

CHRISTMAS DAY.

(From "The Watchman.")

A good old-fashioned Christmas, with the legs upon the hearth, the table filled with feasters, and the room a-roar 'th mirth, with the stockings crammed to bustin', and the merry-makers piled 'th snow— A good old-fashioned Christmas like we had so long ago!

THE ANGEL OF ST. GUDULE'S.

BY MARION HARLAND. PROLOGUE.

Mine is a tale of fashionable life, and in this day nothing could be more commonplace than the lives of people of fashion. The hero is, moreover, a commonplace man, and so unimagined that what really happened to him a year ago was the more remarkable.

Men who get rich fast, and whose wives are ambitious of social distinction, ought not to be surprised that those who construct and raise the ladder are sometimes ignored in the excitement of the ascent.

Yet M. Daniel Barber was disagreeably amazed when he shrank into the background of his money-bags. He had two talents. The one "bible" he did not tie in a napkin and hide in the earth was an aptitude for amassing wealth that deserved to rank with genius.

"Change your mind and go with me," she was saying, "There will be a vacant chair in the box. Or, maybe you expect company?" She laughed, and her sister answered hastily, "I expect no one, but it is just possible that—"

"I wish you were so dangerously fond of your own husband as to obey him. I'd persuade him to order you to go with me to the theatre, instead of moping here on the chance that an admirer may drop in. He doesn't stay at home. Why should you. I have my suspicions!" She laughed until there was hardly a crease between upper and lower lids.

don't know two more independent people; and I suppose perfect liberty has its advantages—even in married life."

Her brother-in-law attended her to her carriage, and as it rolled away good-looking after it with an irresolute expression not common to face or movement.

"What a fool that woman is!" he said behind his teeth. "She'd put me in the lunatic asylum in a week." As if still weighing the question to go or to stay in his mind, he walked slowly up the steps and let himself into the hall. His business appointment could wait. If Helen wanted him to remain at home he would send a telegram.

As he removed his hat his hair showed whitely on the temples behind which the brain drugged continually at his life task of million-making. Each year cut more sharply certain curves, bracketing nose and chin, that were not in his face at thirty. He had never been loquacious, but his taciturnity was becoming proverbial. Sisyphus probably wasted little time in exclamation, and baroque while "up the hill he heaved a huge round stone."

In the intervals of strain and lift he had many thoughts to-day that were irrelevant and foreign to daily toil. In a household where there are no children, Christmas giving is short and usually dull work. Mr. Barber had paid one visit to a jeweller's and another to a modish carriage-maker's shop on his wife's behalf. She had, without doubt, bought something tasteful and possibly useful for him to be presented next day. Checks had done all the rest. The Cralles', big and little, the employees of the house of Barber & Co., various charitable institutions, and a mission or two, would reap the result of the check-writing, which was so much like a business transaction as to have no holiday flavor about it.

"Don't be startled! I came back to ask—that is—Maida's collar marked with your name and address?" The subterfuge was awkward and cowardly, and the knowledge of this stiffened him through and through. He had seen the quick color leap into her cheeks at his voice; her complexion was as sensitive as a baby's. In stooping to examine the silver band upon the dog's neck, he did not note how suddenly the rose flush receded, or the slight curl of the languid lip. Her accents were politely listless.

"Oh yes. Her only danger is from dog thieves." She did not look toward him, but again at the fire. "That's all right, then"—raising himself "Can I do anything for you down the street? The shops will be closed to-morrow."

"Nothing, thank you. I hope Maida has not made you late for your appointment." She had not so much as looked a deerside to have stay. She almost wanted to have stay. She almost wanted to have stay. The night was unseasonably mild, the stars were dim, the atmosphere was oppressively humid. Twenty blocks lay between him and the place of his business tryst, but he chose to walk, forging ahead as if the mercury were below zero. He was chilled to the heart.

