

# Blink's Christmas Gift

By Alfred C. Pickells COPYRIGHT BY WESTERN NEWSPAPER UNION



"Couldn't you stop it?"

**B**LINK CORRIGAN looked from Skeeter's mournful face to the bundle of papers under the lad's arm as the little fellow turned from a signboard at the edge of the alley.

"What youse whimperin' about, y'mutt?" he asked. Then as Skeeter fingered his newspapers, he added, "Stuck?"

"I are," replied Skeeter sadly, leaning against the corner of the building, one foot resting on top of the other. "An' look dere."

Blink cocked his left eye in the direction of Skeeter's nod, and with an exclamation of boyish delight beheld the dramatic scenes portrayed in brilliant colors.



"Great Mike!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't I see dat last week?"

Blink was nicknamed for that defection of his left eye, and readily recognizing that short, un-complicated names were suitable for the needs of his profession, he had applied "Skeeter" to his diminutive younger brother with the authority of the elder brother of a fatherless family.

"Why Didn't I See Dat Last Week?"

After a few minutes of hard mental labor Blink spelled out the wording. "Great Mike!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't I see dat last week?" Then turning to Skeeter, "Say, Skeet, leave us go tonight, hey? It's de 'Newsboy Detective.' It's at de Regent, an' we ken git in de left fer 15 cents."

Again Skeeter's face was overspread with sadness. "I only got 'nough to buy mudder's Christmas present, an' six cents over," replied the boy. "An' people ain't buyin' no more."

"Aw, choke it off; youse ain't on de job a little bit," retorted Blink, although he knew that the demand for papers was decreasing. He glanced at Skeeter's big armful and then at his own slim pile, and softened a bit. "G'wan now, make a hurry, he added. "I'll give youse de foist chance."

A customer whistled and Skeeter ran off. Blink jingled the coins in his pocket. "I'll help de poor kid if he don't sell enough," he told himself. "Sold 'trec," came Skeeter's shrill voice from the corner.

Blink beckoned to him with wildly waving arms. "Hey, youse, pipe yer lights over dere!" he shouted, pointing across the street. "G'wan, beat it."

Dodging in and out among the wagons and carriages, Skeeter started across the street on a run. The street was crowded with traffic at that point, there was a great confusion of noises, and the little fellow did not hear the warning shouts that preceded a heavy dray drawn by two runaway horses. Suddenly it crashed full into an empty carriage, and beneath the torn canvas, the splintered wood and glass and the twisted iron lay Skeeter, stunned.

Blink, too, was stunned by the suddenness of the accident. Then bystanders helped him extricate both Skeeter and one of the men of the team. Skeeter revived quickly, but the man was severely injured, and while he and Skeeter lay waiting for the ambulance he held a brief, hurried talk with his partner.

"Remember, Jim," he said in a low tone, audible enough to Skeeter, "them two tanks what's marked is them what has the gasoline forced in 'em; other two's plain. The team's all right, ain't it?"

The man nodded.

"Then get 'em up to the Regent as soon as you can," the injured man continued. "Bill knows the mark, but be sure'n tell him they're for the second performance tonight."

Blink had Skeeter home by seven o'clock. Visions of the preparations which their mother and Skeeter and he had made for their Christmas feast had strengthened his pleadings with the hospital doctors. They found a badly sprained ankle and a few bruises.

Blink had cast aside all thought of the theater after the accident, but when his mother and he had made Skeeter comfortable in bed, Skeeter said, "Ain't youse goin', Blink?"

"Ain't no good," returned Blink, shifting awkwardly.

"Ain't?" repeated Skeeter, his head thrust up in emphasis. "Dat's all you knows. Why, dere's goin' to be two performances tonight."

Blink's eyes opened wide in surprise. "Two!" he exclaimed.

"Who said so?"

"De man what went to de hospital wit' me," said Skeeter, and he told of the conversation.

"Hully Jim!" exclaimed Blink excitedly. "Dere must be some class to dat show."

"I t'ink so," Skeeter agreed. "An' say, Blink, you go, an' tomorrer youse kin tell me all about it."

