

Article
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No 8

Subject
My first Christmas

Office
Manager for the
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25 Bank Row
New York City
Box 20769

1008

My first Christmas
Present

My first Christmas.

Why, my friend, that Christmas
I do not remember, and
my excellent mother, knowing,
five years ago, gone to her
heavenly home is no longer
here to describe relate its
story. How well she could
have done so.

It will be sixty three years
next Christmas since that
primary anniversary.

Let us see, sixty three years
ago on next Christmas eve
I ^{was but} ~~would have~~ been forty six
days old.

^{Applied to yourself}
~~Imagine~~ a glorious neighborhood
in Maine - a high ridge not
far from the restless, foaming
Androsceggie - a slightly
place too - a neighborhood

always cheered and lifted up
 amid cultivated hills & valleys
 with God-given lake and river and
 mountains, all esthetically
 arranged or disarranged as
 Nature, the Lord's handmaid,
 never fails to do, and varying
 from day to day, & from
 season to season in its
 drapery & rich coloring.

The ~~old~~ ^{double storied} white house
 square & substantial with its
 ample door in the middle
 of the west front, its flat roof
 and top-balustrade, its green
 blinds and its string of out-
 buildings ending with the
 sigable old barn, looked as
 if it must have always been
 there, so essential was it
 to complete Nature's royal
 disorder and make an

unimitable picture, on
which it would trouble
the photographer to gather;
and ^{the} great Bierstadt
would never undertake
to sketch it upon his
prolific canvass.

It was a grand old place but
the best part of it was
in doors. I do not refer to the
tiny ^{the precious part of the group} bit of the ^{indulging} nursery,
not big enough for the cradle
which however, having
rocked an elder brother for
two years, now that he was
promoted to the trundle bed,
stood there in waiting. Who
but the fond mother recalled the
scene when that brother sat in
~~at~~ the cradle's foot and with
his little feet over the side
rocked the sleeping babe!

Her children all remember
the Mother's Tears which
always even in age ~~filled~~
filled her eyes at the mention
of his sweet life and early
death.

He was there, was ever after,
and is still her Angel Boy.
'God is Love!' He must before
this have given them, up there,
somewhere, a loving reunion.
I believe it. You see, my good
friend, who was there indoors in
that southwest room that
Christmas eve. A mother,
an angel brother, and a
gentle neighbor friend, a Mary
& Martha in one who in
sweet sympathy gave a
month's precious time to
this young mother. Were not
these tender ministrations

The children in the summer
 in the mountains of Texas
 looking over the sage brush
 fields and over the mountains
 of the great life and energy
 health.

It was then, when even after
 and in still the angel song.
 that is better. The world before
 that is our given them, of the
 summer, a lasting memory.
 I believe it, you see, the good
 friend, who was their father.
 that faith was a true love
 that was one. A mother
 an angel brother, and a
 gentle neighbor, a long
 I remember in our love in
 sweet song, both given to
 in our this presence, true to
 this young mother. The last
 these children, the first of all.

F

rewarded. Oh, yes, in those
old days where there was but
little money all neighborly
service was returned in kind
or equivalent.

Behold the the grand father,
above three score & ten, a
grand man, tall and straight
and kind. Many times that day
he had stopped ~~his~~ reading his paper,
and with spectacles mounted above
his forehead stepped softly, from
the kitchen to the Mother's East
door ~~and~~ ^{to} make some pleasant
inquiry, as, "How fare you
now Eliza? or how are the
bairnies?"

After the quiet answer of
"all well, thank you Grandpa"
he would add, for this was
his privilege, "let me have the
two-year-old?"

white haired J.

2. The ~~old~~ ^{white haired} veteran and the
bright eyed boy start off
together like Eneas & Iulus
of old! Even the unequal
steps are, as then, expression
of dependence & help, of love
and trust. It was a
pride place by Grandpa's
side ~~holding the~~ hand in
hand holding & being held,
but the ~~throne~~ ^{throne} was upon
his knees. After ^{little} Willie had
left ~~the~~ ^{vacancies} ~~there~~ I
became ~~the~~ in time his
successor. I am sure I never
quite filled the place, no
more than I did in the
stricken hearts of the
bereaved parents. How
could any ^{body} ~~one~~ do that?
Not, if you had such a
grand, heroic Grandpa, you

G

will understand how
unconscious of any loss, I
came to mount that throne
of ~~privilege~~ ^{joy} - ~~grandpa's~~ ^{his} ~~finest~~
~~for joy~~ & instruction.

