

On the Fort Kane Trail

Gloomy indeed had Christmas day been in the little cabin snuggled against the snow incrustated side of Crow peak. Santa Claus had failed to strike the Fort Kane trail. Teddy and Freddy, the Squire twins, had looked with blinking eyes to their mother's faltering explanation that the old chap could not get across the range, but when they had cuddled beneath their own buffalo robe and at a safe distance from the maternal eye could indulge in a few unmanly tears they privately exchanged the opinion that something else was wrong. What reindeer could not bear the drifts of the Fort Kane trail?

Nevertheless for two days after Christmas they watched the trail with eager eyes. Today hope fairly danced within them. A gray pall seemed to fall upon the narrow gulch and the mountains. Even the flames in the deep fireplace refused to dance, and the logs sulked blackly. Mrs. Squire had been called to the nearest ranch by the illness of the one neighbor she had known in this desolate western home. Her husband had gone away, ostensibly in search of "deer meat," perhaps in reality he wanted to get beyond sight of those four pale, questioning eyes, for there was absolutely not a dollar in the house with which to placate Santa Claus. Indeed it was a grave question how the Squire establishment would be run until spring. There was the hole in the next gulch which Squire had been guarding heroically from prying eyes, but even if its contents were known would any one advance him ready cash?

The afternoon shadows were beginning to fall when Freddy was called to wrestling with the unruly fire. An exultant shout from Teddy, as he clung desperately to his watch of the window.

"They's somethin' comin', Ted! I hear it!"

Their hearing, sharpened by long days and nights in mountain silences, caught the distant plunk, plunk of an approaching horse. There ought to have been bells and reindeer, but any sort of vehicle or animal would do if only Santa Claus held the lines. They were wild to rush out to the trail, but the horrors of blizzards had been drummed into their small brains until they were quite willing to obey the parental injunction to stay indoors.

Nearer and nearer came the sound. The boys stood on tiptoe at the window. Ah, he was turning in from the trail! There were two of him on horseback!

The twins threw open the doors. Stood bareheaded and expectant as two horses stopped and their eyes finally entered through the snow barred gate. At sight of the visitors Teddy could no longer hold back the tears. The disappointment was too great—nothing but cowboys and rough looking ones at that!

Freddy pulled himself together and with innate western hospitality told the men to come in.

"If you want to see pop, you'd better wait," he volunteered. "He's gone to track a deer, but he'll be home 'bout supper time."

The taller man of the two punched up the logs until a brilliant flame illuminated the room, burning the hair of the twins until it shone like gold. As he straightened up he caught sight of Teddy's burning eyes.

"Hello, kid! You ain't afraid, are you?" he said gruffly, but not unkindly. The second man sat down on the log side of the fireplace, breathing heavily.

Teddy shook his head.

"I ain't 'fraid, but I thought you was Santa Claus. Mom says he's somewhere on the trail."

"I guess he ain't comin'."

"Pshaw!" said the tall man, looking from one boy to the other. "This town was most unhandy for the ole trail." Then, in a wheedling tone, "What if you was ter give us some 'ole eat p'raps we might help the ole chap out a bit of we come around him up the trail. Now, if you could show me where the coffee was, and some bacon, we could do the rest."

Freddy was all importance on the instant. He hauled out the tin can of coffee and ground away until the tall man bade him stop. He found bread, too, and some cold beans and a small slab of bacon.

It was the tall man who did all the work. His partner sat by the fireplace dejected and uninterested, but not unwatched. Under the heavy waves of the would-be cook anxious never kept guard on the ailing one. The two children prattled on, enjoying the unusual opportunity of playing hosts. At last the scant meal was set forth, and the two men commenced their chairs before the table covered with oilcloth.

It certainly seemed to the twins

that never had they seen men eat as did these strange guests.

"I wouldn't mind havin' a bit more of that bacon," remarked the tall man as the plates became bare.

"They ain't any more," said Freddy, with the frankness of youth, "ner any more beans."

There had been no sugar for the coffee and only molasses of the coarsest brand for their bread. The sick man looked up suddenly.

