

CHRISTMAS IN A WAGON.

Youths' Companion: A short procession of roughly-dressed miners, together with a few sad-faced women, came slowly and quietly down the rocky and narrow trail leading from a little group of gloomy and stunted pines to a dozen or more small log houses, and three or four tents half-way between the summit of a lofty and desolate rocky mountain and the narrow and barren gulch below.

One of the women led by the hand a little girl of five or six years, on whose face there was the questioning and sober look often seen on the faces of children too young to understand what death means, but old enough to be awed into silent wonder by its presence.

Behind the woman and child there walked a stoutly built and manly-looking boy of about seventeen years, who had given his arm to a slender, pale-faced girl of fifteen. There were tears in their eyes, and in the eyes of the woman who had just seen the father of the children laid in his grave under the small group of pines.

Their mother had died the spring before, and their father, always a restless, wandering man, had strayed from mining camp to mining camp, and had reached Camp Fancy but four weeks before his death. Now his children were alone in the world, their only friends the few poor miners who were almost strangers to them, their only home a dilapidated wagon, with a ragged canvas cover and an equally ragged little tent, while their only fortune was a few silver dollars in the boy's pocket.

Their lot could not have been cast in a drearier or more unpromising place than Camp Fancy—a half-deserted and depressingly desolate hamlet half-way up the barren side of a rocky mountain, ten miles from the nearest town, and ten times as far from the nearest railroad. Its two or three promising mines had gone through the process vulgarly called "petering out," and within a few weeks the camp would be wholly abandoned. The Haydens had temporarily taken up their residence in a deserted cabin.

The night after the day on which their father was buried, Louis and Huldah Hayden sat before the sparkling fire, and solemnly discussed their future, while Nellie, the little girl, slept peacefully on her bunk filled with pine boughs and buffalo skins in a corner of the cabin.

"We can't stay here, that's certain," said Louis, decidedly.

"I don't want to stay," replied Huldah.

"Nor I," said Louis. "I'm sick of the mountains."

"Then you don't mean to be a prospector, like father?" questioned the girl.

"No, I won't. It don't pay. It kept father poor all his life, and I've often heard mother say she was worn out wandering round from place to place, and never having any place she could call home."

"Yes, I know," said Huldah, with a sigh. "I wish we could have a home, somewhere, Louis."

"We will, but not here. I want to go back east to the places I've heard mother and father talk about, and I'm going."

"In the wagon. It's the only way. We haven't money to go on the cars. Father and mother came out here in a wagon fifteen years ago and I guess we can go back the same way."

"I don't see why we can't, even if folks don't travel much that way nowadays. If only Old Charley will hold out to get us there."

Old Charley was a bony and feeble horse, tied at that moment to a wheel of the cart outside. He had accompanied the Haydens in all their wanderings for the past ten years, and had drawn the wagon from gulch to gulch and camp to camp. Poorly fed and seldom housed from summer rains and winter snows, his hardships had been many.

By 9 o'clock the next morning Louis had Old Charley hitched to the wagon, in which their few poor possessions had been placed. A few of the kind-hearted miners and their wives gathered around the wagon to say good-by to the children and to wish them good luck. An hour later Louis drove Old Charley around a sharp curve in the mountain road, and they saw the half-deserted log houses and tents of Camp Fancy no more.

A cold wind was coming up from the gulch, and there were a few fine young snow whirling in the air, but the young emigrants risked no such widows with each descending mile, as the autumn had been an unusually mild one.

As they drove along with little Nell seated between them, wrapped in a great buffalo robe, Louis and Huldah discussed their prospects.

They were strangely ignorant regarding the names and whereabouts of any of their relatives. Their information was confined to vague and indefinite recollections of the fact that "ma had a sister in Iowa" and "pa had a brother in Kansas." They had heard of Aunt Mary living "somewhere in Missouri," and of an Uncle Harvey in Ohio, but their mother had been much too busy to write, and their father had so far lost track of his own people that of late years he did not know where any of his four brothers or sisters lived—if they still lived,—and his children felt themselves to be utterly alone and friendless in the world.

But Louis had grown a manly, courageous boy, and hardship had made Huldah old and wise beyond her years.

"We'll get along some way, I reckon," she said hopefully.

They had now gone well down the rocky trail into the gulch, overhung with resinous pines and noisy with the splashing of the narrow mountain stream, along the banks of which thin edges of ice had formed during the night.

"My idea is to go as far east as we can before winter sets in, and then stop until spring at some town where I can find work. Perhaps you

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and Nell can go to school for a few months. I've heard mother tell how there was place in Kansas where a fellow can get good farming land free from the government. I think I'll be a farmer. I know I'd like it from what I've heard about that kind of a life."

So they journeyed on down mountain slopes and through long cañons until they came out among the low foot-hills, and for the first time in their lives, looked out across the wide, unbroken plain that stretched toward the east.

It was now November. The season had been a warm one. The horse's too prominent bones, and the peculiarities of their appearance and method of travel excited both interest and amusement in the towns through which they passed.

The horse grew bonier and more feeble as their journey grew longer. They had to travel very slowly. There were some days when Old Charley was too lame and too tired to carry them on at all. On such days they had a dreary timesitting around the camp-fire or in the wagon while the December wind swept across the plains unbroken by hill or tree.

Their small store of money grew smaller from day to day, as they purchased the food they must have at the widely scattered ranch houses and in the shabby villages through which they passed on their journey—whither they knew not.

