

## OUR YOUNG FOLKS PAGE

## A Christmas Tree in the Forest

(By William Wallace, Jr.)  
A long, long time ago, before this great country was inhabited from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and when extensive forests stretched over great stretches of land, through which the foot of white man had not left its print, the frontiersman living in "the outer settlements" had small chance to celebrate the Yuletide season. He, with his family, composed a small world, which was so seldom entered by an outsider. Neighbors were at great distances apart, and their time was all occupied in clearing the land which was to become the fine, rich fields from which their children and grandchildren should reap rich harvests.

In the early forties a sturdy farmer—or frontiersman, as those "patriotists" were called—moved from the outer borders of what was termed civilization to a new country, where as yet the woodsman's ax had not been heard or the curl of smoke from the log cabin seen by the red man, lurking about on the watch for the intruding paleface. Into the depths of a shadowy forest the frontiersman, accompanied by his family of wife and two sturdy sons, went, hunting a suitable location for a camp. They traveled in a great lumbering wagon, covered with white canvas stretched over bows. All their worldly possessions were put inside the wagon, the wife and mother occupying the seat in front and driving the husband of whom which drew her "darlings." In front of the wagon walked the steps on account of some impossible obstacle which loomed suddenly before him. He went heavily armed, rifle over shoulder and knives in belt. The red man, ed behind the wagon, keeping a keen lookout for hostile Indians who might try to attack from the rear. Like these, they were heavily armed with guns and knives.

And so on they went, farther and farther from those of their own kind, till

after many days of weary travel they halted near a beautiful spring that came from a rocky cliff overlooking a stream that promised to be full of fish. Here the father and sons cut down trees and built a cabin, small, but large enough to afford shelter from the winter, which was fast coming on. In the spring another room could be added. A fireplace built of flat rocks, picked from the bank near the spring, furnished a cozy place for fire, both for cooking and warming.

One evening, as the family sat around the cheerful fire of logs, chattering of the past, present and future, the mother quickly said: "Well, I declare, Christmas is almost here and I'd forgot to think about it."

"Why, can it be possible?" asked the father, reaching for the ever-useful almanac, which hung by a string looped over a peg near the fireplace. "Yes, so it is," he agreed, scanning the small print of the calendar. "Just three days off!"

The two sons, aged, respectively, 14 and 16, were not yet too old to enjoy the excitement and pleasure attending the holiday season, although they had had small opportunity to do so since they were in their teens, for their father was a man who was ever looking toward the setting sun, following it further and further as the settlements grew and prospered and dangers became less about him.

"Well, I'd like to be back at Brittonville," declared Sam, the older son.

"There'll be great times there, I'll warrant. Neighbor Higgins' girls will have a Christmas tree and a taffy-pull!"

"Ah, yes," replied Thomas, Peter, the younger son. "And over at Neighbor Van Smith's there'll be a big, wild turkey dinner and a lot of the friends will have an invite there. Do you mind last Christmas, mother?"

Yes, the mother, "minded," and it sent a pang through her good, tender heart to recall the pleasant and sociable times they had enjoyed while living on the out-

skirts of the little village built in a clearing made purposely for a "meeting-house," a schoolhouse, a smithy, a wheelwright's shop and various other small places of business such as found in the newest part of a new state. And she felt more lonely as Christmas time drew near, for she knew how little she could do to make her sons have innocent pleasure at that time which seems to belong particularly to the young.

The next day Sam and Tom (but never so nicknamed by their parents) went with their guns to hunt for game, the only kind of meat the family had for their table in this wild part of the world. As they trudged along Sam said: "I wish we could give mother some little surprise on Christmas. But I reckon it's out of the question."

"Father never cares about such things," said Tom. "He's a mighty smart and brave man and has no time for foolish things. But I am like mother—I enjoy friends and a sociable time. Wish there were some neighbors near."

"Look!" interrupted Sam, pointing to a curl of blue smoke to be seen rising to the sky through the leafless trees. "That's not an Indian campfire. White people are

where that comes from?"

"It must come from round that hill," declared Tom. "Let's go cautiously, for you can never tell what kind of an Indian surprise is awaiting you."

Like two Indians the boys stole round the hill, which was almost bare of timber. They crept on their stomachs, bare no noise. When they rounded the obstructing point there came into view several covered wagons and a newly built cabin, with two more in course of construction. A number of stalwart men and boys were busy at the building and a number of women and half-grown girls were preparing food over the campfire, the completed cabin evidently not yet having been supplied with a fireplace.

Tom looked at Sam, and Sam looked at Tom, smiles of happiness coming on their faces in spite of their trying to withhold any show of pleasure. Then they rose and timidly approached the new settlers. When within a few rods of the buildings their approach was noted, and it turned out that they were as much of a surprise to the strangers as the strangers had been to them.

