

MOTTO: "KINDLY DEEDS MAKE HAPPY LIVES"

The House of Mystery or How Tom and Bobbie Got the Surprise of Their Lives.

It was Christmas morning in Bennington, and snow was falling lazily out of a sky that seemed at every moment to be on the point of becoming cloudless, and blue. The flakes were large and feathery and sparkling, as if up above they had danced in the sunlight, and they settled on the ground so softly that they made no sound. At any other time Bobbie DeWitt and his brother Tom would have liked to sit by the window and watch the snow come down, but today they were too much excited to remain quiet for even ten seconds. There was a mystery in the house!

At four o'clock the day before, father had come home. Tom and Bobbie had caught sight of him far down the street and had shouted, "Here comes dad!" Then something unexpected had happened.

Mother had said, "No, don't run out to meet him this time. Go into the dining room and shut the door please."

The two boys had obeyed with strange feelings. From the dining room they had heard their father mount the front steps, walk across the piazza, enter the door and speak to their mother.

What he said was spoken too low for them to catch the words, and presently they heard him go upstairs and open the door to the guest room. He was gone a long time, but finally he came down and mother called:

"All right, boys; you may come out now!"

They rushed into the hall with many questions on their tongues; but father only tossed their hair and laughed—and there was something in the twinkle of his eye that made Bobbie and Tom more certain than ever that he was keeping a great secret from them.

Just before supper they met father unexpectedly in the hall with something in his hand, which he hurriedly concealed.

"It looked like a fish," said Bobbie. "Run along downstairs, you youngsters!" cried father, and he kept his back turned toward them, with his coat all spread out in a very funny manner, until they were out of sight in the hall below. Then the boys thought that they heard him put a key in the door of the guest room.

All of that had happened yesterday; it was Christmas morning now, with the feathery snowflakes falling—and the mystery had only deepened. The guest room was still locked, and father still laughed and twinkled his eyes when the boys asked questions.

In the living room there was a Christmas tree that sparkled with tinsel stars and glass balls and fuzzy silver ropes, and among its branches were packages and bundles of many shapes and sizes—long and narrow, thick and bulky, little and big. That was the way it always was in the DeWitt house on Christmas—but never before had there been a locked guest room with a mystery inside.

"I'd give a thousand million dollars to know what it is!" said Tom, who did not begin to realize how much money that really is.

Bobbie merely sighed very deeply and wondered so hard that a wrinkle formed on his forehead.

"Well, perhaps—just perhaps—you'll find out," said mother, "if nothing happens."

But no one in the DeWitt house was prepared for what happened—not even father, who knew, of course, what was in the guest room.

At ten o'clock father began to distribute the Christmas presents from the tree. He always handed the first one to mother, who always reddened a little and looked very happy. That is what he did on this Christmas, and the second present, which he delivered to the boys with a great flourish and

a bow, was a sled marked "For Bobbie and Tom." Then he called in Hilda the maid, from the kitchen, and gave her a big box, which she took with such excitement that she thanked him in Swedish instead of her usual slowly spoken English. Father turned again to the tree to take down a package, when a strange sound went through the house.

It came from overhead, and it seemed to be a muffled thumping and banging against metal, as if some one were pounding a sheet of tin with a pillow. Then they heard a scratching, pattering noise and a curious, high-pitched sound that seemed almost like a person crying.

With a startled look on his face father withdrew his hand from the Christmas tree; then he glanced at mother, and the next moment the whole family—Hilda, and all—were running upstairs. Father reached the guest room first, thrust a key into the lock and threw the door open. Every one crowded in and gazed about.

Bang! bang! bang! scuffle! bang! The sound was louder than ever, but it seemed to come, not from the room itself, but from beneath the floor! Father was the first to guess what had happened, and he ran over to the register, which was beside the bureau.

Two days before Hilda, in cleaning the room, had dropped an iron dumb-bell that father had used in college; it had struck the register and had broken on the metal grating in three places. Father had taken the grating out and replaced it with a folded fireproof screen to cover the square hole in the floor and to allow the heat from the hot-air pipe to enter the room until a new grating came.