At each village Louis tried to find employment, but always unsuccessfully. But often when they encamped near a town or farm house, curious-minded but kind-hearted men and women came out to the wagon and the children went on their way with gifts of food and clothing, and often they found shelter at night and on stormy days in hospitable ranch-houses.

It was the day before Christmas that they found themselves facing a strong, cold wind from the north, as they drove toward a little town far in the distance, but plainly visible in that flat and almost treeless country. The wind flapped the ragged cover of the wagon as it rattled along over the frozen ground, and late in the day flakes of snow began flying in at the open front of the wagon.

Old Charley walked slowly and unsteadily along, while Louis sat on the front seat holding the lines in his chilled hands. Huldah and little Nell sat on the straw in the back part of the wagon, warmly wrapped in buffalo and bear skins, of which, fortunately, they had a good supply.

Nell was a light-hearted little creature, even amid her dismal surroundings. "There now," she said, "when this was done to her satisfaction, 'it won't be the least bit of trouble for Santa Claus to stop here on his way to the town, and he

can fill my stockings without even getting out of his sleigh."

Louis and Huldah sat silent around the camp-fire, looking at the pair of empty stockings hanging from the pins that held them. Suddenly the boy said, "We ain't got but forty cents in the world, Huldah, but I'd rather spend it all than have her get up in the morning and find them stockings empty."

"So would I," replied the girl, promptly. "I couldn't bear to have her find nothing at all in them."

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Where Artificial Eyes Come From. Artificial eyes are supplied to all the world from Thuringia, Germany. Nearly all the grown inhabitants of some of the villages are engaged in their manufacture. Four men usually sit at a table, each with a gas jet in front of him, and the eyes are blown from gas plates and moulded into shape by hand. The colors are then traced in with small needles, to set rule being observed in the coloring; and, as every man uses his own fancy, no two artificial eyes, therefore are exactly alike.

How Our Forefathers Lived. Our forefathers had fewer indoor occupations than ourselves and more enforced idleness. They saw less of society; they depended more on home resources for amusement. Hence the pilgrim with his licensed exaggeration, the minstrel and the whole army of jesters, jokers, discours jong leurs, gleemen, ribalds and goldiards—all the tribe of those whom Pier Plowman calls "Satan's children," were welcome in the baronial hall.

The Order of the Thistle. The Order of the Thistle has claimed a very ancient date for its foundation—even as far back as A. D. 800; but it was either restored or instituted by James V., 1540, when he with twelve knights completed the roll. It now consists of the sovereign and sixteen members; St. Andrew is its patron saint, and the color of its distinctive ribbon is dark green. The knights of this order are invariably Scotchmen.

The Antipyrene Habit. Several physicians assert that the increase in the morphia habit is caused by the use of the new febrifuge, antipyrene. People who are inclined to experiment with medicine, especially young women, take antipyrene until it loses its curative power; then they resort to morphia.

The Saltiest Water on Earth. The saltiest piece of water upon earth is the Lake of Urumia, in Persia, situated more than four thousand feet above the sea level. It is much saltier than the Dead Sea, the water being analyzed to contain nearly 22 per cent of salt.

Dr. Birney cures catarrh, Bee bldg.

sure," said another. "Wonder where the owner of such an elegant outfit is? If he ain't careful somebody'll steal it. It ain't safe to let valuable things round loose in this country for—well, I'll be everlastingly ding-fiddled—look there!"

He pointed his whip at Nellie's stockings as a sudden flame from the fire revealed them flapping in the breeze. "If one youngster ain't hung up its stockings for Christmas!"

The other men drew near. One or two of them dismounted, and one tall, lank man, older than his companions, took one of the stockings and felt it, saying, "Well, old Santa Claus ain't filled it yet and I don't reckon—Hello!"

He stepped back in surprise as a curly brown head was thrust from the rear of the wagon, and a childish voice exclaimed: "Are you Mister Santa Claus?"

The men on the horses laughed and one of them said, "She caught you that time, Cap."

"Well, who be you, anyhow?" asked the man addressed as Cap.

"I'm Helen May Hayden."

"O you be, be you? Where's all your folks?"

"I ain't got none, only just Louis and Huldah, and I's pose they've gone off to hunt Santa Claus. Do you s'pose they'll find him?"

"It's hard tellin' whether they will or not. What if they don't?"

"The child's lips quivered and her voice trembled as she said, 'then I s'pose my stockings 'll be empty in the morning, and they ain't never been empty a Christmas yet.'

"Where'd you come from, anyway?" "From the mountains way off yonder." She thrust one arm out and waved it toward the west in the darkness.

"And your dad didn't come with you?" "He couldn't—he's dead."

"Nor your mam?" "She's dead too."

"And there ain't nobody in the cart with you?" "No man—nobody."

"Who's Louis and Huldah?" "My brother and sister—and they're splendid. They'll find Santa Claus, Louis's got forty cents for him. I heard him sell 'em so."

"Oh, he has? Well, I guess you'd better crawl back there and snuggle down among the bedclothes till they come back. That's what you'd better do."

"Good night."

"Good night, mister; if you see Santa Claus, you'll tell him 'bout my stockings."

"Oh yes, Good night, and sleep tight."

"Good night. I wish you a merry Christmas."

The men mounted their horses and rode away in the darkness, the tall man called Cap dashing silently on ahead of the others.

When Louis and Huldah returned they found little Nell sleeping as peacefully as when they left her. They put the