

The Christmas Card That Travelled

Half the boys of Miss Hathaway's school were gathered in an eager group at the foot of the steps. Miss Hathaway had been giving them a little talk on Christmas presents that afternoon.

"I've got fifty cents, and I'm going to spend it all," announced one.

"I've got a bank, and I shall take all there is in it," cried another.

"I shall give my dolls and half my bean-bags; I'm tired of dolls anyhow, chimed the third.

"I shall give something I'm fond of," said a black-eyed girl, with a toss of her head. "I sha'n't give any old cast-off things!"

"Well, I shall," retorted a boy on the edge of the group. "It's all I've got to give someone that didn't have so much as we did; and I'm sure folks like that won't mind it if things aren't brand new!" And he turned and went whistling down the street.

It was the beginning of a general breaking-up; and by two and threes the rest went their various ways, laughing, and calling merrily back to their comrades. There was one, however, that did not laugh, chatter or call back. It was Carrie Austin, walking all alone down a side street.

Carrie was puzzled, and not quite happy. What was there, indeed, that she could give? Anything new was out of the question—she had no money to pay for it; and as for old things—no headless doll, a few torn books, a broken hoop; surely none of these could she give for a present. Yet it had seemed so easy that afternoon while the teacher was talking—so easy to make someone happy that was poorer than she.

All through the week before Christmas, Carrie puzzled over the question; but not even so much as a bit of ribbon could she find that was fresh enough to give away.

On the twenty-third of December the postman brought her a letter, and in the letter was a bright new Christmas card with a sparkling, snow-covered house in the corner.

"O!" cried Carrie. "Isn't that lovely!"

Then she propped the card up on the mantelpiece and stood off to admire. "Mother, just see how it shines!" she exclaimed exultingly, as a stray sun-beam came through the window and lighted up the diamond-dust on the card.

"But your letter, dear—you haven't read your letter," reminded Mrs. Austin with a smile.

"Sure enough!" laughed Carrie, picking up the letter which bore the postmark of a neighboring town; and this is what she read:

Dear Patsykins: I saw this card in a window to-day and thought of you—you do so love things that sparkle. Keep it or give it away—just which you like.

Love and merry Christmas from Brother Will.

Carrie laughed gleefully. "That's just like Will," she cried. "The minute he's got a spare cent in his pocket off it goes for something for me! 'Give it away,' indeed!" she added scornfully, then stopped short. She suddenly remembered that for a whole week she had longed for something to give away.

Carrie did not speak again for some time. She wandered restlessly from room to room only to come back every few minutes and look at the Christmas card on the mantelpiece.

"It isn't enough to give away anything," she told herself; then something seemed to answer:

"You know better, Carrie Austin. It is big enough for you to like, and if you like it some one else would!"

At length she put the Christmas card in an envelope and sent it to Nellie Randall, the girl who sat two seats in front of her in school, and who never brought much for luncheon except dry crackers and bread without butter.

It was the next morning that Nellie Randall rushed breathless into her mother's room.

"Mother, mother, see!" she panted. "Some one has sent me the loveliest Christmas card! Now I can do something to one of our poorer than I am! But who shall have it, Mother? Mary, Tom, Henry or Jack?"

It was a weighty question. Nellie and her mother could not decide it at once. Mary was poor, certainly, but Tom Henry had a sick mother and no father; while Jack—poor Jack—was crippled himself and could not run and play like the other lads.

At last it was decided; and with shining eyes Nellie hurried away for an envelope and a stamp.

That afternoon on the first mail, Jack Talbot received a bright new Christmas card with a sparkling, snow-covered house in the corner.

"Humph!" grunted Jack. Then he scowled and tried to look as if he were not pleased.

Jack was not a favorite at school. At first the scholars had tried to show how sorry they were that he could not join in their games; but he had met their advances with sullen looks and short words, so that generally his schoolmates had come to leave him pretty much to himself.

Jack was not able to be at school every day, but he had been there on the afternoon that Miss Hathaway had given her little talk on Christmas presents and many times since then he had thought of it.

"Humph!" was as if there could be

anybody poorer than I am!" he would mutter to himself sometimes; and then almost always he would remember Mrs. Murphy, the little old woman on the floor below who took in washing.