It was not long before Tom and Sam found themselves seated at the forest

board, enjoying a share of the plentiful meal of their cordial hosts and hostesses. Conversation did not drag, and Tom and Sam regretted to have to bid their new friends adieu and continue on their hunt. They promised to come the next day and bring their parents, also extending a cordial and hearty invitation to the new comers to visit their cabin, some two miles distant, toward the river.

When the boys arrived home that evening, carrying a fat opossum, they approached their mother with beaming faces. "We've got neighbors!" Sam cried. And then he and his brother told the good news, repeating everything which had been said by the new-found friends over the hill.

And the next day, faithful to promise, Sam and Tom took their parents to call on the new neighbors, who proved to be quite numerous, for six families had come together to fall the forest and build up a town, to which others would soon come. The day passed in work and sociable intercourse, and, as Sam and Tom walked home beside their mother, their father, going ahead to keep a close lookout for their safety, the good woman, with a happy face, said: "What do you think, now,

## The Animals have a Christmas Tree

"Come, have you your trunk all packed in readiness to start to the woods?"

The questioner was a camel and the questioned was an elephant.

"Yes, everything ready and me impatient to be off," replied the elephant. "Come along, friend Camel, I see you have your pack on your back."

And after they went towards the great forest where a meeting of the wild creatures was to be held and a Christmas tree enjoyed. As they hurried along they were joined by a bear, a deer and a fox. And when they arrived at the place of their destination they found a great assemblage of many kinds of beasts and birds. A huge hippopotamus was acting chairman and a tiger was recording secretary. Resolutions had been drawn up and everything was in readiness to assure the visitors a good time. No fights were to be indulged in and no animal of prey was to interfere with the life of his favorite food. Birds and animals alike were safe from harm on this day, which was being celebrated throughout the world.

A tall tree was selected to hold the numerous gifts, the monkeys, being active on limb and bough, were chosen to hang the presents in place. After the tree was duly adorned the birds sang an anthem, the lions roared a speech of welcome and the giraffes approached the tree in single file, for they had been selected to hand the gifts from the tree, the reach being beyond any of the other animals. As they took down the many and useful articles from the treetop the giraffes handed them in turn to the birds, that flew about distributing them.

There was a string of pearls for the elephant, presented by the party of camels that couched front seats on the dead leaves under the Christmas tree. A new set of spots was handed to the leopard and a fine mane was given to the old lion, who immediately put it on. The wolf received a new sheep's skin, and a beautiful rattle was placed in the hands of the hippopotamus, it being a gift from the rattlesnake.

But there is not space to record all the wondrous and novel kinds of presents that were hung on that Christmas tree in Animalburg. Suffice it to say that not one went away unremembered, for each carried home with him a gift that just suited his fancy and made him very happy for the day, and for many days to come, too.

Which goes to show that animals—no matter how ferocious—can become as peevish and kind-hearted as children when Christmas time arrives.



we're going to have a Christmas tree after all. The new neighbor women have agreed to come over and help me all day Christmas. We'll exchange little trinkets and small articles of clothing and hang them on the tree for our sons and daughters. Then we'll have a taffy-pull in the yard in the evening by the light of a campfire. They have a bag of fine nuts and sugar and some potatoes. I'll cook those fine rabbits and squirrels you brought in yesterday. Oh, we'll have a feast—out here in the forest."

"And, best of all, we'll have a Christmas tree," said Sam.

"I'll have three happy hearts beat as they went through the forest homeward.

presents have been hung on and keep it from view till we are ready to hand off the gifts."

"And shall we have a dinner?" asked Tom eagerly, his eyes shining with happy anticipation.

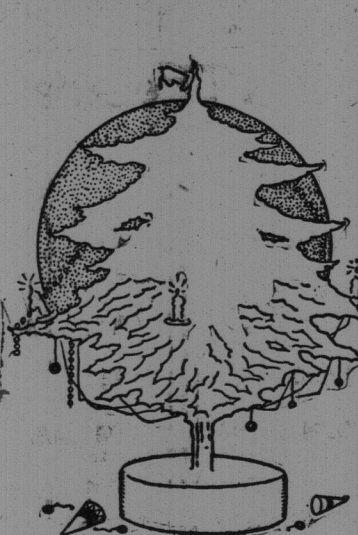
"Yes, we'll have it at our cabin, but the neighbors will bring a lot of nice things along. They have such fine flour and sugar and some potatoes. I'll cook those fine rabbits and squirrels you brought in yesterday. Oh, we'll have a feast—out here in the forest."

"And, best of all, we'll have a Christmas tree," said Sam.

"I'll have three happy hearts beat as they went through the forest homeward.

## After Christmas.

Poor old Christmas tree,  
Lonely and bare!  
Not one single gift  
Hangs anywhere.  
On those green branches,  
Which held such a store  
Of beautiful presents  
That covered it o'er.



