

A Messenger from Santa Claus

By J. F. HENDERSON

(Copyright.)

"I never did see Santa Claus, but I've seen his messenger," said Billy, gravely.



"His messenger!" gasped his astonished mother. "Why, Billy, who put that idea into your head?"

"Didn't you ever see him, mamma?"

"See who?"

"Santa Claus' messenger."

"Of course not, child."

"Well, I did," stoutly declared Billy. "I saw him down by the big gate yesterday. And he's goin' to bring me a new sled."

A ripple of laughter went round the family circle. Billy's mother rose and took him by the hand.

"It is time little boys were in bed," she said, and led him from the room.

When the child was snugly tucked away between the sheets his mother bent down and kissed him.

"Good-night, darling," she whispered. "Tomorrow is Christmas, and maybe if you are a real good boy Santa Claus will bring you something. But good little boys don't tell fibs, Billy—remember that."

Doris Lathrop sighed, even as she crooned a soft lullaby that sent Billy drifting away into the land of dreams. She was not happy, poor thing, and the universal merry-making of the Christmas season only intensified the deep desolation of her heart. How she had lived through the dragging years that had elapsed since her young husband had left to become a wanderer on the face of the earth, she scarcely knew. It was just five years—five years this Christmas eve—since he had gone away. Billy, she remembered, was but three years old at that time—now he was eight.

It was a dark chapter in her young life, and the memory of it still made her blood run cold. A man had been slain—a man named Duke, who had been her father's bitter enemy and persecutor for years. Circumstantial evidence pointed to young Jack Lathrop as the perpetrator of the deed, and Jack had been foolish enough to run away like an ordinary fugitive from justice, thus convicting himself in the eyes of the world. He had never been caught, and had never communicated with his wife, who at last had gone home to her father's house, not knowing whether her husband was alive or dead.

But there had been a sequel to the terrible tragedy. Less than a year ago her father had died. On his deathbed he had confessed that he was the real slayer of his arch-enemy, Duke; that in the madness of exasperation he had struck the blow that made him a homicide; that his son-in-law, Jack Lathrop, had been the only witness to his rash act, and that Jack—noble, quixotic Jack—to save his wife's father, had deliberately diverted suspicion to himself by disappearing from the community!

Christmas dawned on snow-covered earth, but it brought no peace to Doris Lathrop's heart. She sat at the breakfast table with the other members of the family, silent and distraught. She did not even notice when Billy slipped down from the table and softly stole out of the room.

"Where is Billy?" some one suddenly asked.

His mother started up and threw a startled glance around the room. The boy had disappeared.

"I heard some one open the front door a minute ago," said her brother. "The little rascal couldn't have gone outdoors this cold morning?"

Doris stepped into the hall. The front door was wide open. She hastened forward to look out, and who should she see but Billy coming up the walk, leading by the hand a tall, trampish-looking stranger with a bushy gray beard, and dragging behind him a magnificent new sled!

"Here he is, mamma!" cried Billy, in great glee. "This is the messenger from Santa Claus. See the sled he brought me. Now, mamma, I didn't fib, did I?"

Doris fell back in dismay. Billy and his new-found friend came up the steps and into the house.

"I couldn't help it, ma'am," said the stranger, apologetically, as he took off his disreputable hat. "The child insisted on my coming to the house, and I—I—I just couldn't resist—"

Doris gave a piercing scream.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried out wildly. "I know that voice—I know that voice!"

She snatched the long gray beard from the man's face and dashed it to the floor.

"Jack!" she faintly articulated, and fell swooning into the strong arms of her husband.

And at that moment the bells in the neighboring town broke forth in a glamor of joyous Christmas greetings.

One Christmas in the Mountains

By EARL MARBLE

(Copyright.)

Two or three days before the "holy holiday," as Christmas has not inaptly been termed, the dense, almost solid-snow clouds settled down over the Rocky mountains and the adjacent region, as though burying them mountain deep with the feathery flakes that came silently and swirling down, steadily and persistently busy, as though building a new range of mountains of solid and never-ending pearl stretching away seemingly in an endless chain, and creeping up toward the zenith in an ambition to outdo Nature herself. Waterspouts have been known in a few moments of time to inundate valleys and even hills themselves; and such a display of the forces of Nature as this seemed to be a snow-spout, if such a word may be coined.



