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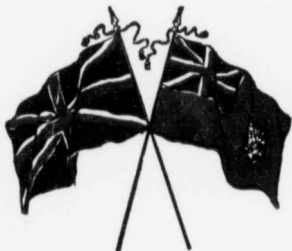
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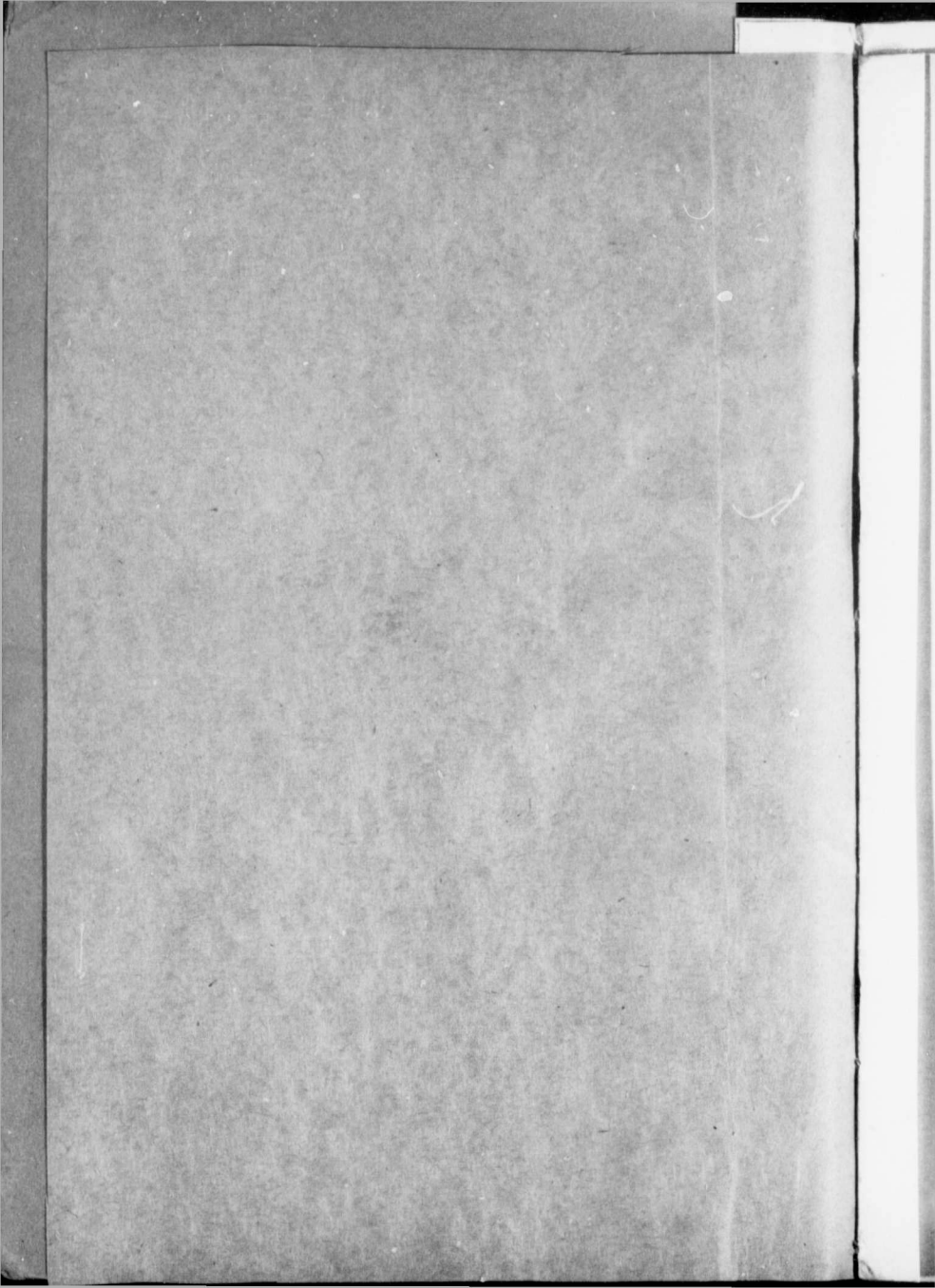
The  
**Nellie L. McClung**  
**Contest Reciter**  
No. 2

Eight Readings  
From  
Mrs. Nellie McClung's  
Book  
"When Christmas Crossed The Peace"



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Grateful thanks are given to Mrs. Nellie McClung for permission to use these Readings; also to Mrs. Isabelle Travers, Supt. of Medal Contests for British Columbia, who secured this privilege.

ANNIE R. FRY,  
Dom. M. C. Supt.

Jordan, Ont.

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MAY 7 - 1963

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 1.

