

Monday, Dec. 20

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See OUR Line of Stationery and Prepare for Santa Claus

Herald Publishing Co.

A Frozen Santa

By Harry Boehme

"I was in a Cheat mountain camp last Christmas eve when someone mentioned the name of 'Billie' Burke. There was an instant stillness in the cabin; the boys dropped their cards, and the words 'poor Billie' were on almost every lip. I was somewhat puzzled. 'Who was Billie Burke?' I inquired. For a moment no one answered. One of the boys called on old Sam—'Uncle Sam' they called him. 'You tell him, Sam; you know Billie longer than any of us.' 'The boys all drew their chairs near the fire and Sam told the story. 'Yes, I knowed Billie from the time he was a wee shaver; me and him used to pelt each other with stones, tree coons and steal whisky together. You know Bill and his pop were in the moonshinin' business before the revenue officers copped it. 'A bad cuss was that young Billie Burke before he was sent to the reform school. But what chances did he have? He knowed no better; the whole blooming family were in that one-roomed log house; the old lady digging ginseng in the summer to get enough to buy the winter's supply of snuff and chewing tobacco, and the old man running his still in the ravine, using the corn for whisky that should have made pone cakes for the kiddies. 'Wal, sir, I never seen such a change in a youngster as Billie when he came back. He read; he wrote; he wore good clothes and fine shoes, and he was a gentleman. His people didn't know him at first. Then Billie said he was going to meet it on the square. 'While he was at home the last time he met the schoolmarm of the Red Sulphur Spring school and he fell in love. I suppose, though, he never said anything to no one but me; he said it to me real earnestly. Any gal would have been proud to have Billie: a straight, strong, clean and good-hearted boy. Why, the president's daughter wouldn't say no to him. 'I can see him yet as he left this camp the last day I ever seed him. I done told him to wait for the log train that went at noon; but he couldn't wait. He started over the short-cut trail to Durbin—a six-mile tramp. There was something in the air; I thought it was snow. There seemed a terrible silence over the whole woods when Billie left at dawn. That was the last time I seed him alive. 'Good-by, Uncle Sam!' he shouted from the hill as he waved his hand; 'and a merry Christmas to you; and don't get drunk. Be sure to make good resolutions for the New Year. Good-by!' 'He stopped at the Widow Jones' house on his way to Durbin, and she made him drink a cup of hot coffee, which she and the kiddies were having at breakfast. Then he told her about the Christmas he expected to spend at home. He was just bubbling over with joy, and the widow started to cry. At Christmas, she said, the thoughts of the ones that are departed are green in one's memory as the holly leaves that grow on the holly tree, and like a circle of holly leaves are they entwined in a wreath of memory. 'Then Billie tried to comfort her, and asked her why she was crying. She said that her kiddies wanted to know about Santa Claus because the Paxson children, who went sledding on the hill, told them what Santa was going to bring them, and they asked their maw when Santa was coming to them. She told them that he wasn't coming; there wasn't going to be any Christmas for them because they were poor. 'That stuck in Billie's craw, and he said he would go to Durbin and get something for 'em, and could still make No. 9 train in the afternoon for home. 'That trail is bad enough in summer, to say nothing about it in winter. One trip a day over that Cheat mountain slope is enough for any man. I don't see how Billie could have been so thoughtless of himself when he always was so thoughtful of others. 'Wal, sir, when he got to Durbin it was high noon. They say it was snowing hard and he was covered with the soft flakes. He never tarried, but as soon as he could get a sack full of dolls, drums, candy, oranges and a sled he started for the hills. It was snowing hard when he came into town, and drifting under a light wind when he turned back. And it got awfully cold—30 degrees below. 'You know the rest; they found him at the foot of the precipice, leaning, smiling, with the sack on his back—no more than a quarter of a mile from the widder's home. I believe, as the parson read, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these—' 'The lumberjacks are not much for sentiment, but let me tell you, when old Sam had finished his story you could see that it had affected every one of them.'—Philadelphia North American.