As Bobbie and Tom dashed across the room they saw that the screen was pulled aside and that nothing covered the hole in the floor.

"He's down there!" cried mother. "Get him out quick—the poor thing!"

"Who is? What is it, father?" shouted Bobbie and Tom, jumping up and down with excitement.

But instead of answering, father got down on his hands and knees and then actually lay flat on the floor with one arm thrust as far as he could reach into the hot-air pipe.

"Lucky it doesn't go straight to the furnace," he said. "It bends here."

For a moment he groped, while the thumping clatter continued, and then suddenly it ceased and he began to withdraw his hand.

What he pulled forth made the boys leap with surprise. It was a furry, grayish-brown puppy only a few months old, with an eager, intelligent face and bright eyes.

"There," said father, putting the dusty, wriggling little dog down on the floor, "that's your Christmas present. He doesn't seem to be any the worse for wear. He didn't have anyone to play with him, and I guess he pulled that screen away to amuse himself."

The puppy seemed cheerful enough about it all. He was wriggling his whole body and wagging his tail at the same time, and when Bobbie took him into his arms he licked the boy's cheek and then suddenly thrust out his head and licked Tom on the ear.

Forgotten—almost—was the Christmas tree, forgotten the narrow and fat and the short and the long and the bulky packages. At last the brothers had a real live pet that seemed to love them just as much as they loved him.

Of course Bobbie and Tom did find time to look at the other presents, but they spent most of the day playing with their dog. They agreed to call him Frisco, and father had promised to buy him a collar with his name on a silver plate.



CONDUCTED BY UNCLE DICK.

Uncle Dick's Chat With the Children

My Dear Kiddies:—

No doubt, you will be expecting me to give you some sort of a New Year's message. In my letter this week, but I really don't think it is necessary to search very far for a splendid one, as the motto of your own Children's Page is the best you can find to try and carry out each day of this next year.

You know what it is: "Kindly deeds make happy lives." I should like to hear of every member of the Corner making a promise to do a kindly deed, to either some other boy or girl, or a dumb animal each day during the year 1917. What happy children it would make you, I mean even more happy than you are now, and in most cases that is saying quite a lot. The old year will soon be over, this being the last year you will have in 1916. To some it has brought many changes, to others prizes and good things have come to them, whilst to all members of the Children's Corner it has meant a year of amusement and instruction, at least so far as their favorite page is concerned.

In the last twelve months thousands of letters have been addressed to you, Uncle Dick, all telling of how many of you have been enjoying the Standard's Special Section devoted to boys and girls, and it is with a certain amount of satisfaction that he looks back over those cherished notes, knowing that they are evidence of happiness and pleasure, having been brought to many homes, through the columns of the Children's Page.

There are big plans being arranged for your page to be fulfilled, during the coming year, and I hope by this time next year, you will all have reason to look back and say "I am very, very pleased I joined Uncle Dick's Corner."

It has been a great pleasure to have had so many new members join during the past year, the books now showing a membership of close on five thousand, and but as I desire to still further add to this number, knowing that many of boys and girls are readers, but have not sent in their name or promised to keep the simple rules, I have the special "New Members Contest," which began last Saturday, in which I offered \$20 to be divided amongst the ten boys and girls who succeeded in getting the first number of new members, who would agree to do a kindly deed whenever possible and also get the Standard containing the Children's Corner, regularly, this competition being open to those kiddies living outside of St. John only.

Every week I was very much surprised to receive a letter from a former member of the Corner, who is now in the forces in England, in which he says: "I still like your chats. It is evident that he is receiving The Standard, even over in the Old Country."

Now I shall have to do my best to you all the very happiest of New Year, reminding you that the best way to have that sort of New Year, is by carrying out the motto of the Children's Corner: "Kindly deeds make happy lives." Heaps of love and kisses.

From your

Uncle Dick

Children's Editor.

THE NEW ARRIVAL

By Bertha C. Wood

The Old Year is a cripple

That limps off in the night;

But round a sunny corner

The New Year comes in sight,

A laughing little youngster

With step that patters light.

Answers to

LETTERS RECEIVED

BY UNCLE DICK

Olive McKenna, Sussex—Have written to you direct, as contests deal with Allie's Aid, etc.