By Nellie McClung

APPARENT ARIDITY

The north bank of the Peace, in its autumn dress of tawny gray was overwashed with the pale December sunshine. The empty grain wagons returning from the Crossing, leisurely wound their way through the valley; but the drivers' thoughts were not of nature nor her beauties and not even the mighty Peace, pursuing its even way, could lift the burden from their souls.

Bill Lukes, leaving his horses to follow, climbed into his neighbor's wagon, for Bill was a sociable soul, and craved the moral support that a kindred spirit like Dad Peters could give.

"I may be wrong," said Dad Peters slowly as he crowded the tobacco into his pipe, "I may be wrong—but—I blame the whole thing on these darned women!"

"What have they to do with it?"

"Lots! Lots! They've got a society now at the Crossing, another at the Water-hold, another at Spirit River and they get speakers from Edmonton, and travellin' libraries. Then comes the nurses! livin' alone too—that's no way for young women to live. They tell the women what they should have and what they shouldn't have."

"Maybe so—maybe you're right. I always knew no good would come of lettin' them vote. It upsets the home—I always said it would. But I don't just see how they could be at the bottom of this."

"O you don't see, don't you? Can they write or can they not? Could they send a letter unknown to us?—I'll say they could—and then here comes this young upstart—twenty-five years old maybe—no more—with the yellow strip down his pantleg—and he'll clean up the whole country—will he?"

"It looks as if he will. I was at Barr's yesterday, and when I asked Jim for a drink, he crossed behind me quick and kind of hissed in my ear, 'the house is haunted,' and then I caught on that the new policeman was standing in the door, with a grin on his face. I could have knocked him down."

"A pity you didn't. What right has this young pup to come here and arrest decent men who ain't doing no harm?"

"It's the law, Dad. It's the law—the law says a man can't buy liquor for drinking purposes; he can buy it to run his machinery, or preserve snakes, or shampoo his hair, or clean his clothes or polish his glasses."

"O shut up! No one wastes good liquor them ways. But what I says is this: Up north here we're bound to be different—it's a cold country—and it's a lonesome country—a man needs somethin' to warm him and somethin' to cheer him—a little nip two or three times a day. Then this man comes along and because he finds a bottle or two he seizes them and here's the worst of it, Bill—he has no respect for God or man—he even found liquor in the magistrate's house, and made trouble!"

"He didn't!"

"He did—sure. If any place should have been safe, it was the magistrate's house. What's our institutions comin' to when a magistrate's house even can be searched. Well they tell me he confiscated what he found—and you know yourself Bill, it was prime good stuff that the magistrate always kept—but it's gone! There's no hope of getting a drop now, and in two weeks it's Christmas!"

"It will be a lonesome one in these parts."

*Apparent Aridity—A House of Trouble*

"It's sure tough, Dad. Ain't there no way? What's wrong with goin' to the Crossin', the policemen there are good fellows—and bringin' out some—the other towns ain't safe, I know—but the Crossin'?"

"I've had all I want to do with the law—when I paid my fine—"

"I didn't know he had caught you too, Dad!"

"When I paid my fine—the magistrate made it as easy as he could—and says he, 'Mr. Peters, I have no option but to fine you'; and he reminded me—the young pup did—that the next offence was jail!"

"But, Dad—we could keep him busy down our way—and you could slip down to the Crossin' just the day before, and bring it out, pretending it was Christmas things—or something."

"You don't say! Sounds awful easy to hear you tell it, and who'd take my place when I was sent to jail? No sir! I don't fancy it. This fellow is a darned crook—anyway he must be or he wouldn't know everyone's business so well. Tom Sneddon had a few bottles hid in a load of hay . . . he found it! John Wallace had his box sent in as usual marked 'Books' just as he has always done, and it always came through every other time—but this time, though there wasn't anything droppin' from it or nothin' to excite suspicions—just a plain box of books, he nabbed it. The undertaker shipped in a few coffins last week, gettin' ready for the winter trade, and he went through them as quick as they were put off the train. That's what I call insultin' to the dead!"

"Did he find anythin' in the coffins?"

"Sure he found it—ain't I tellin' you—he found it—there's nothin' safe or sacred anymore—we might as well give up—and settle down to ginger tea."

"Give up nothin'! Surely one policeman can't run this country north of the Peace. Darn it all—he can't be everywhere at once! We've got the money and we'll have it for Christmas, anyway. I'll bet Bill Adams ain't afraid of him—Old Bill will talk up to him!"

"Bill Adams has been sick, and he's been down with pneumonia, I hear, with the nurse waitin' on him. He's gettin' better though—they say the nurse scrubbed his house—and then scrubbed him, in spite of all he could say."

"Well, that wouldn't hurt Bill none."

