

The Semi-Weekly Colonist.

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VICTORIA, B. C., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1906.

FOETY-EIGHTH YEAR.

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Under Northern Skies

A Christmas Story for Children, by N. de Bertrand Lucien.

MARY ADAMS turned down the lamp a little. Day was dawning. She had swept the cabin very clean and dusted it thoroughly. The kettle was singing cheerily on top of the heater, and there were some warm biscuits wrapped in a napkin on the table that stood near the stove. Mary pursed her little mouth primly and looked about her small domain complacently. Even mother could not have done much better, she thought to herself. The cabin was as neat as wax. But over in the corner stood the particular object of Mary's pride and delight, a small and shapely little fir-tree set firmly in a box. She and Davie had cut it yesterday, and tonight, tonight, when mother and father came home, and Davie and the twins were asleep, she and mother would trim it with candies and apples and toys, while father, who would be lame still of course, would sit and watch them, with his eyes full of smiles. Mary involuntarily burst into a snatch of song, then as the dawn grew brighter, she blew out the light, and going to the window gave a little laugh of purest ecstasy. Such glorious Christmas weather, the whole world white and glistening, and every tree wrapped in a garment of soft snow. She ran to the door, opening it a little way and peeping out. As she did so, suddenly and clearly there came to her ears the musical jingle of bells. She banged the door and flew into the bedroom. "Davie, Davie," she cried, bending over the round sleeping figure on the bed, "Oh, Davie, wake up. Mother's coming."

The little rosy cheeked boy sat up quickly. "Is muvver coming?" he asked, drowsily. "Yes, yes, can't you hear the bells?" Mary was putting on his felt shoes, her own cheeks were glowing, and her eyes like stars.

"An' my daddy too, an' the babies." Davie's voice was trembling with sudden excitement.

"Oh! Oh, yes, and bundles and parcels and apples and candies." Mary hugged him hard. "And you must be careful of daddy, because his leg isn't well yet. Most likely you can sit on his knee."

"Most likely I can't sit on his knees," repeated Davie laughing nevertheless and jumping up and down as Mary stood him on the floor.

She folded the quilt over the foot of the bed and rushing into the other room, stirred up the fire, and pulled her father's chair near the stove.

The music of the bells sounded nearer and nearer. These sounds the house dog Tiger began to bark loudly and the dogs that hauled the coming sled sent back their sharp reply. Mary stood stock still and looked at Davie, who was climbing on the seat near the window.

"Davie," she whispered. "Davie, that isn't our dog-team. Perhaps, perhaps it isn't mother!"

"Yes 'tis, yes 'tis," answered Davie, thumping on the glass. "I know it's my muvver."

But when Mary went to open the door, her little cheeks were white and she was swallowing hard. The sled had stopped very quietly and someone was knocking softly.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Ericson." Mary spoke very bravely. "Won't you come in?" She opened the door wide.

"I ain't got de time for dat," said the big Swede, through his icicled beard. He smiled down upon the little girl. I brought you dis letter," he went on. "You mama's awful sad about you." He handed her a bulky envelope and then from his pocket took a small box. "This is little present from me, some candies for you an' Davie."

"Thank you," said Mary, swallowing again. "Is, is my father worse?"

"You' daddy's fine, just fine, but he's lame yet," Ericson said kindly. "Neffar mind. Next week I think you' miamma come home."

When he had gone Mary gave the candies to Davie, whose little legs were trembling pitifully as he looked sorrowfully at her, then taking the letter to the window she opened it. Davie had begun to sob a little, but when he saw the candies he ceased immediately. Her mother wrote that the doctor thought her father should not be moved from the hospital yet and she did not like to leave him. They would have their Christmas at New Years, unless, and the unless was underlined, it would be possible for Mary to take Davie on the sled and get to the bridge in time to catch the stage. Then they could all be together and have a Christmas tree at Uncle Peter's, for that was next door to the hospital and they could wheel father in. "But perhaps you had better not try it," mother went on. "It is a long two miles to the bridge, and it may be storming. Be a brave girl as you always are, dear, and put the little horse that you'll find in father's trunk in Davie's stocking. Mr. Ericson could not take any parcels for me. He has a month's groceries, and his sled is more than full. With lots of kisses to you and Davie. Your loving mother."

When Mary finished reading, her face was brighter. She ran to Davie and took the rest of the candies from him.

Only they heard the horn blowing farther away and below them. Mary stood up, looking all about. There was no sign of the stage coming towards the bridge. Again the horn still farther away. What could it mean! Ah! Mary turned a little sick suddenly. She had never thought of this. The stage had left the main road long ago, and taking the winter short-cut had gone down to the river a quarter of a mile below the bridge. She could see it now, just as it turned the bend. Then it disappeared from sight.

"Oh, Davie!" Mary looked down upon him helplessly, biting her lip to keep back the sobs. The snow was falling faster now and the wind had risen. Davie did not like the snow.

"What's de matter?" he asked shrilly. "I want to go wiv de horses. Why don't you take me wiv de horses, you promised."

