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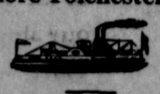

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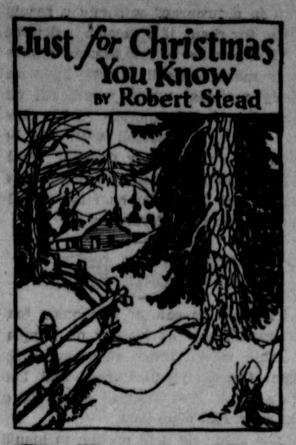

THE sun was gilding the crests of the Rockies. How it gilded them, this Christmas Eve! A line of gold ran to north and south, blocking them out against the champagne sky like huge crumpled masses of purple cardboard. Great fan-shaped shafts of light were piercing the heavens, touching to bursts of color every tattered remnant of cloud. But below, the shadows were settling on the foothills, and in the valleys it was almost dark.

Almost dark, too, it was in the heart of little Mrs. Derrit. For three years she had worked the farm alone, and each Christmas seemed a little darker than the one before. She was beginning to wonder if it is true that time heals all sores. It was five years now since Dave had died, and three since young David left the farm, and the ache seemed heavier than ever.

Mrs. Derrit rose from the rocker where she had been sitting beside her kitchen stove. The gloaming had swallowed up the walls; her few cheap pictures had faded into night; only a stray flicker from the fire glinted on the cream separator in the corner of the room. She crossed the floor and with a hand fumbling in the darkness, found the match-box on the wall. Then she lighted her lamp and set it on the kitchen table. One must eat, even on Christmas Eve.

If Olson, the hired man, had stayed it would have been not quite so bad. But he had done his chores up early and left for the dance in the Swedish settlement across the valley. Olson was Mrs. Derrit's right hand, without which the farm work would have been impossible. He was a bachelor, living in a lean-to beside the machinery shed, and coming to the house only for his meals, which he ate for the most part in silence.

Mrs. Derrit placed food on her kitchen table, and sat down before it. Her meal was frugal, not so much from necessity as from weariness. She ate and drank mechanically, then arose, washed her few dishes and put them away, wiped her table and spread a colored cloth upon it. The light from the lamp fell gently on its patterns. She drew the rocker to the table and sat down. The little clock on the shelf said only six o'clock. It was three hours until bedtime, and who could say how long until morning?

Her little hands found work to do—mending for Olson. For a while her needle darted back and forth, trailing a little thread of silver light in the glow from the lamp; then presently work and needle rested in her lap. For was not this Christmas Eve? And down through memory came a procession of these gracious anniversaries, marking the birth of the Child, and sacred to children everywhere in

Then Presently Work and Needle Rested in Her Lap.

Christendom. In a moment or two Mrs. Derrit was no longer seated in her little cabin in the vast foothill valley, but was back in that home down East where little David had first entered her life. What Christmas Eves were those! What laughter and shrieks of delight when Big Dave, her husband, with his great fur coat with the red sash and whiskers of cotton batting burst through the door, being unable to accommodate his bulky form to the chimney after the tradition of Santa Claus! What feasting and fun, and, after little David had grown tired of play, what hours of domestic rapture linking husband and wife! It all seemed now so strange and unreal, as though it had been part of some previous incarnation.

Down the years came memory. David was now a healthy lad. Troublesome, sometimes, but never bad; just overflowing with that boyishness which no mother quite understands and none would ever relinquish.

Then the breaking of the old home ties and the plunge into the great West. Young Dave had taken to the new land even more readily than did his father. How he grew! How he loved to show his strength in the field, his skill in the corral! How soon his mother found she had no boy at all, but two grown men in her household!

And then that sad, sad night when Dave, his father, had been brought home by neighbors who found him in the road. Just at the crossing of the creek, in the lower end of the farm, it was. No one ever knew how it happened, but all supposed he had slipped from his wagon as it lurched on the prairie trail. It was piled high with wood from the valley; perhaps he had been clambering down to steady the load as it lurched, and slipped under the great rear wheel. There was frost in the earth, and a little snow on it; she remembered there was still snow on his face when they laid him in the room. . . .

David had stood by her for two years, but his infatuation for the Ransom girl had been his undoing. They would have nothing of the farm, after that. David could earn big wages in a distant city, working in an automobile factory, where there were no cows to milk and no chores to do after supper. So they had gone. She had blessed them—what else could a mother do?—and had settled down to her farm and her memories.

For some time glowing letters came back from David, and from his wife, whom Mrs. Derrit still thought of as

The Winding Road Along Which They Brought Him.

the Ransom girl. She held no spite, did Mrs. Derrit, but if it hadn't been for the Ransom girl—! Then after a while the letters fell off, until they almost stopped. It was two months now since she had heard from David. Not even a letter for Christmas!

Mrs. Derrit arose and went to her window. The moon was now up, flooding the great shoulders and sides of the valley with light, just as it had done that night when they brought Dave home to her, with the little patch of snow still on his cheek. There was snow tonight, too, just a light sifting of it as there had been then. . . . It would be cold and frozen down by the creek. For a while she had avoided the spot, but afterwards it had a fascination for her. Often, on cold moonlight nights, she had walked as far. She wondered if Dave—her Dave—knew? Perhaps. Who could say that even tonight, this Christmas eve, he was watching, waiting somewhere, wondering if she still remembered? Remember? Aye, for ever and ever!

