upright with a start. It was time to decorate the tree! The youngsters were asleep, and there was no danger that any of them would "hear Santa if he came."

And so, as gently as they could, but all of the joy of doing it—an hour or more was spent in arranging the tree, and placing gifts before it as some thoughtless ones might lay trophies before an idol. The thought occurred to them—and it amused them.

When all was ready, and the stockings hung in the chimney place had been filled, the two-toed toed bed.

Heat was not long. Between midnight and the moment a small boy shrieked he should hear Santa Claus is but a span. It seemed even less.

Long before the first faint flush of dawn—before the wind rose to sweep the snow into new drifts, and play on

cheeks ruddy from long contact with Arctic winds, strode deliberately into their room!

"And here's the whole bunch of 'em," he muttered. "A bloomin' fine lot, I should say." He lowered the heavy pack from his shoulders as he sat upon the edge of the bed.

"A heavy load it has been; but I've loved to think of them," he remarked under his breath. Then turning to John, a tow-head youngster of seven, he questioned:

"Have you been good?"

"Yes, Santa Claus," was the prompt reply.

Similar questions were put to all as Santa deliberated. Then he turned to the youngest—

"And how about you," he inquired. Her eyes grew big and her expression startled. For some seconds she could not speak. Then, as Santa hesitated whether to leave anything, she inquired.

"Mamma, has I been good?"

All seemed satisfied when Santa left. At the breakfast table, some hours later, the thrill of the early hours having worn off to a degree, the children were chattering away about the experiences of the morning. They little realized that the man who came from the chimney place into their room, several hours before, with a heavy pack upon his shoulders, and bells jingling from his becontoned costume, was sitting amongst them.

"I saw him very self," exclaimed the youngster, looking straight into the eyes of "Santa."

"An' he came right up to the bed," interrupted Jack. "E didn't intend to leave anything at first," piped in another—not 'till mother an' dad told 'im we'd been good. Then he left these presents and hurried away."

"After he shut the door we could

hear the sleighbells jingling, and growing fainter and fainter."

"Wish you had not slept so long, uncle. You should have seen him."

"But why did you not watch him as he went out?" was his comeback.

"I think," said dad, "they—we—were all afraid Santa Claus might not like us to watch him. Anyhow we all poked our heads under the covers. There were smothered chuckles mingling with ejaculations of surprise."

"I really seen 'im. I told you he—And they went on and on.

But it was Mr. Smallwood who had the jolliest of Christmases. The children "really" saw Santa Claus—but he, Uncle John, positively discovered what Christmas meant. When he and Mrs. Smallwood returned to their home after the holiday festivities ended they carried with them more of Christmas than they had ever believed it possible they would possess.

They had understood Christmas.
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Originated Christmas Cards
In 1846 Sir Henry Cole is said to have originated the idea of sending Christmas cards to friends and Joseph Crandall was the first publisher. Only about 1,000 cards were sold the first year, but the idea soon spread to other countries and millions are now sold annually.

Can They Count on You? By V. L. ROBINSON
(In Verse and Rhyme)

**CAN they count on you to always do
The thing that you know is right?
Or do they think you're sure to fight
When the cause demands a fight?
Do they say of you "He is true blue"
In the work committed to you;
Who will stick to your work and never think
Till you carry your contract through?**

**Or do they say "He'll run away
In the time of sorest need;
His dearest treasure is his selfish pleasure
His idol is lust or greed?"
Do they also say "He loves to play
When the game goes his own way,
But he gets lame when he loses the game,
And is ready to charge foul play?"**

**Do your friends all feel you'll stand like steel
When the great test comes to you;
That you'll face the strife, and give your life
For the cause you know is true?
Or do they fear when that test draws near
Shall you turn your inmost heart,
You'll sell the Christ for a paltry price,
And play the traitor's part?**

**We are needing men—who can clearly see
The things that are most worth while;
Who can look ahead and forget the dead,
And at misfortune smile.
For the thoughtful man who can work and plan
When the untrained lose their head;
With the skillful hand at his command,
Who can honestly earn his bread.**

**They look long in the common throng
For the man of faith and love,
Who can think and feel for his brother's need,
And plan for the life above.
With a tender heart to take the part
Of the wretch cast down in sin;
Whose help is sure for the weak and poor,
Who keeps the Christ within.**

The Christmas Dolly

Smallwood, who was to impersonate Santa, crept quietly across the floor of his attic room. Quiet as he was, every board seemed to creak under his tread. It seemed discouraging. He feared the children would awake before he could don his boots and scarlet costume. This was trimmed liberally with cotton "fur" and jingling bells. Fortunately the children had found their beds, after a day of excitement and wonder at all the marvelous things they had seen in the shop windows, and they had slept on.

