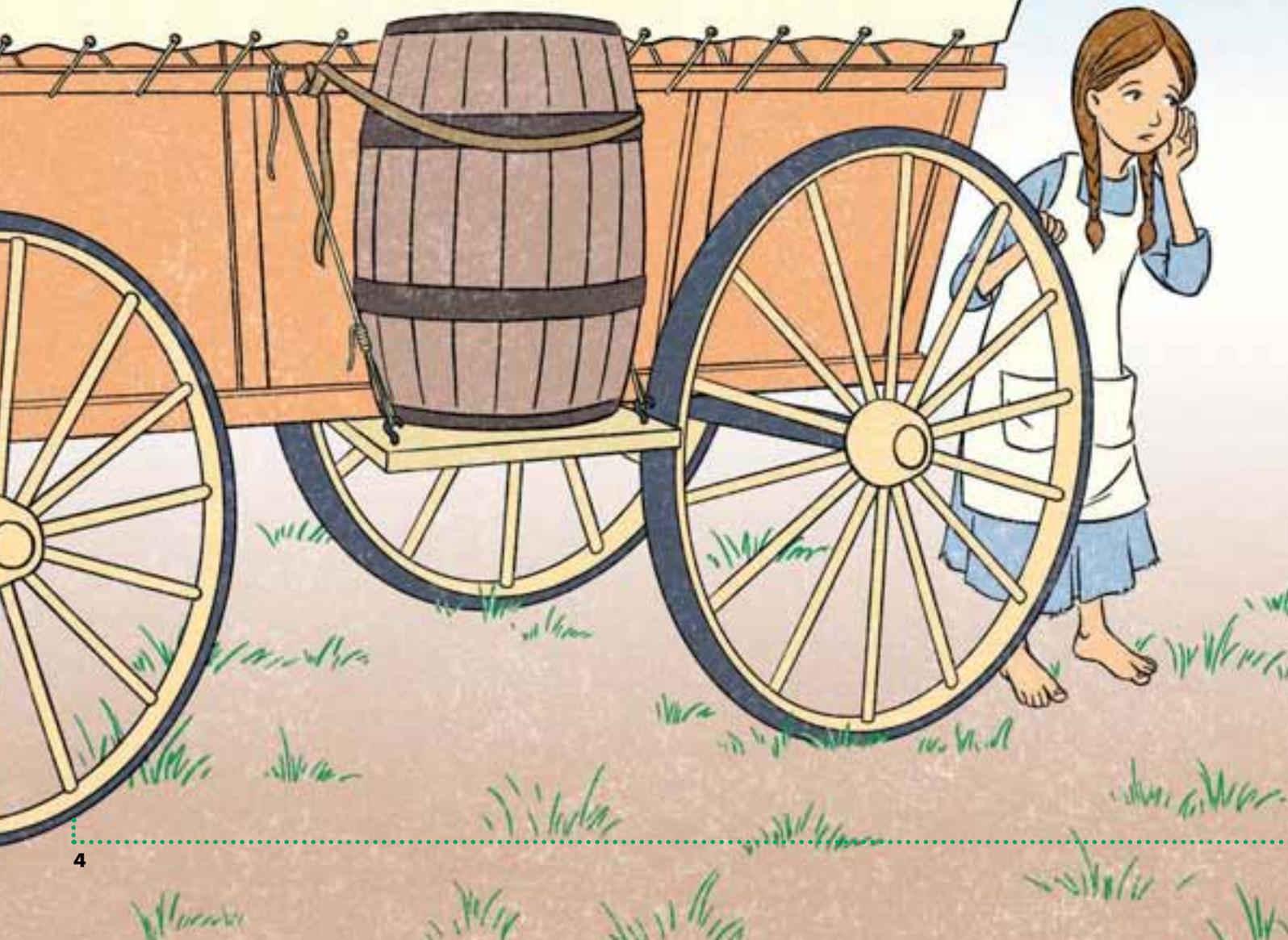


The Most Unusual, Quite CHRISTMAS

BY GERALDINE T. FIELDING
(Based on a true story)



Remarkable, One-of-a-Kind

STOCKING

Look up the following scriptures: 1 Corinthians 16:14, Mosiah 4:15, Alma 7:24. Circle the one you think fits the story best.

