

## Santa Mike— A Christmas Convict Story

By T. C. BRIDGES



THE December night closed across the desolate moor, the snow ceased falling, the clouds broke, and a brilliant moon shed its silver light across the wide stretches of rolling whiteness. With the change, it began to freeze fiercely, coating the sodden drifts with a crisp film of ice.

At every step Mike Dempsey's tired feet broke through this coating, and sank deep into soft stuff beneath, making the traveling so terribly hard that, in spite of the bitter cold, perspiration stood in beads on his thin, brown face.

He was breathing hard, and evidently desperately weary, yet he never stopped for a moment, though now and then, as he plowed his way onwards, he would turn his head and cast an apprehensive glance back over his shoulder.

Had anyone been near enough to watch him, they would easily have understood his haste. The drab livery plentifully besprinkled with broad arrows marked him as one of the state's unwilling guests. As a matter of fact, Mike Dempsey had been for the last three years a prison inmate, and it was with the intention of escaping another seven years of unappreciated hospitality that he had, a few hours previously, "done a bunk" under cover of the sudden snowstorm.

"I've puzzled them screws, that's wan thing sure," he muttered to himself, and in spite of his fatigue a slight chuckle escaped his thin lips. "But faith, I've puzzled meself, too, and I don't know where I am no more than Adam.

"If I cud only git a landmark of some sort!" he went on. "Eanst I cud find my road to the railway, I'd win clear. Mike Dempsey wasn't a navy siven years for nothing."

He crunched his slow way across a flat valley, jumped a little brook and pushed up the steep slope beyond.

A gleam of light in the next valley attracted his attention. It came from a lighted window, and there was something comforting to the lonely fugitive in the red glow cast upon the glittering snow. Without hesitation, he started downhill toward it.

Presently he was cautiously approaching a small house, which stood in a tiny garden surrounded by a low dry-stone wall. There was a gate in front, but Mike preferred to approach



It Was a Man Lying Flat on His Face.

from the back, and clambering gingerly over the wall crept up to the window from which the light came.

Raising himself till his head was on a level with the sill, he peered through the uncurtained window into a bare, furnished living room, lighted by a great fire of glowing turf.

A couch stood in one corner, on which lay a youngish man whose bandaged head showed him to be the victim of some accident. On a chair beside him sat a sweet-faced woman, and on the bare earthen floor played two children—a curly-haired boy of about seven, and a chubby girl a year or so younger.

But what arrested Mike's attention was a little tree not more than four feet high, upon which were strung all the queerest and the blindest of the decorations of the season. Mike then he gazed at the tree.

to get something that will give her a great amount of pleasure and which I can use later on as a pipe cleaner or a pair of suspenders!"

The pale young woman faintly, so I moved over.

At another counter another young lady said to me: "Have you been waited on?"

"No," I replied; "I have been stepped on, sat on and walked on, but I have not yet been waited on."

"What do you wish?" inquired the young woman.

"I am looking for a Christmas present for friend wife," he said. "I want to buy her something that will bring great joy to her heart, and which I might use afterward as a pair of slippers or a shaving mug."

The young lady caught me with her dreamy eyes and held me up against the wall.

"You," she screamed, "you complete a total of 25,493 people who have been in this department store today without knowing what they are doing here, and I refuse to be a human encyclopedia for the sake of eight dollars a week. Go on now; throw yourself into second speed and climb the hill!"

I began to apologize, but she reached down under the counter and pulled out a club.

"This," she said, with a wild look in her side lamps, "this is happy Yuletide, but, nevertheless, the next guy that leaves his brains at home and tries to make me tell him what is a good Christmas present for his wife will get a bitter wallop across the forehead!"

The girl was right, so I went home without a present.

I suppose I'll have to take Hep's tip and get those emeralds after all.

But first I'll go down to the delicatessen store and see if there's anything there.

### THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

One Day of the Year That All Other Days Are Learning to Envy and Imitate.

It seems to me that always, as the 24th of December commenced to shorten, the white, fleecy snow began to fall, says a writer in the Craftsman. When the street lamps flickered up like candles on an altar, they gazed on a world that was white. The strife of the city was muffled. Carts went by, but you had to peer out through the blinds to know that they were passing—they made no sound. An atmosphere of gentleness had descended. Everyone in the house went about with stealth, as though planning some secret kindness.

And then the night and the trying to keep awake till Santa Claus should come. And the waking up, with the frost weaving patterns on the panes. Somewhere far away a harp was being played, and a cornet was challenging the silence. The tune they played

was an accompaniment to the most beautiful legend in the world. At first, dreamily, you tried to remember why for once the darkness was not frightening, and then, "Ah, it's Christmas!" As you turned, your feet made the paper crack, and at the end of the bed you were too content and happy even to look at your presents. Why was it that next day everybody and everything was different? The air was full of bells singing riotously. Every one, for this one day, ceased to think of his own happiness and found happiness in bringing cheerfulness to others. The stern gulf which is fixed between children and grown-ups had vanished—there weren't any grown-ups. Somewhere in your childish heart you wondered why every day couldn't be made a day of kindness.

