

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO THE SETTLEMENT.

By Mabel Nelson Thurston.

The train had pulled up along the platform and the barnlike shed which answered for the station, at the settlement out on the Nevada plains. The passing of the daily train was the only thing that happened out there, and Jule always came down to watch for it that she might have something to tell Joey about.

Today the train stopped longer than usual, and some men gathered about the engine and talked of hot boxes. But Jule cared nothing for hot boxes, and paid no attention to the men. She was looking for a boy to tell Joey about. Her eyes travelled from one square of glass to another disappointedly; then she stopped and started. A girl was beckoning to her.

"Come here a moment," she called, holding out something round and yellow. "Can you catch?" she asked with a merry little laugh.

Jule nodded, holding up two hands for it. "What is it?" she asked, wondering.

"Why, it's an orange!" the girl exclaimed, incredulously. "Don't you know what an orange is?" Then she added, "You peel off that thick skin and eat the fruit inside."

Into Jule's eyes flashed an eager hope. "Are they good for sick boys?" she asked; "lame ones that don't like things, mostly?"

"Yes," the girl answered, "I should think so. Do you know some one like that?"

"Joey," Jule responded, briefly.

"Who is Joey?"

"Brother," Jule answered, looking about with the evident intention of slipping away.

The girl hesitated. Then a glint of silver from the tiny cross pinned to her jacket sent the swift color to her face. She leaned out of the window and dropped down some chocolates. "Those," she said. "If you like them, I'll give you more."

Jule bit one, experimentally. "Oh, my!" she gasped in delight.

"Didn't you ever eat candy before—not even at Christmas?" cried the girl.

"What's Christmas?" asked Jule.

The girl looked around. Her father was outside; it would be all right for her to go out a moment. She picked up her box of Huyler's candy and hurried out to the steps. She sat down on the car steps.

"Do you tell Joey stories?" she asked.

"Reckon so," Jule answered.

The other girl leaned forward with sweet earnestness. "I will give you this box of chocolates," she said, "if you will listen to the story of Christmas. It is the loveliest story in the world. You can tell it to Joey, afterwards."

"Go on," Jule answered.

She listened silently until the end; then she said positively: "Don't believe it."

"Oh!" the girl cried, eagerly. "You don't know how he loves us and wants us to love him."

Jule answered nothing. The group of men had broken up and they were walking back to the cars. The other girl leaned forward suddenly.

"I'm going to give you something," she said. "I'm going to give you this silver cross, so that whenever you look at it, it will remind you of the story of the star. I must go back now, but will you tell me your name first?"

"Tim Burton's Jule," the girl answered, mechanically.

The engine shrieked once or twice and the train began to move.

"Oh Joey, you never dreamed anything like it!" exclaimed Jule. "Look at this yellow apple—orange, the girl called it; and here's a whole box of sugar things. Just you taste one, Joey!"

They feasted all the afternoon, but it was night in the soft shadows out in the sand when Jule told the story of the star. Joey believed it all. "Wish't I could hev seen him!" he cried. "He must hev been good. Jule, would you let me keep the cross sometimes? Maybe I wouldn't get so cross then, when my back hurts, if I thought he cared about it, you know."

"You kin hev it all the time, an' you ain't ever cross!" Jule cried, passionately.

Joey's thin voice was full of longing: "If only he'd said something so we'd know an' be sure he knew us!" he said, wistfully.

The days grew shorter and bleak winds blew sharply across the desert. Yet day after day Jule went down to the train and watched for "the other girl." She never imagined that anything had come except through the girl. But one night the station master called her.

"Are you Miss Burton?" he asked, quizzically, looking from her to a big box on the platform. Jule stared in amazement. "Reckon I am," she said, "though 'taint common to call my name proper, like that."

The man laughed. "I guess it's all right," he returned. "That box goes your way. If I was back in the States, I'd say it looked like Christmas."

"Christmas?" That was the word the girl had said. Jule started across to the box and began tugging at it.

Tired, breathless, exultant, she got it home at last and chopped it open. Joey leaned over it, his face flushed with excitement. In absolute silence he pulled out candies, fruit, pictures and toys, till the floor was strewn with them. Then he looked up.

"Jule!" he cried, "let's give some to everybody at the settlement. He would, you know. Don't you think he'd like it?"

