

It was the first kiss in his remembrance—the first kiss.

'You dear boy! (It was the baby's mother talking). You little hero! It makes my heart ache to know that you got hurt saving my baby.'

'It's all right, ma'am, don't you fret. You see I ain't got any folks to feel bad, I'm just Dan.'

He was trying his best to comfort her, but her only answer were the tears that rained down her face.

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Christmas, glad Christmas, had come. Dan had not walked yet, but the doctor at the hospital had assured him that 'he would soon be running around as well as ever.' He sat on a great cushioned chair—with his legs on a padded stool—in Mrs. Swift's parlor. The lovely baby that he had saved was toddling about the room, approaching him now and then with a smiling gurgle of delight, holding up her new Christmas dolly for his admiration. Sometimes she would shyly reach up one of her tiny dimpled hands and stroke his thin ones gently. He had never loved any one else as he loved this beautiful baby, and

he had saved her. And there never had been any one else as pretty as she was—he thought—unless it was her mother.

'Little Dan,' she had said, that morning, 'how would you like me for a Christmas gift?' 'You?' he had questioned, wonderingly.

### The Christmas Stocking.



'Yes,' she said, with her loving smile, 'if it had not been for you I would have been childless this Christmas day, and so I think I ought not to be motherless. I will be a mother to you if you will have me, little Dan.'

She put her arms around him and drew him close to her. All that he could say at that wonderful moment was, 'Oh! Oh!' but the glow that had come into his soul had come to stay. Ah, what a gulf lay between to-day and the old days in the attic. Rest and love had transformed the little face, which was fair and clean now. His gifts were many and lay all about him, on his lap and on the table beside him. Caesar, an old colored servant, suddenly appeared on the scene.

'De Christmas dinner am served,' he said with a broad grin.

Dan took a long breath of delight. 'Oh!' he said, 'Oh!'

The delicious aroma from roast turkey was wafted to him. Caesar was carrying him gently into the dining-room. He folded his hands when the blessing was asked. He said his own silently, his face aglow.

'You are so good, dear God,' he said to himself, 'an' I'm so awful happy.'



'Long ago—so very long ago it seems to me now—when I was a very little boy not out of petticoats, my father brought home a book,' writes Mr. W. T. Stead, in the preface to this edition of the 'Christmas Stocking.' 'It was only a little book, but that little book has helped to make me happier every Christmas for forty years. For it was the reading of that story in our house which began, for us

in the old home, the practice of hanging up Christmas Stockings. Although the bairns of to-day may think that there never was a time when Santa Claus did not fill the Christmas Stocking, yet there are many men and women now living who, when they were little children, knew nothing of Christmas Stockings, even when they kept Christmas with plum pudding, roast beef, and Christmas boxes. I wish even now I could believe that there would be no boy or girl in the whole

world who would not find their Christmas Stocking full this Christmas day in the morning. It is rather a sad little story, in some ways, but it is none the worse for that, if it should make you, when you read it, think a little of poor little boys like Norman Finch, who are weak and ill and do not always get enough to eat. The best Christmas Stocking which any one of us can get is the habit of always remembering some one who has not all the good things which we possess.'

### THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

By Elizabeth Wetherell, (author of 'The Wide, Wide World'.)

'Wife,' said John Krinken, 'what shall we put in little Carl's stocking to-night?'

'Truly,' said his wife, 'I do not know. Nevertheless we must find something, though there be but little in the house.'

And the wind swept round and round the old hut, and every cupboard door rattled and said in an empty sort of way, 'There is not much here.'

John Krinken and his wife lived on the coast, where they could hear every winter storm rage and beat, and where the wild sea sometimes brought wood for them and laid it at their very door. It was a drift-wood fire by which they sat now, this Christmas Eve. The andirons were two round stones, and the hearth was a flat one; and in front of the fire sat John Krinken on an old box making a fish-net, while a splinter chair upheld Mrs. Krinken and a half-mended red flannel shirt. An old chest between the two held patches and balls of twine.

'We must find something,' repeated John. And pausing with his netting-needle half through the loop, he looked round towards one corner of the hut.

A clean rosy little face and a very complete set of thick curls rested there, in the

very middle of the thin pillow and the hard bed; while the coverlet of blue check was tucked round and in, lest the drift-wood fire should not do its duty at that distance.

'You've got the stocking, wife?' said John, after a pause.

'Ay,' said his wife, 'it's easy to find something to fill it.'

'Fetch it out, then, and let's see how much it will take.'

Mrs. Krinken arose, and, going to one of the two little cupboards, she brought thence a large iron key; and then having placed the patches and thread upon the floor, she opened the chest, and rummaged out a long grey woollen stocking, with white toe and heel and various darns in red. Then she locked the chest again and sat down as before.

'The same old thing,' said John Krinken, with a glance at the stocking.

'Well,' said his wife, 'it's the only stocking in the house that's long enough.'

'I know one thing he shall have in it,' said John; and he got up and went to the other cupboard, and fetched from it a large piece of cork.

'He shall have a boat that will float like one of Mother Carey's chickens.' And he began

to cut and shape with his large clasp-knife, while the little heap of chips on the floor between his feet grew larger, and the cork grew more and more like a boat.

His wife laid down her hand, which was in the sleeve of the red jacket, and watched him.

'It'll never do to put that in first,' she said; 'the masts will be broken. I guess I'll fill the toe of the stocking with apples.'

'Apples!' said John. 'Well, I'll give him a farthing to fill up the chinks.'

'And I've an old purse that he can keep it in,' said the mother.

'How long do you suppose he'll keep it?' said John.

'Well, he'll want to put it somewhere while he does keep it,' said Mrs. Krinken. 'The purse is old, but it was handsome once; and it'll please the child, anyway. And then there's his new shoes.'

So when the boat was done, Mrs. Krinken brought out the apples and slipped them into the stocking; and then the shoes went in, and the purse, and the farthing—which, of course, ran all the way down to the biggest red darn of all, in the very toe of the stocking.