I must have imbibed a
war-spirit from him; for
he had participated as a seventeen
year old lad by his father's side
in the closing campaigns of
the Revolution, and subsequently
taken part in Indian conflicts.
An aged veteran, forgive him my
friend, can but speak of what
he has seen & heard. He may out-
live his time, but never to the
eager child who worships him!
You perceive how, in the
developing child, history is
made to repeat itself.

The father in that house
had to go & come. The care of

to stock which included his
fine horses, his cattle & sheep,
the getting up the wood, its
cutting & splitting & piling so as
to be well seasoned for next
winters use, the clearing of paths
and roads from fresh fallen
or drifting snow and other
necessary work, engrossed
his time from sunrise to
sunset so that except of
evenings & Sundays the
mother did not enjoy much
of his society. Only a farmer!
No, he was more. He had much
culture, loved poetry and in
fact all the good books he
could procure, & find time to
read. His shaggy brow & keen
blue eyes made him seem sterner ⁱⁿ
~~to~~ his childrens view than their
grandpa; yet his smile was

I.

something of his laugh clear
 & hearty. That father was, as
 I now know & love to record, a
 thrifty self-sacrificing man,
 respected & trusted by his
 neighbors. He ~~felt~~ ^{felt} obliged to take
 upon him, like so many around
 us today, burdens too heavy
 for his strength, and so wore
 out his life all too soon
 in sheltering an aged father
 and providing for wife &
 children; for the beaming
 father took his home
 before my tenth year.
 His departure was my mother's
 second great sorrow. Oh,
 how Manly & handsome he
 appeared to me in those early
 days, particularly on Sunday
 morning as he emerged from
 his room ready for Church. The

rich suit of dark blue cloth.
The cutaway coat with bright
buttons, the elegant watch
ribbon ornamented with buckle
& seal always pendant from
the waist band. The high
collar & bona fide stock.
These were the settings of the
well bred New England man,
my father!

He was there at the
homestead my first Christmas
eve. Now, friend, indulge
me. Make a picture of
yourself. The fire, wood
or not coal or gas, is above the
hearth stones then under
the lofty mantel. The brass
andirons, we have them yet,
with their large knobs ^{so} clear as
to mirror your face, the live
coals & the shooting tongues of flame

sustain their load. The Grandpa
is in his corner, leaning
back in his chair & holding
the lisping boy ^{comfortably} in his
~~sheltering~~ arms. The young
mother opposite with a
pillow behind her shoulder,
shielding her pale but
happy face by a pamphlet
from the heat. She ~~seems~~ ^{is}
~~to be~~ looking at her neighborhood
nurse & baby ^{gently talking} before the
fire, ~~but~~ ^{and} then turns toward
her husband & father, who
sits a little back where
the light from the chimney
shines full upon his smiling
face. A hook & burning
candle rest upon the square
table close to his right
hand. You can fill out the
fiction with the ~~fire~~ ^{fire}
bed in the ~~corner~~ ^{parlour}, the portraits on

at the wall; the Cur and
Mirror to suit in proper
place.

Then is the little group, listen:
for they are talking of the
morrow, — of the Season:

"It is Christmas eve,
Liza. At Peekskill where
I lived so many years
with brother Ward, the
people made much of
Christmas!"

"So I have heard you say
before, Rowland?" she
said with a bright smile, —
"but our folks hereabouts
think there is something ^{wrong} in
those Christmas doings.

Our Elder (the Baptist
minister) calls keeping
Christmas a Paganish custom."

Grandpa ^{rejoicing} interposes: "What if

M.

it is? There can't be anything wrong in remembering whose birth day it is, or in filling the youngsters empty stockings with nice little presents!