"No, but I'll bet it was an awful come down on a man like Bill, that's never had it to bear, to be bossed around by a woman. It's different with us, we're sort of hardened to it, but Bill has led a free and happy life. He's never had his spirit broken like some of us. Yes sir, Bill Adams may be willin' to risk it."

"He's our last chance, as you might say."

---

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 2.

A HOUSE OF TROUBLE

While Dad Peters and friend Bill Lukes were discussing the arid conditions of the land of their adoption, the same subject was being taken up from another angle.

In a big kitchen the early twilight of the December day was reflected in the face of a tall woman kneading bread on a long, unpainted table. Her movements were slow and hopeless. She wore a flannelette wrapper as faded and anaemic as herself, and as she worked she sighed deeply.

Sitting on a stool made of tomato cans and covered with gaily flowered cretonne, her daughter, Madge, was peeling potatoes—and taking a delight in peeling them much deeper than was necessary, just as a protest against prevailing conditions. All her life, she thought,

*A House of Trouble*

she had "peeled thin," and what good had it done. She threw back her mop of red hair indignantly. There was rebellion in every movement.

"It's no use, Madge. It's no use—there will be no Christmas this year—the weather has gone against us somewhat, and your Pa is that cross there's no livin' with him. Let us just get on with him in the easiest way—it's the best way, after all."

"Ma, you're too dead easy with him, you've lost all your pep these last two or three years. I remember when you used to stand up to him, but now you're so full of resignation, you make me tired. You're just as much to blame as he is—always takin' the quiet way because it's easiest. Why don't you ever stand up to him like you used to?"

"O Madge, don't talk like that."

"I will talk, and you'd be better if you talked more. What right has he to hog every cent—and blow it in for his own pleasure and then get so cross when he's sobering up that we can't live with him—you work for this money—so do I—so do the boys—but he has the spendin' of it. You've been too easy, Ma."

"You shouldn't talk that way, Madge, about your Pa and me—we've done the best we could, only we've had some trials too these past years, and we've kinda lost heart, and if he gets a little off once in a while, you mustn't blame him. It's just so he can forget all his troubles."

"O, is that it? Ma, you sure are easy—you'd make excuses for the devil, if he were here! That's why, is it? Why did he drink in the good years then? Why does he drink every chance he gets? Oh, I know it keeps him hot in winter and cool in summer, keeps him dry when it rains and from being parched when it don't rain, makes him better when he is sick, and keeps him from getting sick. But it doesn't keep him from making fool bargains, and giving away things when he goes to sell them. It doesn't keep him from being so cross that Bill couldn't stand him and left home. We've been here five years, and we've all worked harder than he has, but he handles the money, and doesn't even give himself a good time with it. Now, Ma, you may be willing to slave all your life, but I'm not. I see nothing ahead but hard work and sour looks, and I won't stand it."

"There's no fight left in me, Madge. I'm beat—clean beat. I have fought and fought, and there's no good in it. It's better just to quit fightin'; it's like that piece of paper out there, caught on the fence, flappin' in the wind. Small good its flappin' does it—it just tears itself to pieces—that's all it does; that's just like me, only I've quit—I'm done flappin'!"

"Don't cry, Ma, it will be alright. I'm a brute to talk to you that way—I just got too sore for a minute. I didn't mean what I said about not standing it—sure I will, I'll stick by you, Ma—I'm all that you have now that's any help, and I'll sure stay until the kids are all raised anyway—you bet I will, I won't leave my Ma!"

"You're young, Madge, and I wouldn't blame you—there's not much life for you here—I've often thought lately that there's a sort of curse on people that venture too far. We had no need to come so far, when there was lots of land back home—but he would come—and I have been easy, just as you say.

"It always seems worse at Christmas. It taunts me that my children have never known a Christmas since we came up here. When I was a little girl—back in Nova Scotia—we always had a Christmas tree, with candles and clove apples, and tissue paper balls, and a doll for the little girls, but here there's nothin' but hard work and sour looks. Christmas will never cross the Peace!"

"It's gettin' in on Ma. She's goin' queer—she's slippin'. Well, now there has to be something done—and done quick!"

Madge's first thought in her hour of need was, Nurse Downey.

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 3.

A MEETING OF SUBTLE FORCES

Across the fields of grass and poplar scrub from the Lukes' home, and about a mile distant, stood the nurse's house, a roughly built house of logs.

A fire burned cheerfully in the big wood range, and a small tea kettle threatened to dislodge its lid in its bubbling exuberance.

But the north window drew her, and putting out the lamps, she stood gazing in rapt attention at the panorama of the sky.

Unconsciously she began to sing the Christmas Carols which she had so often played at home.

Then a blur of homesickness shut out the glory of the sky.

Suddenly, outside, Tinker-Bell began to bark in sharp little staccato yelps.