When he was fully attired and considered himself, after careful survey, ready to perform his stunt, Mrs. Smallwood betook herself to a room adjoining that of her sister. A few minutes later, in the rooms down stairs, the clatter of feet and the jingling of bells was heard.

Sleepy eyes opened, and a drowsy gasp as a child's treble piped up: "Ma, I hear him, it's Santa!"

In a twinkling there were smothered sounds—attending, all were looking for the jolly old man of Christmas. As Mrs. Smallwood approached, the jingle of bells became distinct, little eyes were an anxious told the thrill of Christmas was experiencing. A few moments later the family were assembled in the big comfortable bed-room, carried away in the wonder of the children's eyes, and children with the knowledge that Santa Claus was actually before them.

There Were Willing Hands Which Helped Trim the Tree.

about the approval with which the entertainment was received. The young people were worth of all the praise which they received. The coaching had been successful. The day had been delightful and was a topic of conversation for a long time. Mrs. Barber was even happier over the occasion than the old folks, if such a thing could be possible. She realized that this vision, her scheme, had been practical. The fifty dollars had given pleasure to not only the old people but it gave these young foreign Settlement-house children a chance to share in the joys of Christmas, the joy of giving of their own talents, reaping the consequential rewards of pleasure, praise and remuneration, the joy of finding the true Christmas spirit in giving freely of themselves, as well as having had a sumptuous Christmas dinner which otherwise might have been merely a thing of their dreams.

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She Read the Note Once more as It Lay on the Desk.

of than are the institutions such as yours. We therefore wish to remember the Old People's home with our small sum. We have enjoyed accumulating this money and hope it, added to your other yearly contributions, may help to bring cheer and happiness to your home on Christmas day."

The evening failed to disclose the adequate solution for this problem. However, on the morrow, Mrs. Barber awoke with a radiant face. With the clearness of the morning, the crispness of the air and the invigoration which had come through sound, restful sleep, the perplexities vanished, and Mrs. Barber saw her way clearly defined before her. Her feet and hands couldn't work fast enough to comply with the wishes of her brain. Time was limited. Plans must be drawn up quickly and executed immediately.

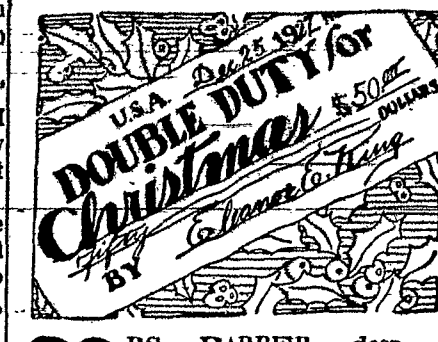
The first day saw the telephone as a center of interest. It was constantly in use either for outgoing or incoming calls. If Mrs. Barber had realized how many phone operators she wore out, her kindheartedness would certainly have made her spread her phone calls over two days. She was so enthusiastic and absorbed in her plans that she was not aware of her excessive tax upon these girls. The last phone call brought smiles and added energy to Mrs. Barber as she hurried off into the heart of the great smoky city. She spent perhaps an hour behind closed doors in conference with the matron in charge of the large settlement house. At the end of that time she emerged with a piece of paper bearing the names of some fifteen young boys and girls. Glancing down the list she swallowed forcefully, uttered a peculiar, sound and shook her head as she said:

"Can't exactly say I am very apt at pronouncing these long foreign names."

The Settlement house matron put her hand on Mrs. Barber's shoulder in an affectionate manner.

"Don't worry. They understand and are used to it. They will help you and you will soon learn their Americanized versions." The next two days were spent in the city library. From the stacks of books which Mrs. Barber went through in her two days there, but one did she select to take away with her.

For some few days after this Mrs. Barber occupied her time with the white paper with the list of unpronounceable names, the book and last but not least, fifteen vivacious young persons, grimy and a little crude, but flow sweet, earnest, happy and eager they were. The training had to be patiently undertaken. The response was altogether what might have been



DOUBLE DUTY FOR CHRISTMAS
BY ...

There were exactly one hundred and fifty old people in the institution depending upon her care and judgment. Never was this fact brought so forcefully to her attention as it was at Christmas time. To be sure, people were generous and thoughtful in remembering this group. That was exactly it. How could one put this generosity into a form which would benefit the largest number in the group? The agitation of the question had begun but today, when Mrs. Barber had received a note and a donation of fifty dollars from a group of fine, public-spirited citizens who were endowed with the true Christmas spirit. The accompanying note merely stated that its use could best be determined by Mrs. Barber, and so would be left entirely to her good judgment. She read the note once more as it lay on the desk before her.

"Our group or society has a little fund raised in various ways by its members. Each year at Christmas time, we give fifty dollars of this fund to the head of some institution, and leave it to the judgment of the person in charge as to how it will be disposed of to best advantage in their particular or peculiar situation. It has occurred to us that the children are more apt to be well taken care



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