

The Story Page.

How Johnny Spent Christmas Eve

BY SYDNEY DAVRE.

"Johnny," said his sister Agnes, "you get a gum bottle and brush, and the paint box and some water, and bring them up to the sewing room."

"What for? And why can't you get them yourself, anyway?"

"Because I want to hunt up bits of silk and lace, and thread and needles and things. We're going to have a busy morning of it, you and the rest of us."

"Doing what?"

"Putting the toys and dolls and books in order to send to the children's hospital. I have gathered up a fine lot of them, and most of them are almost as good as new. With a little touching up you'd scarcely know they were not new. Now let's get to work. The things are to go at noon."

"I can't," said Johnny, decidedly. "I am going over to grandma's this morning. She most always gives me some money for Christmas, but here's Christmas eve and she hasn't done it. She must have forgotten it, and if I go to see her and wish her Merry Christmas I guess she'll remember."

"You can go there this afternoon."

"No, for then I want to go and spend the money."

"Johnny," said his sister, soberly, "don't you feel as if you wanted to have a little share—just a little—in making the Lord's birthday a time of rejoicing for poor little children whose lives are full of sickness and suffering? You will have plenty of nice things, even without any money from grandma."

"I say," said Johnny, testily, "the things are good enough as they are. They're better than those children are used to."

"Then, perhaps you will wish, out of the abundance of all you will get to-morrow, to pick out something and send them."

"Out of my new Christmas presents? No indeed, I never have more than I want."

Mother gave him leave to go to grandma's, adding:

"She sent me word that she is to have a gathering of her little grandsons this evening, so think you will have to remain there all night. Come home early in the morning."

As he took leave of her after dinner grandma said to him:

"It looks as if it were going to be stormy later, Johnny. If it is you had better not come back here, though I shall be sorry to miss you. But as you have to walk quite a way to get here you had better take the street cars right home if the weather is bad. Here, dear—"

Johnny's face shone as she put into his hand two big silver dollars.

"It will be enough to buy some little gifts for your sisters and something nice for yourself," she added. "That's what Christmas is for, you will remember, my little man—to think more of the joy of giving to others than of what we receive ourselves, at this time in which our Lord came as a precious gift to the whole world."

Half an hour later, Johnny found himself in the toy department of one of the great dry goods stores. How crowded it was, and what a busy, delightful hum of buying and selling. He wandered up and down the long aisles, his right hand in his pocket tightly clasping the two dollars, rejoicing in the feeling of possession given by having so much money to spend all by himself. There were thousands of things in that store which he could buy. But as the time flew swiftly he settled down to the realization that it could be only one thing among the thousands which he could buy. At last his mind seemed near the making-up stage. For an hour he wavered between a brass real cannon with finely made soldiers and a steamboat that would wind up and go. It was a difficult question to decide and in much wear-and-tear of mind he took another walk through the huge room.

He stopped, as he had stopped before, among the made-up animals. They were most enticing, beginning with the cheap counters, around which crowds reached and pressed, and leading up gradually to the high priced wares—cats which could mew, dogs which barked, bleating lambs and goats, horses of all kinds, on wheels or rockers. There were fewer people here, and he had a better chance of seeing them. Suddenly his eyes were fastened by a pair which seemed fairly to wink at him, so bright and full of expression were they. They belonged to a dog, a love of a woolly fellow as large as a real small dog. Everything about him was well made, from his dainty woolly coat and the roguish eyes to the wheel platform on which he stood, and his price was \$2.

Johnny exchanged glances with him, in which the dog said as plainly as a toy dog could say it: "Buy me."

In great perplexity he wandered back to the cannon and the steamboat.

"Pshaw! I can't fire the cannon in the house. And I can't sail the steamboat without water. I'm going to take that dog."

It was some time before it came back to him. Then with a mind at length at rest he stood around watching the other people. As he was pushed this way and that his elbow knocked a toy from one of the tables. He stooped and picked it up.

"It's wheel's off. That's too bad. If anybody's seen me they'd make me pay for it and I'd have to give my car fare for it. Here's the little nail that held the wheel on. I can fix it myself just as well as not if I only had room and a place to sit down."

Looking about him he saw that the carpet department of the great store was next the toys, and not far from the cheap dog table lay a pile of rugs partly shaded by a screen. Making his way to this he soon had the wheel in order.

"How tired I am. My—I didn't know I was so tired till I sat down." It was pleasant to recline on the rugs watching the people come and go, lazily counting how many different toys he could see carried by different ones. They grew at last hazier before his eyes, and the hum of voices grew hummier and less like speech, until he was suddenly roused by hearing a little yelp close beside him.

"Let me go now, please," it said. "I want to have some fun with the rest of them."

Johnny's arm had been resting on the cheap dog, who was squirming under it in vain efforts to free itself. As Johnny lifted his arm it hurried away and, following it with his eyes he saw a wonderful sight. Men, women and children were all gone, but the great toy department was, if possible, a busier, certainly a far merrier place than before. With yelps of delight the cheap dogs were tumbling off the table, and entering into a rough and tumble scramble with each other. Other animals were also sporting in ways best pleasing to themselves. Horses rushed madly across the room, mounted by boy dolls. Sailor dolls took possession of the steamboats, soldiers drilled or fired off the cannon. Johnny laughed until he was tired at seeing an acrobatic exercise given by the jumping jacks.

"What's that thumping?" he asked of one of them, as a chorus of small pounding mingled with shouts, fell on his ear.

"O, that's jack-in-a-boxes. A good many of 'em are shut in and can't get out to have their share of Christmas Eve."

