

PATHEIC HOLIDAY STORY

Such Scenes May Be Seen in Any Large City.

Children Prematurely Aged Caused by Poverty - What the Proud, Cold Woman Done.

The woman hesitated as she neared the entrance of the great department store. Santa Claus was holding his court within and the busy throng jostled each other good-naturedly as they struggled through the crowded doorway. Richly gowned and of refined appearance, the woman's natural beauty was marred by a bored, unhappy look.

"Please, ma'am, will you take us in to see Santa Claus?" The wistful question, in a pleading, childish voice, and a timid touch on the arm, drew the woman's attention to a ragged feminine creature at her side. With a flush of annoyance she was turning away without a word when some impulse, possibly stirred by the gentle Christmas spirit that once a year steals into every heart worthy of a Master's sacrifice, prompted her to turn and look again into the pinched and haggard little face.

Silently she gazed at the little, old child—aged with poverty and grinding cares beyond her years and strength. A small, square shawl was pinned across her shoulders and a shapeless arrangement of straw and faded ribbon did duty for a hat. Her mouth dropped at the corners. Clinging to her hand was a tiny tot as ragged and as pitiful looking as herself. The hard lines of the woman's face relaxed and she asked:

"Can't you go in alone?" "No, ma'am," the answer came with breathless haste, "they won't let children go in unless they are taken in."

"Why doesn't your mother take you in?" The childish lips quivered and the hungry eyes dropped disappointedly.

"Cause," With newly awakened sympathy and tact the woman changed the conversation. "How old are you?" she asked in a softened voice.

"I'm 10 years old." The child, small, aged and thin, answered proudly.

The woman caught her breath. "The little boy?" she went on, "is he your grandson?"

There was a whimsical light in her beautiful eyes as she asked the question. "No, ma'am," gravely answered the child. "He's my little brother. He's 3 years old. His name is Bobby."

"And your name?" "Martha." The woman gazed a moment longer at the two pitiful little figures. With the divining sense of children, they already knew that their victory was won.

At last they stood facing his Majesty, Santa Claus—the usual tawdry, familiar-mannered, patronizing creation of the department stores. Martha's whole cramped little soul shone forth retulgent in her wide, wondering, reverent eyes. "Bobby, do you see him?" she asked in a strange whisper.

"Yep," answered Bobby. "It's Santa Claus, Bobby," she whispered again.

"Yep," responded Bobby, clinging closer to his sister's protecting hand and trying hard not to feel afraid of the fantastic old fellow in the fur-trimmed jacket and high-topped boots. His Majesty bent a fierce look upon them somewhere about 50.

"Why," he blustered, "you are too old to have a box of candy." "I-I know it, Santa Claus," she breathlessly stammered, in painful confusion. "But Bobby—he's little, you know, and—and he just loves candy."

Santa Claus handed Bobby the sweets, and as he did so his glance accidentally encountered that of the woman. Embarrassment brought the hot blood surging to his face, and he hurriedly reached for a box for Martha. A shake of the lady's head arrested him.

"And you, little girl," he said genially, "what do you want me to bring you?" "Oh, nothing at all," she gasped. "Now, let me see," he tantalizingly insisted. "A pretty doll that goes to sleep, a nice little trunk to put her clothes in, a tricycle, a—"

"Please, Santa Claus, I don't want nothing," Martha interrupted, in reckless despair, "but—but—" "But who does? Your sister?" "No, sir, my—"

"Your mother here?" broke in Santa Claus, glancing mischievously at the woman, whose face was illumined with a sunny smile.

All at once a knowledge of the fraud to which she had been a party came to Martha with overwhelming force and she shrank with a sudden proud reserve from her new friend—the richly appareled woman who needed nothing that Santa Claus could bring, while the real mother—

A lump came into Martha's throat and hurt. "Tell Santa Claus what you would like him to bring your mother," the woman gently said.

"I don't know," she said, hesitatingly. "If you were rich and your mother were poor, what would you give her?" the woman's soft voice tempted.

"Oh," exclaimed Martha, thrown off her guard by this adroit move, "I would give her new shoes and stockings and a hat and a pretty dress and a cloak and—"

Suddenly she checked herself with a droll little gesture of dismay; "I was only fooling," she stammered; "I—"

"Come," the woman said, smiling contentedly, and taking Martha tenderly by the hand she conducted them back to the entrance, where she bade them good-by. In each eager hand a gaudy trinket was tightly clasped and the weight of yours seemed to have dropped from Martha's small shoulders as she turned for a last affectionate glimpse of her benefactor.

Her little crushed soul was already expanding with hope of Christmas joy to come, for the woman—her beautiful friend—had written her name and address in a dainty jeweled book that she might tell Santa Claus where her mother lived.

As the woman stood gazing after her erstwhile protegee, a man gave her an idle, careless glance in passing. Something in her face seemed to arrest his attention. He hesitated, stopped, then hastened back with cordially outstretched hand.

"Why," he exclaimed, "how well you are looking! I hardly knew you. More beautiful even than when I went away."

