

DECEMBER 26, 1915

WHO SANTA CLAUS WUZ

James Whitcomb Riley
 "A little bit of feller—I remember
 still—
 'Tis to almost cry for Christmas, like
 a youngster will.
 Fourth o' July's nothing to it!—New
 Year's ain't a smell!
 Easter Sunday—Circus day—jes' all
 dead in the shell!
 Lawdy, though! at night, you know, to
 set around an' hear
 The old folks work the story off about
 the sledge an' deer,
 An' 'Santy' skootin' round the roof,
 all wrapped in fur and fume—
 Long before—I knowed who—'Santy-
 Claus' wuz.

Wet to wait, an' set up late, a week or
 two ahead;
 Couldn't hardly keep awake, nor
 wouldn't go to bed;
 Kittle stewin' on the fire, an' mother
 settin' here
 Darnin' socks, an' rookin' in the
 shanty, an' wonder where it wuz the
 money went,
 An' quar' with his frosted heels, an'
 spill his liniment;
 An' me a dreamin' sleigh-bells when
 the clock 'ud whir an' buzz,
 Long before—I knowed who—'Santy-
 Claus' wuz.

Size the fire-place up, an' figger how
 "Ole Santy" could
 Manage to come down the chimney,
 like they said he would;
 Wistht 'at I could hide an' see him—
 wondered what he'd say
 If he keitched a feller layin' fer him
 thataway!
 But I bet on him, an' liked him, same
 as ef he had
 Turned to pat me on the back an' say,
 "Look her, my lad,
 Here's my pack—jes' he's yourselt,
 like all good boys does!"
 Long afore—I knowed who—'Santy-
 Claus' wuz.

Wistht that yarn was true about him,
 as it peared to be—
 Truth made out o' lies like that—un-
 good enough fer me!
 Wistht I still wuz so confidinn' I could
 jes' go wild
 Over hangin' up my stockin's, like the
 little child
 Climbin' in my lap tonight, an' beg-
 gin' me to tell
 'Bout them reindeers, an' 'Ole Santy'
 that the loves so well
 I'm half sorry fer this little girl-
 sweetheart of his—
 Long afore—She knows who—'Santy-
 Claus' is!
 —James Whitcomb Riley.

WIT and HUMOR

One Result of the War
 "Waiter! Vienna steak please!"
 "Ush, sir, we calls 'em Petrograd
 patties now, sir!"

His Preference
 "Whisky, my friend, has killed
 more men than bullets."
 "That may be, sir, but, bejaysus, I'd
 rather be full of whisky than bullets."

Defined
 William—"Pop, what's a paradox?"
 Father—"A paradox, my son, is a
 woman who wears silk stockings and
 tries to keep it a secret."—Puck.

The Latest Style
 "He owns a coach dog."
 "How old-fashioned. We have a
 French poodle that rides in the auto-
 mobile with us."

Unseasonable
 "It's a beautiful day."
 "Yes," replied O. U. Grouitch, the
 noted pessimist, "but unseasonable for
 this time of the year."

A Misplaced Husband
 "I never see her with her husband.
 Has she lost him?"
 "I don't know. Some people seem
 to think she has merely misplaced him."

A Perilous Experiment
 Rural Constable—"Now, then, come
 out o' that. Bathing's not allowed
 ere after eight a.m!"
 The Face in the Water—"Excuse
 me, sergeant, I'm not bathing; I'm
 only drowning."

An Efficiency Expert
 "Marion has become an efficiency
 expert. She goes about telling women
 how to live within their incomes."
 Gladys—"Nothing doing here! I'm
 looking for someone to teach me how
 to live beyond mine."—Life.

The Causes
 "What do you suppose causes the
 rise in breadstuffs?"
 "Sometimes it is strikes, sometimes
 the failure of the wheat crop, some-
 times speculation, and often it is just
 plain yeast."

A Good Guesser
 Shrank stopped his motor at a deso-
 late crossroads and yelled to a farmer
 who lay on a cart of fertilizer: "Hey,
 Cornsilk, is this the way to Croydon?"
 The farmer raised himself from the
 fertilizer in astonishment. "By heck,
 stranger, how did you know my name
 was Cornsilk?" he asked.

"I guessed it," said the motorist.
 "Then, by heck," said the farmers
 as he drove off, "guess your way to
 Croydon."

