**Grandmas Christmas gifts**

Grandma Burns sat knitting busily in the sun one bright morning the week before Christmas. The snow lay deep, and the hard crust glistened like silver. All at once she heard little sighs of grief outside her door. When she opened it there sat Peter and Jimmy Rice, two very poor little boys, with their faces in their hands; and they were crying.

"My patience!" cried grandma. "What can be the matter with two bright little boys this sunny morning?"

"We don't have no good times," sighed little Peter.

"We can't slide. We haven't any sleds," whimpered Jimmy.

"Why, of course boys can't have a good time without sleds," said grandma, cheerily. "Let us look about and see if we can't find something." And grandma's cap-border bobbed behind barrels and boxes in the shed and all among the cobwebs in the garret; but nothing could be found suitable.

"Hum! I do believe this would do for little Pete;" and the dear old lady drew a large, pressed-tin pan off the top shelf in the pantry. A long, smooth butter-tray was found for Jimmy. Grandma shook her cap-border with laughter to see them skim over the hard crust in their queer sleds. And the boys shouted and swung their hands as they flew past the window.

"I do expect they'll wear 'em about through," murmured grandma; "but boys must slide,—that's certain."

And the pan was scoured as bright as a new silver dollar and the red paint was all gone off the wooden tray when Peter and Jimmy brought their sleds back.

Grandma knitted faster than ever all that day, and her face was bright with smiles. She was planning something. She went to see Job Easter that night. He promised to make two small sleds for the pair of socks she was knitting.

When the sleds were finished she dyed them red and drew a yellow horse upon each one. Grandma called them horses, but no one would have suspected it. Then the night before Christmas she drew on her great socks over her shoes to keep her from slipping, put on her hood and cloak, and dragged the little sleds over to Peter and Timmy's house.

She hitched them to the door-latch, and went home laughing all the way.

**Christmas Stories: 'Twas the Night Before Christmas**

’Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of sugarplums danced in their heads.

And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap, had just settled our brains, for a long winter’s nap.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open the shutter, and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow, gave a luster of midday to objects below.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer.

With a little old driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a minute it must be Saint Nick!

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, and he whistled and shouted and called them by name.

“Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen! On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner, and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall, now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!”

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, when they meet with an obstacle mount to the sky.

So, up to the housetop the coursers they flew, with a sleigh full of toys -- and Saint Nicholas, too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof, the prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head and was turning around, down the chimney Saint Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot, and his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.

A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, and he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes, how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry.

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow, and the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, and the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath.

He had a broad face and a little round belly, that shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.

He was chubby and plump -- a right jolly old elf, and I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.

A wink of his eye, and a twist of his head, soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, and filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk.

And laying a finger aside of his nose, and giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, and away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, ere they drove out of sight, “Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night.”

**Papa Panov’s special Christmas**

This story is about Papa Panov, who is an elderly cobbler living alone in a tiny village of Russia. His wife is dead, and his sons and daughters are all grown up, living far away from his home. It’s Christmas time and since his wife is dead, he sits alone and sad in his little shop. He decides to read the Bible and the story of the birth of Jesus.

He reads the Christmas story but reading it continuously, he feels tired. The further he reads, the sleeping he becomes. Finally, he falls asleep and has a dream. In his dream, he notices a man in his room; he realises that it is Jesus. The Lord tells him that he can come and visit him the next day. However, Jesus would not reveal his identity to him. The next day is Christmas. Papa Panov wakes up early and is excited about meeting the Lord in person.

He notices an old sweeper cleaning the street diligently, despite the cold weather. Touched by his hard work, Papa Panov calls out to him and offers him a hot cup of coffee with a plateful of cookies. Later on, he notices a young mother with her baby in a sad mood, looking dejected with life in general. He calls them and shares his lunch with them. While they wait, he crafts a beautiful pair of tiny shoes for the baby.

The day passes quickly, but there is no sight of the holy visitor whom he was so eager to meet. Beggars came and went too, and Papa Panov fed them without having second thoughts. As the night approaches, he returns home, disappointed that Jesus did not come to meet him. Just as he was about to say that it was only a dream, he heard Jesus’s voice. “I did come to meet you,” said Jesus. Jesus had visited him in the guise of every person whom Papa Panov helped, right from the sweeper to the young mother to the beggars! Papa Panov is very happy that Jesus came to visit him after all.

**Santa Claus does not forget**

This story is about a little boy who lives with his father and mother. He is kind and obedient and shares all his toys with his friends. However, he has one fault: he always forgets to carry out errands and other important work he is told to do. Every time he is is asked to do something and later questioned, he has one answer, “I forgot.” If he is sent to the tailor to remind him of an urgent alteration, he would forget to tell the tailor about it. If he is given money to pay the electricity bill, his mother would find the money and the bill in his pocket that night. The reason for not doing a particular job remains the same. You guessed it right – “I forgot.”

