

The O'Donnell Index

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Martha Banning Thomas

The Biggs family were holding a consultation. There were nine of them, counting father and mother, and they sat in a somewhat solemn sanctitude before an open fire.

"The whole truth of the matter is," said Father Biggs, "that we have no money to spend on Christmas. The amount I saved has been used to pay for Danny's hospital bills. There is coal to buy this month and new shingles to put on the roof unless we all want to drown when we have rain."

Mother Biggs glanced wistfully around the circle of children. It was hard. "Oh, well," said Eliza tossing her black, short curls, "who cares? We're all well now," she looked at Danny who smiled heavily back, "and we can rig up something without money. Don't let's look like a row of tombstones."

This made them laugh—even mother. And next day every Biggs tried valiantly to behave as if stockings were going to be filled on Christmas morning with more gifts than they knew what to do with.

But Danny was particularly troubled. It was because of his sickness that the rest of the family were being deprived of their rightful presents. He felt that it was up to him to do something. He must contrive to get eight gifts by hook or crook. But how? He thought about it steadily for five hours.

"Danny, you haven't taken your boat in yet from your holiday gift," said Mrs. Biggs at a noon lunch. "Soon it will be frozen in the water. You'd better drag it up ashore this afternoon. Turn it over. I saved a big piece of old canvas you can cover it with. You'd miss having that row-boat next summer if it got rusty now."

Danny promised he would see about it. Mrs. Biggs went to the church sewing society at two o'clock. Several other Biggises disappeared on various errands. Danny walked across the fields to hunt his boat in the little stream which flowed out of the Connecticut river.

It was a cold, raw afternoon. A fine rain drizzled down. Danny stubbed along over the rough ground still thinking, not of his boat, but presents—and how to get some. As he neared the spot where his row boat was tied his eye lighted up on a large wooden box. It was tilted up on sand and frozen in the mud. It was filled with something—small objects seemed to be bursting out of the cracks.

Danny hurried forward. He leaned over the box. He poked a finger inside a large crack. The box was partly ripped apart. Some of the boards were missing. It was water soaked. Danny's finger came in contact with other, pasteboard boxes of all sizes. "It wonder what this is and where it came from?" he said aloud.

There was an address in heavy black print on the top. Danny read it. It was of some shipping firm in town in Vermont. Slowly the boy thought it all out. "This box must have been washed away in the terrible flood. It had floated two hundred miles down the Connecticut river and had been cast up by the tide on the beach of the inland river. It was here

been here for some time. Danny managed to draw out one small box. The colors were faded and blotched. But on lifting the cover Danny discovered a neat array of toilet articles. They were hardly damaged, being for the most part in metal cans and tubes. Talcum powder! Toothpaste! Shaving soap! Cold cream! Vanishing cream! Face powder in gold boxes!

Danny felt weak with excitement. He knew now where his Christmas presents were coming from. He also knew he had a perfect right to take these things, because they were unclaimed, damaged goods—and he was the finder!

He ran home as fast as his legs would carry him. He must let one other person into the secret, to help carry the things home. They must work fast before the rest of the family returned.

He found Eliza looking blue and darning socks beside the fire. In no time they were both scudding down across the fields. They spent a breathless afternoon tugging a clothes basket full of the toilet articles back to the house. Eliza worked like a Trojan. Her hands flew; she had more ideas than you could shake a stick at, and she stopped three times to powder her nose out of a little gold-on-box!

Three times they made trips from the house down to the box beached on the shore. They were worn out and completely happy. They hid the treasures in the woodshed. . . . and Mrs. Biggs said she had never seen Danny look so dirty in his life. Eliza threw him a glance and burst into laughter, but they could get nothing out of her. She was mum as an oyster! Christmas morning Danny and Eliza crept up every Biggs out of bed at six o'clock. They came sleepily downstairs, a little cross and shuffling in their slippers.

Danny and Eliza threw open the living-room doors. A row of bulging stockings hung from the mantel piece. A bright fire crackled on the hearth. A Christmas tree stood near by heavy with gifts.

Such squeals and grunts! Such laughter! Such an outburst to clasp a noble stocking in a surprised breast. Presents for every one. Presents every one needed and could use. Dozens and dozens of presents.

"We won't tell a single thing until every one has opened all their gifts," announced Danny, his eyes shining like stars. "I was the one who made you lose your Christmas because I was sick, and now I give it back to you!"

"Now son," said Father Biggs when the last string was untied, the last paper unwrapped. "Tell us how you did it!" So Danny, standing by the fire in his woolen pajamas with a box of talcum powder in one hand and a cake of soap in the other, related his experiences in finding the box. Eliza helped out when he ran out of breath. "The very merriest Christmas we have ever had!" said Mother Biggs and kissed Danny on the forehead. At this point several younger Biggises had to be restrained from a gay, ferocious battle of throwing talcum powder.

Christmas means friendship, the thought of the absent, and at least a momentary forgetting of ourselves.