Blink slapped his knee and jumped from his chair. "I never t'ought of dat," he said. "I'll do it."

A long line of eager newsboys stretched from

the gallery entrance to well down Fourteenth street when Blink arrived.

Step by step he moved along the line, passing the brilliantly lighted stores from which shone an unending array of Christmas things. At last a glittering display of surgical instruments dazzled him; his eyes rested on two long pieces of polished wood crossed as a background to the shining metal pieces, and he stopped, wide-eyed and open-mouthed.

In a moment Blink was out of the line. In another hour he was home, standing before his mother and holding a pair of crutches up to her astonished gaze, with but fifteen cents left in his pockets.

Hastily, Blink told his story to his mother and asked her to wait until next week for her Christmas present, at which Mr. Corrigan folded the boy in her arms until he suddenly straightened up, excited.

"Say, look dere!" he exclaimed, pointing breathlessly to a bright glare in the western sky. "Gee! Will yez look at it. Dere's a whoppin' big fire somewhere."

It was half past ten o'clock when Blink reached Broadway. The sidewalks were filled with the usual Christmas eve crowd, most of them unheeding of the fire toward which Blink was hurrying.

With each step the crowd grew denser, the excitement greater. Occasionally a few people came hurrying in the opposite direction, and from these Blink heard a lot of mixed rumors. But what he did hear made him rush the faster. It was the Regent theater; an explosion that seemed to start a fire all over the theater at once, a panic, and a score or more of people supposed to have been lost.

For a moment Blink shuddered at what he felt was a narrow escape for Skeeter and himself. But his boyish excitement gave little room for sentiment, and he became all intent upon getting nearer.

"Couldn't you stop it?"

Presently the voices of two men caused Blink to draw farther in. They stopped near by and one said:

"My God, Gallagher! There's people been killed. Wasn't there no way? Couldn't you stop it?"

"How could I stop it?" came the growling reply. "I had the two marked tanks stored away in 'props' room, fixed so's I could turn 'em on last thing before I left after the house closed. Everything was O. K. I tell you, until the tanks we had on the calcium lights got weak just in the burglary scene. The stage manager got hot and called for them other tanks. Well, there was nothin' to it; I had to get 'em out. I was makin' slow work so's the scene would be over, but the stage manager was fery. He had them things connected in a second, turned 'em on, and when the gasoline spray hit them red-hot limestones in the lamp—My God! I never seen anything like it. Both tanks burst together, and—you know the rest."

The two men were silent for a moment, then, "Where's the manager, Jim?"

"I don't know," was the reply Blink heard. "We warned him, Well, it's done now, but I wish we could have burnt his house without—"

"Shut up, man. Somebody might hear."

A heavy prolonged rumble, followed by a dull crash of falling walls, the shouts of Bremen, and an increased crackling of the flames held the men speechless for a moment while Blink crawled to the edge of the arway. Then:

"How about Collins? He might blow. Let's go to the hospital and talk to him. It'll be safer."

There was another pause, then the reply: "I never got the name of the hospital. I don't know where he is."

"You don't!" came the astounded voice. "Then we will have to beat it. This is no place for me and you."

The story had become very apparent to Blink, and before the men started he had picked his way down the smoke-filled alley, turned back, running, purposely stumbled against them, and stood panting for breath.

"Say," he said, between breaths, "could youse guys tell me where I could find Mister Gallagher?"

The men eyed Blink suspiciously. "What d'you want with him?" asked one of them.

"They's a guy sick in the City hospital what wants to see him right away," returned Blink. "They sent me up here on a dead run."

Another great crash and then the smoke in the alley became blinding. But Blink saw the men run, and he faucled he saw also a grin of satisfaction.

Close on their heels Blink ran to the nearest telephone and called the city editor of the Record. He was not a stranger to that official, and he said, "Dis is Blink Corrigan. Know me?"

"Yes, yes; what is it?" came a hurried voice.

"I've got somethin' great fer youse and the Record about the fire," answered Blink excitedly. "Send a man and two plain cops to meet at de City hospital right away. Tell 'em to wait fer me if I don't get dere ahead of dem. I'll point out de men they got to arrest. Are youse on?"