Just before entering the snowy realm on an east-bound train, Harold Lancaster had telegraphed to Hollyville, a pretty little village in Illinois, that he was on his way home, and would be there in season to assist in the church festivities on Christmas, after which the train had plunged into the mountain region. He did not know that his telegram was not sent, as before it was dispatched the wires had broken under the weight of the snow, and all communication with the east was suspended. The train plunged ahead, assisted occasionally by a convenient snow-plow, and was making fair progress toward the summit, where it was expected it would meet with less obstruction than on the western slope.

Harold had gone on a trip up through the wonderful Canadian country in the fall, promising to return to assist in giving a Christmas entertainment in the church, of which Edith Lowell, his sweetheart, was the soprano, as he was the tenor. He had written a little musical skit, in which he was to essay the part of a trumpeter and messenger, to announce to the Christian world—the birth of the Saviour; and his announcement of that event was to be greeted by the beautiful soprano voice of Miss Lowell in a welcoming aria, which had been composed with particular reference to her exquisite method of bird-like trillings, which was one of the features of her voice that made her so popular with those who listened to her voice Sunday after Sunday.

As Christmas approached, and day after day passed without any word being received from young Lancaster, she seemed buried in gloom as deeply as were the foothills and even the peaks as well as the canyons of the great dividing range of the country.

All this time, out in the Rocky mountains, a train was creeping along slowly, and a muffled tenor voice was murmuring, almost muttering, in occasional voiceings, "A son is born to the Highest!" and again, "Glory Hallelujah!" as though in rehearsal of the event in the little church in Hollyville.

At last Christmas eve arrived, and the congregation in their seats were expectant. The choir singers seemed to take their cue from Miss Lowell, and a small modicum of success only was anticipated.

Everybody was ready for the start, and there was a pause. The blast on the trumpet sounded, which was the signal for Edith to rise and be ready to greet the tenor announcement.

"If only Harold were here!" she said sotto voice, as she arose. "It will be hard for me to sing it." She stood expectantly. "I have no inspiration without Harold."

Following the trumpet signal, a figure appeared in the distance; but Edith did not have the heart to look. There seemed to be a little commotion.

"O, dear!" she exclaimed, "I hope that end of it will not fall also, as I fear this will."

Then a clear, ringing voice sounded forth, which acted on Edith like an electric battery:

"A son is born to the Highest!" she heard, which was followed by "Glory Hallelujah!" taken up by both choir and congregation.

Her inspiration had arrived. She knew the voice so well, and her heart leaped, as her voice rang out in the opening notes of her aria, which in turn was so inspiring that it brought the entire audience to its feet, and all remained standing, in deference to her sweet delivery of the words and notes alike.

"It was a great triumph!" said the old pastor, as he was being congratulated.

"And love was the key-note," said a knowing young deacon.

"Yes, love to God," said the pastor. "And to man," added the deacon.

Three Christmas Days Together

By F. B. EMERY

(Copyright.)

Christmas day dawned bright and clear, but Mildred Hudson was anything but cheerful. For a year she had been looking forward to the time when her lover was to ask her father for her hand, and now everything must come to an end. Could the daughter of Willis Hudson, merchant-prince, waste her life upon a mere architect who could hardly support himself? Such an idea was beyond belief and while the young man tried to show that he had been successful in his calling and that the future promised more, the older man became more violently enraged as the minutes passed and finally told the "pauper" to leave his house and never to return until three Christmas days came together. Then he could have his daughter as a Christmas gift. As a man of honor John Dean could only submit to the decision until he could convince the wealthy man of his mistake.



Now it so happened that Willis Hudson had men and ships in his employ—men who sought out the uttermost parts of the earth for what they could find to please their master's eye. Jewels and trinkets from foreign marts, delicate perfumes, rare fruits, soft fabrics and countless curiosities came to him each year through his faithful assistants, and Mildred was always allowed to choose whatever she wished whenever one of the captains returned from a voyage.

The Christmas breakfast had been rather less cheerful than usual and it was with a feeling of relief that Mildred heard her mother call to her to come to the library.

