

The Best Gift of All



Bobby's Christmas Gift

By Winifred Barford

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Claus won't come as he used to. I hear of children writing to Santa for what they want and I'm going to write to him, too."

So Bobby sat down and wrote his letter. He spelled bugle, bugel, and Christmas, Crismus, and some of the words were so bungled that the old fellow must have had a hard time deciphering them; but all the things Bob wanted were named in the letter and he did not doubt for a moment that Santa Claus would respond generously.

One morning shortly before Christmas, Peter the postman left a letter at the door addressed to Robert Sawyer. Peter who had long delivered the letters of the Sawyer family would not



Wrote His Letter.

give it to anybody but Bobby, saying that Santa Claus required him to give any letters marked "from Kris Kringle" to the child to whom it was addressed and to no one else. Bobby opened it and read:

"Dear Bobby:

"I have received your letter and will bring you the finest Christmas present you ever received in your life.

"SANTA CLAUS."

Bob of course was delighted with this, and he noticed that from the time of its receipt everything about the house seemed to take on a certain cheerfulness. Bobby laid in wait for Peter when he came again and asked him a lot of questions as to how and where Santa Claus gave him the letter. Peter said that he was not permitted to tell children anything about Santa Claus. They must hang up their stockings and wait for him to fill them.

This was three days before Christmas. Bobby who was very watchful detected his mother smuggling in cer-

tain packages. This puzzled him, for his mamma had told him there would be no gifts this year and he did not expect any except what Santa Claus would bring. Bobby asked his mother if what she brought in was intended for Christmas, but she gave him no satisfaction, though she took him in her arms and gave him a bear hug and a dozen kisses. She seemed as happy as if she expected Santa Claus to bring everything she wanted for Christmas.

The day before Christmas a messenger boy came with a telegram for Mrs. Sawyer. She tore off the envelope and read it, and looked very happy, giving the messenger a half dollar. Bobby asked what the telegram was about. She told him it was about a Christmas gift she and all the rest of the family were to receive, and when Bobby kept asking again and again "What is it mamma?" she gave him another bear hug and smothered him with kisses.

Bobby had a sister, Edith, twelve years old, and a brother Jim, ten. Both of them were too old to sympathize with Bobby in his faith in Santa Claus bringing him the gift he had promised him in his letter. Indeed they didn't believe Santa Claus really wrote letters to children. Bobby tried his best to get out of Edith or Jim what made their mother so happy, but they would not tell. Indeed they seemed almost as happy as she. Having failed with them Bobby tried Peter the postman. Peter said he suspected Santa Claus had something to do with the family happiness, but he was not sure. So poor Bobby was obliged to swallow his curiosity and wait for Christmas morning.

Bobby went to bed on Christmas eve determined to resist the sandman and keep his eyes open all night, so that he might get a glimpse of Santa Claus and see what his remarkable gift was. But the sandman soon began to drop sand in Bobby's lids, and he was asleep in ten minutes after his head struck the pillow.

When Bobby awoke the sun was quite high in the heavens. He heard the word "Bobby!" shouted in his ears and at the same time felt himself gently shaken. He did not awaken by degrees, but all at once. And there standing before him and looking down upon him, smiling, was his papa.

"Why, papa!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were never going to come home any more."

"Santa Claus told me that he was to bring me home to my little boy for a Christmas gift."

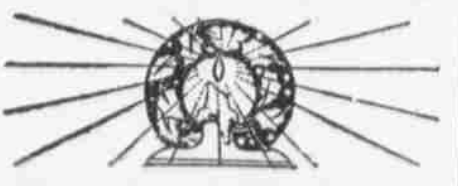
Bobby threw his arms around his father's neck and hugged and hugged, and it seemed that he would never



"Why, Papa!" He Exclaimed.

let go. Mamma, and Edith and Jim came in and so great was the excitement that Bobby forgot to look for what was in his stocking.

That was certainly the happiest Christmas the Sawyer family ever spent or ever would spend. Bobby was too young to have it all explained to him, but when he is older his mother intends to tell him that his father was on a vessel that was torpedoed and sunk. Mr. Sawyer was reported missing, but he was picked up out of the water by an American cruiser and in time managed to get home. After word came that he was saved the letter was written to Bobby by his sister as from Santa Claus, and afterwards a telegram came saying that his father would be home on Christmas morning.

