

THE REWARD

Large flakes of downy snow were lazily sailing earthward as John McKay, his day's work over, emerged from the factory, and walked briskly up the street towards his home. It was no mansion, to be sure, but in it were all he owned in the world,—a tender, gentle wife, and a bright young boy of six years; as he walked he fell into thinking of them.

"I wish I could afford to give "Mary" something nice for Christmas," he mused, "and Frank, too. He expects Santa Claus to bring him a train. Poor child! I don't know,—I will do my best, anyway, and trust in God; he will"

His reflections were cut short by the shrill cry of a child. He had reached the railroad crossing, and, as he looked up to see whence the cry had come, he beheld a child on the track in the full glare of the head-light of an approaching train, struggling vainly to disengage her foot from between the rails at the switch.

He paused but for a second, then bounded forward to the side of the child; with a skilful twist he wrenched her foot free, and stepped back from the track, the child in his arms, just as the big train thundered past.

A crowd of spectators soon surrounded him, and remarked his bravery; a woman forced her way through the crowd and confronted McKay who still held the child.

"What has happened to my ward? Is she hurt? Lucy, you naughty child, why did you run away from me?"

McKay spoke reassuringly to the trembling child, and turned to the woman.

"Madame, the child has narrowly avoided an accident, and is weak from fright. If her home is handy, I shall carry her there, otherwise we shall take a taxi; I presume you are her governess?"

"Yes, I am. She slipped away from me while I was talking to a friend; her home is not far away, and you may carry her there; I will direct you."

"Let us hurry then," he said, and the crowd gave way to let them pass.

She led him up the street for some distance, to the residential section, and stopped in front of a large home. Her ring was immediately answered by a butler, who ushered them into a beautifully furnished sitting room; the maid then bade McKay wait, and left the room with the child.

After some moments the door was opened, and a stately man of middle age entered; he advanced toward McKay and extended his hand.

"Miss Williams has just informed me of your brave act in rescuing my child's life. I assure you that I will not forget your bravery. It is not Judge Cameron's way to let services go unrequited. Your name is—"

"John McKay, sir. But I beg of you not to overvalue what I have done. Anyone in my position would have done the same. Besides I have a child of my own, and I felt it my duty to save yours."

"I understand your feelings, but I cannot overlook the fact that you risked your life in so doing. Believe me I will not forget it, but will endeavour in some means to repay you."

"I thank you for your kindness; that is enough to repay me sufficiently. I beg you to excuse me now, as my wife is expecting me home."

"Certainly, if you insist; otherwise I would like to have you sup with me to-night, and meet my wife and family. You will leave your address?"

McKay left his address and started once more for home where his wife was anxiously awaiting his arrival. Frank was busily engaged in writing to "Santy" when his father entered.

"John dear, what has kept you so late? Supper is waiting, and Frank says he is awfully hungry."

They were soon seated at the table, and, as they ate their frugal meal, John told the story of the rescue and his visit to the judge's house.

"He is indeed a very fine man, and has a beautiful home," he concluded.

"I know Bernie Cameron," commented Frank. "He says he has two big trains; did you see them Daddy?"

"No Frank, I saw neither Bernie nor his trains," responded the father.

"He told me that he was going to ask Santy for another one bigger'n the others,—I wish I had even one. Daddy, how is it that Santy brings him everything and don't bring me much? I don't think it's fair."

"Hush Frank! you shouldn't say that. Perhaps you are not quite as good as Bernie. At any rate, Santy will bring you what he thinks best."

"I suppose so, but I wish he would bring me a train."

"Perhaps he will, too, Frank, if you are very good. Now take your Catechism and study it a little bit before you go to bed."

When the supper was cleared away and Frank in bed, the husband and wife sat talking about their Christmas prospects; they were not very bright to be sure, but John spoke hopefully.

"Even though we haven't much, Mary, we have health and shelter to be thankful for; I have my week's wages, and I must make them go as far as I can, but the rent must come out of that. I should like to get Frank a new pair of boots—and—I hope Santa will bring him his train."

"Poor child!" sighed the mother, "Do try and get it, John, if you can at all; he has been awfully good lately."

Before he retired that night, John knelt and prayed that God would bless his little family and make their Christmas peaceful and happy.

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The next day was the vigil of Christmas, and as John had no work, he stayed at home, attending to his few Christmas supplies in the afternoon.

The dinner was over and Frank gone out to play, when a delivery wagon drew up before the door. A man alighted

and knocked; John opened the door and was handed a letter addressed to himself. He broke the seal and read:

Dear Sir:—

Since you appeared unwilling to accept any recompense for your brave deed last evening, I beg you to accept the enclosed, with the accompanying accessories, as a Christmas gift from your grateful friend.

GEORGE CAMERON.

P. S. —Call at my office Monday. I have a good position open for you.

G. C.

He read the letter with deep feelings of gratitude, then looking at the enclosed slip, found it to be a check for one hundred dollars.

“This is indeed a surprise; I do not deserve all this,” he murmured.

“Where will I put these parcels, Sir?” asked the driver.

McKay directed him to the porch at the rear of the house, and the provisions were soon stored away. Among the good things were all the requirements for a Christmas dinner, articles of clothing, and some toys for Frank, including a handsome train. Mrs McKay looked at all with tears of gratitude.

“God is indeed good to us” she said. “We can now have a very happy Christmas. All our wants are filled, and John has the promise of a good position. Poor John, I am so glad for him.

That night when Frank had hung up his stocking with much ceremony, and had pinned to it a note to Santa, his parents smiled contentedly at one another. Frank would indeed get his train—and more, this Christmas.