Myrtle Cox, Young's Cove—Thanks for the nice Christmas wishes, Myrtle, it was thoughtful of you.

Mary Hoyt, Hammonds—Was quite pleased to have your good wishes, Mary. A great number came, but few just as nice as yours.

Ina McAllan, Cody's—Glad to have your nice letter, and to hear that you are getting better. In printing with your set, always see that the large part of the letter "S" is at the bottom, otherwise the letter prints upside down.

Margaret Edgar, 281 Rockland Rd.—Thanks for the good wishes and nice letter. I have made a note of your birthday.

Pauline Johnston, Perth N. B.—Very

pleased to welcome you to the Corner Pauline, and I hope you will often write me.

Freda Coles, Red Head, St. John—Your well written letter arrived, and I am glad to have you as a member. Thanks for the good wishes.

Vera Coles, Red Head, St. John—You are a wise little kiddie to also join the Corner, with your sister, and send me such a neatly written letter, as I am sure you will continue to enjoy the Corner.

Marion Lunn, Campbellton—Your long and interesting letter was very welcome. Are you feeling quite better now? That was kind of you to think of the birds on Christmas morning. Thanks for all the nice things you say about the Corner.

Reta Culligan, Jacquet River—Although there are so many kiddies, I always like to hear from others who wish to join, and give all a hearty welcome. You must be having a great time now that the snow has come to stay.

Helen Magee, City—It was very kind of you to think of Uncle Dick in the midst of all the excitement, and fun, Helen. Thanks ever so much.

Marjorie Shannon, City Road—The Christmas message which you sent me was very sweet, and I thank you, Marjorie, for your thoughtfulness.

Bernice Sommerville, 382 Union St.—It was very pleased to see that you tried so hard in the contest, and shall look out for more of your work.

Clarence Clark, St. George—I guess you received quite a surprise when you discovered how many words could be got, eh Clarence? Yours were neat.

Evelyn Morrow, Grand Bay—I am sorry if I missed answering your letter Evelyn, but really there are such a number I am sure to miss some. Glad to hear that you are enjoying the Corner so much.

George Charlton, 83 Germain Street—It is a pity you did not send the usual coupon with your letter and as without same you stand no chance of getting a prize. Glad to have you as a member.

Helen Lennox, 240 Brussel Street—Very pleased to see that you are enjoying the contests, so much Helen. The writing is most neatly written.

Arthur Chamberlain, East St. John—The drawing was done nicely, Arthur, but you did not fill it in as the picture showed.

Clarence Currie, 55 Murray Street—From your letter I gather that you are quite a busy boy, but nevertheless find time to enjoy the Corner. Delighted to have you as a member. How do you like being a cadet?

Mary Wright, Milwood—That's a good plan for you to show Hilda how to crochet. It would be nice for other members of the Corner to help each other like that. The Allie's Aid Society, Children's Corner branch help each other that way. Thanks for the good wishes.

Francis Spright, Welsford—Very pleased to hear from you Francis, and to see that you are enjoying the contests so much.

Fraulein Matthews, Red Head, City—Thanks for the nice little letter, Fraulein, and also delighted to have you as a member of the Corner. I think you are quite a neat writer.

Greta Matthews, Red Head, City—Sorry you have been so long in joining the Corner, Greta, but nevertheless very glad to welcome you now. What a number of pets you seem to have. Thanks for the nice wishes.

Nellie Badreau, Plaster Rock—Very pleased to see that you are enjoying the contest, Nellie, and hope you will often write me.

Myrna Smith, Sussex—Glad to hear that you had such a great time and received so many presents from Santa. Thanks for pretty card.

Ada Walton, Markhamville—Yes certainly, Ada, you should have joined before. Will credit Myrna with your name.

Doris Watson, Undine—Thanks for your very nice letter Doris. Hope you will enjoy the Corner now that you have joined.

Gladys Mae Lewis, Centerville—Glad to hear that you like your music lessons, and shall be pleased to hear of your continued success. Did you name the pet dog after me eh? I am very sorry to hear the sad news about your papa. As you get older you will have to help mamma not to miss him too much. Like a brave little girl should. Write me whenever you like Gladys, as I am always pleased to hear from all the kiddies.