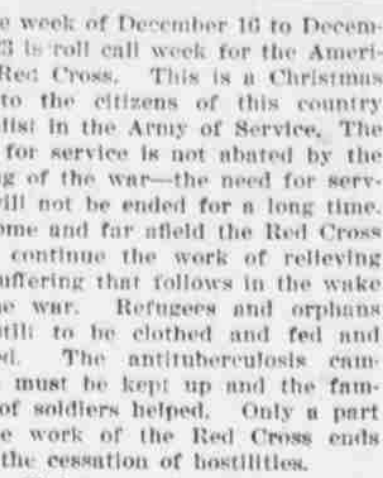


OBSERVING THE PROPRIETIES



Expensive presents to a girl
At Christmas time, are
not good taste
As that's the case, the dia-
mond brooch
Given to Mary will be paste

WHAT CAN WE DO?



The week of December 16 to December 23 is roll call week for the American Red Cross. This is a Christmas call to the citizens of this country to enlist in the Army of Service. The need for service is not abated by the ending of the war—the need for service will not be ended for a long time. At home and far afield the Red Cross must continue the work of relieving the suffering that follows in the wake of the war. Refugees and orphans are still to be clothed and fed and housed. The antituberculosis campaign must be kept up and the families of soldiers helped. Only a part of the work of the Red Cross ends with the cessation of hostilities.

The Christmas roll call has for its object more than anything else the enrollment of all adults as members of the Red Cross and the appeal is for \$1 memberships. The canvass will be mainly for this. The Red Cross makes its appeal to all, without regard to creed, race, sect, faction or class; it is one organization for universal service based on sympathy and humanity. Of course everybody that is anybody wants to belong to it.

The Good-Will Box.

Home after home is establishing its good-will box for the benefit of people less fortunate than its own members. In the end it develops that the household is benefited in turn and a demonstration that it is more blessed to give than receive is brought about in the most practical way. Into the good-will box go all the used or unused articles that are not needed in the household, but might be used by some one else. Clothing, shoes, books, magazines, pictures, house furnishings, china and glassware, which have served for a time, but have been replaced without being worn out, these are all assembled in the good-will box to be redistributed where they can do

some good. Things of this kind simply clutter up the average storeroom space in the average home, accumulate dust, and are in the way generally when they might be useful elsewhere. It would be a fine idea for every community if the contents of good-will boxes could be collected in one place either for sale or distribution, and disposed of once or twice a year.

The money that has been salvaged from useless old silver and gold trinkets ought to inspire everyone who possesses battered and uninteresting things made of the precious metals to convert them into bullion. Since the war, women have unearthed all sorts of old gold and silver ornaments, jewelry and flat wear, some of it atrociously ugly, and turned it in for melting up. With the gold and silver procured they buy War Savings stamps. But even if they do not care to invest it is worth while to turn useless junk into money which can be put to work and thereby made useful.

Watteau Plait in Winter Frocks.

For dinner frocks black is much used, sleeves are short and the watteau plait is favored. In a black mousseline de sole gown embodying these details the corsage consists of a broad draped velvet girdle that narrows at the back and holds down the watteau plait with a large bow. Also for dinner frocks embossed velvet is much used. Waists are long, sleeves are short and draped effects predominate. Dinner frocks are often of charmeuse with the salvage serving as a hem. A well-designed evening gown is of black charmeuse with a two-tiered tulle tulle heavily embroidered in pearl and jet chrysanthemums and edged with narrow feather trimming. A broad silver girdle slips under the tulle in back and ends in a discreetly veiled bow.

EVERY WOMAN LOVES FURS



Whether it is because they are becoming or because an atmosphere of luxury, and sometimes a suggestion of splendor belongs to them, or that they are so comfortable—every woman loves furs. They may be excused for extravagances in this direction; there are so many reasons why furs are a better investment than any other sort of apparel. Furriers have presented a greater variety in scarf and muff sets and in fur garments of all kinds than is usual in one season and this has made one more reason why furs are everywhere. Their vogue is universal.

Beginning with the short muffer collar and ending with the long coat, one may buy wraps of any size between with muffs to match. The scarfs or capes and muffs classed as separate furs and sets, are made in all varieties of skins. Then there are the short coats (their name is legion) and finally the long capes and coats that almost cover the figure.

The separate fur—scarf or small capes with muffs to match—lead in popularity. Recently hats trimmed with the same fur or partly made of it, have added a chic, harmonious detail to the midwinter toilette for the street, but a scarf or cape looks well with any sort of millinery. The handsome mink scarf and muff shown in the picture are designed for matronly wearers and are good example of new but staple styles that will outlast many seasons. Tails as a finish for scarf ends have been reinstated, but the flat fur-covered button is a novelty in ornaments. There is a narrow fringe of satin along the center of the scarf to protect the lining when the scarf is brought close up about the

throat. The mink muff is finished at the ends with plaited puffs of satin and hangers of satin allow it to be worn suspended from the arm. Hudson seal, mink, mole, squirrel, kolinsky, are the short-haired furs liked best for sets with marten, skunk, fox and sable the choicest in long-haired pelts.

