

A NEW SANTA CLAUS.

Without the wind was waiting,
The night was cold and drear;
Within the red logs crackling
Proclaimed the Christmas cheer.
"If Santa Claus would only,"
Said little Bertha, "now
Come down the jet black chimney
With painted doll and cow,
With elephant and zebra
And scarlet cockatoo,
Rhinoeeros and camel
And frog and kangaroo,
I should be very happy
To see his features sweet."
Her father said, with laughter,
"The logs would burn his feet."

He sent them to the kitchen
And told them that no doubt
Santa'd come down the chimney
When he saw the logs put out.

Then up stairs went the father.
A laughing with delight,
Put on a great fur ulster
And hair and whiskers white.

He brought the toys down with him,
And when they flocked about
He gave them fruit and candies
And laughed to hear them shout.

He gave them toys and kissed them
And sent them up to bed,
That he might join the reindeer
And speed upon the sled.

"The children all are happy,"
Unto his wife said he,
"And we shan't have the bother
Of dressing up that tree."

"Hurrah for all the blessings
That light our cozy ken!
Hurrah for Merry Christmas
And peace unto all men!"

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

TWO CHRISTMAS EVES

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CHAPTER I.

HOW THE FIRST ONE CAME.

"Not another word, sir," said old Eben Withers in his usual decisive manner. "I know nothing about the girl, and I don't desire to, but I do not intend you to marry for some years, and then you are not to choose a penniless bride. You are to build up the family fortune, sir, not scatter it. No; I will not listen." And he turned to his morning paper again.

Young Eben said more than his prayers sometimes, and it would not do to set down all he said to himself as he left the room. He was as plucky a lad as there was in seven counties around, but he had always been obedient, partly from a sense of duty and partly because of the genuine love that existed between father and son.

But even young Eben, after he met Miss Mildred, saw things a little differently and would perhaps have used another word than love in speaking of his father. Certainly it did not seem as if his filial love was very strong when he came to tell her what his father had said. In those days he told her everything. Afterward he grew older and learned a good many things.

Miss Mildred did not take it well. Young Eben was dissatisfied with the promptness with which she said that she

would live to be proud of yourself. Now that you are a man I want to start you with this. It is yours to do with as you like."

"This" was a check for a small fortune. He took it from his pocket as he spoke and handed it to the young man, who flushed with surprise and perfectly natural pleasure as he looked at it.

"It would be idle, sir, to try to thank you in words for this, or for all your kindness to me all my life," he said. "But I have something else to ask. Even this princely gift of money seems small compared to that."

Old Eben's face darkened. He did not like to hear money spoken of lightly, and it seemed an ungracious speech. However, he spoke kindly and with all sincerity.

"What is it, my son? You are not likely to ask anything that I could refuse today." "I want you, sir, to reconsider what you said about my marrying. Let me introduce you to the woman!"

The dark face grew rigid. "Let us understand this now," said the father inter-

"I insist upon your obedience so

long as I play the part of a father. I have no legal claim, I know!"

"Don't talk of a legal claim, father," said the son, interrupting in his turn.

"Very well. It is not a claim, but I am still your father, and so long as you continue in my home you are my son. Let me hear no more of this folly. I will never consent to this marriage. Do you understand?"

"I do, God help me!" exclaimed young Eben. "And you must understand me also. I shall certainly marry the girl I love, and I do not change, sir, any more than you. I will obey you in all else, but not in that."

"Then we may as well part now," said old Eben, stung beyond endurance by the first defiant words he had ever listened to. "You can have no claim on me henceforth."

"If we part," said the lad, his voice breaking, "let us part in kindness at least. I ask for nothing more." And he stepped forward with his hands outstretched.

But the other drew back. "I said you had no claim on me. My kindness was for my son, not for an ingrate. Obey me and everything shall be as it was. If not, go now."

With a despairing gesture the young man turned away, but his father spoke again. "Stop a moment," he said. "You have forgotten your check." And he pointed to where young Eben had dropped it on the table. "I gave you that, sir, before you had defied me. It is still yours."

"I cannot take it, father," said young Eben, with some spirit, though not defiantly. "You would not give it to me now, and I cannot receive what does not come from your hearty good will."

"As you choose," said his father. "I certainly would not give it to you now."

And after the young man left the room he picked up the slip of paper and tore it in bits before throwing it into the fire. Then, seating himself at the table, he rang for his breakfast. When it was brought, however, he sat for an hour looking straight before him and finally, leaving it untouched, he arose and went to his office.

"God help your poor father," said Mildred as she nestled in young Eben's arms in the shelter of their new home the night before Christmas.

"Amen!" said young Eben. "He is poor indeed in his loneliness, but I never cease loving him."

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE SECOND ONE WENT.