Capt. Zeno had just returned from a long voyage and had a few little presents he wished to give her. Mildred hastened to the library, anxious to let her thoughts dwell upon more cheerful subjects.

Just as she entered the door the ruddy captain turned around, saluted and wished her a Merry Christmas, adding that although he was a day late with his greetings it had been impossible for him to see her the day before, and anyway, it was just as well to wait, for he had many business matters to talk over with her father, who did not like to discuss business matters on Christmas day, so he had not entered port until about two hours ago, and had let the sailors celebrate Christmas all day yesterday.

"Why," exclaimed Mildred, "to-day is Christmas, Capt. Zeno. You must have lost your reckoning on your last trip."

"No, Miss Mildred, yesterday was Christmas. Do you suppose I could sail clear around the world and be so forgetful of Christmas? Our records are perfect."

Just as she spoke the bell rang again and Capt. Jonas came in loaded down with numerous bundles, which he presented to Mildred.

"I brought these to you to-day so that I can leave here to-night and spend Christmas with my family to-morrow," said Capt. Jonas.

"To-morrow?" asked Mildred. "Why Capt. Zeno has just been trying to make me believe that Christmas was yesterday."

"It is to-morrow," said Capt. Jonas.

"Taint to-morrow," said Capt. Zeno just as emphatically, "yesterday was Christmas day and I can prove it."

"And I can prove it is to-morrow," said Capt. Jonas, warmly. "You must think I can't keep my records straight."

Both the worthy captains were fast reaching a point where it meant give in or fight, when Mildred's younger brother, Max, who heard the noise, came in, and asked what was wrong.

Mildred told him, and after a minute he asked: "How far did you sail, Capt. Jonas?"

"Clear around, boy."

"And which way did you go?"

"West, all the way."

"And how about you, Capt. Zeno?"

"Same thing, only east."

"Then it is easy," said Max. "You went from east to west Capt. Jonas, and lost a day. You are a day behind, so Christmas is to-morrow for you. You went from west to east, Capt. Zeno, and gained a day, so Christmas was yesterday for you. The rest of us stayed at home and have Christmas to-day, so that we have three Christmas days altogether, yesterday, to-day and to-morrow."

Mildred rushed to her father and caught his hand. "O, father, don't you remember your promise?"

The stern face softened and as he placed his hand on his daughter's shoulder Willis Hudson said: "The laws of nature seem to work in your favor. If you can reach John by phone you may invite him to dinner, to give him his present."

Western Kansas

Farm Your Own Land Get a Home in Kansas

There has been a great deal said and written about Kansas. Many have sang her praises, and many more have heaped curses upon her, but the same has been the history of every state. Kansas has forged ahead until to-day she ranks with the foremost agricultural states in the union. Scientific farming has uncovered the secret, and the farmer who works with his brain as well as with his hands, has turned what was once known as the "Great American Desert" into broad, fertile fields, producing great crops of corn, wheat, oats and alfalfa.

What One Man Did, Another Can, If He will Only Try

What William Kuhlman Did

LEOTI, KANSAS, July 15th, 1909.

To whom it may concern:

I am a resident of Wichita County, Kansas, and have been for seventeen years past, and will say that when I landed here I was practical broke, possibly had \$300. Today I have 920 acres of nice, level land and have refused \$25 an acre for part of it, and the same is located 17 miles southeast of Leoti. I also have large bunches of horses and cattle. I have a small peach orchard, possibly two acres, and in 1905 raised 300 bushels of peaches, and in 1906 raised 500 bushels, and for two years just past would have raised more had it not been for the late frosts. I am well satisfied with the country and think anyone with a little money, and who will work, can do the same as I have done. My orchard was not irrigated. For the last thirteen years, with the exception of one or two years, I raised fine crops of corn, wheat, barley, etc., and I can well recommend this country as a good place for a home investment.

WILLIAM KUHLMAN.

\$500 cash; balance \$100 each year at 6 per cent interest. These farms are all smooth, level and the best of soil, located in Greeley county. I have just as good bargains in Wichita, Scott, Lane and Ness counties. Call on or write me for a little booklet, entitled "Western Kansas," explaining in detail the resources of this great country.

G. H. Fallstead

FALLS CITY, NEBRASKA