"Cause of fire?" questioned the city editor.

"Sure, an' a stunner."

At the hospital Blink stationed himself in the shadow of one of the big columns at the main entrance. Presently the two men from the theater appeared. Blink's heart started to sink, but as they turned to mount the steps the Record man and two headquarters men turned the corner.

Blink slid out from behind the pillar, ran down the steps, and wildly waved his arms to the detectives. "Pinch 'em!" he cried, as they hurried up.

The two men turned about. "What's this for?" asked one.

Excitedly Blink blurted out the story. It caused a laugh from the men, looks of incredulity on the part of the detectives, and even a question on the face of the reporter. But Blink, instead of losing his nerve, remembered stories of the "third degree," boldly jerked his thumb over his shoulder and said, "No use bluffin'. It's all up wid youse. He's confessed—got scared when he heard of de fire."

Blink plucked at the sleeve of one of the detectives and pulled him aside. "Say," he whispered, "dat was a bluff about him confessin'."

"I know it, you scamp," the officer replied; "but he will son, don't you worry."

The mental preparation of the injured man within the hospital by the police was a slow and tedious process through which Blink was consoled by numerous winks from the reporter. It was long after press time before the detectives called upon the newspaper man to take down the confession, which verified Blink's story. In the meantime the reporter had written the main features of the story in anticipation, waited only for the verification and motive, and when they came was off in an instant. Blink followed and laid in a stock of papers, which promised to contain an unusual and rapid-selling story.

They did, and they sold more rapidly than ever before in all Blink's professional experience. Only after the edition was exhausted Blink went home, armed with the proceeds in the form of two bundles, one for his mother and one for Skeeter.

It was a glorious Christmas morning. The sun had risen brightly and Blink went in whistling. Just as he passed into the room a messenger arrived and handed in an envelope and a copy of the Record. It was the first opportunity Blink had had to spell out the headlines, and on the front page in big, black type, supported by half a dozen subheads and encircled by a heavy blue pencil mark were the words: "A Newsboy Detective."

Blink cast it aside with the expression, "Slush!" opened the envelope, and passed it to his mother.

Mrs. Corrigan read:

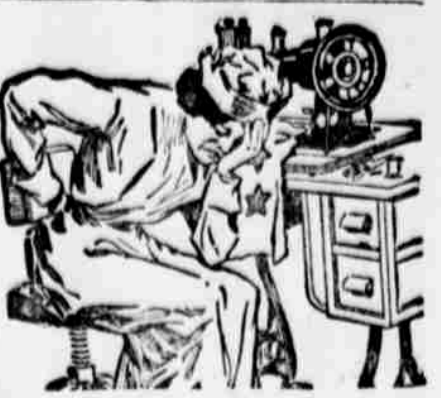
"My dear Blink: Inclosed find check for \$50 in part payment for last night's work. By your friendliness to us, the delay in securing the confession, and the fact that the men on the other papers were chasing up the manager of the Regent in every corner of New York for a story on the cause of the fire, the Record made the greatest scoop in history. Therefore, I say, the inclosed is in part payment. Please come to the office tomorrow night prepared to go to work."

"ANDERSON, C. E."

## ROOKIE ATONED FOR FAULT

Call It "Fisherman's Luck," if You Will, He Came Out of Scrapes With Coveted Decoration.

