

think I'm the best present in the world. Miss Grantley, she's goin' to give me a week's leave 'cause so many of you goes home. Last Christmas I couldn't go 'cause some of the young ladies had the measles. Think of its bein' Christmas and folks not to home with their own folks, Miss Eunice! But O—I must hurry! I'll get there by the night train—just in time to say "Merry Christmas."

She hurried away with a song on her lips, and Eunice turned into her own room with a sigh. All her doubts had come back—indeed they were no longer any doubts. 'Think of it bein' Christmas and folks not to home with their own folks!' The force of Hannah's artless words pressed heavily on her. 'Their own folks.' From the depths of a very loving heart Eunice was beginning to realize that no other 'folks' could make her dear festival what it should be. And if there would be, among all the attractive things planned for her, still an emptiness, how much greater must it be for those who were longing for her and to whom Christmas would not be Christmas without her.

If I get off on the five o'clock train I can, like Jane, be there in time to say "Merry Christmas." It won't be pleasant to reach it in the dead of the night, but I know everybody so well it won't matter. Now—for Marian. What will she say? The next moment she was in the next room, where two or three girls were chatting in joyous anticipation of the home-going. 'Marian—if you'll forgive me for asking—will you let me off—?'

'Let you off—? Why, what do you mean, Eunice?'

'I mean, from going with you!'

'Now, Eunice!' A blank expression settled over her face. 'I wouldn't have thought it of you. After promising me. After all my plans are made. To treat me so. No,' with a vigorous shake of her head. 'I won't let you off.'

Eunice sat down on a couch and burst into tears.

'It's—I want to go—home. I didn't realize—and now I do, how they're all longing for me. And as to any one going to your home—if you go it's all they want. You know if yourself—' Eunice was sobbing broken-heartedly, and after a short pause Marian was beside her with her arms about her.

'You dear! I do know. It's going simply to spoil my Christmas—' Eunice gave a gesture of dissent, 'but I'll stand it. What time must you go?'

'On the five o'clock train or not at all. And it goes in less than two hours.'

'We'll all help you. Em, you run to the telephone and get a cab.'

A lively hour, and with kisses and good wishes Eunice was hustled away. And now, as she sped away in the unexpected direction, what a lightness filled her heart.

'I should never, never, have felt right about the other thing. Not for one moment.'

The brightness of the winter sky had become overclouded, snow had begun to fall and fell heavily as the train made its way among the mountains which must be passed. In deep cuts the running became slower until, after several short delays, a longer one called forth a clamor of inquiry from impatient travellers as train men came through.

'Blocked. Can't get any further till the snow plough reaches us.'

'When do we reach B.?'

'Not before morning.'

'And this only nine o'clock.' A chorus of discontent arose.

'All night to spend in this day car.' Eunice looked about her in dismay.

They were at a flag station, and Eunice presently followed a few who sought a little relief from the closeness of the car. Outside, in the dead hush and loneliness, her impatient thought soon underwent a change.

All about her arose mountains, lifting their sublime heads to meet the stars gazing down upon them.

How had it been that she had heretofore had so little realization of the profound mystery of the blessed season—the God-child come to earth; and so little of earth awake to it, so small a welcome given to this bringer of the gift of peace and good-will.

Into how many hearts ever enters a real thought of the sacredness of the day?

The cold silence, the stars and the mountain read their lesson to her, and she went inside, soon engaging herself in helping a tired mother to pacify the complaints of some restless children.

'Now, it's Christmas Eve—' she presently remarked, cheerily.

'And such a Christmas Eve!' arose in variously pitched walls.

'Yes, how much fun there is in it. Think of all the people who are having a happy time at home, with not any journey at all. Or, of the people who are having just a plain, humdrum journey, no snow blockade or any other exciting time to tell about afterwards. Christmas Eve is right here, you know, exactly the same as at home or at grandmother's. Let us sing on this Lord's birthday.'

Other voices joined hers in some hymns, after which a man told stories, ending with a prayer as one by one children sank to sleep and there was quiet in the car.

At nine o'clock the next morning Eunice rang at the door of her father's house. Elizabeth, who opened it, opened also her lips for a shriek of delight, which was suppressed by the new arrival as she whirled into the vestibule to get a hand on her mouth.