It was a bright, happy year for the youngsters, contrary to the laws of fiction, for they had love and hope and hard work to fill the time and good common sense to guide them, but old Eben had never relented, and there was a shadow over the little home, happy as it was. One evening late in the year young Eben had come home from his work and settled himself, as his habit was, to study, when he was suddenly interrupted.

"I want to talk a little while," said Mildred, pulling his book away and seating herself on his knee.

"Good," said young Eben, smiling, "but you must pay for my time."

But after she had done that very satisfactorily with a kiss she sat for a long time with her head on his shoulder, saying nothing till at length he said, "I thought you wanted to talk to me, dear!"

Still she was silent a moment, as if it were hard to begin. Then she said, "What would you like best for a Christmas present?"

Young Eben laughed. "It's some time to Christmas yet," he said. "I hadn't thought. Besides you gave me the most precious gift in the world last Christmas. Anything else would seem very small after that."

"How lovely to say that!" she exclaimed, kissing him again. "And to say it as if you meant it. But that is just what I am afraid of."

This was bewildering. "What are you afraid of?" asked young Eben.

"I think," she faltered, "that the angels are going to bring you—about Christmas time—a blessed gift, straight from heaven, and I'm afraid you'll love it more than you do me." Then came a flood of tears—happy ones that young Eben was too wise to try to stop.

Old Eben might have softened a bit if he had known about this, but, of course, he didn't. He kept himself well informed about the lad he loved, but proud as he was to see that his son could make his way in the world without help, he was sensi-

ble.

And that is why she did not take it well. She would, and she wouldn't listen to either side of the question. Young Eben must obey his father, and he must never cease to love her, nor ever marry any else. And nothing was ever to induce her to waver in any respect. It was delightful—and somewhat perplexing.

"If you won't settle the matter," he said finally, "I will." This, by the way, was what he had intended from the first.

"Settle it, how?" she asked in some alarm.

"By marrying you," he said firmly, "but not just now. I will do nothing rashly."

It must be said that the next few months were pretty hard ones for the boy. He had set himself to wait till he should be of age, the next December, not even then, but because he would render his service loyally to the last day. So time went on. His duty was done at his desk in the counting room so well that his father could not complain, rigid taskmaster though he was. His sweetheart was not neglected, and yet he found time, or made it, to keep up his studies faithfully.

Of course, the birthday came in due time. Birthdays do. In the morning old Eben met him with something like emotion.

"I have looked forward to this day," he said, "as anxiously as you. You have been a good son and I believe you always will be. I am proud of you, and I believe you

will live to be proud of yourself. Now that you are a man I want to start you with this. It is yours to do with as you like."

It was a crafty speech, for she knew that the old man would resent the charge of injustice, and her eyes flashed again when he said harshly, "I have no son. I had one, but he left me. Never mention him again."

And so the broach seemed hopeless, but Christmas was coming again, and strange magic is working everywhere in the Christmas season, softening men's hearts and quickening all impulses to peace and good will. As the year drew to a close old Eben grew weaker and more infirm. Day after day he sat alone, careless of his business, thinking of ways of his ruined hopes and eating his heart. On young Eben's birthday he shut himself in his room and would see no one, but he was harder than ever next day.

Nothing moved him till that strange magic of Christmase came. Here, and everywhere it worked, penetrating

the James river, at the back of the prison, was locked with ice, and the snow, falling steadily outside, and swept in by the cutting wind through the iron barred, glassless windows, did not lighten the gloom in the six long, black rooms, where the ragged prisoners tramped to keep warm, and thought as they tramped of the dear ones in homes far beyond the battle lines—dear ones whose Christmas season would be rendered joyless by thoughts of the imprisoned soldier.

"We mustn't give way to despair," said young Lieutenant Watson of the Twenty-third Wisconsin, as he took my arm and led me down the crowded length of the upper Chickamauga room, so called because most of the prisoners occupying it had been captured in that disastrous battle. "Turner has agreed to let us have the cookroom for a show tonight, and Ed Maas, God bless the brave fellow, is getting up a troupe in the Potomac room, and they will sing the old home songs and the war songs, too, and so we'll forget the hunger and the cold. After all, old fellow, happiness is largely a matter of imagination, and if a man can't get his imagination going on Christmas time—why he hasn't any."

Watson, he is now colonel of the Thirteenth Brooklyn, or New York State guard, was and still is, one of those brave, cheerful spirits that look over on the bright side of things and have the power to communicate their feelings to those of more somber cast, like myself.

We had reached the head of the broad damp steps leading to the lower middle room when, instead of going back in the same way, I led my friend across to the other.

"What for?" he asked.

"I want to see Bohannon, captain of the Third Middle Tennessee cavalry. You remember he came in about ten days ago."

"Yes, yes. He's a quiet sort of a chap, but looks like a good soldier. What of him?"

