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"There won't be much money left over, Garry, from the 'fill' and tunnel work, if we keep on. We ought to have a cyclone next to finish us with; we've had about everything else."

"You're all through, Jack," replied Garry with emphasis.

"I'll believe that when I see it," said Jack with a smile.

"I tell you, Jack, you are all through. Do you understand? Don't ask me any questions and I won't tell you any lies. The first thing that strikes you will be a check, and don't you forget it!"

Jack's heart gave a bound. The information had come as a surprise and without his aid, and yet it was none the less welcome. The dreaded anxiety was over; he knew now what the verdict of the Council would be. He had been right from the first in this matter, and Garry had not failed despite the strong political pressure which must have been brought against him. The new work now would go on and he and Ruth could go to Morfordsburg together! He could already see her trim, lovely figure in silhouette against the morning light, her eyes dancing, her face aglow in the crisp air of the hills.

Garry continued to talk on as they sped into the city, elaborating the details of the warehouse venture in which he had invested his present and some of his future commissions, but his words fell on stony ground. The expected check was the only thing that filled Jack's thoughts. There was no doubt in his mind now that the decision would be in MacFarlane's favor, and that the sum, whether large or small, would be paid without delay. Garry being treasurer and a large amount of money being still due McGowan on the embankment and boulevard. It would be joyous news to Ruth, he said to himself, with a thrill surging through his heart.

Jack left Garry on the Jersey side and crossed alone. The boy loved the salt air in his face and the jewelled lights flashed from the ever-restless sea. He loved, too, the dash and vim of it all. Forcing his way through the crowds of passengers to the forward part of the boat, he stood where he could get the full sweep of the wonderful panorama:

The jagged purple line of the vast city stretching as far as the eye could reach; with its flat-top, square-sided, box-like buildings, with here and there a structure taller than the others; the flash of light from Trinity's spire, its cross aflame; the awkward, crab-like movements of innumerable ferry-boats, their gaping alligator mouths filled with human flies; the impudent, nervous little tugs, spitting steam in every passing face; the long strings of sausage-linked canalers kept together by grunting, slow-moving tows; the great floating track-yards bearing ponderous cars—eight days from the Pacific without break of bulk; the slippy, far-reaching fingers of innumerable docks clutching prey of barge, steamer, and ship; the stately ocean-liner moving to sea, scattering water-bugs of boats, scows and barges as it glided on its way—all this stirred his imagination and filled him with a strange resolve. He, too, would win a place among the masses—Ruth's hand fast in his.

(To be continued.)

Santa Claus and Little Billee.

By John Kendrick Bangs.

Copyright, The Frank A. Munsey Co. He was only a little bit of a chap, and so, when for the first time in his life he came into close contact with the endless current of human things, it was as hard for him to "stay put" as for some wayward little atom of flotsam and jetsam to keep from tossing about in the surging tides of the sea.

His mother had left him there in the big toy-shop, with instructions not to move until she came back, while she went off to do some mysterious errand. She thought, no doubt, that with so many beautiful things on every side to delight his eye and hold his attention, strict obedience to her commands would

not be hard. But, alas! the good lady reckoned not upon the magnetic power of attraction of all those lovely objects in detail. She saw them only as a mass of wonders which, in all probability, would so dazzle his vision as to leave him incapable of movement; but Little Billee was not so indifferent as all that.

When a phonograph at the other end of the shop began to rattle off melodious tunes and funny jokes, in spite of the instructions he had received, off he pattered as fast as his little legs would carry him to investigate. After that, forgetful of everything else, finding himself caught in the constantly moving stream of Christmas shoppers, he was borne along in the restless current until he found himself at last out upon the street—alone, free, and independent.

It was great fun at first. By and by, however, the afternoon waned; the sun, as if anxious to hurry along the dawn of Christmas Day, sank early to bed; and the electric lights along the darkened highway began to pop out here and there, like so many merry stars come down to earth to celebrate the gladdest time of all the year. Little Billee began to grow tired; and then he thought of his mama, and tried to find the shop where he had promised to remain quiet until her return. Up and down the street he wandered until his little legs grew weary; but there was no sign of the shop, nor of the beloved face he was seeking.

Once again, and yet once again after that, did the little fellow traverse that crowded highway, his tears getting harder and harder to keep back, and then—joy of joys—whom should he see walking slowly along the sidewalk but Santa Claus himself! The saint was strangely decorated with two queer-looking boards, with big red letters on them, hung over his back and chest; but there was still that same kindly, gray-bearded face, the red cloak with the fur trimmings, and the same dear old cap that the children's friend had always worn in the pictures of him that Little Billee had seen.

With a glad cry of happiness, Little Billee ran to meet the old fellow, and put his hands gently into that of the saint. He thought it very strange that Santa Claus's hand should be so red and cold and rough, and so chapped; but he was not in any mood to be critical. He had been face to face with a very disagreeable situation. Then, when things had seemed blackest to him, everything had come right again; and he was too glad to take more than passing notice of anything strange and odd.

Santa Claus, of course, would recognize him at once, and would know just how to take him back to his mama at home—wherever that might be. Little Billee had never thought to inquire just where home was. All he knew was that it was a big gray stone house on a long street somewhere, with a tall iron railing in front of it, not far from the park.

"Howdido, Mr. Santa Claus?" said Little Billee, as the other's hand unconsciously tightened over his own.

"Why, howdido, kiddie?" replied the old fellow, glancing down at his new-found friend, with surprise gleaming from his deep-set eyes. "Where did you drop from?"

"Oh, I'm out!" said Little Billee bravely. "My mama left me a little while ago while she went off about something, and I guess I got losted."

"Very likely," returned the old saint with a smile. "Little two-by-four fellers are apt to get losted when they start in on their own hook, specially days like these, with such crowds hustlin' around."

"But it's all right now," suggested Little Billee hopefully. "I'm a found again, ain't I?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, you're found all right, kiddie!" Santa Claus agreed.

"And pretty soon you'll take me home again, won't you?" said the child.

"Surest thing you know!" answered Santa Claus, looking down upon the bright but tired little face with a comforting smile. "What might your address be?"

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