"Is there anything more to eat in the house?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Freddy cheerily. "There's rice an' potatoes an' cornmeal. I heard pop tell mom he reckoned it would last a month or two anyhow."

The two men looked into each other's eyes, and the taller said as he pushed back his chair: "Wouldn't be surprisin' ef that was why Santa Claus didn't come this way. He's a great feeder, you know. But ef we come up with him crossin' the range we'll tell him what good cooks you are." He was pulling on his gloves now, but he stopped and thrust a hand into his pocket. "Here," give this ter your mother an' tell her we're sorry fer the mess we left, but we ain't got time ter clear up."

Then they were gone, and Freddy and Teddy were studying over the round yellow dollar the tall man had thrown on the table.

The two horsemen had pushed four miles in the teeth of the storm before they spoke of the twins. They had stopped under shelter of an overhanging rock to tighten up girths and to gather fresh strength from the flasks which they drew from their hip pockets. The shorter man leaned wearily against his faithful horse.

"Seems a good many years, Jim, since the old lady filled our stockin' an' told us stuff about Santa Claus. What was it—'The night before Christmas?' Great stuff we thought it."

"Come on," said his companion anxiously. "You'll be off your nut directly if you don't get some quinine or somethin'."

"I've got an idee when we strike Golden we'll buy somethin' sides quinine." He groaned slightly and clutched at his side.

"It'll be a box 6 by 2 ef you don't get a move on," growled the tall man.

His companion looked up with a smile that almost transfigured his face.

"Don't get grouchy, Jim. We're goin' ter meet Santa Claus down ter Brown's store an' drop his pack by that cabin on the Fort Kane trail. It's a risk, I know—but this as he noted the angry light in the other's eyes—

"but, Lord, them two youngsters has about cried their eyes out, an'—well, you remember when the ole lady filled our stockin', Jim."

The tall man threw himself into his saddle, but he did not answer even with an oath.

It was nearly morning in a narrow room at the Golden hotel. A smoky lamp gave forth a sickly beam of light, which in turn fell upon a ghastly bearded face. The short man was breathing fast now and with an ugly gurgle in his throat. Suddenly he turned toward the grim watcher by his bedside and in his eyes was the pathetic yearning of a child.

"It ain't no use ter send fer the doctor, Jim. It only means bein' hauled off ter jail ter die. I know it all right. It's pneumonia. An' the first marshal as claps eyes on you will clap somethin' else on your wrists."

A grin of humor shone even through the dying man's agony. "Fer the sake of the ole lady, Jim, don't forget them kids. Drop off at that cabin, sure, an' then make tracks, fer when they fin' me they'll be on your trail. S'long, Jimmy!"

The tall man straightened up as if the name he had not heard in years, "Jimmy," hurt him. He picked up the other man's coat and took from its pockets some odd shaped, knobby bundles. Then he came back to the bedside and gripped the hand that lay outside the gray blanket.

"I can't do it, George; by heavens I can't!"

Slowly the sick man opened his eyes.

"Fer God's sake, man, it's bad enough fer me, ter die, but ter see you took by the deputies"—A shudder ran over the dying man's frame. "Go on, Jimmy, an'—an'—don't forget them kids."

The Cheyenne papers two days later announced in glaring headlines that the body of Jim Cosgrove, one of the most notorious stage robbers of the Little Basin district, had been found in a hotel room at Golden.

"Deserted in His Dying Hour by His Comrade," ran one of the sub-heads.

And in the little cabin on the Fort Kane trail two small boys were making merry with the gaudiest toys to be purchased at Brown's general

store and eating more candy than they had enjoyed in all the rest of their short lives put together.