Soon the clatter of a horse's hoofs mingled with the dog's bark, and a heavy knock sounded on her door.

She flung it hospitably open, and beheld a young man in uniform who politely bade her "good evening" and waited for her invitation to enter.

"Won't you come in and have something to eat?"

"Don't start me off unless you have plenty on hand, for I haven't had anything for twelve hours."

"Why, where have you been?"

"I am on my way to the Crossing, and there's some sort of an agreement it seems, that they won't feed me—I am Sergeant Woods of the A.P.P. and I guess I am in wrong with the men, for I have been hounding up the bootleggers. But even women turned me down today."

"Surely not."

"You bet they do. The last house I went to was Bill Lukes' over there, and that poor, white-faced, stoop-shouldered wife of his said to me, 'I wouldn't dare to let you come in—Pa wouldn't like it.' But the girl spoke up, 'Go to the nurse's house—she is at home, and she'll feed you, she's not afraid of anything, and she's got lots of grub on hand.' So if you are not afraid, and if you have lots of grub on hand, we can proceed—I can do the rest."

When Sergeant Woods had satisfied his hunger, he looked at her quizzically.

"Do you know what I am wondering?"

"No."

"How you come to be here, a young girl like you, in this wild place."  
"It's not wild, and I'm not young. I was three years overseas, and I am a graduate nurse."

"Well, you're young, and you are living alone."

"I'm not very much alone, I board around—though generally I get home at night if I am not too far away. I have been away three nights now, but that was because I had a bad case that I couldn't leave."

"Where were you?"

"I was with Bill Adams."

"Bill Adams! The worst old soak in the country. Do you mean you stayed in his shanty—that dirty little hole?"

"Oh, you should see it now, and you should see Bill. I shaved him, trimmed his hair, gave him the first bath he ever had, and cleaned his house."

"That's no work for a woman."

"Well, have you seen any man volunteering for the job?"

"No, and I am not likely to."

"You see, Mr. Adams was a very sick man, delirious and threatened with pneumonia."



*A Meeting of Subtle Forces*

"Off on a bat, I suppose."

"Very likely, anyway he was very sick. I did not probe the past, and he was very repentant."

"The old bounder."

"Aren't you glad he was repentant? And he told me all his story."

"Church and state have both had their deliverance!"

"He is going to remember me in his will—and he called me 'Dolly' when he was delirious, and he said I was an angel."

"Well, I am glad the old rascal hits the truth once in a while.

What does he say about this bootlegging business that he has been carrying on?"

"We argued quite a bit about that. You see, Mr. Adams claims that he is doing a real service in bridging the gap between the thirsty home-steader and the supply. He says in this cold climate, so far away and so lonesome, people need something. He spoke quite nicely of you. He said you were an officious young man, who took the law seriously, but you would find just as he had found, that human nature could not be changed by laws. He says no one has a right to interfere with another."

"That is another way of saying, 'Do what you like, mind your own business and let the world go to the devil if it wants to.' That's an easy philosophy if a person has neither heart nor conscience."

"I told him that. Oh, I told him, and I rubbed it in by asking him where he would have been if I had simply minded my own business and left him alone to mind his."

"Aren't you afraid of going into such places and dealing with such people? Have you no fear?"

"Of course I have. I'm often afraid I won't arrive in time, or that I'll fall asleep when I should stay awake, but my biggest fear is that I'll get lonesome—dead lonesome—and throw it all up and go home."

"That's what I'd do."

"You would not. You've a harder job than mine, but you stick, because you think you should."

"I just can't make you out. You are too young and too pretty to be wasting your life out here. You could practice your profession just as well in a city—and have some of the pleasures of life."

"I know, I suppose I could, but I've changed my mind on what constitutes pleasures. I want a hard job, a real job—I liked cleaning up Old Bill Adams. It's great to get really next to people, and change the current of their thoughts."

"My work is different. I am a spoil-fun—a blight—they think I am just trying to spite them. With you, all is well, for they don't want to be sick, but they are sore on me, for they do not want to be good, and I am as tired of the job as they are, if they only knew it."

"Why do you stay then?"

"I'm not going to fall down on the job now that I've started. It isn't just that either. It seems too bad to let these bootleggers degrade the settlers—for the sake of money—to peddle this awful stuff in this country where the people have endured so much, especially the women. Pioneering is surely tough on the women. It isn't coming to them after all they've been through. I like the game, too, matching my wits against theirs—and I have been able to put the fear of the law into most of them too, all but your old Bill. But I'll land him yet! They are determined to have a blow-out on Christmas and the gang at the Crossing are going to supply it. They have barrels of it cached there somewhere—I am going there to look around and see if I can find it. If you can keep old Bill in bed until after Christmas it may help, for he has been the go-between, I understand. He receives contributions from all the thirsty ones, and he makes as good a bargain as he can with them at the Crossing—and keeps the change. So, keep him bed-fast, will you, in the interest of a sober Christmas?"