For some time after the Christmas card came Jack sat looking at it.

He picked it up and tilted it from side to side that he might catch the glint of the diamond dust.

"'Tis kind of pretty," he said aloud, almost grudgingly. "Humph! I wonder what Mrs. Murphy would say to this? Guess she'd think 'twas a little bit ahead of that old postal card picture she came totting home last week; and she thought that was fine even if it was all torn!"

After a time he arose and limped stealthily down stairs. He paused at Mrs. Murphy's door and was just taking something from under his coat when the door opened and Mrs. Murphy herself appeared.

"Bless you, boy, how you startled me!" cried the little old woman.

"'D-did I?" stammered Jack, hastily thrusting something under his coat and stumbling on down the stairs.

Ten minutes later, after walking once around the square, Jack slowly climbed the stairs and stopped once more at the washerwoman's door.

"Hi there, Jack! I was just looking for you," called a boy's voice; and again Jack thrust something hastily out of sight.

"W-were you?" he stammered. Jack seemed to be doing a good deal of stammering that afternoon.

"Well, here I am." And he limped boldly without so much as a glance toward the washerwoman's door.

Long after dark that night, however, when the house was quiet, Jack crept downstairs and tied something to Mrs. Murphy's door-knob.

It was on Christmas day that Carrie Austin's mother answered a timid knock at her side door.

"Why, good morning, Mrs. Murphy," she said pleasantly to the bent old woman on the doorstep. "A merry Christmas to you!"

"And it's just that, ma'am, that I've come to say to you," returned Mrs. Murphy, in an eager, quavering voice.

"It's always you who have been doing things for me—potatoes and tea, and a bit of warm flannel—and never a thing could I do for you. But now, ma'am, I've got something you'd like—something I'm sure you'd like. I found it hanging on my door-knob this morning, and I hadn't more than set my two eyes on it before I said, 'Silly Ann Murphy, you've got it now; that's just the thing to give good, kind Mrs. Austin and Miss Carrie.' And here 'tis, ma'am, and a merry Christmas to you!" she finished, handing out a flat, brown paper parcel.

"Thank you, thank you," called Mrs. Austin, as the little old woman hobbled joyfully down the walk.

"Why Mother!" cried Carrie in amazement a little later, as the wrappings fell away from Mrs. Murphy's gift and disclosed a bright new Christmas card with a sparkling snow-covered house in the corner.

"Why Mother that's my very own card! I sent to Nellie. I remember that little black mark on the back."

It was some days before Carrie understood the mystery; then she overheard Nellie Randall say:

"O, yes, I sent something. It was a Christmas card that some one sent to me—such a pretty card, all snow and sparkles! I sent it to Jack Talbot."

"And Jack Talbot lives just over Mrs. Murphy!" cried Carrie under her breath, as she hurried home. "Mother!" she cried, bursting into the house, "only think! First Will sent that Christmas card to me, then I sent it to Nellie Randall and she sent it to Jack Talbot. And what did Jack do but take it down to old Mrs. Murphy's and tie it on her door-knob, and then Mrs. Murphy brought it to us. My! how that Christmas card has travelled!" she finished, as she hurried over to the mantelpiece to examine with new interest the wonderful card with its sparkling, snow-covered house in the corner.

Where the Card Came From.

The stinky young man approached the flame of his passion.

"Did you receive many Christmas-cards, Miss Buzzer?" he asked, by way of a beginning.

"Oh, yes! And there was one—unsigned—that I thought particularly dainty and artistic. I'm sure it came from you!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the delighted gentleman. "And what makes you imagine so?"

"Why," replied the maiden sweetly, "because I sent it to you last Christmas!"

At An Armory.

The head of a great gun and armory-making establishment said to the agent of a foreign Government:

"Then, sir, I am to understand that you want us to make you an armor plate that no projectile can pierce? We are producing armor plate like that daily."

"No," replied the military agent, "you mistake me. I want to know if you can make a gun that will pierce any armor plate manufactured?"

"Certainly, sir, certainly," was the prompt answer; "we do that sort of thing every day."