For Mr. Barber's second talent, the one which he did wrap in the napkin of diffidence and hide under the ashes of humility, was his love for his wife. It had always expressed itself in deeds rather than words. She was apt with graceful phrase and ready turns of speech. He thought slowly, and words came tardily to the birth. Once, and for long, she had comprehended this. Only five years ago, when he presented her with the title-deeds of the handsome dwelling they now occupied, he had told her, between kisses, that every stone in it was the token of a loving thought of her. There was no vulgar exultation in his enjoyment of her financial triumphs. Like herself, he was refined and ungrain. Unlike her, he had few showy qualities. She had once jestingly compared his conversational abilities to the Rothschild who, refused a seat in a Paris omnibus because he had no change in his pocket, offered the conductor a note for a million francs, and asked for the change. But if he was apt to be caught without small talk, he comforted himself like a correct, dignified gentleman at the dinners which her beauty, her vivacity and gracious tact made famous. He paid cheerfully for the musical and dramatic talent that helped lift her "evenings" above the level of the monotonous "reception."

floated a glittering mote in the radiant stream she helped to glorify.

"In which I have no place," he reflected. "The best base I had for the money was to give her every thing she wanted, and it divides us like a sea of molten gold."

Two men issued from the door of a fashionable club-house just as he passed it, fell into step, and kept directly in front of him for some yards. "I will go as far as the corner with you," said a voice Barber thought he knew; "but I am really due up town. I have an engagement to call upon the loveliest of her sex, the nicest woman in town, with but one drawback—she is married, and to a gold-plated log."

"That's worse for her than for you, I take it. Do we part here? Good-night!" Without hesitation, Daniel Barber wheeled about as the first speaker crossed the avenue and started up the other side. He knew the man as a star in the social firmament of New York. He was well born, travelled, accomplished, and handsome, and had on sundry occasions, in her husband's presence, distinguished Mrs. Barber by marked attention. Until this instant her lawful partner had never felt a twinge of jealousy of him, or of any other man. Nine words had opened a crater at his feet.

The two men tramped on in line, the width of the street between them, the complacent admirer of the loveliest of her sex never glancing toward the person who dogged him, even when he halted where the other had been certain he would stay his rapid walk, and rang the bell at Mrs. Barber's door. He was admitted. Her sister had insinuated that she expected an admirer. Helen had checked her faint disclaimer at "it is just possible"—with a conscious blush at seeing her husband. Her toilette of studied simplicity, her business of the delay of his second and third departures—each trivial incident of the evening stood out in lurid distinctness.

"This, then was what parted them and kept them asunder! In the full horror of the shock, he would have staked his soul upon Helen's honor. She would keep her marriage vow to the letter. It was only her imagination that was led captive; and the feminine fondness for admiration was her snare. Admitted, she was lost to him when her wifehood was named lightly and as a barrier in her chosen career.

While thinking, he was walking, holding on the long stride that made other pedestrians turn to glance after him, so ill-suited was it to the close, clinging warmth of the evening and the general depression it induced. How far and in what various directions he wandered, he could never recollect. He was exhausted and out of breath when, at eleven o'clock, he looked about him for a quiet corner in which he could rest and plan.

Right beside him was a church with truncated towers and broad solemn front. Two windows were faintly illuminated, the rest dark, and he could hear in the stilling night-time the regular pulse of the organ. The door yielded to his push. The choir rehearsal for tomorrow's service was over, but the organist had remained for an hour's private rehearsal. The gloomy spaciousness from wall to wall was unattended. Daniel Barber took a seat midway between door and chancel, and drew a painful, shuddering breath; the cold sweat dropped from his forehead. "O God!"