His parents are worried that this habit of forgetting to do things would spill over into his adult life too, which would prove to be difficult for him. They decide to do something about it to make him remember things. Christmas was nearing, and like other children, he also got busy preparing notes for Santa, asking for his favourite things. His mother says, “Santa may forget to bring those things for you.” But the little boy is sure that Santa wouldn’t as he would put them in his stockings so he wouldn’t miss the list.

On Christmas morning, he wakes up early and rushes to check his stockings, pretty sure that Santa Claus would have delivered all that he wanted. His mother knew what was going to happen and keep away from him. The boy stands in front of his mother holding a long list of all the errands he was asked to run during the past year. At the end of the list, in bold letters was written, “I FORGOT.”

The little boy is heartbroken and drags himself to visit his grandfather with the rest of his family. On his grandfather’s Christmas tree, the boy finds all the things he had wished for! Though he does not change immediately, his mother reminds him when things got out of hand – “Santa Claus does not forget!” He slowly understood why it is so important to remember one’s duties and responsibilities in life.

**Santa Claus’s Letter**

Christmas was coming. Jamie and Ted had already begun to write long letters to Santa Claus. But one thing was rather queer: both boys asked him for the same things.

Each little letter ended with - "Just like Brother's."

They agreed to ask for only one sled. They would rather ride together. Now was not this very sweet and loving?
One night, after they had gone to bed, Jamie said, "Ted, if Santa Claus brings us skates, Jim can teach us how to use them."

"Oh, yes; and if we get fur mittens it will be such fun to make a fort."

"And a snowman," Jamie answered.

Ted went oh: "I'll always ride the sled down a hill, and you can ride it up."

"I guess you won't," Jamie said, speaking loudly.
"Why not?" Ted asked.

"Because it'll be as much my sled as yours."

"Yes, of course," Ted replied; "but I chose it first."

"You are a selfish boy!" said Jamie.

"Well, then, so are you!"

"I don't care. I won't sleep with you. I'll ask mamma if I can't have the first pick; I'm the biggest," roared Jamie, bounding out of bed.

"You're a big, cross cry baby," Ted shouted, jumping out after his brother.

Away ran Jamie to mamma, with Ted at his heels. Both were angry. Both talked at once.

Mamma was grieved. Her dear little boys had never been so unkind to each other before. She kissed their hot faces and stroked their pretty hair. She told them how their naughty words hurt her. She showed them how displeased God was to see two little brothers quarrel.

That night they went to sleep in each other's arms, full of love and forgiveness.

Christmas morning came at last. Very early the boys crept out of bed, just to "feel" their stockings.

Papa heard them, and, remembering that he was once a boy lighted the gas.

Each little red stocking was full from toe to top. Boxes and paper parcels were piled around them. Such shouting! Such a good time! It seemed as if all their letters had been answered.

Suddenly Jamie cried, "O Ted, here's a letter!"

They put their little heads together, and with papa's help spelled this out:

*"My dear Boys,—No sled this year. It quarrelled so I was afraid to bring it. I dropped it off the load about a week ago. Get ready for it next year. Merry Christmas! "*SANTA CLAUS

**The Carol Singers**

There are four penguins named Micky, Fred, Rob and Eve who are fond of singing Christmas carols before the inhabitants of the ice pack, where they live. Every time they sang, they received a golden star which they put up on their Christmas tree. One Christmas eve, Micky catches a terrible cold and starts sneezing. He tells his fellow singers that they will have to sing without him that year as he is unwell. “No, that’s not possible,” said the other three. But they realise that the inhabitants of the ice pack looked forward to their performance every year and would be terribly disappointed if they didn’t sing.

The penguins decide to approach Doctor Lolo and ask to heal Micky soon. The doctor thinks for a while and tells them that the only way to get Micky better was by using the golden seaweed which could be found in the Indian Ocean. The penguins realise that the Indian Ocean is far away from them and that it would not be possible for them to get the seaweed in such a short time. Fred is tearful, and his tears fell in the water below, which Pincho, an ice fish, feels on his body. He swims up to the penguins and asks them the reason for their sadness.

On hearing their problem, Pincho says, “Wait! If it is the Indian Ocean, I have an idea.” He has friends and family spread across all the great seas of the world and begins to send messages to them. The message is passed on from one fish to another, across the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, before finally reaching the butterflyfish in the Indian Ocean. The butterflyfish looks for the golden seaweed, high and low. When he finally finds it, he passes it across till it reaches Pincho. The penguins are overjoyed, and they ask the doctor to prepare the medicine from it. Micky drinks the medicine in one gulp and his original voice returns in a jiffy. The Christmas carol show is a hit, and the penguins tell everyone how Pincho helped them in finding the golden seaweed.