WHEN CHRISTMAS TIME COMES ROUND

S. T. KISER

When Christmas time comes round it seems

As though the long, long years
Rolled back and take away our cares
And dry up all our tears
I don't know why it is, but when
The great day comes along
I like to feel the young again,
And kind of turn to song,
And whistle and go on just like
A boy would. I'll be bound,
The world seems to brighten up
When Christmas time comes round.

I'm tickled at the Juggin' Jack
And all them kind of things,
I like to watch the to-a that play
By windin' up the springs,
And somehow—don't know why it is—
Love seems to fill the air,
And I forget I've enemies
Or troubles anywhere;
And every little while I sort
Of listen for the sound
Of voices that have long been still,
When Christmas time comes round.

I wish that I was Santa Claus
And had a magic sleigh,
To visit all the children who
Look forward to the day—
The orphans and the cripples and
The poor folks everywhere—
All children that are good and kind
And care long ago prayers;
I'll bet you that they'd all be glad
When they got up and found
Their stockings fairly bustin' out,
When Christmas time comes round.

Oh, happy time of Juggin' bells
And all the white with snow;
Oh, joyful day when all
The happy times at home,
I wonder if up there above
Where happy angels roam
They do not get to thinkin' of
The other side of life,
And turn in fancy back once more
To listen to the sound
Of voices that have long been still,
When Christmas time comes round?

MAKING CHRISTMAS A BURDEN.

A Worried Mother Writes the Following Protest.

"With the approaching Christmas season cannot a word of protest be uttered against the custom of exchanging gifts between pupils and teachers? The writer was present at the closing of a school term last year, and saw a teacher open gift after gift piled up on her desk. It was easy to single out those who had not brought presents by their distressed and unhappy faces, their sensitive little hearts feeling as if they were under a ban for not being able to do so as the others. A sorry beginning for so joyous a season. Even if the gifts are not brought to the school, but sent direct to the teachers' or scholars' homes, would it not be better simply to have the good wishes of the season exchanged, without the expense and formality of a present?"

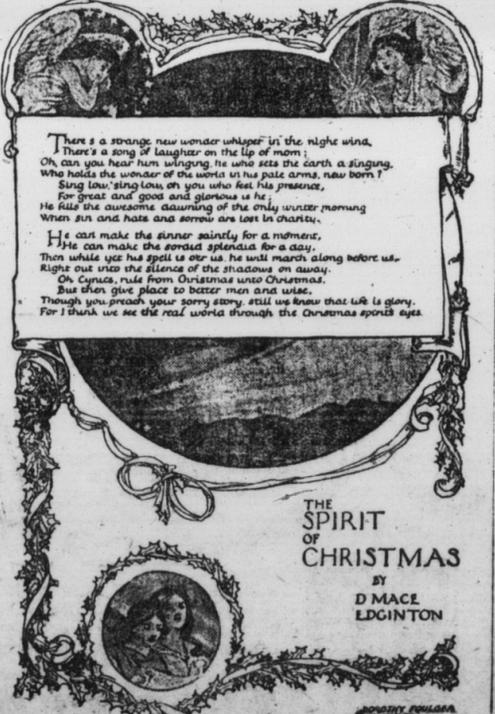
"I know of one family where the three children expect to take a gift to each of their different teachers. They are asked also each year to bring something for a donation from the class as a whole. The same thing is repeated in the Sunday school, each child giving to each teacher, and each one also expected in addition to contribute to some special charitable object.

The father and mother of these three children each have Sunday school classes, one of seven scholars, the other of five. If they pursue the same method in their own classes and give a remembrance to each pupil, and also contribute to the special object chosen by each class, the grand total of the presents given by this one family would reach the extraordinary number of twenty-six, aside from the immediate relatives and friends.

"Is it any wonder, therefore, that Christmas becomes a great financial and nerve-exhausting strain? This is especially the case when the burden falls upon the tired mothers, who have to select the gifts. An overdoing of anything, however good of itself, ceases to be desirable. In the needless multiplication of Christmas gifts have not many of us lost the spirit of joyousness and true thankfulness? In our absorption in 'much giving' do we not often forget to thank our Heavenly Father for the gift of gifts, whose advent we are supposed to be celebrating?"