Rachel peeked around the wheel of the covered wagon and whispered, "Psst, Mary Ann!" When her friend did not respond, she spoke louder: "Mary Ann, come here!"

Mary Ann was sitting on an old quilt tending her baby brother. She looked up. "I can't come there," she said. "My mama told me not to move off this quilt until she was through cooking the biscuits."

Rachel made her way to the quilt, which was spread on the ground under a shady tree. They were traveling west with their families in a wagon train. They had left Missouri with everything they owned loaded into the wagons. Rachel was ready to cry as she sat down on the quilt.

"I've looked and looked," Rachel groaned. "It's gone!"

"What's gone?" Mary Ann asked.

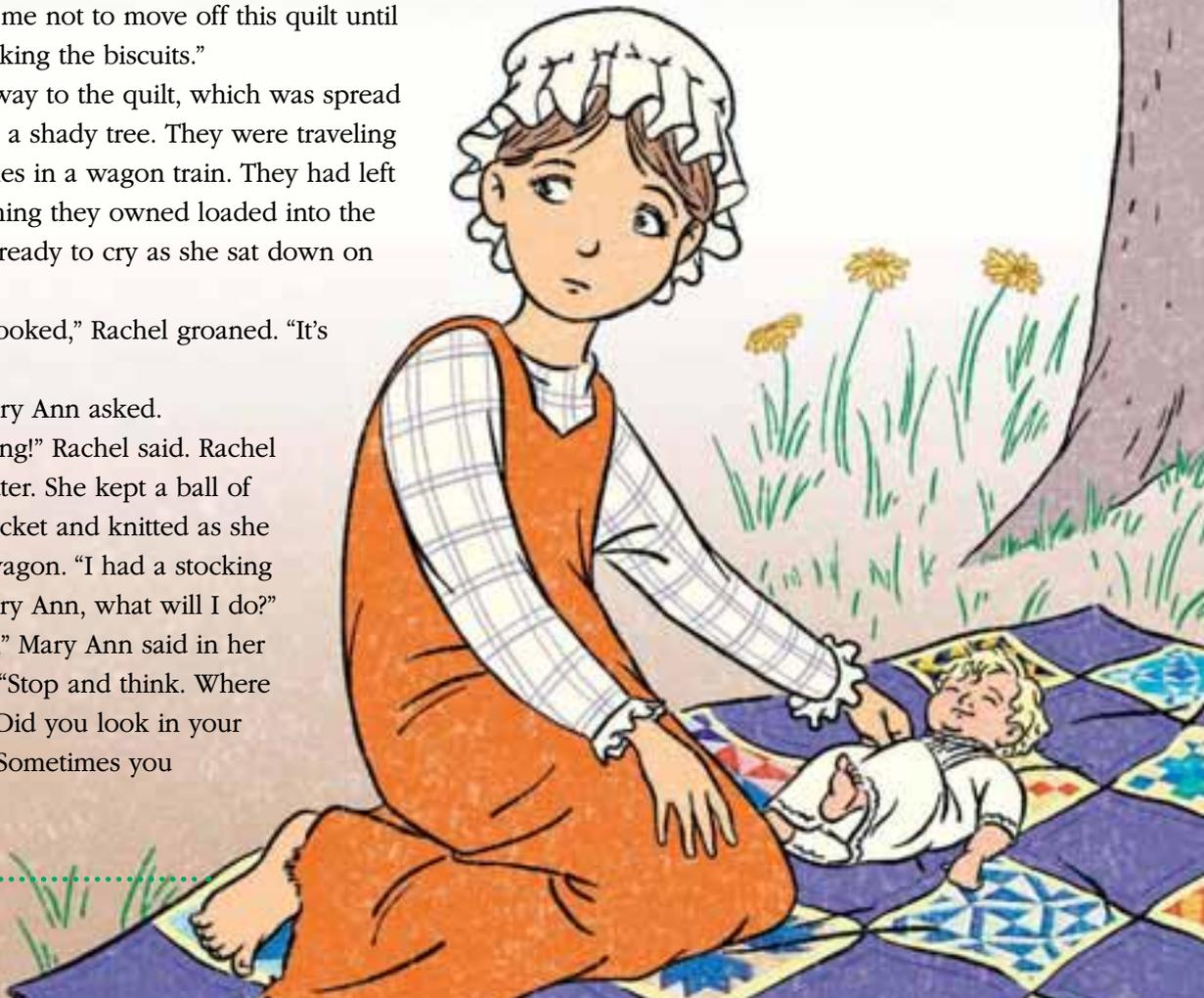
"I've lost my knitting!" Rachel said. Rachel was a very good knitter. She kept a ball of yarn in her apron pocket and knitted as she walked behind the wagon. "I had a stocking almost half done. Mary Ann, what will I do?"