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 4.

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

The next day, Miss Downey received a hurried visit from Madge Lukes, who burst in with dishevelled hair and burning cheeks, and with eyes full of terror:

"Ma's had a breakdown, Miss Downey, and is actin' queer."

"Tell me what she is doing, Madge."

"She's working around just the same, but she's talkin' to herself about Christmas, and what she will get on the tree, and all that. She's just gone kind of queer and childish, and Pa is scared stiff. He wishes now he had let her go to Edmonton to the Convention when she wanted to, but he said then there wasn't any money to spend that way. She's just like a child, Miss Downey, and it's terrible to see her."

"I'll go over with you. Now don't let her think you notice anything wrong."

When they reached the house and went quickly in there came to their ears the sound of singing; there sat Mrs. Lukes rocking herself to and fro with every appearance of enjoyment and entirely oblivious of her surroundings, chanting an old nursery rhyme.

"Now, listen, we must get ready for the Christmas tree, everyone will do something, and we must get the baking done for the supper. How many chickens can you get ready?"

"How many can we promise, Mother? Mother always does a lot."

"Alright, but you must help her, it won't do to leave her all the work, she's not very strong, you know."

"Oh, I love to get ready for Christmas."

"That's fine, now help all you can with the chickens."

Out in the kitchen, Madge held on to the nurse in a paroxysm of terror.

"Will she die, nurse, oh nurse, will she die?"

"No, she won't die, Madge. She'll be alright but we've got to have a real Christmas, a great big bubbling, sparkling Christmas, full of excitement and surprises, with candles, sparklers and mysterious parcels; where everyone sings and dances and shouts and laughs and forgets their troubles. We've just got to, Madge! Harness your best horse for me, I am going around the neighborhood to invite everyone to the hall for Christmas night. This is going to be one grand occasion, and you and I will have to see it through. Don't be frightened, Madge, I'm full of hope that it will bring your mother right and save the other women from going queer! They haven't enough excitement in their lives, and it just gets them!"

The round of the settlement which Miss Downey made, revealed the fact that a Christmas celebration was just exactly what the people wanted, and hams and chickens were eagerly volunteered, also pie and cake. The supper was easily arranged for; the program to follow, was more difficult, though Fred Ross reported that there were two great singers, a man and his wife from Winnipeg, just come to Wintering Hills. Donald Ross offered to do the Highland Fling if anybody would lift for him, and Miss Downey agreed to be responsible for the music.

Miss Downey endeavored to make the bare hall look like Christmas. Her tour of investigation had revealed one flag, belonging to the school, a few sheets of tissue paper, now in the hands of the school children, being turned into flowers and balls, a red cashmere shawl which could be draped over the box on which the Christmas tree would stand, two dozen candles that would help to light the tree. But what could she put on it and where could she get music? And how be sure that the people would get out?

*An Appeal for Help—The Whimsical Ways of Fate*

Two days before the eventful day the news was brought to her by Madge that Bill Adams was "out" and she thought he had gone to the Crossing on his usual errand, for Madge said her father had made some excuse about having to go to Dunvegan and would not be able to come to the hall on Christmas night. She feared that the men had arranged their gathering place where Bill would bring them the "goods," and the Christmas celebration would go on as in previous years.

On hearing this, a wave of rage filled the nurse's heart. This, then, was all they cared for their families, or their happiness. But old Bill Adams had not got the liquor yet, and maybe he wouldn't get it, the whole supply might be discovered and seized. She believed Sergeant Woods was still at the Crossing, waiting for just this contingency!

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WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 5.

THE WHIMSICAL WAYS OF FATE

It was four o'clock that afternoon just as the pale yellow winter sun was setting behind the grove of trees, that a wagon came up to the nurse's door.

But as she looked out she saw the driver carefully removing the robes, preparing to lift someone from the wagon.

She was behind him in a moment.

"Somebody sick?"

"It's the policeman, Miss, broke his leg on Brick's Hill. His horse rolled over him, hard lines, too, right in his busy time, but he was discharge'n' his duty when it happened, weren't you, Sergeant, trying to keep the north bank of the Peace dry? But fate went against you, didn't it, Sergeant? We sort of thought this was the place to bring him, Nurse. Bill Adams said he was a lucky dog and he is."

The Sergeant groaned, as they laid him on the nurse's bed, there was bitter disappointment on his face.

"Go over and get Madge Lukes. I'll need her to help me to set this leg; and tell her to bring over a horse, I want her to do something for me."

Mr. Peters was in such an amiable mood, he would do anything. Fate had been kind beyond his dreams.