Jule hesitated; then she answered steadily. "Yes, Joey, I reckon he would. You divide the things, and we'll ask everybody to drop in tonight."

That was the way that Christmas came to the settlement.

KING CHRISTMAS AND MASTER
NEW YEAR.

By S. Weir Mitchell.

King Christmas sat in his house of ice.

And looked across the snow.
"Hallo, my little man!" he cried.
"Now whither dost thou go?"

"I go, my lord, along the way
That all my kin have gone.
Where thou, my lord, shall follow me
Before another dawn."

"Right gayly," cried the Christmas King.

"Who ride tonight with thee?"
"The days of grief, the days of joy,
Are they who ride with me."

"God keep thee, merry little man;
Go whisper them that mourn
How surely comes again the day
When Christ the Lord was born."

"And be not sad, my little man,
But when thou, too, art old,
And when o'er wintry wastes you come,
A weary man and cold."

"Right cheerily, I pray thee, then,
To keep thy gracious tryst,
And leave thy weary burden here
Where cares grow light, with Christ."

"Now, bid thy gallant company
Ride onward without fear,
For I, the King of Christmas,
Have blessed the glad New Year."
—Century.

The return of Christmas will serve its best purpose if it shall teach us anew how to cherish the Christmas spirit and live a Christmas life all the year round. All our giving and receiving will mean but little if they do not deepen within us God's thought of peace and good will toward the world, and move us to put that thought to practical use in our daily lives.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
—Charles Wesley.

CHRISTMAS AT GRANDMA'S.

The Donalds were sitting in the costliest little sitting room that you can imagine, and it was the hour when they were their happiest, because their father was with them. It was almost Christmas, and Mrs. Donald said, "I am so sorry that grandma can't come."

"Yes," said Mr. Donald, "but I had another letter from her to-day, saying she can't come. She has sprained her knee and has to walk with crutches; and the doctors say it will be weeks before she can step without them."

"It doesn't seem as if it would be a Christmas without her," said Mrs. Donald. "I wrote her I was so disappointed I hardly dared to tell the children."

By this time the children had gathered around their father. "Isn't she coming at all?" asked Dick.

"Why can't she come if she does use crutches? 'Twon't be a quarter as good without her," added Earle.

"What is it, Puss?" said Mr. Donald to gentle little Grace at his elbow.

"Papa, couldn't we go to Grandma's and have a tree there, if she can't come here?" replied Grace.

"That is quite an idea. I hadn't thought of that. What do you think of the plan, mamma?"

"It would be delightful, and how it would please mother!" said Mrs. Donald.

"We could get everything ready and go the afternoon before Christmas, have the tree in the evening, and come home after dinner the next day. Nora can get the dinner all ready for Lucy to cook. Then mother won't have any care."

"But, papa," said John, "how can we carry the tree?"

"I think, my son, we won't need to carry one. We can find plenty there. I will have one at grandma's in good season."

So it was arranged that they should go and surprise grandmother.

In the meantime the days at Grandma Donald's were very long and lonely.

The day before Christmas she looked out of the window, on the white snow, and said aloud to herself, "How will they get along at Richard's without me? I am afraid the children will really need me. At any rate, I don't see how I can get along without them. My knee seems to grow worse. I believe I won't try a Christmas dinner. Lucy can go and take dinner with her folks. How my knee does pain me!"

The morning passed slowly away, and when the afternoon train came in, she sat by her window that overlooked the main street of the little village, and watched the arrivals, so as to while away her time.

There now, if there isn't Rufus Ellis and his family come to spend Christmas with his mother. I am so glad, for she is so lonely. But who is that? It looks like John Donald and his father and mother! It is, and there's the whole family! Where are my crutches? It seems as if I never should get to the door. It's just like Richard and Mary and the children, too, to think of me!

And very soon came a man with a tree that, he said, was to be set up in the parlor. Lucy kindled a fire in the parlor with the brass andirons. Grandma had the andirons when she was married.

Then came the box, that was so full Lucy thought it would last most of the winter.

After supper mamma and Grace arranged the tree, and then invited the rest of the household to come in.

As the tree was for grandma, the most of the presents were carried to her, and the children covered her almost out of