A delicate blush overspread her refined features as she mutely protested, but he replied: "It is true. How glad I am to see you again! I thought I had forgotten you—where have you been?"

She glanced down at the jeweled memorandum book in her hand as she quietly answered: "I have just arrived from the north pole. Don't you see my reindeer and sleigh outside?"

LOST HIM HIS WIFE

Nebraska Man's Humor Causes Family Disaster.

Omaha, Neb., Dec. 21.—A practical joke has cost John S. Weledge his wife. Mrs. Bertha Weledge has been granted a divorce in Judge Estelle's court on the ground of cruelty. The young wife has been caused much anguish and distress of mind, the petition pointed out, through a practical joke perpetrated by the plaintiff, who pretended that he had committed suicide.

The Weledges were married in Rood house, Ill., in 1898, changing their residence to Omaha one year ago. Mrs. Weledge says that they quarreled frequently but that no occurrence of any importance transpired until one month ago. The disagreement had been more violent than usual and when it was at its height Weledge exclaimed that he would put an end to his troubles "for once and for all."

He seized his revolver and rushed into an adjoining room, slamming the door and locking it. Mrs. Weledge heard the report of a pistol and the falling of a heavy body to the floor. The frenzied wife hastened for an ax and broke the lock of the door. She found her husband lying on the bed in an abandonment of mirth over the success of the jest. An overturned sofa testified as to the identity of the falling body. Weledge explained between bursts of laughter that he had taken this surprising means of teaching his wife to appreciate him. Mrs. Weledge responded by going into hysterics from which she was with difficulty relieved. She failed to see any humor in the incident and sought a divorce.

TO WORK OLD GROUND AGAIN

Eldorado Claim Owners Purchase Latest Improved Machinery.

Immense Values to Be Recovered by Use of Modern Methods Others Will Follow.

Eldorado creek, the scene of so much activity in the past four years and the cream of which it is generally conceded to have been worked out, will again soon be a regular beehive of industry if plans of a number of the kings of the creek are carried out. It is a well known fact that in the early history of the camp the methods employed in working the gravel were extremely crude and much of the value contained in the gravel was lost on account of not possessing the proper appliances for sifting the fine gold and also the hurry in crowding the dumps through the boxes lest the supply of water should become exhausted before the clean-up was completed. Then, too, there was a great deal of ground which with wages at \$15 a day would not pay to handle, but which now at reduced prices of supplies, labor and everything else would yield a handsome profit.

The trip outside this winter of many of the Eldorado claim owners has resulted in the determination of a number of them to work their ground over again. They have visited the placer camps of California and seen ground profitably worked that goes but five cents per cubic yard when in the Klondike computations are never made upon a larger basis than so much to the pan, it requiring about 150 pans to make a cubic yard.

Among the passengers expected inside in a few days from Whitehorse are William Leake and wife and Clarence and Frank Berry. While in Seattle a short time ago Mr. Leake bought a large quantity of the latest improved placer mining machinery and immediately upon its arrival he proposed to work over again all his Eldorado claims from one end to the other. If the results are equal to his anticipations, and there is no reason why they should not be, his example will doubtless be followed at once by other mine owners on the creek.

WAS LIKELY DRUNK

Regiments Have Hard Fight Without a Commander.

New York, Jan. 16, via Skagway, Jan. 23.—A report just received from Colombia states that two government regiments fought for several hours with each other and that 20 men had been killed before the officers found out the mistake.

Claims for Lynching.

Rome, Dec. 20.—In the Senate today Baron Fava, formerly Italian ambassador at Washington, raised the question of lynchings in the United States, in which there had been a repetition of grave events, he said, and where the guilty persons had not been discovered.

Baron Fava referred to the suggestion of the late President McKinley after the lynching at Erwin, Miss., to legislate for the proper protection of foreigners, and he alluded feelingly to the high esteem in which the late Mr. McKinley and the late King Humbert, both victims of the assassin, were held by their respective countrymen.

Replying to Baron Fava, Signor Prinetti, the foreign minister, said the Italian government would protest in the hope of obtaining satisfaction against a state of affairs which constituted an offense against international treaties. The government had represented that a serious thing it was, said Signor Prinetti, that the government of the United States should declare itself unable to fulfil its engagements in conformity with

the international treaties. To this representation the United States government had not replied in writing, but it had admitted that the Italian claims were well founded and had proposed to carefully consider the question.

Signor Prinetti said he agreed with Baron Fava in his expressed opinion that an indemnity for the lives of Italians lynched should not be refused, but that he considered indemnities ought not to be regarded as a set-off to crimes committed.

Eaten by Wolves.

Basswood, Man., Dec. 27.—A report has been brought to this section by Indians from the northwestern reserve, lying between Newdale and Strathclair, of the finding of the body of a man in that district. According to the story the body was torn and eaten by wolves, which roam in large numbers in this country. The remains could not be recognized, but it is presumed to be the body of a Galien, who became lost and subsequently frozen during the recent severe weather. Another theory is that the man while traveling alone may have been attacked by the large timber wolves, which are numerous and very ferocious in the north. It is understood the authorities are investigating the truth of the report.

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