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XMAS PIE

All aboard the merry-go-round for a 9-minute trip round the world. First stop, ~~Americana~~ <sup>Florida</sup> - where instead of 12 below zero, folks spend Christmas 12 fathoms down. Just fancy! - turkey with seaweed stuffing - DEL-licious!

Coffee? - why naturally! You'd be thirsty with all that seawater around... ..

Well, I'll be a snook's uncle! I'll bet he even chews tobacco in his hip-bath...

One good thing about it, anyway - Mum never has to do any washing-up. Phew! - now we can breathe again. But not for long - as Little Nell fights for her life. It's Slippery Stanley the Mortgage Man up to his dastardly designs - eh, the dastard!

On the 8.18, the here can smell something burning. It could be Nell's cooking. It could be Slippery Stanley. It could be gunpowder. It was gunpowder. But there's more trouble ahead - for the here, this time. Oh betheration! - and he's just bought a new season ticket, too....

But don't worry, folks. It's just a gag - a crowd of movie-makers spending Christmas Day filming an old-style melodrama.

So Little Nell marries the engine-driver and promises never to go off the rails again. Gosh, but there's an awful mess for someone to clear up before supper.

Now let's pop over to Paris, where Katherine Dunham's Negre dancers are beating tom-toms and wagging tom-toms.

If you're feeling tired after all that, count the sheep and soon you'll be as fast asleep as a puppy after a piping-hot pasteurised pint.

But what's this? Only four-weeks-old, and directed into National Service already!

On your way, yes - you too! What a relief for mother to have such wonderfully well-behaved children. Lamb on the hoof - and now, in London, shoes on strings. These women are out shopping to buy a new pair of shoes.

But there's more to it than that. These shoes belong to the only girls in the world who never answer back - and always do what they're told. Yes - they're literally on a string. As puppets, they're peppets, showing off the latest in footwear.

Backstage, you've got to pull strings to get results in the marionette  
mannequin parade. They may be dumb, but what dell isn't?

Just a piece of wood, and a coat of paint. But isn't Christmas the  
time when make-believe makes everything real?

And so to a children's theatre in Germany where the season brings the  
best-loved show of all - the Punch and Judy. You may not sprechen deutsch  
but thrills and laughter speak a language of their own.

Of course it all comes out right. The Punch and Judy show always  
does. May all your worries end, just as happily-ever-after.