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One Christmas Eve

By Harry T. Barker

Copyright by Western Newspaper Union. He was grinning like a schoolboy at the gyrations of a mechanical clown. His bluff hearty laugh seemed to come straight from his heart. His long white whiskers, bearskin coat, merry eyes and full-round figure—suggested the veritable Kris Kringle to a T.

Men, women and children were all smiles as they looked him over, but too polite to linger and embarrass him. The proprietor of the store, observing the slight halt in the passing procession, beckoned to the stranger. "My friend," he spoke rapidly, "could I have a word with you?" "A dozen, if it suits you," responded the other heartily, and followed his interviewer inside the store.

"It's just this," explained the store man: "we've got a Santa Claus—see him yonder, in that booth, shaking hands with the children?" "I see him," nodded the Westerner. "He is on till midnight and I can't spare him. A family here—the Moodys—best people in town—want me to send them up a Santy. You're just made for it. Come—ten dollars cash and it won't take you an hour. I'll furnish the robe and cap."

The Westerner smiled queerly. "I'll take the job," he replied. Directed by a lad from the store, he was piloted to the Moody mansion, admitted and shown into a room off the main parlor, where a Christmas tree stood, leaved and ablaze.

All around it the hired Santy gazed keenly, almost eagerly. He appeared to be scanning the various framed portraits on the wall and seemed disappointed, as if in that inspection he missed something he had expected to find.

A servant came and helped him on with his costume, directing him in what he should do when the children entered the festive room. An admirable Santy he made. He went through his part in a merry heartsome way, then quietly slipped out through the side door and proceeded down the street. He seemed to have been over the ground before, for he reached his destination by pursuing lanes and byways where he would not be observed in the costume he still retained.

It was in the snow-drifted garden of a neat but humble little cottage that he finally halted. "I'll do it," he spoke to himself. "If I can work it. Maybe I'm not forgotten here!" He knocked on the door and a woman opened it.

"Don't be scared, ma'am," spoke the Westerner. "You see, I've just been up to the Moodys—relatives of yours, I believe—acting Santa Claus. Knew that you had a little one here, saw the tree and thought maybe I could make her happier by going through my act."

"Oh, would you?" cried the lady in quick delight. "Indeed, it would cap the climax of all her Christmas eve joys."

"Smuggle me into the room with the Christmas tree," suggested the Westerner buoyantly. "I'll do the rest."

It was passing strange, but, conducted into the apartment and half hiding behind a screen, the Westerner studied the walls of the room circumspectly, just as he had done at the Moody mansion. A great glow spread over his face as he noticed a portrait of a woman, in the special place of honor. It was wreathed with holly and evergreen.

"No, not forgotten; that's certain," he uttered in an intense tone. "I guess I've landed in a real home spot."

The little one of the household came in, leading the children of some poor neighbors. They screamed and then fluttered with delight as Santy came into view. Then their eyes danced as his jolly manner restored confidence. He handed out the presents from the tree. The air quivered with the joyful shouts of the happy little ones.

"For Uncle Reuben," he read the card pinned onto an old worn woolen stocking. "Where's he? Come on, Uncle Reuben!" he shouted into space, and his tone was a sob.

"Oh, he isn't here," prattled little Esther, stepping forward. "He hasn't been for two Christmases. That's him," and she pointed to the holly-wreathed portrait. "He'll come back some time, though. Mamma says so, don't you, mamma? And every Christmas I put a nice card in his old stocking, and then I save them all up to give to him when he comes back."

A choking sound came from the throat of the Westerner. He turned aside and reached under his robe. It was to unclasp a great belt buckle, a belt bulging with gold.

"Your Christmas gift, Mary!" he cried to the mother of little Esther. "Only a trifle out of a whole mine—It's full of the stuff," and he threw it into her lap.

Then off went costume and cap. "Don't you know me, Mary?" "Uncle Reuben!" she gasped. "Uncle Reuben and Santa Claus, both in one!" shouted the Westerner hilariously. "Little Esther—come!"

And Esther bounded into his arms in a wild transport of recognition and delight.

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