**The Gift of Magi**

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. To-morrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honour of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 Bat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out of the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she cluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One Eight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick" said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 78 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please, God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was with out gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet, even after the hardest mental labour.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise-shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men-who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

**The story of the birth of Jesus**

Christmas is the perfect occasion to narrate the story of the birth of Lord Jesus. Here goes the story. A young woman named Mary lived in a town called Nazareth and was engaged to a man called Joseph. One night, God sent an angel named Gabriel to visit Mary. The angel said to Mary, “God is extremely pleased with you and you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a baby boy. Name him Jesus for he shall be God’s own son.” Mary was afraid but believed in God and trusted that all would be well. The angel told Mary to live with her cousin Elizabeth and her husband Zachariah as they would soon be the parents of a child who would prepare the way for Jesus. Mary lived with her cousin for three months then returned to Nazareth.

Meanwhile, Joseph was worried about Mary having a child before they get married, but an angel appeared in his dream and told him that Mary would give birth to the Son of God. He also told him not to be afraid and take Mary as his lawfully wedded wife. Jesus means Saviour and the baby would indeed be a saviour for his people. Joseph woke up from his dream and the next day Joseph and Mary got married.

Sometime later, Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, which was a long way from Nazareth. Mary’s baby was soon to arrive and hence they travelled at a slow speed. When they reached Bethlehem, they had no place to stay as all the inns and lodgings were occupied by other people. The couple took refuge in a stable with cows, goats and horses, and the same night Jesus was born. Jesus was put in the manger (a place where the animals ate from) after he was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes.

On the outskirts of Bethlehem, shepherds who were tending to their sheep saw an angel appear before them. The angel told them, “Your saviour was born in Bethlehem today. He is lying in a manger.” When the shepherds rushed back, they found Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus in the stable, and were surprised and happy.

At the time of Jesus’s birth, a bright new star appeared in the sky. There were three wise men in a faraway country who knew that the arrival of Jesus was a sign of the arrival of a great king and they rushed to find him. King Herod heard that the wise men were looking for the great new king who he knew would take his place. King Herod planned to kill the baby but no one knew about it yet.

The three wise men followed the bright star until they came to the stable where the happy family lived. They showered him with gifts and worshipped the Son of God. They also knew that the king was evil and hence did not inform him of the location where baby Jesus was. Joseph was warned by an angel in his dream that King Herod would search for Jesus in order to kill him, so it was better if they went to Egypt. This was where they lived until the evil King died. As Herod couldn’t find Jesus, he ordered all the young children in Bethlehem to be killed.

**What happened to Christmas eve**

It was Christmas Eve and the frost fairies were busy getting ready for Christmas Day. First of all they spread the loveliest white snow carpet over the rough, bare ground; then they hung the bushes and trees with icicles that flashed like diamonds in the moonlight. Later on, they planned to draw beautiful frost pictures on the window panes, to surprise the little children in the morning.

The stars shone brightly and the moon sent floods of light in every nook and corner. How could any one think of sleeping when there was such a glory outside!

Jessie and Fred had gone to bed very early so they might be the first to shout "Merry Christmas!" but their eyes would not stay shut.

"Oh dear! It must be 'most morning," said Fred; "let us creep softly down stairs and maybe we'll catch Santa Claus before he rides off."

Hand in hand they tiptoed to the dining-room and peeped out the big window - surely, surely, that was something climbing up the roof of cousin Nellie's house; it must be old Santa. Fred gave a chuckle of delight; to be sure the reindeer were very queer looking objects, and the sleigh such a funny shape, but the children were satisfied.

The old fir tree, whose high branches almost touched the roof, knew all about those shadows, but it was so old no one could ever understand a word of the many tales it told.

"There's something scratching on the door," whispered Jessie; but it was only a mouse, who had sniffed the delightful odors of the Christmas goodies and was trying his best to find a way into the pantry and test them with his sharp teeth.

"Come," said Jessie, "we'll turn to icicles if we stay here much, longer"; so up-stairs they quickly scampered.

Papa had been to town on an errand, so it was quite late when he came home. As he was hunting in his pockets for his key, he heard a pitiful cry, and looking down he saw a big, white cat carrying a tiny kitten in her mouth.

"Poor thing," said papa, "you shall come inside till morning."

Santa Claus had been there with the nicest wagon for Fred and a warm, seal-skin cap that lay right in the middle of it. When papa left the room, puss and her kitty were curled up comfortably on the rug singing their sleepy song.

The sun was shining brightly in the dining-room window when Jessie and Fred made their appearance; then Fred just laughed with delight, for right in the crown of his new cap lay the cutest white kitten, with big, blue eyes and wee pink nose, while standing close by as if to guard her darling from danger, was good old mother puss.

"I never had a live Christmas present before," said Fred, "now I know Santa Claus read the letter I threw up the chimney because I told him to bring me a kitten and here it is."

Papa smiled and looked at mamma, and then everybody said "Merry Christmas" at once.