"I'll open you," said Johnny. He went about slipping up the catches which held them down, when, each jack sprang up with a whoop.

Then Johnny wished with all his heart that his little sisters could have been there to see the lovely lady dolls, as with great dignity they came and went into the doll houses. Not to sit straight and stiff, staring before them, but to keep house as ladies should do, the colored dolls coming to wait on them and take care of the babies. As he stood by one of the tables he heard a pathetic little wail and saw that it came from one of the cheap dogs.

"Why don't you go and play, too?" asked Johnny.

"I can't. My leg's broke. Some one dropped me and broke me."

"Can't you be mended?"

"I s'pose so. When Christmas is over they'll pick up all of us that are broken and send us to ladies in societies, and they'll mend us and send us to sick children in the hospitals. It's a pity, though, that the poor little things couldn't a' had us before Christmas."

"It's because you're such a cheap lot you break so easy," not at all meaning to be unkind, but because he examined so many dogs that day and noted their differences in a businesslike way.

"Yes," said the dog, meekly, "but cheap dogs do a lot of good in the long run. I know we're made of just the snips and patches of skin left over from the high-priced dogs, and they don't take time in making us to get our ears on straight, or our eyes even, or any kind of a good twist to our tails. We're only 10 cent dogs, you know. But they've sold 1500 of us today to folks that couldn't go higher. The other day a lady was in here, and she bought thirty of us to send to an orphan's home."

"I s'pose the orphans were glad."

"No they weren't. It made a lot of trouble. There were 100 orphans in the home, and every one but the thirty cried like fury."

"What did they do then?"

"They took up a collection among the directors and bought seventy more of us."

"I am glad I am not in a place where there are a hundred of you," thought Johnny to himself. Aloud he said: "If I had my way I'd bundle all the broken ones of you off to the hospital without waiting for Christmas. I don't believe the children would mind."

"O, that would never do. The children are lame just like us, you know. How do you think it would suit 'em to have us like this?"

The cheap dog limped pathetically across the table as he spoke. At the same moment Johnny heard a sound of sobbing. It came from the direction of the carpet department in which he had been lying, and he quickly turned his head that way. How was it that he had not before noticed a number of pale children in the half light of the great room? Some on cushions, some on rolling chairs, some on crutches, some feebly tottering about. Some were happy over toys with which they played, while the sobs he had heard came from others, who bent in sad trouble over something. He went a little nearer to see what it might be.

"My poor little lamb," he heard one say, as a lamb with only three legs struggled to take a few steps and then fell to the floor.

"And my poor baby—see!" wept a little mother. "Only one arm."

"You're not so badly off as I am," sighed another. "Mine's head wobbles so I'm afraid it may come off any minute."

"I can't make this pretty shepherdess stand straight," said another, as a china image toppled over whenever she took her thin hand from supporting it.

"O dear, dear!" Others joined them in pitiful wailings.

"You see how it is when we're bent in that way," said the cheap dog. "You wouldn't like it yourself, you know."

"No, I wouldn't," said Johnny, profoundly moved by the sight. "It must be bad enough to be so themselves, as you say, without that. I never thought of it before. I wish I had," his thoughts going back to the moment in which Agnes had asked him to give his help in repairing the toys for the hospital.

"But another Christmas will come." He tried to console himself with the reflection as he at length lay back on the rugs drowsily watching the toys.

Just before him 300 climbing monkeys were dashing up their strings, and further off all the dogs were giving chase to a wound-up toy cat, when a different sound broke in on the din.

"Hello! Well, I'm blessed!"

For one dazzling moment dolls, dogs, cats, jumping-jacks and other toys could be seen in a wild scramble for places. Johnny rubbed his eyes to see a man looking down on him.

"Hello, little chap! You been here all night?"

"I—don't know," said Johnny, in great bewilderment. "What time—when is it, anyhow?"

"It is Christmas morning, bright and early. Well, this is a queer go. Got left by your folks, hey? I guess you'd best get out and get home as quick as you can. Cars have just begun moving."

As he passed through the great room everything was quiet. The jack-in-a-boxes were fastened down, the lady dolls seated or standing in their usual graceful attitudes, and the dogs stood in orderly rows on the tables, Johnny followed the man, carrying his own dog, and was let out into the dim light of the Christmas morning.

Two hours later Johnny and his sisters were happily engaged with a liberal store of gifts. Every one admired Johnny's dog, pronouncing it to be as handsome and well made a toy dog as was often seen.

"O, stay with us, Agnes," coaxed the others as she came into the room wrapped for going out. "We want you so, when it's Christmas."

"Yes, my dearies, but you will gladly give up something for the sake of poor little ones who have so much less than you."

"I'll give you more than that," said little Ruth, in a burst of generous enthusiasm. She lovingly hugged a new doll and said: "I'll send them this dolly."

Johnny gazed at his dog. How life-like it looked. It almost wagged its tail and winked its bright little eyes as Johnny pressed the spring and made it bark, whispering: "I'd like to keep you—awfully." Then he said to his sister:

"Agnes, you give this to some little boy that is lame. And tell him it was the best thing I had."

How the Prize Was Awarded.

BY MARY C. FARNSWORTH.

Half-past eight!

The schoolroom clock ticked on as calmly as though there were nothing significant in the announcement. But then that clock had been long accustomed to make significant, not to say, startling, statements with the greatest equanimity and apparent unconcern.

Carrie Hawley deposited the Latin grammar which she had taken home the night before to study, on her desk with an impatient slam which roused up discordant echoes from every corner of the vacant school room.

"I don't believe they're coming," she muttered.

Her faith could not have been wholly shaken, however, for she immediately left the room and went around to