EVERYONE was happy but Carrie, they said. All four of the others had come in the last two days before Christmas. A heavy snow had fallen and to remind them of old times Father Carson had met Harry and Esther at the station in the old bobbed. And Harry and Esther, in turn, had jingled merrily down after Frank and his wife and the new baby. Mr. and Mrs. Carson beamed at the children, home again. A yule log crackled in the fireplace. The old fashioned pantry almost bulged. Harry and Frank had brought a Christmas tree from down by the creek and Esther and Marion, Frank's wife, trimmed it.

Of course, poor Carrie had to be the last one brought. She'd wired them that she had to teach up to the last minute and wouldn't arrive until Christmas eve. "Poor Carrie," they said again. For Frank and Marion were so proud of the new baby, and Harry'd had a promotion. Esther was romantic with a beautiful diamond and a young man's very spinal picture. This was her senior year in college. She'd depended on Carrie for funds as each of the others had, but she couldn't

help patronizing Carrie a little in her mind. Poor drab Carrie with her eternally shabby clothes and her same old teaching job. "Did she ever have a fellow?" Marion asked Frank and Harry as they pulled on heavy overcoats before meeting the train. "Everyone reflected. "Once," Frank recalled, "the year she was in normal school, but he married somebody else."

Esther gazed casually at her ring and shrugged. "Poor dear," she murmured. "She has no idea of how to handle men. It requires much tact." The boys roared with laughter. "You leave Carrie alone!" they shouted as they crunched out to the sleigh.

Mrs. Carson came from the kitchen, cheeks flushed. "Girls," she said, "Carrie's always been the family backbone. Let's be specially nice to her this Christmas. I don't think we ought to brag to her about our own good fortunes. Don't, above all things, let her see that we feel sorry for her."

The girls agreed. "Especially Esther's engagement. That'll make her more lonesome, poor thing," said Marion. But Carrie was radiant when she came in. "Merry Christmas, folks!" she called, kissing each of them. "Why, Carrie?" they gasped. She had a new dress, too.

"Am I not festive?" she said, but noticeably she would not tell them until supper time. "I've had a talk with the principal. You're all through school, now, and I'm going to Europe next year! Oh, I've always wanted



to!" They'd never seen her so happy. Esther and Marion forced descension from their congratulations. "Poor dear," whispered Esther. "She's having to let these things take the place of the love she's starved for. I'm sure her gayer isn't real." But Carrie didn't hear.

John Grey called. He'd known the family always but they were surprised that he should come on Christmas eve. It took Harry to detect the

reason. "I believe he's here to see Carrie," he whispered to the astonished family. Carefully, each slipped away. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if she could land him—with all his money and—but she can't. She doesn't know how, poor thing, and he's been a bachelor too long to fall for a little drab mouse," they said.

John left at eleven and the family rushed in. "You sly lady," they all shouted, not believing themselves. "How does this happen?" Carrie smiled and then looked serious. "Oh, John wants me to marry him, but I don't want to marry. I want to go to Europe!"

"What? You turned him down?" Esther and Marion couldn't believe it. Carrie nodded. "I just happened onto him at a convention the first day I'd found for sure that I could go next year. I acted so ridiculously happy that I thought he'd be ashamed of me. Instead, he asked me to marry him, and he's been at it ever since."

Their Carrie with a chance to marry John Grey and turning it down! The family looked at each other in confusion. The phone rang. "Carrie!" said Father in bewilderment.

Fifteen minutes later, Carrie turned from the phone. "I've just decided to let John go to Europe with me," she said doubtfully, then looking at the clock, "Merry Christmas everybody!" (© 1928, Western Newspaper Union.)

Construction work between Olney and Seymour on the grade and drainage structure of Highway 24 will begin soon. The highway leaves Olney on Main street and follows the Gulf, Texas and Western Railroad tracks to the Archer County line on the north. The contract has been awarded for the part of the highway passing through Archer County.

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WHAT'S DOING IN WEST TEXAS

The ... was recently broken for ... \$52,500 Baptist Church of ... The church building will ...

An extension road improvement program has been started by the citizens of Plainview. Five city blocks have recently been ordered paved by the city council.

A summer resort that will make Del Rio known throughout the state and beyond the border of the state as a summer resort is the dream of citizens of that town who are planning to use the water backed ...

By order of the city council at Crosbyton, elm trees are being planted in the city park to replace locust trees that have died. The city square has been much improved by bermuda grass that was set out in the spring.

The West Texas Gas Company's main line has reached the city limits of Hereford and has been brought beyond the railroad tracks. The welding crew is only about a mile and a half from town, and Hereford's prospects for natural gas in the near future are bright.

No doubt addition to Alpine containing the busy lots of fifty foot frontage has been opened by Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Hamilton. Four new residences are under course of construction, all being of brick veneer construction and modern in every detail.

The new Wallace theatre at Level-land which recently celebrated its opening had a capacity crowd. The equipment of the theatre is unusually modern, having an electric amplifier for music. Everything from the ticket office to the electric sign is new.