"A Mother."

To this we would like to add a word for the teacher, longing to remember each little one, and without time or money to spare for such a purpose. Let love and loving wishes take the place of all this strain.



Christmas Giving and Christmas Living

It was Annis Crosby, in her pathetic black dress, advertising the recent loss of her mother, who startled them all by coming to the first meeting of the Christmas sewing-club with a large darning-bag. We had hardly expected her to have the courage even to think of Christmas this year.

"It isn't only that we don't feel very Christmassy at our house this year," she said, drawing a boy's thick, ugly ribbed stocking over the darning-egg, "but I've been doing a lot of thinking, especially about Christmas. For one thing I've come to the realization that we've all grown fanatical over giving instead of living—and maybe over getting, too—but with most of us here, present-making has become a regular vice."

"Why, Annis," expostulated Marion, the most ardent and elaborate giver of all "giving things is the very essence and spirit of Christmas!"

"Giving, yes—but not altogether giving things, Marion," replied Annis, quietly. "I don't know quite how to express what I mean without seeming to lecture—but don't you think there are gifts more important than the material ones, and, too, better selections to be made when it comes to the actual gifts themselves? None of us ever count the cost of all our Christmas preparations. I thoroughly believe, for instance, that we could choose a few more 'boughten' presents and use the time and effort we expend on Christmas sewing to better advantage. If I'm not mistaken, Marion spent her Christmas holidays in bed with the grippe last year; she added with a faint smile, 'just because she was tired out and her resistance was low when the grippe germ roamed in her vicinity—that's one kind of unreckoned cost, but not exactly what I mean, either.'"

"She stopped, hesitating.

"Go on, go on!" urged several of the girls. The group of eight busy teachers had formed a little club which met once a week from the first of October for the laudable purpose of working on their Christmas gifts. Of course nobody accomplished all, her Christmas sewing to the accompaniment of tea and little cakes and much talk; in fact, each of the eight had somehow to manage seven presents for the other members entirely outside of the club meetings, to say nothing of gifts to her own family—

But the club furnished the impetus for a vast amount of energetic Christmas labor, so that eight pairs of eyes, already tired by the close work of correcting papers and writing reports and plan-books, were taxed after the school day for many a long hour; nerves, taut and tense from the classroom noises, were put to final strain by the confinement of sewing; eight intelligent brains centered frantically for weeks on producing tea-spoons, ornamental traveling-cases, embroidered shirtwaists, fancy pin cushions and coat-hangers, hemstitched table-linen, tatting, crocheting, and sheer and fragile dress-accessories dear to the feminine heart.

Annis cleared her throat. "After Mother died I gradually began to notice how everything fell on me—how my own affairs all the time, and nobody had time to help. Right there I sat down and asked myself how much time I, personally, had been giving Mother when she was with us. I counted up the hours and minutes, and the sum total was, oh, so pitifully little! I used to think it was fine of me to work hard and let Mother use most of my money; but I know now that money isn't everything, and that there were lots of little matters, I might have attended to, but mostly there was so much time I never have spent with her that I can't have now."

"Take this Christmas sewing-club—we've had it for six years. If it was just the one afternoon a week, I'd say it was a fine thing—bringing us all together, having a good, jolly time and forgetting other work. But that's the smallest part of Christmas. After we leave here we all spend every spare minute sewing on a lot of unnecessary things that don't do the people who get them any good, and all that precious time might be spent being with people we love, doing things for them, making life easier. There is a little tinge of selfish indulgence in the way some of us concentrate on the pleasure of making Christmas things."

"But what," asked Clara in bewilderment, "are we going to do about the presents? I think it's all true about too much giving, and over in our school we all joined the 'Spugs' to prevent collections for the principal and officers, but home giving and your friends are different—you wouldn't feel right, not to remember them."

"We could begin right here in this meeting by pledging ourselves to omit all gifts to each other, couldn't we?" suggested practical Elsie.

"Or limit it to a card of greeting or a letter or camera picture," put in Millicent.

"I suppose," said Dorothy, slowly, "my mother would have more actual satisfaction if I brought her darning-bag to these meetings instead of making her centerpieces I've started. I believe I'll do it, Annis. I just love to embroider and I hate to darn—but what shall I do for a Christmas present for her, something she'll really like?"