"Well, he's under the weather and in bad shape. He was captured in a cavalry fight near Knoxville and was pretty bad hurt by the fall of his horse. The horse was killed. You can bet on that. Then the captain got a severe cold, but he has a horror of the prison hospital and refuses to report himself on the sick list," I said.

Captain Bohannon was half reclining, with his back against the wall and his legs stretched out on the damp floor.

He was a tall, slender man of five and thirty, with long brown hair and curly beard of the same color. The strong face must have been handsome before the sun had bronzed it to an Indian hue, and had cut deep lines down the cheeks and between the fearless gray eyes.

Now, there was a flush on the cheeks and a light in the eyes which experience had taught us were due to prison fever instead of to health. This impression was increased as Watson and myself knelt beside the captain and pressed the strong brown hands and felt their abnormal heat.

Before that I had again and again urged the captain to go to the prison hospital. Dr. Sabal, the Confederate surgeon in charge, was one of the best and kindest men that ever administered to the ailments of friend or foe, but the Tennessean always shook his head and said:

"I know you're my friend, old pard, and you are dead right, but I've never been in a hospital, and I somehow feel that it would kill me if I went there. No, if I've got to be buried in a blanket, let them carry me away from here. What's the difference?"

The captain had evidently lost his grip on things terrestrial. It was not that he was a prisoner that depressed him; he was too much of a man for that, but there are heart wounds more killing than those made by bullet or saber, and the captain was suffering from one of these.

Bohannon's father had been a well to do planter in middle Tennessee, but mistakes impoverished him and ended in his death a few years before the war. George was the only child, with characteristic

hands. He was a tall, slender man of five and thirty, with long brown hair and curly beard of the same color. The strong face must have been handsome before the sun had bronzed it to an Indian hue, and had cut deep lines down the cheeks and between the fearless gray eyes.

Young Eben glanced through it and then noted the date, and with a glad shout sprang forward again. At his father's door Alice met him and would have stopped him, but he pushed her aside with a laugh and went straight to the old man's room.

There lay old Eben, weak from his fainting fit, but little the worse for it.

"My son! My son!" he cried out eagerly. "Now I can die in peace."

"Die nothing!" exclaimed young Eben, with a cheery laugh. "God has sent you a grandson and a son tonight. You'll have many a merry Christmas yet with me and mine."

And so it was. DAVID A. CURTIS.

Post-Christmas "Lines."

[After Stephen Crane.]

It was the morning after Christmas and the boy was breaking toys.

I begged him to desist and come out into the sunshine,

But he—he wrinkled his face. And he cried,

"No, I will not come!"

And he continued his work of destruction.

The Usual Way.

He was a tall, slender man of five and thirty, with long brown hair and curly beard of the same color. The strong face must have been handsome before the sun had bronzed it to an Indian hue, and had cut deep lines down the cheeks and between the fearless gray eyes.

"FOOL!" SHE BEGAN.

Five enough to feel it an injury to his own importance and unreasonable enough to feel his anger increasing week by week.

One day when he was more incensed than usual he made a will leaving all his fortune to a distant cousin, Alice Withers, who had come to keep house for him.

When he told her about it that night, a gleam of triumph came in her narrow eyes.

It was what she had hoped and schemed for, but her face was grave, and her voice steady, as she spoke in reply:

"You are doing too much for me. Cous-

CHRISTMAS IN LIBBY.

MAJOR A. R. CALHOUN RECOUNTS HIS OWN EXPERIENCE.

Christmas of the Awful Battle Year of 1863—A Touching Incident of the War.

The Captain's Death at Midnight—Memories Recalled.

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change their love. "I would not have you fight against your convictions," said Edna. "But go to the side where your heart calls you. It is yet two years, George; the war cannot last till Christmas, 1863. Come back to me then, and whether the Union fails or wins, our union can be staled only by death."

And so they parted again, Edna Crawford following her lover to escape into Kentucky, where he met Buell's army and secured a commission in the Third Middle Tennessee cavalry.

Then the young captain began to count the Christmas days. That of 1861 was spent on the banks of the Ohio; that of 1862 was passed in the terrible series of battles that ended in Bragg's defeat at Murfreesboro. Before the victorious Union legions, Edna Crawford and her mother, braving the inclemency of that most inclement weather, fled for safety to Chattanooga. They might have remained at home in security, for not only the captain, but who at once sought them out, but every Union soldier worthy the uniform he wore, would have protected them, but in those days the invading Yankee was regarded as a cruel monster.

The privation brought on a cold. Consumption followed, and a monster more inexorably cruel than the war god had an irredeemable lien on Edna Crawford's life.

Rosencrans advanced on Chattanooga and Mrs. Crawford took up her dying daughter and fled to Knoxville. Burnside came down through east Tennessee and seized Knoxville, and Bohannon's troops were the first to enter the city with the stars and stripes.

Edna was dying when the captain found her and gave her every care.

"Christmas, 1863, will soon be here, my darling," he whispered at their last meeting. But she did not