New Style Booster Club

The Booster Club, which has for its objects "the discouragement of unkind criticism, to push and uphold worthy fellow-men; to encourage everything public-spirited, praiseworthy and laudable," is a Chicago enterprise. Recently its president, Mr. John A. Huesner, was asked for his idea of "how to help the other fellow up," and he gave it most ably in the columns of the "Evening Lamp." I take pleasure in quoting from Mr. Huesner's article:

"Believe him to be a friend. Meet him on the ground of confidence. Greet him with hand extended in honest human cordiality instead of withheld behind the back in an attitude of hesitancy and suspicion. These are the first steps in the march of mutual helpfulness. A heart that pumps red blood and throbs with the genial currents of friendliness is not in a state of chronic defensiveness. Convince the man that it is down that the attitude of the world is friendly, and this alone will put him on his feet and set his heart bounding with the stimulative action of cheer and courage. Be frank. Many seem to think frankness consists in plain speaking to a third person. At least a too common practice warrants this conclusion. After you have convinced the man who is down that you are really his friend, ready to defend him against all comers, it may be the kindest and most helpful thing in the world to show him how he came to be down. This may hurt, and it sometimes takes rare courage, but if he knows that you would be the last person in the world to expose his faults to another, he will respond to the ordeal in the right spirit. Be loyal. Win from friends—and from enemies, if you have them—the expressive compliment of being characterized as 'a stayer.' Let it be known that the breath of suspicion will not cause your friendship to wither away—and that nothing short of a cyclone of incontrovertible evidence will uproot your loyalty and devotion. Never descend to scandal. This carries a double penalty. It hurts the fair name of its intended victim and brings unfailing contempt upon the man who retails this poisonous commodity. Don't let dis-

appointments fire out your friendship or sour desire to do the helpful thing. Failures of this sort are characteristic of weak natures. Of course you will encounter ingratitude until human nature has been completely revolutionized. But what of that?

"Be not weary in well doing." That is sound doctrine, as well as good common sense. In other words, keep everlastingly at it, no matter if you do strike a "Tartar" now and then.

"Above all, be ever ready to deny an unproven attack upon the good character of any man and to make malicious insinuations unpopular. Then be as ready to help a man to mend his ways as many are to help him break them. This line of reasoning reduced to actual conduct will mightily increase the area of sunshine in the shadow-haunted atmosphere of human existence; it will reduce the number of suicides and make men cling to life because this old world will seem altogether too good to leave!"

This is an excellent system to formulate, although it is a difficult one to carry out.

The difficult part lies in trying to show the man "how he came to be down." Nine men out of ten will not permit the kindest and most unselfish friend in the world to finish such a recital. They will leave him, made indignant and wounded by his frankness, because he did not attribute their misfortunes to cruel fate, but to themselves.

The tenth will listen and profit; and that is why only one man in ten who is down can be really aided to rise by the efforts of friends. It is the egotism of trouble which keeps men down more frequently than the cruelty of fate.

It is very easy in these days for a man to become depressed, blue and pessimistic. There are many conditions to induce this state of mind for the struggling business aspirant.

Enormous rents, enormous trust combinations, false standards of living, are all productive of despondency and despair, unless a man takes himself in hand and realizes the fact that in every "blue" mood he wastes enough energy to make himself master of circumstances if properly conserved and used. Every time we fear failure, dread poverty and anticipate disease, we scatter the wealth of power which lies in each one of us to the four winds of heaven.

Every time we meet the worst

frown of fate with a calm, steady smile and say, "We shall triumph later on, you are only putting temporary obstacles in our way," we add to our natural vital forces, just as we add to a bank account when we make a deposit.

The very first and most important thing to do for the "man who is down" is to impress him with an idea of the power within himself. Just so certainly as he awakens to an understanding of this truth he will rise, though the whole world seem to be against him.

The fact is, the world is never against a man who is not against himself. Once let the most unfortunate man make close acquaintance with his own real self, and stand by it, asserting its right to all God's blessings, and they will come.

He will, however, very likely change his ideas regarding what real blessings are. Great wealth is not a blessing. Comfort is.

Power and position are not blessings—influence for the good of humanity is.

The success which means passing others on life's track and pushing them back is not a blessing—the success which means enlarged opportunities for helpfulness is, and all these shall come to the man who is down, if he will rise and claim them. —Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

In a village postoffice Miss Pede had a job at six plunks per week. But she near had a fit.

And threatened to quit.

When a postal came written in Greek.

—Exchange.

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