"Certainly, Miss, anything else?"

"Nothing else, thank you, only be sure to tell everyone about our Christmas entertainment. We want everyone there. And now a Merry Christmas, Mr. Peters, and don't fail to come and bring all the family, we want to make this a great day for the children."

Mr. Peters' face revealed a flicker of embarrassment as he went out.

"Well, girl! I fell down on my job, didn't I? And those rascals have the laugh on me. I found out where the cache was, and was just on my way to seize it, when my horse broke through into a badger hole on Brick's Hill, and falling on my leg, on the frozen ground, smashed it below the knee. Old Bill, accompanied by Dad Peters, found me, and lectured me soundly on the whimsical ways of fate. Now look, is there any way we can head off this old rascal? Can you think of anything—I've made a mess of it. Can you think of anything?"

"Sure I can. I have it all thought out."

"Well, don't mess around with me here. It has to be done in a hurry if you are going to stop it. He may get his supply in the next six hours."

"No hurry. You're leg must be set first. You see, I am a nurse by profession and a moral reformer and community leader only in my spare time. Just now I have one thought, one care, that is you."

*The Whimsical Ways of Fate—Taking Up a Christmas Collection*

When the leg was set, and Madge Lukes instructed as to what to give him to eat, Miss Downey suddenly retired to the dispensary and dressing room, carrying the police uniform, cap, boots, and all. Then she came back, fully dressed, and as she put the revolver in her holster, "I'm glad you are not any bigger; I can stuff this coat out with my revolver. It doesn't look so bad, does it?"

She revolved slowly, to give him a complete view. Her golden hair was completely hidden by the cap.

"I'm Sergeant Downs, a friend of yours who came to spend Christmas with you. Now tell me where the cache is, and I'll see if I can head off my old friend before he reaches it, or failing that, to meet him coming back, and seize his load."

The Sergeant seized her hands impulsively, "Oh, girl, you're a wonder!"

With Sergeant Woods well out of the way, the pathway of Bill Adams in his official capacity of bootlegger for the north bank of the Peace, was singularly free from danger, and when he saw his friend, Dad Peters, driving away with the helpless Sergeant in the bottom of his wagon, the old man's soul was lifted on the wings of song, and out upon the quiet roadside there floated out a real paean of praise:

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm."

He stopped many times on the road to tell the joyful news that the young Sergeant had broken his leg; and Christmas would be Christmas once again.

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WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 6.

TAKING UP A CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

The short winter afternoon soon drew to a close and a darkness only relieved by the northern lights fell on the road. Nurse Downey urged her horse to a gallop hoping to catch up to Bill and under cover of night follow him to the cache. To arrest him there red-handed and make the seizure seemed to be the simplest course.

After a time she began to realize that Bill would have to hand the money over to the Peace River dealer before he would even be told where the liquor was. The thought took hold of her so strongly that she determined to push on with all speed to the Crossing.

Suddenly a feeling of fear smote Nurse Downey's stout heart. Her lack of knowledge as to police procedure made her fearful lest her disguise should be discovered, and having to deal with a "gang" so skilled in evil ways, so full of craft and guile, suddenly gave her a weak, helpless feeling.

Swinging around a bend in the road, she reached the spot where she could see the livery stable silhouetted against the darkening sky. Slipping quietly from her saddle, she approached the barn under cover of the darkness, just in time to hear old Bill say goodnight to the livery-man and start off down the street towards the welcome light of the Peace Hotel.

Following cautiously, she crept up behind him, laid a detaining hand on his arm, and said in her deepest voice, "William Adams, you are under arrest!" Before his astonished lips could utter a word, she had snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

*Taking Up a Christmas Collection*

"But I haven't done anything, search me, and you won't find a thing." She backed him over against the wall of a building, and using her flashlight went through his pockets until she came to the great roll of bills.

"What are you doing with so much money?"

"Just came in to get things for Christmas. We're having a big Christmas treat out at our hall, and some of us just made a little collection to buy a treat for the kiddies—Christmas time, and all that, you know."

"Now see here, you're lying, of course, and I know you're lying. The whole gang are known to me. I know where the cache is, and all about it. The cache is in Bill Fraser's old barn. You thought my leg was broken, I suppose."

"I'm no match for you. I could have sworn that leg hung limp. Oh, I'm too old, I guess, to play the game with young fellows like you. I thought I was pretty cute, but I'm not!"

"That's alright, Mr. Adams. You're cute enough, but you see you are caught fairly—I could send you to jail, but I have my own reasons for not wanting to do that."

"Now we'll make a bargain; I'll keep the money tonight, but tomorrow we will make your lies come true. I will send a friend of mine, a nurse, to go round with you to help you with your shopping. She won't know but what you are the benevolent old man who wants to give the kids a good time. I know, maybe better than you, the people you are to buy for. I'll give the nurse a list, and she will help you through. How much money have you here?"