Annis considered. "We've been thinking at home that our so-called Christmas presents to Mother weren't really personal gifts at all. One year

three of us clubbed together and bought her a lamp—and Mother rarely had a chance to use it at all because we usually monopolized it with a light. The traveling-bag Don gave her he used himself, and we all walked over the new rug—Mother simply kept it clean. This year we're going to put our savings into a few substantial things the house needs. It's our home now, and even when she was here, it wasn't just Mother's exclusively. We'll have councils over the purchases, and committees, and the kind of celebration Mother would have liked over the installation. Any one who still wants to cultivate the individual feeling can do so in a separate small gift to the house—an egg-beater or a new book or a sofa pillow or anything else we can all get some satisfaction out of.

"Then for our friends, letters and greeting-cards and 'service-promises' will be all. We don't—"

"Please, Annis," interrupted Marion, "what do you mean by 'service-promises'?"

"Why," smiled Annis, "if Dorothy should hand her mother a note saying that her Christmas present was a contract to darn stockings or do mending for two hours once a week, that would be a 'service-promise.' The Dorothy's mother could have the fun of embroidering centerpieces instead of doing the less interesting work. Marion should decide to give Myra Conway all the time she is putting into that baby-jacket, taking care of the other children, for instance, while Myra rests or gets out for a change without the children, that would be a service-promise. And without wanting to criticize, it's been the experience of most of my friends with babies that the practical 'boughten' things, like hot-water bottles and diapers and rubber bath-tubs, are far more needed than the fancy garments. I've thought of lots of 'service-promises' for my own family—helping Roy with his mathematics, taking one of Edna's settlement classes off her hands. There are really lots of uses for time if you count up how much there is and what you can do with it."

"Do you believe in giving people clothes for presents, Annis?" demanded Dorothy. "I don't. Every year Ted gives Jack a necktie and me a pair of gloves, and Jack gives Ted silk socks and me silk stockings—and secretly nobody likes what the other has chosen. And if I want to invest in a new party-dress in October, Mother says, 'Wait and see what Santa Clause does for you'—most like forgetting and giving me underwear when the time comes! I can't see much present about something you have to have anyway!"

"In families where there are children you can't lavish gifts—they always expect 'em," protested Anna, the youngest member.

"Yes, they do," Annis agreed, "but usually they get too many and very few well-chosen ones. As long as children are at the expectant age, give them playthings with which they can make or do something. Good tools, building-blocks, the various kinds of wood and metal building-toys, scissors, knives, paints, electric motors, sewing-outfits, crayons, raffa—things like that. After a while they will learn to make things for others, and finally come to the household-gift idea, outgrowing personal anticipations."

"We've always devoted the day before Christmas to making our own candy," Clara said. "We've done it for years, and everybody helps. Bannocks aren't making or buy pretty boxes and the children fill them to give to their friends. When the candy's put in cornucopias on the tree, they eat too much, and get at it repetitiously."

"Our Christmas plum pudding is made a month beforehand," remarked Millicent. "It's another family institution. We all send raisins and cut citron till our arms ache. Then it's boiled and hung in a bag in the attic to season. It comes on the minute sewing on a lot of unnecessary Christmas table blaring all around."

"Wouldn't it be a fine thing," Annis said, "if families could get together once a year and talk over their income and expense-budget frankly? Decide how much each ought to spend for clothing, for example, and let each spend it whenever he or she wished—take birthdays for the really individual gifts, the little luxuries, and turn Christmas into a day of broader thought, good will to all? Have the whole family unite in whatever fun or celebration there is—such as installing a new phonograph or a big chair or an electric light or a beautiful set of 'best' linen—and then try to have the day one of 'peace on earth' instead of confusion and commotion? The big Christmas dinner's all right—the family feast belongs to the traditions that ought to be kept alive—but the work of it shouldn't fall on one member of the family."

"We can't give up our Christmas tree," said Clara, "but we could certainly adopt some of these other suggestions that make Christmas a day for all the family to think about loving and serving each other better and doing things in unison."