At Aix a strange story was told of an American soldier who will probably abandon fishing for the rest of his life. It seems that the rookie had heard it said that one could readily catch fish with a hand grenade, the method being to proceed to the fair of the fish and hurl the hand grenade into the water. The grenade, exploding, would kill all the fish in the neighborhood, and one could gather in a plentiful harvest. So our hero set forth one evening and, reaching a not far distant canal, he threw in his hand grenade. No doubt it killed a fish or so, but, unfortunately, so intent was he on his job that he had not noticed a barge hard by. The grenade nearly blew the barge and the barge and his family out of France, and did such mighty damage to boat and boatmen that, although for the moment flight enabled the culprit to escape arrest, it was quite clear that, when discovered, as he would inevitably be, he would suffer very severe punishment. It cannot be permitted to blow French barges up with impunity. A court-martial and death were the least that the wretch expected. That night there was an attack on the American sector. Our man went over the top a desperate rookie. He had determined to die a glorious death rather than submit to a shameful end. The result was that, single-handed, he killed seven Germans, and, seizing a machine gun, turned it on the enemy, thereby saving a ticklish situation. Picking up the machine gun, after it had done sufficient damage, he carried it back toward his own line, but, en route, he fell into a German trench and on top of a German postman. This postman was laden with mail for the regiment or company ousted from the trench; cigars and other delicacies were among his burdens. As the officer who told the story said, the rookie murdered the postman and, seizing several bags of mail, bore them, in addition to his machine gun, back to his own people. His record for the day's work was not only deemed sufficient to condone for his fishing escapade, but to his astonishment he received a medal for distinguished conduct in the field. He was decorated! Fisherman's luck with a vengeance!—Scribner's Magazine.



Your Labor Counts—every ounce of work you do helps some soldier! This war was fought as truly in the household and in the workshop as it was in the trenches.

Some of our American women are borne down physically and mentally by the weaknesses of their sex. They suffer from backache, dragging sensation, bearing-down pains, very nervous and pain in top of head. If they ask their neighbors they will be told to take a Favorite Prescription of Dr. Pierce's which has been so well and favorably known for the past half century.

Weak women should try it now. Don't wait! Today is the day to begin. This temperance tonic and nerve will bring vim, vigor and vitality. Send Dr. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y., 10c for trial pkg. tablets.

For fifty years Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets have been most satisfactory in liver and bowel troubles.

Aurora, Neb.—"My mother was always a great believer in all of Dr. Pierce's Medicines and when I was a girl she gave me 'Favorite Prescription' when I was in a run-down, nervous condition and it soon built me up in health and strength. I am glad to endorse 'Favorite Prescription' as being a splendid tonic for girls or women who suffer."—Mrs. Walter Guard, 608 10th St.

## WAS SURELY "ONE GAME GUY"

Most People Will Admit That Corporal Browne's Message to His Wife Contained Truth.

The American advance was being made in an open field on the banks of the Vesle river in France, where the Germans had planted a machine gun on high ground, which enabled them to deliver a sweeping fire on the Americans.

Try as they might the Yanks could not flank the German position. They got a pot shot at Fritz and continued their advance.

Fritz was not inclined to expose himself and kept his gun working.

"Say, sergeant, gimme that gat of yours," said Corporal Browne.

Browne drew his own pistol and, with an automatic in each hand, he got up on his hands and knees and took a peep.

"Say, boys, tell the wife for me that I was one game guy! So long to all of you guys!"

Browne went out after the Boches. He got them, too—four of them and a perfectly good machine gun.—Stars and Stripes.

## AS SHE FELT JUST THEN

Woman Had No Occasion to Smile, and Wouldn't Do It to Please Photographer.

The village photographer was losing patience with his lady patron. "Just a little smile, please," he said, dwelling somewhat on the last word. "A smile adds so much to the artistic effect."

The lady shook her head.

"Of-course, if you'd rather—" commenced the artist.

"I would that," came from the direction of the head rest. "Our one layin' hen died this mornin', bacon's gone up tuppence a pound, mother's had a couple of fits, my boy George has just broke a plate glass window, and my husband is in a military hospital with four or five pounds of lead inside him. If you think I'm goin' to look like a Chesky cat when I'm up against that shower o' blessin's—you're scratchin' the wrong pig. You git on with it natural, mister."—London Tit-Bits.

**Solid Winter Nourishment**

The real food elements of wheat and barley so made as to be rich in sugar, and ready to eat from package with milk or cream. That is Grape-Nuts A Substantial Food and Economical

**Proof of Dog's Ownership.**

A little dog followed two small boys until they reached the parting of the ways, when a violent dispute arose as to the ownership of the pup. The question was finally adjusted to the satisfaction of one of them when he announced that the dog belonged to him because it smelled him first.

A long line of eager newsboys stretched from