Where is the dolly  
That sat on a limb,  
Dressed all so daintily,  
Graceful and trim?  
Where is the gay drum  
That went "Beat, beat!"  
Setting to music  
The tramp of boys' feet?

Where are the skates,  
And the rocking-horse, too?  
Where are the toothbrushes,  
Shining and new?  
Where are the picture books,  
And old Noah's Ark?  
Where is the moon-ot,  
And dog that could bark?

Where are the candles,  
And popcorn, so white,  
That strung o'er the branches,  
A beautiful sight?  
Where have they gone to?  
Why, the girls and the boys  
Have stripped the old tree  
Of her funnicking toys.



MAUD WALKER.

## Bricktop and the Twins Celebrate Christmas. By Helena Davis.

After a most enjoyable visit with their relatives in New York city, Bricktop and the twins arrived home several days before Christmas. They found their mother busy with Christmas shopping, and they at once began to engage in buying some gifts on their own account. There were so many to remember, however, that one evening Bricktop and the Twins took paper and pencil and set down to the task of writing the names of those whom they must remember on the festive occasion so near at hand. First on the list were papa and mamma; then followed grandpa and grandmamma, Uncle Will, Aunt Agnes, Aunt Lulu, Cousin Bert; their teacher, Miss Quick; their Sunday school teachers, Maggie, their cook, and ever so many of their young friends.

"My, oh, so many names as we have to remember," declared Bricktop.

"Oh, that's all right," said Bettie. "We couldn't expect to remember a dollar on each of those names. We'll put a little more on those dearest to us and a little less on those not so dear."

"Then cents for Miss Quick," said Bricktop, jumping away from the reach of Lettie's little fist as she said: "Shame on you, Brick. You know Miss Quick is a love of a teacher."

"Yes, as compared with the teacher I had last year," laughed Bricktop. "But, come, let's get a move on us. We've just two days in which to get our presents. Let's set to music."

The tramp of boys' feet?  
Where are the skates,  
And the rocking-horse, too?  
Where are the toothbrushes,  
Shining and new?  
Where are the picture books,  
And old Noah's Ark?  
Where is the moon-ot,  
And dog that could bark?

That evening the Twins had a pretty little box hidden away in their wardrobe closet, and Bricktop had two parcels secreted under his bed, where no one would ever think of finding anything. Then the family assembled to talk over the arrangements for the Christmas dinner, and the tree which was to follow in the evening. As a great many guests were to be present, it was decided to have the dinner at 6 o'clock and to retire from the dining-room to the parlor, where the tree would be "unveiled," as Bricktop put it. Then a general good time would follow, Mr. and Mrs. Perkins distributing the gifts from the tree. Christmas Day came bright and with a delicious snap of frost in the air. A beautiful snow had fallen the night before and covered everything with a blanket of smooth whiteness, on which the sun shone all day, taking care, however, to not melt the fine covering away. All day the members of the Perkins family were as busy as bees. A tree, green and wide of bough, stood in the back parlor, holding about two dozen wax candles and loaded with presents of every kind. A cord was stretched from wall to wall in front of the tree, on which were hung curtains to shield the tree from view till a given hour. Before the curtains should be drawn Mr. Perkins would step behind them and light the

tapers on the tree, then, as if by magic, the tree, aglow with lights and glistening with colors, would appear.

Late in the afternoon, and while his mother was busy decorating the dining table and giving Maggie occasional assistance, Bricktop called his sisters to a private "confab" in the safety of his own room.

"Do you think either papa or mamma have much of a chance?" the young man asked in a cautious tone.

"Not a sniff," Bettie assured him, smiling in happy anticipation of a certain surprise which awaited everyone that evening. "Isn't it strange that mamma—of all persons—should have noticed anything of unusual interest going on in your room?"

"She's been so busy that she hasn't had time to even peek into this den since we came home from New York," said Bricktop. "That's what made it possible."

"And is everything ready?" asked Lettie, in a stage whisper, just as though she were afraid someone down stairs might overhear their conversation.

"All ready and waiting. But, say, kid, does how am I to slip away from the table in time to—"

"I'll tell you," exclaimed Lettie, still speaking in her stage whisper. "Just as you're feeling a bit ill and don't wish to go for any desert."

"But I don't want desert," protested Bricktop, recalling the great plum pudding that he had smelt steaming that morning in the kitchen.

"Oh, you shall have it here in your room and eat it as you dress," put in Bettie. "We'll have to take Maggie into our confidence and she'll give us a plate of pudding."

"And a piece of pumpkin pie and some ice-cream," interrupted Bricktop. "Yes, a piece of pumpkin pie, too," promised Bettie, "but not ice-cream, for that, with the nut cake, is to be served at ten o'clock, just before the guests depart. I guess you'll be around then and will be allowed to show your liking for such unhealthy diet, as papa declares ice-cream and cake to be."