"Oh, no - certainly not the father adds. When they are a little bigger (he looked fondly towards the happy boy & the ^{white} bundle in nurse's lap) - when they are a little bigger we will celebrate the day. Episcopal & Catholicism must not be allowed to monopolize all the good things!"

Eliza smiled silently acquiescently in her ^{appreciating} heart whatever the Elder might say.

Inches 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

the other night for nothing
many in circumstances
whose death has been
in killing the tyrants
with the tyrants
and little parents
the one - certainly that the
pattern which is then there
have a little longer to look
further through the happy
the one that is in the
up - after that one a little
higher one more elaborate
the day. Spontaneous
Catholics men in the evening
to manifest all the
God through the
Elder Smith's subtle argument
swayed in his heart
the other night.

N.

It was a pretty Christmas
one as it was. The home
picture had in it sacred
beauty & quiet joy. That
mother lived to participate
in over fifty Christmas
Eves after that one, and to
see children, grandchildren
and great grandchildren
gather yearly around handsome
trees replete with holly
ornaments & abundant gifts
or tables loaded with
Christmas presents, when jinglers
cried, & little hands clapping
gave charming emphasis to
the happy occasions, but I
doubt if, on any ~~Christmas~~ ^{other},
she was ever happier than
on that my "first Christmas night"
Oh. You meant "the first Christmas"

0. remember!
on which I can ~~see~~
Of course you did!

Well. We were in the same
house few years later. Rueland
no ~~was~~ ^{four years my junior} in the historic
cradle. Mother ^{in this South East room} was at
work near the large table
listening to Grandfather's
reading. Otis that is, myself
had gone to ~~the~~ ^{sleep} across the
hall in Grandpa's bed.

~~Suddenly~~ It might have
been ~~eight~~ ^{at night} 8 o'clock. Suddenly
there was a sound of bells -
then Mother said: "a face
pressed against the window,
and I was frightened, but
a second look discovered
my husband." Hurrah, it
was my father home from
~~Massachusetts~~ ^{Massachusetts} A. J. He had been
gone two months on business.

He arrived unexpectedly to
all except himself. It was
a joyous surprise.

On ~~he~~ heard the noise & got
up & came to the living
room in his night gown.
rubbing his eyes. His father
caught him in his arms.
and as soon as the welcome

was over, he brought a
bundle from his valise
and took off the wrapping.

What the others received
I could not tell, but I
had a Malletbrown Geography
& atlas, and a beautiful
back ^{boards} octavo size, with
the nicest sort of cover.

My heart was in my throat
with ~~small~~ emotion. The

outside of that book ^{would have} ~~was~~ been
enough. ~~But~~ ^{But} ~~there~~ ^{there} ~~was~~ ^{was}
~~the~~ ^{the} ~~book~~ ^{book} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~pictures~~ ^{pictures}, ~~that~~

the morning of the 1st of June
 the people of the village of
 St. John's were informed that
 the British fleet was in the
 harbor.

The British fleet consisted of
 the ship of the line, the
 frigate, the sloop, and the
 schooner.

The British fleet was in the
 harbor for several days, and
 the people of the village of
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charming illustration of
short stories. It was not
much trouble to my
mother to take care of
me after that for
many days. I would
lie on the floor by the
fire, picking up my books
with face downward
intent on the pictures
in that book, and
skipping out the stories.
If boys & girls ~~find~~ find & see
you all are as excited
& happy as I was over
those Christmas gifts. I hope
they will not fail to be
supplied. The rich boys
have always had so many
gifts - that they do not seem to
care for them - certainly not
so much! Well, my friend,

Tell them ^{to} look around
till they find a youngster
like Otis Howard who
was not born ~~with~~ in
the midst of luxuries—
unless you take account
of nations ^{condemnation} ~~bestowments~~ &
farm products, and see
how his heart will beat
& his eyes glisten as
you put into his hands
to be all his own, a
rich Christmas card.
~~such~~ Rich children
will find a joyful
excitement in giving.
If they can find a way
as the St Paul says
"to give with simplicity".

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"
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by

Maj. Genl. O. Howard
U. S. Army

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