Julia Bottomley

Perspiration Stains.

Perspiration stains can be boiled out of white material, but in colored material they usually mean that the perspiration has spoiled the color. If that case, about the only thing to do is to bleach the garment white by holding it in a solution of washing soda—about a cupful of soda to a boiler half full of water. It is, of course, disappointing to find oneself in possession of a plain white frock or blouse instead of one of dainty blue or pink; but surely the snowy-white is more attractive to all eyes than a streaked, yellow-stained color.

Amber Instead of Pink.

Flesh-pink chiffon and georgette blouses are being worn so universally now that women of exclusive taste have turned to another tint, and that tint seems to be amber—not yellow, and not tan, but the indescribable golden shade produced by sunlight shining through clear amber. A simple tucked batiste blouse becomes, touched by the magic wand of amber, an exclusive model worth several dollars. Amber chiffon blouses cost still more, and amber organdie trimmed with flit lace is exceedingly distinguished in price.

CELEBRATING DEC. 25

Yuletide Festival Once Marked
Return of Sun God.

Observance of Day Is Habit of More
Than Twenty Centuries' Standing—
"Yule" Means Sun—Community Christmas Tree.

Celebrating the 25th of December is a habit of more than twenty centuries' standing. It is a remnant of that good nature of our early ancestors, which has disappeared to a great extent with the irritating problems of civilization. All the rest of the year, writes Frederic J. Haskin, we fight and grab things away from each other and wear our nerves to a frazzle, but at Christmas we close our commercial exchanges, eat tremendous quantities of food and send presents and postal cards to our friends and relatives bearing our good wishes. At least this is what we are supposed to do. Many people do a great deal more in the way of community Christmas trees, visits to the hospitals and baskets for the poor, and still others regard the whole thing as absurd and consider abstinence from Christmas gifts a sign of strength of character.

Long before the birth of Christ our ancestors in northwestern Europe celebrated the 25th of December, which marked the passing of the winter solstice or the return of the sun in the heavens after conquering the powers of darkness. That was the day of the sun worshippers. The problem of the universe was just beginning to puzzle and our ancestors figured it out in a straightforward manner that was not half bad for supposed savages. All plant life, it was observed, depended on the sun for its existence, and all animal life depended on plant life, so that the power of the sun was greatly respected and it was personified in the person of the god Thor. Thor was watched with considerable interest, since there was always some doubt as to whether he would survive the winter solstice. Hence the feasting and merrymaking when he continued to shine clear and strong in the heavens.

Meaning of the Word "Yule."

Besides Thor there were numerous gods who lived in the branches of trees. Therefore the people gathered mistletoe boughs and holly branches and put them in conspicuous positions in their houses, where they might easily be seen from the outside. In the hope that some wandering god would take a fancy to them and take up his residence among the red berries. In Germany the early Huns chopped down the evergreens and brought them indoors for the same purpose. The burning of the yule log and the term yuletide are survivals of these early December festivals whose influence is still to be seen today in our own Christmas celebrations. "Yule" means sun.

With the dawn of Christianity and the conversion of the sun worshippers, the birth of Christ was substituted as the cause for celebration and the festivities became religious demonstrations. The people still gormandized, trimmed their houses with holly branches and gave presents, but the 25th of December usually saw them comfortably seated in church.

So Christmas has come down to us with all these traditions. The German Santa Claus legend has improved it considerably for the children, and it is now known almost entirely as the children's season.

Community Christmas Tree.

Among the finest Christmas institutions today is the community Christmas tree, which originated in Madison square, New York, five years ago and since then has spread to communities all over the United States. The community "Tree of Light" is usually planted in a central location in the city, trimmed with balls and ornaments and lighted with electricity. Citizens are organized into committees to collect donations for the tree and employ bands of musicians to play Christmas carols and hymns. In Baltimore last year groups of men and boys carrying holly-trimmed lanterns walked through the streets singing and greeting each pedestrian with "Merry Christmas!"