And that wonder of a child's heart is the Christmas message. Once a year, by a divine conspiracy, all the ships of our hopes and fears turn back from their voyagings to the harbor of tenderness. They are borne back on the crest of a white tide of mysticism that sweeps round the world. A trace of God is declared to all fightings, and men and women walk as children through a world that is kind. They commence to give and cease to annex; they act in the belief that God is in his heaven. The spirit is one tremulous white day of unselfishness—a day which gradually some other days in the year are learning to envy and imitate.

### Why We Burn Candles.

The custom of burning candles on the Christmas tree comes from two sources. The Romans burned candles at the feast of Saturn as a sign of good cheer, while the Jews burned candles during the feast of the Dedication, which happened to fall about the same time as that of Saturn in the Roman calendar. It is quite possible that for this reason there would have been many candles burning all over Palestine about the time of the birth of Christ, and from this comes the term "Feast of Lights," which is the name used in the Greek church for Christmas day.

### A Christmas Hint.

To those who may have become tired of the old-fashioned games usual at Christmas the following may be found suitable:

Hunt up a lot of poor people that have not got any Christmas dinner and go and give them one.

N. B.—This game may be played by any number of persons.

### Welcome to Christmas!

Christmas crown o' the year! Gold on clasp to its round of light and shadow. Truly the bells of it shall ring out. "Peace be o' our peace I have." Welcome o' rosy peace! Spread for you o' our sense o' good will and o' our sense o' good will.

## Good-by, Old Year!



GOOD-BY, Old Year! With words of grace, Leave us with him who takes your place, And say, Old Year, unto the New,

"Kindly, carefully, carry them through, For much, I ween, they have yet to do."

—John Godfrey Saxe.

### Their Resolutions.

They were young as April as they pressed close to a window full of wonderful confections.

"What bad habits are you going to give up this New Year?" he asked.

"You," she answered briefly; "what bad habits are you going to give up?" "Letting you have your own way," he responded firmly, "so our engagement stands."

"Very well, then, go in and buy me that heart-shaped box of candy." And both New Year resolutions went the way of their kind.

### The Old and the New.

Another year has joined his shadowy fellows in the wide and voiceless desert of the past, where, from the eternal hour-glass forever fall the sands of time. Another year, with all its joy and grief, of birth and death, of failure and success, of love and hate. And now, the first day of the new o'erarches all. Standing between the buried and the babe, we cry, "Farewell and hail!"—Robert G. Ingersoll.

## NEW YEAR "NEVER AGENS"

Suggestions for Husbands, Wives and All Lovers, Married or Single, That Are Timely.

If you haven't thought up any, here are a few timely suggestions:

For hubby: Never again to spend a moment out of the presence of the wife unaccompanied by a trustworthy guardian appointed by her, who will report faithfully all of your doings, even to the irregular quiver of an eyelash, or the drinking of soda instead of buttermilk.

Never again to be such a brute as to want to stay at home when the wife wishes to go out, or to wish to go out—by yourself—when wife desires you to stay at home in the bosom of your family.

Never again to growl, grumble or swear, or pretend to be asleep when the wife pokes you in the back and asks you to walk with the baby in the middle of the night.

Never again to threaten to forbid tradespeople to allow the wife credit if she and the girls do not cease their extravagance—when the monthly bills come in.

Never again to forget to peck wife on the cheek upon leaving her in the morning and coming home at night, to tell her that her frightful new bonnet is a perfect gem, and that her "fourteen-year-old" short dress is altogether too old-looking for her youthful figure.

For wife: Never again to make biscuit for breakfast until you have tried them on your own digestion for a few weeks in the absence of the rest of the family.

Never again to notice pa exchanging glances with the pretty girl across the aisle all the way downtown.

Never again to keep the lights turned on when pa has been detained downtown "on business," in order to see what time he gets home, or to insist on his kissing you that you may smell his breath.

Never again to come to the table with hair in crimpers and wearing a soiled kimono.

Never again to subject pa to spells of lachrymose reproaches, telling him that he doesn't love you any more.

For lovers, married or single: Never to miss an opportunity to tell the dear old story over and over again.

Never to lose the coquettish elusiveness that makes lovers so delightful to each other.

Never again to spend the sweets of young lover souls in cheap flirtations when there is such a world of real happiness at your command.

Never to become insensible to the delicious tremblings and flutterings of your own heart, or to become lax in all of those lovely attentions and giftings that help to keep a keen response in the heart of the beloved.

# THE HORACE BOGUE STORE

## Santa Claus' Headquarters



TOYS  
TRAINS  
CUT GLASS  
HOSIERY  
SHOES

DOLLS  
DOLL BUGGIES  
CHINA  
NECKWEAR  
COM'Y SLIPPERS

GAMES  
ROCKING HORSES  
GLASSWARE  
BATH ROBES  
DANCING PUMPS



Everything is arranged to make it easy for you to make your selections.



THE HORACE BOGUE STORE

TOYLAND  
In Our Basement

SANTA CLAUS HEAD-QUARTERS