"Papa's fond of unhealthy diet," laughed Bricktop. "He eats his share of those things and always looks as though he'd like an extra helping. But, say, you kids don't disappoint me about the pudding and pie if I excuse myself from the table before desert and coffee."

The twins promised they would remember the pudding and pie, and kept their promise, too. That evening, after all the guests had arrived, and while a committee picked from among them were busy hanging gifts (which had been brought in boxes and parcels with them) on the hidden tree, the twins slipped into the kitchen and held a short conversation with Maggie, the cook. Ginning with amusement, Maggie at once filled a soup plate with plum pudding, swimming in delicious sauce, and put the quarter of a pumpkin pie on a saucer which she gave into the hands of Bettie and Lettie to be carried by the back stairs to Bricktop's room.

Just before dinner was announced Bricktop called his mother into the hall and whispered into her ear: "I guess it's the excitement, Mamma, but something has taken my appetite. If you'll excuse me at dinner, just before the desert and coffee, I think I'll go to my room a little while and rest before time to go to the parlor. The truth is I'm pretty well fagged out with all this Christmas work."

Mrs. Perkins was a bit uneasy at first

about her boy's condition of health. Never before had he asked to miss desert. The good lady examined his tongue and pulse to find both all right. Then, supposing he was just tired out with the excitement attending the preparations for the evening's entertainment, she promised that he might be excused from the dinner table when he felt like it. "And, dear, you'd better lie down a little while on reaching home, so you'll feel fresh for the tree and the social time following it," his mother said. Then kissing him, she returned to her guests.

All through dinner Bricktop and the twins exchanged knowing glances. As the table was being cleared for desert Bricktop looked toward his mother, rose, bowed to her, and asked to be excused from dinner. In another moment he was going up the stairs to his own room like one who had been sent to bed.

Entering, he closed the door and looked into the dining-room. Bricktop's door opened cautiously, someone came out and passed swiftly down the back stairs, creeping along the halls and entering the back parlor. The figure went boldly behind the curtain and rolled the tree and set it up in the parlor. After all this strange thing happened when the guests, laughing and talking—their children's voices soaring above their elders—came into the two parlors. After all this, the twins were comfortably seated Mr. Perkins stepped forward, disappeared for a minute behind the curtains, lighting the candles,

then came forth pulling a string which caused the curtains to quickly draw apart, disclosing to view the beautiful Christmas tree. A murmur of admiration was heard, the Twins' hearts were in their throats as suddenly and without announcement there came stepping to the front of the tree the old Santa Claus, in white beard and fur-trimmed garments. Everybody clapped and cheered, and Mr. Perkins, turning to see what caused the commotion, was dumfounded to see the fat-to-bursting figure of a little old man, pack on back and mittens on his hands, bowing left and right, and speaking in a high key, "Merry Christmas to all, dear friends!" Then, to the amusement of all, especially to the Twins, Santa Claus began to sing a rollicking song, keeping time with his feet.

"Bricktop, as I live!" exclaimed Mr. Perkins. And, laughing till his sides ached, he came to the door and, with all her might at the unexpected newcomer.

"Who is he?" she whispered to Mr. Perkins, and amidst the laughter of their guests he answered, "Don't you know your own Bricktop? Who else would think of playing so gay a trick on us?"

"Ah, now I understand why he didn't want any desert!" And Bricktop's proud mother laughed heartily at the antics of her big boy who "was always past finding out." Then the fun became general, old Santa siding Mr. and Mrs. Perkins in distributing the presents from the tree, all the while keeping time with feet and voice to the amusement of everyone present. And all declared they'd never forget that Christmas night.

Before the Christmas Dinner.

Before the Christmas dinner  
How impatiently they wait,  
And watch the clock so eagerly  
With fears that 'twill be late.  
How every boy and every girl,  
All dressed so nice and sweet,  
Await their mother's summons  
Telling them to come and eat.

They've seen the bright-red cherry  
In thickest jelly glow;  
They've seen the sweet-spiced peaches  
On the pantry shelf in row.  
They've looked, and kept on looking,  
At the wonders kept on hand—  
The salted, cake and custards  
Her most precious spoon has hand.

They know they'll do them justice  
For their hunger's growing wild;  
And groans of suffering are heard  
From every waiting child.  
Ah, how their mouths do water  
As they hold their stomachs tight  
And hope that very soon the food  
Will all be OUT OF SIGHT!

MAUD WALKER.

Before the Christmas dinner  
Every girl and every boy  
Has peeped into the dining-room  
With feelings of great joy.  
They've also seen the turkey  
(One that never could be best!)  
A-basking in the kitchen,  
A stuffed and grivated treat.

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Has peeped into the dining-room  
With feelings of great joy.  
They've also seen the turkey  
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