Featherstone: "I wonder if your sister realizes, Willie, that during the last two months I have given her ten dollars' worth of sweets and flowers?"

Willie: "Of course she does. That's why she is keeping her engagement with Jim Burling a secret."

Home-Made Christmas Gifts

A "traveler's friend" is a pin case that can be tucked in a corner of the suit case or traveling bag, and that carries all sizes and colors of pins. A strip of cretonne twelve inches long and eight wide, has one end rounded like the lap of a pocketbook. The strip is then bound with narrow ribbon or silk tape. Eight leaves of white flannel three inches and a half wide and not quite two inches wide are pinned on one side and the two ends. Two are bound together with the tape or ribbon, and the four groups stitched to the center of the cretonne strip, one above the other, with equal intervals between; the sides of the strip are then folded over the leaves, and the fold stitched to hold it flat. After the leaves are stocked with pins the case is folded up like a pocketbook, and a cretonne covered button and loop of the tape added for fastening. For this use a pretty striped cretonne is best.

Pretty curtains for a boy's room can be made of a very light weight, unbleached domestic cotton, finishing them about a foot from the top with a six-inch band of cretonne which repeats the colors of the wallpaper and carpet. Such curtains are pretty, not easily torn or injured, and can be laundered easily. Nor is it much trouble to renew the cretonne.

For a young housekeeper a couple of big checked gingham aprons, nicely made off, folded neatly, tied with red ribbons and with a sprig of holly thrust through the knot look quite Christmassy.

Stocks and collars of silk braid, the kind that draws up on a thread and forms charming curves, are easily made from the patterns, which cost about 25 cents each. Very little work is necessary—just joining the braid and putting in a few filling stitches.

The greatest trouble the Christmas giver has is to think of suitable gifts for her men friends. Almost any man will like a pretty and serviceable box for his handkerchiefs—not something all lace and frills, but one that is practical. A sweet grass basket in box form, or one on raffa, with the inside wadded and lined with thin silk and a cover that lifts with a ring and hook instead of a ribbon loop, will suit the average man "real first-rate."

Find out the color of your friend's room, and—unless she has one, make her a pretty cushion in that color. Choose the desired size, cover with the color, and stretch all over lace over the top. Make a ruffle of the silk—China silk is best, pink one edge and gather and sew the ruffle all round the cushion. Take lace edge just a trifle narrower than the ruffle, gather and sew neatly around over the latter. Finish the corners with bows or rosettes of narrow ribbon.

A pin cushion recently seen at the Woman's Exchange was made of pale blue satin in the exact style of a mattress. It was "boxed" in proper form, and tufted as mattresses are by baby ribbon run through and tied in the thickest of loops. Very small pearl buttons might be used instead of the ribbon. Men like such a pin cushion; it is simple, and there is "no nonsense about it."

A college man always likes things connected with his college or university. Cushions in college colors are always appreciated. So are pictures for his room, scenes from the campus, the portraits of the faculty properly grouped, the football team or boat crew, views of the buildings, prettily framed in passepartout.

Christmas Musings.

The joyous bells are ringing
The message from above,
And worshippers are singing
Of God's unfathomed love:

Of love in sending Jesus
From glory bright and high,
Down to Bethlehem's manger,
For rebel man to die!

Love! Higher than the heavens,
And deeper than the sea,
Broader than a world of sin
So gloriously to free!

Such love transforms the rebel;
His Spirit and His Word
Implant the love undying,
Make sinners "Sons of God!"

In turn, God asks the homage
Of loyal hearts to-day,
Who prize the loving Saviour
And labor, watch and pray.

Oh; swell the anthem ever;
Throughout the circling years,
For love unbounded never
Should pall on ransomed cars.

In Need of Repair.

"When I bought this automobile from you a few weeks ago," cried the irate purchaser, "you said you would be willing to supply a new part if it broke anything!"

"Certainly, sir!" agreed the manufacturer. "What can I have the pleasure of providing you with?"

"Well," replied the purchaser, "I want a pair of new ankles, a left eye, three yards of cuticle, a box of assorted finger-nails, four front teeth, and a funny-bone!"

The observation of Christmas began in the second century, in different months—January, April, or May.