A Simple Explanation
 Banks—"I had a new experience
 yesterday, one you might call unac-
 countable. I ate a hearty dinner,
 finishing up with a Welsh rabbit, a
 mince pie and some lobster a la New-
 burgh. Then I went to a place of
 amusement. I had hardly entered the
 building before everything swam be-
 fore me."

Binks—"The Welsh rabbit did it."
 Banks—"No, it was the lobster."
 Bonks—"I think it was the mince
 pie."

Banks—"No, I have a simpler ex-
 planation than that. I never felt bet-
 ter in my life; I was at the Aquar-
 ium."

THE HELPING HAND

or Christmas Eve in a Lodging House

By EDWARD PADGETT

ELL, what d'you know,

Pop?

Old man Ransom—better

known as "Pop," Superintendent

of the Municipal Lodging House,

didn't even look up from his work

but returned the salutation—for

such it was, coming from a news-

paper man—with the equally stere-

typed reply, "Oh, nothing much."

And then he added, after a mo-

ment, "Except that this Christ-

mas Eve and"—he smiled sadly—
 "we haven't quite as much Christ-mas around here as I hoped to.
 Sit down, Proctor; I'll be with you

in a moment."

Proctor, the visitor, sauntered

across the room and took the chair

indicated, sliding down onto the

small of his back, leisurely crossing

his legs and reaching for the in-

evitable cigarette.

He was H. Kenneth Proctor, if

you please of the Morning Star, an

old hand at the game and, indeed,

one who had reached that stage

where, without being really aware

of it, he posed as a cynic, so sat-
 isfied with life, human emotion,tragedy and pathos, as they reeled
 past him each day like so manymoving pictures, that he rather
 prided himself upon his mental at-

titude.

Ransom—kindly, gentle, benevo-

lent old Ransom—had been with

the Municipal Lodging House for

over fifteen years. And he still be-

lieved in the flotsam and jetsam

that came and went each night.
 To him they were his "boys,"

down on their luck, a little worth-

less, even a little wicked, but still
 human beings with a spark of theDivine in their hearts that needed
 only to be fanned at the right mo-ment and in the right way to put
 them on their feet facing the worldwith confidence and wringing from
 it by fair means the living it owed

them.

In one point, at least, the old

man was adamant. No subterfuge,
 nor pleading nor profane refusalcould budge him. The would-be
 "guest" had either to yield or get

out. And that point was his firm

insistence that all who tarried un-
 der his roof live up to his motto of"Soup, soap and Salvation."
 Many were strong for the soup,but indifferent to the soap and sal-
 vation; yet they must take all

three—or nothing.

Presently he turned from his

small, cheap desk, shoved off in

one corner of the main room be-
 neath a swinging electric light un-der which his hair shone white as
 snow, and faced Proctor.

"Well, my boy, what can I do

for you?" he said in kindly tone.
 "I haven't seen you for quite a

while."

"Nope," the Star man replied,

sprawling at greater ease in his

chair and exhaling a cloud of

smoke ceilingward. "Things have

been breaking over at Headquarters

and I've been on the jump. I've

come tonight to get some Christ-

mas dope from you. I'm to come

across with an 'under-world' one

as the city editor calls it, and I'm

up against it. Can you help me

out?"

"You don't happen to have a se-

cond cousin to Santa Claus pop-

pin' around here in disguise, do

you? Or a hobo who comes back,

rich and rare, as the Christmas

ehimes ring out, and hands you a

check for a thousand to be spent

in Christmas presents for the dis-

tressed and plain bums who have

burned in here tonight?"

"There are other ways," insist-

ed the old man slowly, gazing

straight into the electric light with

far-seeing eyes. "Surely, for a

man to come back he need not be-

come rich. It's not what he ac-

cumulates, but what's in his heart

that counts, my boy."

"Say," spoke up Proctor sud-

denly, "how about some hard-luck

Christmas stories the bums have

told you at one time or another?
 Something with a few sobs in it—

what we call 'human interest'

dope? You've been on the job

here a long time, Pop, and surely

during all those years a number of

bums have been soaked to the cry-

ing stage around Christmas and

have wept on your shoulder about

it being Christmas and about their

old home. Huh? I can interview

you, see, and let you tell a few of

these stories. Can you think of

any?"

"I'll try," said Ransom. "Come

back in about an hour and perhaps

I'll have something for you. But

I must finish this statement first."