'Oh, Eunice, Eunice! But no—it can't be. She said she wouldn't come.'

'Sh!—Never mind that. She's here now.'

'We're just going in to the tree,' said Elizabeth, under her breath.

'I was afraid I wouldn't be in time for it. Oh, Lis', is it in the same old corner?'

'Yes.'

'With the closet behind. Get me in there—first—'

And before long came the merry little group to see the Christmas tree. Mother would not let the shadow on her own heart fall on the others. Bright wondering eyes gazed their fill.

'But, Lizzie—why didn't you light the candles on the back in the corner?'

'And Lizzie—what's that behind there? Oh, mother—somebody's there—'

But 'somebody' was no longer there, but in mother's arms, and to every eye and heart had come the bright fullness of thankful Christmas joy.—The 'Standard.'

There is an old-fashioned verse by an old poet which very aptly expresses the feeling prevalent at this season: 'Lo! now is come our joyful feast!

Let every man be jolly,

Each room with ivy leaves is drest,

And every post with holly.

Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke,

And Christmas blocks are burning.

Their ovens they with bak't meats choke,

And all their spits are turning.'

God's Christmas Gifts.

Bethlehem's first Christmas Day brought something more than a Perfect Example down to earth. If Christ were only our Pattern, then he only increased our hopelessness. He came to do greater things than to show us His Perfect Life. God's Gifts of Christmas Day to all His eager, expectant children are these: the remission of the death penalty of sin that is past, and the power to overcome sin in the present and future.

That is the twofold Christmas salvation, the good tidings of which the angels are still singing.

And while these Christmas Gifts can come only from God, He lets us have the priceless joy and privilege of bearing them to others. Shall we help to make this season of true Christmastide to some who have never yet opened their hearts to these, God's Gifts?—S. S. Times.'

A Christmas Rush.

(By Susie Bouchelle Wight.)

Merry went spinning down the street on the morning before Christmas, full of joy in his work, glad that holiday time had come so he could work all day, and anxious to be helping out in the big rush that was already beginning at the office. The sweet winter wind was rustling the leaves of the double row of palm trees that ran down Main street, and the houses were gay with wreaths and decorations. The very air was full of Christmas, and as Merry rode whistling blithely along, he had many pleasant thoughts. Tony Harris had told him how last Christmas Eve he had taken seven dollars in tips, and not a single complaint from anybody. 'You see, it is this way, Park,' he had said. 'Some folks send out their presents on Christmas Eve. Fact, most of them do it, and then if there is nothing coming to them from the other side, the other side'll still have time to get at it. Well, a present more'n usually puts folks in a good humor, if 'tisn't more'n a box of candy, and so Christmas is money to us Trotters.' Merry remembered all this now, and although he knew he would not be as fortunate as Tony had been, for Tony was a little poor-looking fellow, and Merry a broad-backed youngster with a most independent one-sided tilt to his head, still if luck should set his way, he would know exactly what to do with all that might come. He would spend every bit of it for presents—a pair of long, soft gloves for his mother, and trinkets for the aunts and cousins back in the country. It wouldn't take such a great deal for all of these plans, and Merry was secretly rather glad that there was something about himself that kept him from looking as if he needed and wanted tips. He might need them as much as any other boy in the office, but though his clothes were always mended more or less, they were kept nice and clean, and those immaculate trousers were never without a very conspicuous crease down their fronts—a crease that would fade a little by nightfall, only to be back in, sharp as ever, when morning came.

'Here, Parker, hurry, hurry!' Mr. Campbell was all a-frown, and the office in a hubbub. The boys were running in and out, and people crowding in with packages. Hurry calls were coming in thick and fast over the telephone, and the boxes clicking one number after another with scarcely a pause between.

'Here, you Parker, take this note, and go out to the waterworks!' Mr. Campbell did not look toward him again, and Merry soon was making his way down Main street, hoping that his next errand would be something more seasonable than a trip to some dull office or other. The man at the waterworks sent him on another trip, however, and it was nine o'clock before he reported at headquarters again.

'Forty-nine? Forty-nine? Has forty-nine ever come back?' He heard in impatient exclamation as he entered the door. 'A man down on the viaduct has been phoning for Forty-nine every minute and a half for an hour.'

'All right, Miss Nona!' cried Merry. He was always rather proud to be asked for specially. It was a sort of