EXTRACTS FROM THE MAIL BAG
Chipman, N. B.

Dear Uncle Dick:—I am going to try the word contest and hope to be successful. I think it would be very nice to have a dollar bill for yourself and get nice Christmas presents. I have got over a hundred words now, and had a hard time thinking all them. It makes me want to try to get a prize when I see all the other children getting them. I see my

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL THE KIDDIES

The Great Race—The Animals of the Forest Decide Who Can Run the Fastest.

The fastest runner of all the wood folk is Prong Horn," said Willy Wolf, and he looked round in a way that showed he did not believe that anyone would dispute him.

"Oh, no," White Throat is the fastest!" cried Billy Bear at once.

"You are both wrong," said Ray Coon. "Velvet Eyes is the fastest deer in the forest—the fastest on this side of the big mountain."

And so they argued and their friends joined in the argument. The three deer themselves had little to say, but they held their heads high and each made it plainly understood that he was very proud of his speed, and each in his heart felt sure that he could run faster than any living creature, perhaps even faster than the West Wind itself.

At last Grandpa Fox, the wisest of all the wood folk, spoke up. "Idle talk! Idle talk!" he cried. "Boasting settles nothing. You must have a race. That is the only way to settle it."

"Good!" cried the others. "A race!"

"The course shall be straight through the forest, from side to side," went on Grandpa Fox. "You, Grandpa Wolf and Grandpa Rabbit, go to the farther side and see that the start is fair. And you, Grandpa Coon and Roundface Owl, stay here with me. We will be the judges at the finish line."

Just then Grandpa Coon reached up and whispered in the ear of Grandpa Fox.

"Oh, yes," said Grandpa Fox, "the deer must have riders in the race! You, Willy Wolf, shall ride on Prong Horn; you, Billy Bear, on White Throat; and you, Ray Coon, on Velvet Eyes. Now get ready!"

All this time Gray Squirrel and Bouncer Rabbit had been whispering together, apart from the others, at the foot of a big pine. Now Gray Squirrel ran up to Grandpa Fox and cried out, so that all could hear:

"What is the race for—to see which is the fastest deer, or which creature is fastest of all the wood folk?"

"To find the fastest of all the wood folk," answered Grandpa Fox. "Am I not right?"

"You are right!" cried the others. "Then I want Bouncer Rabbit to be in the race, and I will ride him," said Gray Squirrel bravely. "Bouncer is too modest to speak for himself, but I think he is the fastest of all the wood folk."

How they all laughed! And Bouncer Rabbit crouched close among the roots of the big pine.

"Silence!" cried Grandpa Fox, raising his big cane. "What Gray Squirrel asks is only fair. Bouncer Rabbit may start if he desires to. Are there any others?"

No others came forward, and so the three deer and Bouncer Rabbit went off with their riders to the starting point on the other side of the woods. Bouncer Rabbit looked very small before the deer.

side the deer; but Gray Squirrel patted him on the back and whispered something that made his eyes brighter than ever, and he no longer minded the jeers of the others.

A moment later they were in line. Then Grandpa Wolf barked the word "Go!"

The three deer flew like the wind, and in places where the branches were low the three riders had all they could do to stay in their seats. In the open places the snow was deeper, and there Bouncer Rabbit, with little Gray Squirrel on his back, was able to gain on the flying deer—for Bouncer barely sank into the snow at all. Prong Horn slipped down on a piece of ice, where the wind had blown the snow away, and so he fell a bit behind.

Bouncer Rabbit was covering the ground in long leaps. The others had no time to jeer at him now. His heart was thumping big sides—less because he was getting tired than from the excitement of the race and the hope of victory. He must win, because his good friend, Gray Squirrel, expected him to win and had told the others that he was the fastest of all the wood folk.

He would win! His leaps became longer and faster. The deer, too, ran faster and faster but try as hard as they would they could not leave Bouncer behind.

Just before the finish line there was a fallen tree that all must leap over. Here the judges waited. On came the racers in a flurry of snow. Over the fallen log they flew, the leaders fairly abreast and Prong Horn behind.