Proctor untangled his knees and

got to his feet. At the door he

paused, turned and called back,
 "Merry Christmas, Pop!" Then,

as though half-ashamed of the lit-

tle bit of emotion he had displayed,

he banged the door after him and

set out for Police Headquarters.

There, he first learned from the

Sergeant on the desk that nothing

had "broke" during his absence

worth more than routine mention.

He sauntered into the "back room"

where checkers and pinchols were

in progress, watched Patrolman

Hegarty, one of his best "pipe

lines," triumphantly take another

cop's last king.

Then he wandered back to the

office arriving at the desk almost

simultaneously with a man who

had entered unattended by a blue-

coat.

The stranger looked like a man

down on his luck, and yet he

didn't. His clothes were plain,

even shabby, but they were not

a man loses his grip and finds out

for a moment Kent made no

comment. Then he said tensely,
 "He's the salt of the earth!" Andafter a slight pause he added,
 "Maybe some of them swallow a

little of the salvation with their

soup."

Proctor hastened to take up his

cudgel. "So he thinks, too. But I

can't see it. Once a bum, always

a bum, is my theory. And a man'll

sit through a prayer meeting or an

experience service on any cold

night to get a bed and something

to eat afterwards. It's just a mat-

ter of psychology, you know. Once

I've been planning this meeting

for five solid years!"

They walked along in silence for

trembling.

Ransom looked at him long and

searchingly. "Your—your face is

kind of familiar," answered the

honest old man, "but I can't place

it—and I haven't the slightest of

your name."

"Kent," said that individual.

Pop seemed to grope back—back

in the archives of his mem-

ory, reaching out for light.

"A little over eight years ago,"

Kent prompted, a whimsical smile

on his face. "One Christmas Eve

—soused to the gills—and bent on

—suicide."

Suddenly the old man's face be-

came alive with joy. "Kent—B.

Kent—as I live—B. Kent!" he

cried.

"Yes!" And there was a strange

mixture of enthusiasm and pride

and gratitude in his tone. "Only

now it's Bertram Kent, right out

and without any hesitation. Pop,

I've been planning this meeting

for five solid years!"

By this time their hands were

clasped and old Pop had an arm

over Kent's shoulder in affectionate

embrace.

"One of my boys, one of my

boys!" he exclaimed joyfully, dis-

spite the tears in his fine old eyes,

and looking at Proctor. "He's

come back to see me after all these

years. My, my!"—and he sniffed

hastily and without shame—"here

I am forgetting all my manners.

Sit down old man and let's talk it

over. You're a sight for sore eyes!

And how is everything with you,

my boy?" He reached out, a trem-

bling hand toward Kent's knee and

patted it. "You're looking fine!"

Then he glanced at Proctor, with

pride and triumph.

"I guess you two old—friends—

would rather talk it over without

me," said that worthy quickly.

"So I'll—"

"No!" said Kent in decisive

tones. "That is, if you aren't

busy. I—I was much interested in

what you said as we walked here,

and I want to say a few things to

you. Sit down, please."

Proctor sat, for there was some-

thing compelling about Kent. But

he was far from subdued. "I—I

guess you mean you got some of

the salvation along with your soup,

eh?" he remarked in a tone that

just bordered on the sarcastic.

"And maybe you're a millionaire

by now, eh?"

For a second anger blazed up in

Kent's eyes, but then it changed to

a tolerant, confident smile. "Yes,

I swallowed some of the salvation,"

he said, "enough, anyway, to cut

out the booze and get me a job on

a coastwise freighter. I landed in

Central America. Why I want I

don't know, except that I wanted

to get where nobody knew me, and

begin all over again."

"I batted around for a while and

finally ran into an Englishman who

owned a big banana plantation, and

he gave me a job. Also, he helped

me fight the booze—by not giving

it to me. It was hell sometimes!

Well, I got on my feet. Then he

made me boss of one of his gangs.

I was making pretty fair wages,

too; and I saved them, for the

simple reason that there was no-

thing to spend them on.

"After three years his manager

left for a better job in the Argen-

tine, and the Englishman gave me

his place. One year ago, when the

war came on, he returned to Eng-

land to join his regiment—leaving

me to run the whole plantation.

He also let me buy a small in-

terest in the place with the money

I'd saved. He said it would make

me a better manager to feel that

part of it belonged to me. I guess