"There are twenty of the boys in on this, and they each gave me twenty-five dollars."

"Alright, that's very good, now you can go to the hotel. Have you some money besides this? Alright then, the nurse will join you at nine, and you can get at your shopping right away. I won't appear at all. Now, goodnight."

When Nurse Crawford opened her door, a few minutes later, she was astonished to see on her doorstep a young man in the uniform of the Alberta Provincial Police, and to hear him say in suppressed excitement:

"Let me in! Don't say a word. Are you alone? Alright then, pull down the blinds and listen."

As the young policeman entered he hastily removed his cap, letting fall a shower of golden hair; then with a whoop of delight, caught the astonished Miss Crawford around the waist and kissed her.

"Didn't you always want a policeman for a beau, Kate?"

"Why, Bess Downey, what have you been up to?"

"Kate, I flashed my flashlight into a man's face to-night, and took his roll from him—and here it is."

Her friend arose and locked the door. "Go on, Bessie, don't hurry, and don't get excited. Begin at the beginning."

When the story was told, the two girls sat long beside the fire deciding what should be bought with the money, and writing down each item as they thought of it.

First on the list was a phonograph for the hall. Then came ribbons and dolls for the little girls, jack-knives, drums and sets of tools for the boys, and candy and nuts for all.

"You are to do the buying, Kate, and do get something gay and fancy; perfume, boxes of candy, vanity cases, silk stockings, fancy collars, beads—go strong on beads, and fancy combs, and oh, Kate, get lots of sparklers and crackers, and red and green candles, and big bells of red paper, and sleigh bells, and a big Santa Claus and reindeers and anything you can lay your hands on that is festive and gay—and now Kate, I believe I'm hungry—it seems like years since I left home. Forty miles on horseback is some jaunt."

WHEN CHRISTMAS CROSSED "THE PEACE." No. 7.

ARIDITY BRINGS CHRISTMAS AND SANTA CLAUS

The next morning the store-keeper at the Crossing got the sensation of the season. The well-known Bill Adams, accompanied by the district nurse, Miss Crawford, made the rounds, and bought with a lavish hand their fancy goods and toys. Miss Crawford was particular to tell each proprietor of the generous part Mr. Adams had taken in making a collection among his friends to give the women and children a real old-fashioned treat.

"We all got thinking about it. Christmas seems to be a time to kind of spread the joys around and shed the oil of gladness on each head."

"Pretty decent scout, that old Bill Adams, after all," said the proprietor of one of the drug stores, after Bill had paid for every box of candy in the place, and the complete stock of perfume and balloons. "I always thought he was a tough old bird, but that just shows you never can tell."

The big packing boxes were loaded at last, and Bill started back with his precious load. What his thoughts were, on the homeward journey, will never be known.

The snow which had held off so long, now began to fall in gently gliding flakes. When he arrived at the hall he found Miss Downey waiting for him, and although he must have thought it strange, he said nothing.

Unloading the many boxes and parcels, he stayed to help her decorate the tree with the candles, sparklers and balloons, and was apparently much gratified by her many words of approval.

"How did you know so well what to get?"

"They helped me a good deal in the stores, and then of course I thought about it a good deal myself."

"Come back as early as you can to-morrow. You must help me put the things on, and decide what we shall give to each person—this is going to be the most wonderful Christmas I have ever known. It has all, or nearly all, been your doing, and I cannot tell you just how I feel about it all!"

By two o'clock on Christmas day, people began to arrive with their provisions, and soon the long tables were set up and filled with roast turkeys, chickens, salads, and jellies, cakes and pies. No one was gayer or happier than Mrs. Lukes, who had come over early with Madge, to sweep out, and see if the lamps were ready.

"It's just like a dream. I'm so happy I just feel I could fly! Just to know our children will have one real Christmas, makes up for all we've come through."

The tree was not allowed to be seen until after supper, although there was many an adventurous young soul who crept forward to get a peek, and came back shivering with delight.

At five o'clock dinner began.

Mrs. Lukes presided at the base of operations, and made the coffee and cut the pies and was everywhere at once.

At the proper moment, a hush fell on the audience, for the lamps were all turned low, and when the curtain was rolled back and the Christmas tree, ablaze with candles and sparklers, burst on the enraptured assemblage, there were little peals of delight and surprise from all over the hall.

Dolls with golden hair; balloons in red, green and white tugged at their tie-strings and threatened to fly to the roof, and the presence of balls and drums and engines and wagons and mysterious bundles and boxes below the tree, set the young hearts dancing with expectation.

*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.

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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."

*On Earth Peace, Good-will to All*

"Haven't we met before?"