"Oh, Davie, I can't." Mary did sob once. She could not help it. "The horses have gone. I-I'm afraid we'll have to go back."

Whereupon Davie began to cry wildly. "I want to see my muvver," he sobbed. "You said you would take me to see my muvver. You promise an' you never break your promise. I don't like dis nasty old snow. It wets my face."

Mary made up her mind suddenly. She did not know how far it was to Dawson, but she knew her father had

A Christmas Greeting

This Christmas morning dawns upon a world at peace, upon a strong and united Empire, a prosperous Dominion, a progressive province, and here in Victoria, upon a city which is feeling the impulse of a new life.

Perhaps never in the history of this community, has the holiday season been characterized by so much that makes for happiness. Happy crowds have thronged the streets and the stores; happy voices were heard on every side; happy faces were to be seen everywhere. It has been a delightful Christmas season.

There is only one thing to say. It is the old, old saying which generation after generation of British people have used, and future generations will never grow tired of using

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

"You must not make yourself sick," she said, as the little boy began to sob. "We are going on a long, long journey. Davie, I'm going to drag you on your sled, and I'll run myself all the way."

"Oh will you?" he asked, his eyes shining.

"Yes, I'll see my muvver."

"Yes Mally, I promise and Mally always keeps her promise, doesn't she?"

"Yes, will you promise, Mally?"

"Yes," Mary nodded vigorously as she hurried about the room making preparations for departure. There was not very much to do. It took longer to dress Davie than anything else. She made the little sled very comfortable. It was really an apple box fastened upon runners. She lined it with an old fur cape of her mother's and she put the biscuits in at the foot, in case Davie should be hungry.

When they were outside and the little boy was tucked in warmly, she looked about her in vain for Tiger. He must have followed Mr. Ericson's train, she thought. He sometimes did. So she locked the door and taking a last look at the house, set off down the trail which was clearly marked now by the runners of Mr. Ericson's sled.

Davie was delighted. He sang, he shouted; he screamed. He slapped his little mittened hands together and told Mary to "Gee" and "Haw" over and over. The little girl ran very fast for the path was level and smooth, and Davie's weight was nothing at all. Once a brown rabbit ran out from the bushes at the side of the trail and scurried across in front of them into the trees at the other side. Davie saw it, and wanted to get out and catch it. Mary laughed at him and raced on. Above the mountains that looked down upon them on every side, shone slanting rays of sunlight. The sun itself had gone, after showing a pale golden disk for an hour or two. Very soon, Mary knew, the short daylight would be waning. There was a hill before her now. Beyond the hill, half a mile, was the bridge.

The stage passed them at 2 o'clock. It was 1 o'clock when she left the cabin. By this time the little girl was breathless with running, and, in spite of Davie's cries of "hully up, hully up," she could do no more than walk. The hill seemed very steep, steeper than she had ever thought it before. After a long time she reached the top and could see, down below her, the frozen Klondike river, and the narrow white bridge across which the road ran. Even while she watched she heard the distant blast of a horn, and turning her head, she caught a glimpse of the stage, a long way off yet, but coming swiftly along the road towards the river.

"Hold tight, Davie," she called, and started down the hill with the speed of a deer. It was beginning to snow a little. She winked her eyes as she ran, while she watched intently the top of the road above the bridge, down which the stage must soon come. At last the bridge was reached, and, smiling wearily, Mary sat down upon the edge of Davie's sled and waited. She could hear the horn every now and then. The stage would be along very soon. She began to talk to Davie, with long pauses for her hurried breathing. Davie laughed and turning his head watched the road with her. Pres-

walked there from the bridge once, before he had broken his leg. She was very strong, and she was nearly eleven. Perhaps a sled would pass them on the road and pick them up. Besides long ago she had impressed upon Davie the value of a promise. She must not disappoint him now.

"Never mind, Davie dear," she said brightly. She offered him a biscuit, which he disdainfully refused. "Never mind," she went on. "I'll take you to see mother, and I'll run just like a bunny."

Davie laughed through his tears, but insisted that Mary should keep her word, so she had to jump along, imitating a rabbit as best she could. It was very tiring, and she did not keep it up very long. Besides, it was getting dark, and the snow made it darker. The road was drifted in places, and Mary could not understand it, until she remembered that the winter trail ran along the river, and that few people took the road except in the summer. She made up her mind that she had better try to get down the bank, before it got quite dark. But the bank was very steep everywhere, and once when she started down a seemingly gradual slope, the crust of snow broke on the drift that formed the incline and she went through up to her waist. It was lucky the sled was still on the road. Mary let the rope go and clambered out and back to Davie.

"Are you a bit cold?" she asked him anxiously, after they had traveled nearly an hour along by the river. Davie answered her crossly: "I want a biscuit," he said.

Mary handed him one, and taking off her mitten felt his little cheeks. They were very cold, but then that was not surprising. The wind was in their faces, and the snow stung like needles.

"Are your feet cold, Davie?" she questioned tenderly. "No," Davie spoke shortly, his mouth full of biscuit. "Go 'way, Mally. Be a bunny."

