

had never been anything to them but a fake to make the colored supplement sell. The revelation of the Kid's simple faith struck them with a kind of awe. They sneaked quietly down stairs

"Fellers," said Tom, when they were all together again in the big room,—by virtue of his length, which had given him the nick-name of "Stretch", he was the speaker on all important occasions,—"ye seen it yerself." Santa Claus is a-comin' to this here joint to-night. I wouldn't 'a' believed it. I ain't never had no dealin's wid de guy. He kinder forgot I was around, I guess. But de kid says he is a-comin' to-night an' what de kid says goes.

Then he looked round expectantly. Two of the boys, "Gimpy" and Lem were conferring aside in an undertone. Presently, Gimpy who limped as his name indicated, spoke up.

"Lem says, says he——" "Gimpy, you chump! you'll address de chairman," interrupted Tom, with severe dignity. "Cut it out Stretch," was Gimpy's irreverent answer. "This here ain't no regular meetin', an' we ain't goin' to have none o' yer rot. Lem he saye, says he let's break de bank and fill the Kid's sock. He won't know but it was ole Santy done it.

A yell of approval greeted the suggestion. The chairman, bound to exercise the function of his office in season, and out of season thumped the table. "It is regular motioned, an' carried," he announced "that we break de bank fer de Kid's Chris'mas. Come on, boys!"

The bank was run by the house, with the superintendent as paying-teller. He had to be consulted, particularly as it was past banking hours; but the affair having been succinctly put before him by the Committee of which Lem, Gimpy, and Stretch were the talking members, he readily consented to a reopening of business for a scrutiny of the various which represented the boys' earnings at selling papers and blacking boots, minus the cost of their keep and of sundry surreptitious flings at "craps" in secret corners. The inquiry developed an available surplus of three dollars and fifty cents. Savoy alone had no account; the run of craps had recently gone heavily against him. But in consideration of the season, the house voted a credit of twenty-five cents to him. The announcement was received with cheers. There was an immediate rush for the store, which was delayed only a few minutes by the necessity of Gimpy and Lem stopping on the stairs to "thump" one another as the expression of their entire satisfaction.

The procession that returned to the lodging-house later on, after wearing out the patience of several belated storekeepers, might have been the very Santa's supply train itself. It signaled its advent by a variety of discordant noises, which were smothered on the stairs by Stretch, with much personal violence, lest they wake the Kid out of season. With book in hand and bated breath, the midnight band stole up to the dormitory and looked in. All was safe. The Kid was dreaming, and smiled in his sleep. The report aroused a passing suspicion that he was faking, and Savarese was for pinching his toe to find out. As this would inevitably result in disclosure, Savarese and his proposal were scornfully sat upon. Gimpy supplied the popular explanation.