The Chamber of Commerce at Dalhart has accomplished much constructive work this year, including the purchasing of a suitable site on which to build a \$80,000 hospital the sponsoring of the exhibit program, the marking of the federal highways, and obtaining eight hundred column inches of newspaper publicity.

The new \$75,000 viaduct at Las Cruces, N. M., which takes traffic on U. S. Highway 80 across the Santa Fe tracks was officially opened on December 22. The viaduct was made possible by federal aid, state and county funds, is an imposing structure and gives beauty as well as safety to the tourists.

Native pecan trees, in Sabinal, added to improved varieties five Pop years ago are now bearing a crop of Burkett, Halbert, Texas Prolific, and ...

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY ... V. O. KEY ... GIBSON AND MAY ... J. S. FRITZ ... BERRELL FARRINGTON

Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Graham spent Christmas in Ada, Oklahoma.

Mr. and Mrs. Glen P. Lee, of Marlow, Oklahoma, spent Christmas with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hal Singleton.

Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Shook and family spent Christmas with relatives at Iredale.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Welch spent Christmas at Fort Worth.

Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Hill of Dallas were the guests through the holidays of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Ray and Mr. E. M. Hebison. Mr. Hill is book-keeper for Murray Gin Co.

Mrs. M. C. Pemberton spent Christmas in Lampasas with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Brown Gilmore.

Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Palmer, Miss Irma D. Palmer and little Miss Yvonne Westmoreland spent the holidays with friends and relatives at Hamlin.

Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Tull spent Christmas with friends and relatives at Plainview.

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Veazey and little Wilda Gene Campbell spent Christmas with relatives at Hamlin.

Mr. and Mrs. Major H. Rodgers and little daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Sanderson and children were home for the holidays.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Debenport spent a happy Christmas, all of their children being home for the holidays.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Thomas and little daughter Pauline, spent Christmas with Mrs. Thomas' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wyatt.

WANT ADS

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Martin Line, who is now in Brownfield spent Christmas with his parents.

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Jack Veazey is home for the Christmas holidays.

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When the plaintive drone of "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" is sailing over the ether and out of the speakers of thousands of sets in the Southwest it is a pretty safe bet that L. A. "Peg" Moreland is at the business end of the microphone at WFAA, the Dallas News-Sears Roebuck station. "Peg," who has been dubbed the "Cowboy Bard" and the "Barnyard Tenor," sings of the cowpuncher and the cow country with a sincerity that bespeaks long association with the business of which he sings. Moreland regards the microphone as the campfire and the unseen radio audiences as his buddies circled around it after a hard day on the

range, and sings with an unconcerned with the knowledge that he is being heard and enjoyed in all parts of the country.

"Peg" is so called because of the wooden stump strapped to his right leg just below the knee. When asked where he acquired it he answers: "Waal, I got kinda tired punchin' cattle and thought I'd try herdin' box cars for a change. Got a job as a brakeman and locked horns with a fast ruttler one day that threw me. If I'd stayed breakin' broncs instead of brak'ing railroad trains I'd still have it. But that's all right, I've got another one anyway." And that's Peg's philosophy.

THE WHY of SUPERSTITIONS

By H. IRVING KING

GERANIUMS

THERE is a rather common belief in the rural districts of the United States that snakes will not go where geraniums are growing and geraniums growing in a window box will prevent flies from entering the window. This superstition attaches to the plants cultivated in gardens and as house plants, which are not geraniums at all, but belong to the genus pelargonium of South Africa. The magical qualities of this plant were transferred to it along with the name from the true geranium, the word geranium being a Greek word meaning crane's-bill, a name given to the true geranium because of the long, projecting beak of the seed capsule. In fact, crane's-bill is the common name for the true geranium.

Now the crane was for long ages a bird of mystery. At a certain season the crane disappeared and at a certain season he reappeared, always flying in a V shape. This mystery as to the crane's place and manner of breeding, and the weird dances they indulge in at the time of their love-making caused a wealth of mythology and folklore to grow up around them. It was not until 1833 that it was discovered that the crane sought the shores of the Arctic sea to lay its eggs and rear its young.

Among the ancients there was a belief that forms of plant life were in some cases transformed into forms of animal life. In the mystery which hung over the propagation of the crane the peculiar form of the seed-capsule of the geranium caused it to be looked upon with suspicion, and to the plant were assigned some of the mystic attributes which pertained to the crane which was known to be antagonistic to snakes and flies. When the pelargonium came to be called in popular parlance "geranium"—crane's bill—the superstition went with the name. This is a curious example of a superstition surviving by means of a name though the name is now given to an entirely different object from that by means of which the superstition had birth.

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PLANS FOR NEW SCIENCE BUILDING TO BE SUBMITTED

LUBBOCK, Texas, Jan.—Plans for the new science building at Texas Technological college will be submitted to a meeting of the board of regents in Fort Worth January 24. Details of the plans have been practically completed by the architects working in conjunction with college authorities.

It is hoped that construction may begin early this spring which would make completion of the building possible by next January 1. President Paul W. Horn and Business Manager E. W. Provence will attend the meeting.

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