

Christmas at the Zoological Garden.

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the Zoo, not a creature was stirring, not even the gnu. A sleepy hush hung over the animal houses, and nothing disturbed the midnight quietness except a distant whistle from the railroad yards. Just as the clock in the tower of the State House struck 12, a little fat man with a long beard came dashing over the trees of Fairmount Park in the regulation reindeer sleigh and polar expedition costume. Yes, you have guessed it. The little fat man with the very long beard was Santa Claus.

How it happened no body in the Zoo knew. Perhaps Santa Claus wanted to have a chat with his old fellow townsman, the polar bear, or perhaps his reindeer chided and threw him out. However, it happened, Santa fell with his pack into the bear pit. His fall was so heavy that it woke up the bear family, and then there was trouble. The father bear was so glad to see the good Saint that he nearly hugged the life out of him. The mother bear hid her head under the covers and growled something about the thoughtlessness of visitors in dropping in at such an hour of the night and the little bears shuddered at the bare idea.

Now Santa Claus had always avoided the Zoo in his periodical visits because the little beasts have no stockings to hang up. So the father bear pulled the family out of bed and told them of a most brilliant plan, which was immediately put into execution. The little bears took the reins from the reindeer and tied Saint Nick to the post in the bear pit. Of course, Santa Claus made a great disturbance and woke up the rest of the animals, and then the fun began.

"Who'll be Santa Claus?" cried the elephant.

"I," said the bear.

"Hurrah for Christmas!" shouted the animals, and they all climbed out of their cages and crowded around the bear pit where the father bear was trying to accommodate his face to Santa Claus' false beard.

"We must have a Christmas tree first!" said the ostrich, as he jollied the crowd. "I plume myself on knowing a thing or two about it."

"A Christmas tree!" they all shouted.

"Who'll be it?"

"Would I do?" modestly piped the tree toad.

No big animal wanted to be the Christmas tree, but the father bear finally prevailed upon the long necked giraffe, and the decorations began. The monkeys undertook to hang the presents on the tree, and it was funny to see them running up and down the giraffe's neck. They soon had the tree ready for the

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candles, but it was discovered that the little bears had eaten them all, for which they were spanked and sent to bed by their mother, who wanted folks to see that she knew how to bring up children.

"Now for a dance," cried the kangaroo and all the animals formed a ring around the giraffe and scampered and swung under the light of the winter moon until the fat hippopotamus rolled over from sheer weariness and stopped the performance.

"Now," said the father bear, whose beard had worked quite around to the back of his neck, "let everybody sit down while Mr. Possum sings a coon song." The song was encored and all the animals joined in the chorus, which ran:—"Oh we are the happiest familiee That you in your travels ever will see. We shout with glee a three times three For our Zo-ological Christmas tree."

The most important event came next, and the father bear began the distribution of presents. The lion's gift was a bottle of hair tonic, with the label, "Remember the Mane." The king of beasts didn't like this a bit.

"I ought to get the lion's share," he roared.

"Oh, you're a lion," growled the father bear.

"Who are you aloodin' too?" squawked the lyre bird, who is very particular in matters of veracity.

"Gentlemen!" cooed the doves, "let us have peace." And the fuse stopped there.

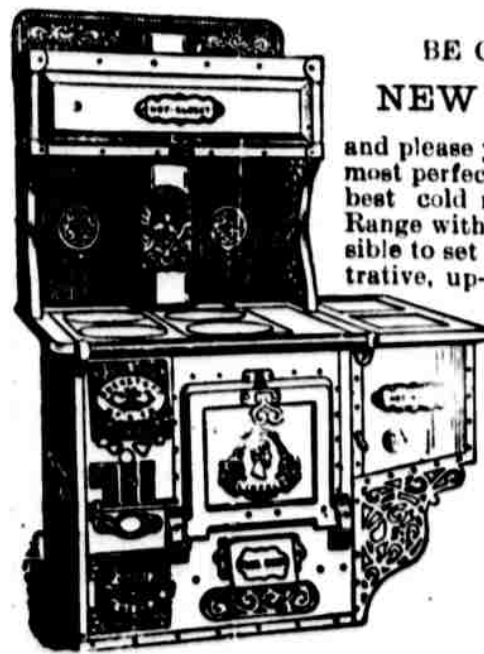
There were enough things on the Christmas tree to go around. The leopards received polka-dot neckties, the elephant got a doll trunk that he could have lost in his mouth, the kangaroo was delighted over a jumping jack until someone said that the toy looked just like the owner, after which the kangaroo gave it to a monkey, who broke the string. Mrs. Bear stepped down when her name was called and took a worsted

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motto entitled "Bear and Forbear." The fawns were happy over some of the most beautiful horns on the tree. "Just what the little bears have wanted for a long time," said their doting mother.

"Hump yourself," shouted the father bear to the camel, who was bashful in coming forward. His present was a pair of shoulder-braces. And so it went until the monkeys stood up and received fine-toothed combs. Most of the assemblage looked the other way, but the laughing hyena thought it so funny that he nearly split his sides. He is a very vulgar animal, you know. There was a Noah's ark left over, and the animals spent the rest of night making fun of the poor little wooden beasts inside. When the bears let Santa Claus go, he had a terrible time getting his rein-

deers away from their brothers in the Zoo, but he succeeded and drove off two hours late.

The secretary bird, who is a kind of jim-crow journalist, wrote the story for the papers, and he vouches for its truth. He says that if any boys and girls in Philadelphia failed to find anything in their stockings on Christmas morning it was because Santa Claus fell into the bear pit out at the Zoo.

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