

Aridity Brings Xmas and Santa Claus—On Earth Peace, Good-will to All

When the supper was over, and the last waiter had been fed, the nurse insisted that Bill Adams should speak to the people. "They are all asking who bought these things, and you must tell them. It's only fair to all the men who contributed. Sure you must speak, Mr. Adams."

There was no time for thought, for already the nurse was speaking, and a hush had fallen upon the happy company.

"You will be wondering, dear friends, who our Santa Claus is to-night, who has made all this happiness possible. We have him here behind the curtain, and now I am going to introduce to you one of our oldest and best known settlers, Mr. William Adams."

Too much surprised even to applaud, the people sat, and old Bill came forward.

"Dear friends, it's a long time since I've made a speech. But to-night is Christmas, and the spirits of Christmas are abroad and make us do queer things, things we did not intend to do—queer things, but things which make us happy, too—I don't half understand all this myself, and I don't know why I am here. But, it's only fair to the boys who chipped in on this to tell you that a bunch of us got talkin' about Christmas, a while back, and it being time for a little jollification and this year it seemed best to spread it out, and make the fun reach over all the people—it seemed best! In fact we were led—that way—by an invisible hand—as it were—and we sure all hope everybody is as pleased as I am. I never knew that a person could feel as good as this—without takin' anything. It's a new one on me—but I hope you are all happy—I sure am."

Cheers and wildest applause broke out and then, cries of, "you bet we are." "Good old boy, Bill," "You're alright," and when it had subsided, another thrill came for from behind the tree and hidden by it, the big square phonograph, with its doors opened wide, burst into song:

"Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled."

Mrs. Lukes pressed her rough hands together, convulsively. "Now it's Christmas; it's a real Christmas, with God in it. It has crossed the Peace!—it has come true, I'm satisfied." And from her eyes the staring loneliness had gone, and in their depths had dawned a great new hope of better things to come.

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 8.

ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TO ALL

While the tree was being unloaded, and the fun at its height, the nurse slipped away, with a great basket of provisions for her patient.

"I'm neglecting you, but oh, the things I have to tell you when it is over. I'm going to bring old Bill home with me."

A few hours later he heard footsteps.

"Come right in, Mr. Adams, come right in—you've never seen my nice little house, have you? Oh no, I'm never lonely. You see sometimes I have a patient for a few days—my private ward is over there behind the curtain. Hang your coat here, Mr. Adams. I would like you to meet my patient. He cannot get out of bed, so will you please come this way."

Throwing back the curtain in front of the "Dispensary" the light fell full on the laughing face of Sergeant Woods.

"Mr. Adams, meet Sergeant Woods."