He was evidently getting sleepy. Mary was frightened suddenly. She put her numb little hand down and felt Davie's feet. She knew that when people froze they always went to sleep first. But it was as warm as an oven in the little fur-lined box and Mary heaved a sigh of relief. She was getting very tired and her legs and arms ached curiously. It was quite dark now, a darkness that was noisy with the wind and thick with the snow. Once Mary stumbled and fell on a piece of ice, and the sled slewed around nearly upsetting Davie, who began to cry fretfully, and told his sister that he "wanted his muvver now this instant minute."

"I am going as fast as ever I can," Mary said, stopping a minute to get breath, and bending down to him. "I'm being a bunny, too, sometimes, Davie, only you can't see me," she tried to laugh, but her laugh was not very merry. Davie was not pleased. We wanted to go to sleep.

"I want to see Santa Claus," he said, unreasonably. "You told me dat I would see Santa Claus tonight, an' it's night now."

"No dear, it's only dark. It's not nearly bedtime. Mary changed his position in the box and she felt his

(Continued on Page Six.)

A Palmist's Weird

Written for the Colonist by Clive Phillips-Wolley

CHAPTER I.

"MAKE way, ladies. The King comes." The speaker stood among a group of brilliantly dressed women under the great wreaths of clematis montana, which make a fairy bower of the south side of Government House.

Through and through those white wreaths, with shrill whistle of tiny wings, darted and poised the ruby-breasted humming birds, and across the unroofed eaves of the Straits, the Gateway of the Angels, stood open for all who chose to explore the mystery of sapphire and violet which lies beyond the Olympics.

From the very western verge of Britain's Empire, Carey Castle looked out of a land of homes to the white snow peaks and dimly beautiful Beyond, as Youth looks from its pride of life, across the seas of time to the unknown, seeing only beauty in the distant snows, peace on the sunlit sea.

The ladies started, and turned towards the sunken lawn. "What do you mean, Colonel Mansfield, His Excellency is still receiving?"

"True! I spoke not of His Excellency but of the King. See he comes—Young Manhood crowned," and his glance led their eyes to a tall soldierly boy, who came sauntering towards them.

At his side was a girl, golden as a cottonwood in fall, and graceful as that cottonwood in the wind.

He came with the springy stride of the mountains, a dark, curly-headed fellow, and she, long though his strides were, danced beside him like the smile that follows a thought, and between them was a link, which though intangible, even worldly eyes could see.

"Northern pine, and western honeysuckle," suggested the Colonel.

"Is it true, then?"

"Nay, you must ask the cyringa bushes. I am no authority, but I should guess that those have added one more to their sweet secrets today, and that I have lost an officer. Don't their faces look as if they had seen a new god?"

"She is a lucky girl," said the youngest of the party, and then blushed at her own frankness, as some of the others laughed, and a handsome woman with hard blue eyes and tailor-made gown replied:

"You know it, don't you, Colonel?"

"Yes, if she is a good sportswoman. I hate quiet cattle myself, but that colt will want a lot of breaking."

"Not unlikely. Well-bred ones have generally plenty of spirit, but he is young enough to break. He has a lovely place to take her to."

"Yes, I used to shoot there when we were quartered at Durham; a strange old pile in the Cheviots, looking over miles and miles of yellow downs, where only the cloud shadows move, or the wraiths of those moss troopers from whom he comes. He would not make a bad moss trooper himself, would he?"

"Moss trooper? What is that? A sort of a hold-up man? I don't agree with you a bit, Colonel. Mr. Antrobus is as steady as a yoke of oxen, and the best business man in barracks, my husband says."

"You are a loyal friend to our youngsters, Mrs. Bridges, but he need not be a miracle to be the best

(Continued on Page Three.)

Christmas Greetings

By CLIVE PHILLIPS-WOLLEY

By courtesy of "The Week."

Back! we are back from the frontier lands,
Where the greatest game of the world is played,
Where men take their lives in their reckless hands,
Play hazard with death and are undismayed.
We are back from the mine and the railway grade
To our island home mid the orchard trees,
Each to his merry Canadian maid—
Peace and goodwill to you over the seas.

We have seen the surf on the Arctic strands,
Have tickled earth's ribs with a miner's spade,
Washed gold at Nome from the frozen sands,
Where mammoth and aurochs lie undecayed,
Back in our overalls tattered and frayed,
To kneel with our girls on bended knees,
Praying the prayer that the angels prayed—
Peace and goodwill to you over the seas.

We have done the work which the Race demands,
Have worked for a wage that cannot be paid,
Contented if only She understands
That 'twas not for a dole of fame, nor trade
Alone, that we cleared, that the rails were laid,
But just for her folk, whom such labour frees,
Giving room to breathe in the homes we made—
Peace and goodwill to you over the seas.

L'ENVOI.

Sire! if political critics upbraid
As if we forsooth had not paid our fees
To share in the empire your fathers swayed,
Point to the world you rule over the seas.