The race was over. Who had won? They all crowded round the judges, clamoring loudly—all except Gray Squirrel and Bouncer Rabbit. They stood apart, and Bouncer panted softly, while Gray Squirrel patted him and said something that made his eyes still brighter.

"I don't know who won," said Grandpa Coon, one of the judges. "It was watching Prong Horn, who was behind the others."

"Neither do I," said Roundface Owl, another judge. "The sun came out and blinded me just as they leaped watching the finish line and the sun over the log."

"Well, I know who won," said Grandpa Fox, still waiting his big handkerchief. "It was Bouncer Rabbit. I was watching the finish line and the sun did not blind me. Bouncer Rabbit won, and I am glad of it!"

"So are all of us!" cried the others in a chorus, for they suddenly remembered what a fine little fellow Bouncer was—friendly to all and never boasting.

And that is how Bouncer Rabbit, with the help of his good friend, Gray Squirrel, won the great race through the forest that the wood folk talked about all the rest of the winter. Later there was a race on the ice—but there is not time to tell about that now.

NEW MEMBERS WANTED

A Contest for Kiddies Only
CASH PRIZES VALUED AT \$20.00

The following interesting contest is open to members of the Children's Corner, in the St. John Standard, excluding those who live in St. John only.

What You Have To Do.

There are now nearly five thousand names and addresses of boys and girls on that membership roll of the Corner. Uncle Dick is anxious to commence the New Year with thousands of other kiddies' names added to the list, as he has several surprises for 1917. He is therefore going to divide TWENTY DOLLARS among ten members of the Children's Corner, who succeed in getting the most number of other children to join this entertaining club on or before Jan. 13, 1917, the prizes being as follows:

1st Prize \$5.00 3rd Prize \$3.00
2nd Prize 4.00 4th Prize 2.00
and Six Prizes of \$1.00 each

All entries must reach this office not later than January 16th, 1917, together with the coupon filled in as given below.

How To Get New Members:

1. Show your school mates, cousins, and friends the Children's Page.

2. Tell them about the splendid prizes awarded each week, the nice stories, Uncle Dick's regular chat, the answers to letters, and best of other attractions.

3. There are only two rules:—"Do kindly deeds whenever possible," and "Agree to get The Standard and read the Children's Corner."

4. The drawing and painting contests help them to make nice sketches, and use the colors better.

5. Among the prizes awarded each week, are watches, skates, trawlers, gold necklaces and pendants, mechanical sets, dollar bills, beautiful illustrated story books, and games.

6. The Children's Page is just the very thing to turn to for recreation and amusement after school is closed, and lesson books are laid aside.

7. The Red Cross Helpers' League, and Allie's Aid Society (Children's Corner Branches), are open to all members of the Corner.

8. All intending members must write a note to Uncle Dick expressing their desire to have their names added to the membership roll, promising to keep the two rules given above, and mention the name of the member who showed them the Corner and asked them to join.

UNCLE DICK,
THE STANDARD,
ST. JOHN, N. B.

whose decision must be considered as final.

CONTEST COUPON

Name
Address
School
Age Birthday Grade
Name of Teacher

A CONTEST For Kiddies

1st Prize—Fountain Pen
2nd Prize—One Dollar

To the Boy or Girl who succeeds in solving the following riddles most correctly, and sends in the answers, written out neatly on a piece of white paper, not later than January 9, 1917, a splendid FOUNTAIN PEN will be awarded. The sender of the next best in order of merit (handwriting being taken into consideration) will receive the sum of ONE DOLLAR.

RIDDLES.

- No. 1. Why is a schoolmaster like a shoeblack?
- No. 2. Why are teeth like verbs?
- No. 3. Why are deaf people like Dutch cheese?
- No. 4. How many sides are there to a tree?
- No. 5. Why is sympathy like blindman's bluff?

All entries must be accompanied with the coupon as given below, correctly filled, and addressed to

UNCLE DICK,
THE STANDARD,
ST. JOHN, N. B.

whose decision must be considered as final.

CONTEST COUPON

Name
Address
School
Age Birthday Grade
Name of Teacher