She drew on a shawl. It could not be so very cold, the night was so bright, the moonlight so soft against the edge of the hills. The door creaked as she opened it; there was frost on the hinges, but her heart was warm; she was going to do her vigil for Dave. Down the winding road she went; the road along which they had brought him home. How warm it was! Or was it cold? Cold and warmth are so much alike. How the road stretched on and on! It never had seemed so far. And the moon—why was the moon growing dark, when it had not yet reached the zenith? And what made it sway like that?

Ah, here was the spot, the very spot. She sat down on the ground. This was where they found him. Her hands touched the snow, but it was not cold. Nothing was cold. All was warm. But the moon had gone out. Why had the moon gone out? . . . Ah, there he was! Dave! She felt his arms about her; she felt his kiss on her lips. There was snow on his cheek! . . .

* * * * * * *

"Don't you know me, mother? Don't you know me?" he was saying, as she opened her eyes. She was in her room, there was no doubt about that. Yes, it was her room; through the open door she could see the cream separator in the kitchen. But who was that woman, that— Why, it was the Ransom girl! And what was she carrying? She was bringing it to her; why was she bringing it to her? And David, kneeling beside her bed?

"We brought you another little David, for Christmas, mother," the Ransom girl was saying, and before Mrs. Derrit knew it a little face was pressed against hers, and suddenly her hard, dry cheeks were wet. "David, David," she cried. "Your Grandpa's David!"

Big David's hand was in hers.

"You found me on the road, David?" she asked, after a while.

"Yes," he answered, gently. "Just—just where—it happened."

Her eyes were big and bright. "I knew he would come," she said. "But I didn't know he would bring you, and wee David, and—and the Ransom girl!"

"Well, here we are," the Ransom girl rejoined. "The city is all right for a while, but when a man has a wife, and a family, it's back to the farm! We were keeping it a secret from you, just for—just for Christmas, you know!"

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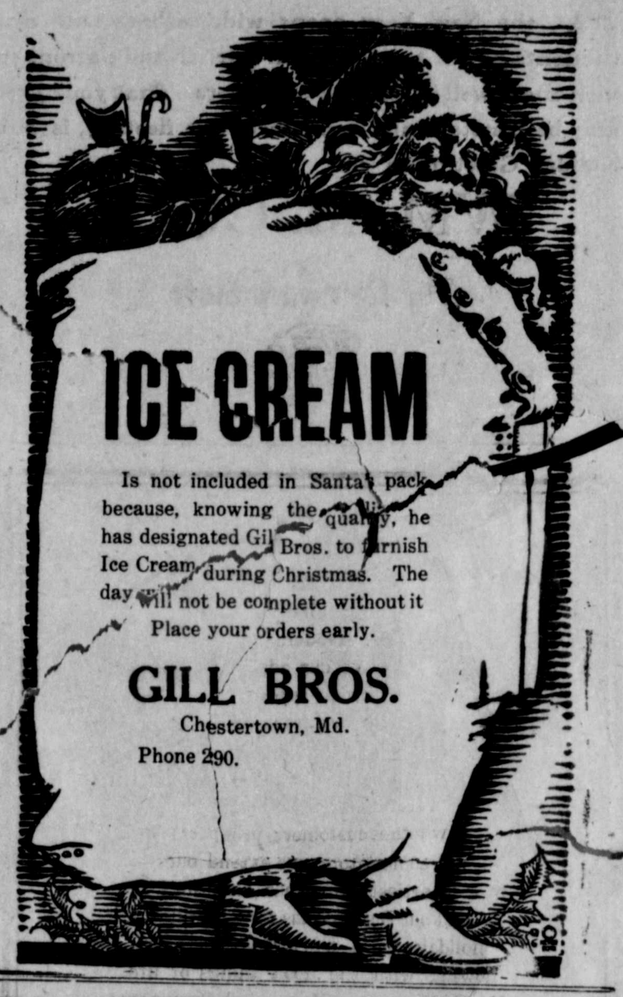

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Stewart-Warner Radio Wins Two Grand Prizes in Italian Contests

In Italy, land of Marconi, inventor of radio's predecessor, the wireless telegraph, an American built receiver, has twice carried off the honors in competition with every leading European and American brand. The Grand Prize at both the Gonzaga and Padova Fairs was awarded to a well-known radio, built in the United States, in a contest judged on the basis of performance and beauty.

An indication of the extreme values in radio, available to American buyers, is the fact that this receiver, manufactured by the Stewart-Warner Speedometer Corporation, of Chicago, sells in the United States for a nominal price, while many of the competitive European makes entered in the contests sell for extremely high prices.

Unquestionably the American radio fan is fortunate. In America, the land of free speech and free radio programs, a tax on radio sets is unknown. But in many countries across the Atlantic, radio listeners must pay an annual fee to their governments for the support of broadcasting.

In addition, the United States has not only outdistanced European nations with an overwhelming number of excellent broadcasting stations—but in the production of finer receiving equipment, selling at prices that, to our Continental cousins, would seem ridiculously low.

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