"Now, calm down," Mary Ann said in her best motherly voice. "Stop and think. Where did you have it last? Did you look in your little wooden trunk? Sometimes you put it in there."

"I looked everywhere," Rachel said. "My last ball of yarn and my metal knitting needles are gone. My papa traded a whole pound of nails for those knitting needles in St. Louis. He'll never forgive me for losing them."

"I'm sure he will understand," Mary Ann said. "But I'll help you look in your wagon tonight after supper."

The girls searched the family's wagon together, but they didn't find Rachel's knitting.





“How can I tell Mama and Papa?” Rachel asked.

“Tell us what?” a voice asked.

The girls whirled around. There was Rachel’s father, standing next to the wagon checking the level of the water barrel.

“Oh, Papa,” Rachel sobbed. “I am so careless, and I have done such an awful thing. I’ve lost my metal knitting needles, my yarn, and a half-finished sock.”

Rachel’s father put his arms around her. “That is sad, but it’s not the end of the world.”

The following Saturday when the wagon train stopped for the night, it was announced that they would camp there until Tuesday to give the horses and oxen a chance to rest, and to let the men make repairs to the wagons and harnesses.

Rachel tried to keep busy. She helped her mother cook. She washed clothes in the nearby stream. She helped Mary Ann with her little brother. Rachel sighed. “If I had my knitting, I could have had that stocking almost finished,” she told her friend.

“Never mind,” Mary Ann said. “When we get to the Salt Lake Valley, you can get some new needles and yarn.”

“I hope so,” Rachel said sadly.

“Rachel, please come here,” her father called. “I have a surprise for you.” He was standing near the campfire with his hands behind his back. He brought out one hand. “I whittled a new pair of knitting needles for you,” he said. “They are not as sturdy as the metal ones, but I think they will do. They are made of alder wood, and they are quite

straight and smooth.”

Rachel squealed with delight. “Oh, Papa, they are beautiful!”

Then he brought out his other hand from behind his back. He was holding a ball of red yarn.

“Yarn! Where in the world did you get it?” Rachel asked.

“Sister Davis donated it. She said it was just taking up space in her sewing basket.” Her father smiled. “And here is a bit of green yarn that Sister Harper found, and a small ball of yellow from Sister Rogers.” He hugged his daughter. “Everyone felt so bad about you losing your knitting that they all found what scraps of yarn they could so that you could continue knitting the rest of the trip.”

"This is wonderful," Rachel said. "I must tell everyone how much I appreciate it." Rachel started off, but she turned around quickly and went back to her father. "Thank you so much for the knitting needles, Papa. I will take very good care of them." Rachel ran off to show all the ladies of the wagon train the wonderful gift she had received.

As they walked along with the wagons, Rachel knitted and knitted. At night, Rachel held her needles and yarn safely in her pocket. "I'm not taking any chances with this knitting," she told Mary Ann. "It is too special."

The day finally came when they looked down into the Salt Lake Valley. They were relieved to have arrived before winter. The nights were getting colder and they knew that snow would not be long in coming.

"Did you finish the sock?" Brother Carter asked Rachel as he led his horses down the steep mountain trail.

"I did," Rachel said. She pulled out her knitting to show him her finished work.

"Well, now, that is a most unusual stocking," he said.

"I know." Rachel laughed. "Papa called it 'quite remarkable.'"

The knitted stocking had wide and narrow stripes in many different colors. Rachel looked at it thoughtfully. "It's one of a kind," she said. "There will never be another like this. I am going to hang it on the mantle at Christmastime when we get a house built. It will be my most unusual, quite remarkable, one-of-a-kind Christmas stocking!"

"In any community of Saints, we all work to serve each other in the best way we know how."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Building a Community of Saints," Ensign, May 2001, 37.



Rachel enjoyed hanging up her special Christmas stocking for many years. It was a colorful and happy reminder of her trip across the plains, and the generosity and kindness of her fellow travelers. ●