"Yes, you very kindly picked me up on Brick's Hill, and your friend Dad Peters brought me here two days ago."

"But you didn't stay here."

"Ever since, haven't I nurse?"

"For the very good reason that his leg is in splints."

The old man looked from one to the other helplessly, and sat down hard in the chair the nurse had placed for him.

"Then who did I see, and who was it that—"

"That what, Mr. Adams?"

"See here, did you break your leg or did you not?"

"I did."

"Well, why did you tell me you didn't, and that it was all in the game to throw me off the track. Who held me up at the point of a revolver in a dark corner at the Crossin' and took five hundred dollars from me?"

"I didn't. I have been here all the time, with a broken leg."

Looking from one to the other, the old man began slowly to nod his head.

"Young man, there's one awful lesson in this for you and me! We're poor fish, us men! We have a rough way of doing things. Your way was to arrest me, seize the stuff—send me to jail—that's no good! I'd be swearing my soul away in jail—boys all mad—everything in a mess. Look at this girl—she skins my roll, but look what she does with it—what she does with me, first scrubbed me, shaved me, in my own house, then in the public highway, robbed me, but made me the best liked man in the neighborhood, makes everyone think so well of me—I think well of myself. I'm not Bill Adams the bootlegger; I'm the man who brought the Christmas treat to the kids. She spoils my taste for booze, this girl, and has given me a taste—for my fellowmen. Tonight coming out, I met a bunch of boys who gave me the money, Dad Peters, Bill Lukes and the rest. They grabbed my hand and said, 'Alright, old man, glad you done it.' They feel better, I feel better, everyone in the settlement feels better, she did it all."

"Mr. Adams, you're wrong about the revolver. It was only a flash-light I used, and remember, the suggestion was yours, at jut buying things for the kids. You said it first—that gave me the idea. I saw it was the way out, and it has all been so fine! You played up well, too, Mr. Adams, and we'll never give it away."

"Yes, indeed, I like your idea for weekly meetings in the Hall. Now with the phonograph and so many ready to help, we can have all sorts of good times."

Mr. Adams turned to the bed and shook hands with the Sergeant. "You remember what I said, Sergeant, about a man being a poor stick, profit by it, not but that I'm willing to admit that as men go you're some man."

And outside, right above the little house, the northern lights, pink and green and violet and amber, marched and flamed and danced and looped, folding and shooting and darting—just as if they knew—and were glad.



RULES FOR CANADIAN W. C. T. U.

## ELOCUTIONARY MEDAL CONTESTS

1. These shall consist of:—

No. 1. Junior—Contestants 9 years of age and younger.

No. 2. Junior—Contestants, holders of Junior No. 1 Medal and others 9 to 12 years of age.

Intermediate—Contestants, holders of Junior No. 2 Medal and others 13 to 15 years of age.

No. 1. Senior—Contestants, holders of Intermediate Medal and others 15 years and older.

No. 2. Senior—Contestants, holders of No. 1 Senior Medal, viz., silver medalists.

No. 3. Senior—Contestants, holders of No. 2 Senior Medal, viz., gold medalists.

No. 4. Senior—Contestants, holders of No. 3 Senior Medal, viz., grand gold medalists.

Inter-county or inter-district contests may be any one of the above, as determined by the superintendents concerned.

2. Contesting class shall consist of not fewer than five nor more than eight persons, as nearly equal in age and ability as possible.

3. When a contest class falls below the minimum number, the contest may be postponed or an entertainment held, with no medal awarded.

4. A speaker may contest any number of times, but once the holder of a medal, then not again for that medal.

5. Double contests may be conducted as one programme.

6. No contestant shall be trained individually by a teacher of elocution.

7. Reading shall be taken from the authorized Canadian W.C.T.U. Reciters. Other selections may be used with the permission of a County Superintendent. Copies of such permitted selection should, with the contest report, be forwarded to the Provincial Superintendent to be used if it is deemed wise in the compiling of new reciters.

8. Selections shall not be abridged, but spoken in their entirety, unless permission has been granted by the County Superintendent.

9. The selection given by the winner of any medal may not be repeated by that contestant in a subsequent contest. Defeated contestants may, as a competing class or as members of other classes, repeat the selections rendered in previous defeat, either in the same or another locality, preferably another.

10. Printed forms shall be given to three able, distinguished judges, who shall mark each contestant accordingly to award the medal. These judges' papers may be given to a referee committee, who shall make the award.

11. For deviation from these rules appeals should be made to

ANNIE R. FRY,  
(Canadian M. C. Superintendent),  
Jordan, Ont.

For supplies write to:

MRS. DELIA COTTAM,  
Dominion W. C. T. U. Depository,  
97 Askin St. London, Ont.

Make all moneys payable to Mrs. Delia Cottam.