While every year there is an increasing number of persons who decide to "be sensible" and send cards in the place of Christmas presents, the average person lacks the courage to face his family empty-handed on Christmas morning. But Christmas is a spirit, which you either have or haven't. If you haven't it, the holidays are only a bore; on the other hand, if you allow yourself to become enthusiastic there is really a lot of fun to be derived from it, even though you're lonely and away from home. Last year a traveling man who was compelled to spend Christmas away from his family in a strange city gathered a number of little tenement waifs together, took them into a large restaurant and treated them all to a Christmas dinner. "I never had so much fun in my life," declared the traveling man.

The Christ-Babe.

We give the Christ-babe his cradle in our hearts, and afterwards he sets up his cross in our hearts, and in our hearts he plants his throne.

A Real Good Fellow.

A real good fellow is a man who keeps something of the Christmas spirit all the year round.

Duty Brings Vision

Tolstol tells a lovely little story of two pilgrims who set out for Jerusalem. Yeseel stopped to help a starving family. He bought food, fetched water, split wood, started the great oven fire, nursed and fed the sick, redeemed the mortgage on the home, and bought back the cow, horse, and scythe with which the living was earned. His money was all gone, and he could not hope to overtake his companion on the road, so he returned home and devoted himself again to daily duty. Yefim would not pause to help anyone. He reached Jerusalem, visited the sacred places, obtained earth from Calvary, water from the Jordan, and blessed amulets of every kind, but because of the throng he could not reach the Holy Sepulchre. Yet, under the lamps themselves where the blessed fire burns before all, he saw a vision of Yeseel, wearing a halo of shining glory about his head. For Yefim had brought his body to the Holy Land, but Christ himself had come to the soul of Yeseel, and he learned that in this world God bids everyone do his duty till death—in love and good deeds.

HOLY CITY'S CHRISTMAS TIME

Distressing Scenes Witnessed in
Church of the Nativity—Guards
on Duty Day and Night.

Although much has been written upon the subject of Christmas in Bethlehem, writes Harold J. Shepherson in the Wide World, and we have had glowing accounts of its gorgeous processions and ceremonies, none appears to have been bold enough to tell the world of the distressing scene which may be witnessed in the one spot on earth where man would expect peace to reign at that glad season of the year. Christmas is a long business at Bethlehem. First come the Latin ceremonies, which take place on December 25, followed 13 days later by the Greek services, while 13 days later comes the Armenian Christmas feast. The services are held in the Church of the Nativity, one of the most remarkable edifices in the world. The holy of holies of the church is the grotto or manger. It is a small underground chamber, said to be the actual site of the stable where the Saviour was born. Just in front of the altar is a silver star, let into the marble floor, said to mark the exact spot of the nativity.

In the various ceremonies the bitterest rivalry exists between the various sects, and even during the ordinary services Turkish soldiers have to be on guard day and night in the church to prevent strife. On special occasions, such as Christmas time, an extra force of soldiers is necessary if order is to be maintained. It is during Christmas festivities that the church is cleaned. To prevent quarrels among the rival priests the authorities many years ago set down definite rules as to what portions of the walls, pillars, floors, etc., this or that body may clean or sweep. Despite these elaborate precautions, however, trouble often arises. During the Christmas festivities of 1913 a deplorable scene was witnessed in the sacred building. "Two sects disputed the rights to clean a certain portion of the church. They went to the governor of Bethlehem and he decided a certain sect possessed the right to do the work. When they started to sweep, however, the rival priests flew at them and soldiers had to hold one sect back while the other did the sweeping.

CHRISTMAS IN OTHER LANDS

Children of Russia, Spain and Italy
Devote Day to Worship in
Their Churches.

The children of Russia, Italy and Spain spend Christmas day in worship at their churches and receive their presents on January 6.

On this same day French children have a great celebration and cut the "king's cake," which is a round cake, usually, with a china image baked in it. Whoever cuts the slice that contains the image is king or queen for the day, and the rest of the children must do everything the king or queen does.

In Norway and Sweden they have Christmas services in their churches at four o'clock in the morning and the kind-hearted children scatter wheat for the hungry birds.

Germany was the first country to use Christmas trees, and from England we get our idea of hanging the stockings by the chimneys, burning the yule log and hanging up the branches of mistletoe.

In Holland on Christmas eve the children fill their stockings with hay and oats for the white horse that they believe Santa Claus rides. In the morning they find the hay and oats zone and instead are presents for good children and a rod or chunk of coal for the bad ones. The young men of the town arise at two o'clock in the morning and sing Christmas hymns, carrying a star on a high pole that is lighted by a candle inside of the star. The singing of Christmas carols is the way we follow the story in the Bible, when the shepherds heard the angels sing when Christ was born: "Peace on earth; good will to men."