It is the cry of the human when the possibility of human help is swept away and the naked, destitute soul hurls itself, a battered moth, in the face of Him who, it feels, blindly and distractedly, ought to have succored it from ruin. Sometimes it is a prayer; as often it is an imprecation. Daniel Barber in his sane moments believed in a large and simple way, in the Father's love and forgiveness. His first coherent thought now was of thankfulness that he had taken refuge in a church. He had serious matters in hand; had formed a momentous resolution. Whatever the devout people who worshipped here might think of his purpose, he, in whose honor the temple was built, knowing so much more of the facts in the case than they, might be brought around to his views on the subject.

had lived. His eyes and winsome ways were the mother's, but she insisted vehemently that he would grow up into his father's image. Her heart would not be so empty to-night if her boy were with her. Tender branches upon the "log" might give widely affection something to which to cling; might even have hindered the closing up of the golden plates. He had deplored childlessness as a misfortune. He saw it now as a curse. Helen could never have grown superbly indifferent to her boy's father, and the prattle of the baby girl would drown the call of the river down which the "log" must float by midnight. How, ever miser-stricken, he could not have foregone the pure joy of hearing the two shout in unison, "Merry Christmas to dear papa and mamma!"

As it was, he had worked back in a circle to the starting point of the reverie. It must seem to be an accident. Helen would feel it to be a shock, not a sorrow. She had her "circle" and her fortune. He sneered sourly in reflecting how much more valuable was the plating than the log inside of it.

All beyond the small area immediately about the organ-loft was in black shadow to one coming in from the arched streets. When Daniel Barber's eyes got used to the darkness, pews, chancel, and altar took shape. He could trace the outline of the Christmas decorations, the resinous perfume of which was oppressive in the dank warmth of the night. The windows upon his right were brighter than the rest. One near the middle of the church received the direct force of the electric light without. The dull eyes strayed to it by and by in the same feeble impulse of unconscious cerebration that had led him to follow the musical refrain.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life!" While he steeled gazed, the wonderful thing he spoke of happened. A strong voice, like a clarion for clearness and melody, uttered the words in the hearing of the half-crazed man, and the organ throbbled an accompaniment. It was thrice repeated. In his bewilderment he recalled that it was always thus with true "signs."

"Be thou faithful!"—the recitative rising majestically, distinct above full sustained chords—"unto death"—the sigh and hush were as the passing of a soul; then out burst soaring into a glorious crescendo of organ and organ peal, "and I—and I will give thee the crown of life!"

The visitor to the stately temple, standing, like "a pause in the day's occupations," in mid-channel of the sweep of labor and life, may see for himself the memorial window set by filial love in the gray wall. To none besides the solitary wanderer within the sacred gates was it given to receive from an angel lips the message sent by Heaven that Christmas Eve to a soul ready to perish.

"Faithful!" unto the death so close upon him—the end presumptuously courted. Was the proffered crown for him who in a frenzy of impatience threw down the cross he was commanded to bear? Who was the soldier who, in mid-fight, turned his back upon his enemies? Wavering rays of light outlined the monitor; with outstretched arms she seemed to lean toward him; her look to grow more sweetly compassionate. In an agony of contrition he fell upon his knees, and tears, bursting between the fingers that veiled the shamed face, were the savior of the over wrought brain.

As the organist, having extinguished the lights, was leaving the gallery, his eye was caught by the well defined apparition of a kneeling form right in the track of the mellowed glows flowing through the memorial window. It did not move at his approach, yet the intruder was so evidently not a drowsy vagrant that he did not offer to touch him. "I beg your pardon," he said, respectfully, "but I am about to lock up the church."

frankness. Let her disclose or keep back what she would, there was an end of reserves on his part. The changes in the eloquent face of the auditor were more than he could bear at last. He concluded the story with averted eyes.

"I blame you in nothing. I am not the mate of a woman like you. I can only love you with all my heart and soul, and work for you with all my strength. While I have delved in common soil, you have been climbing. As I have grown dull, you have grown brighter. I am afraid it is too late to make me over"—his features wrung by a faint, sorrowful smile—"If you had begun ten years earlier, I doubt, if you could have fashioned me into such a man, for instance, as your visitor of this evening."

She wrested her hands impetuously from his, laid them on his shoulders, and looked at him with eyes that blazed. "You must stop there, Dan! husband! my love! my darling!" flinging epithet after epithet breathlessly, as if she could not content herself with any lavishness of endearment.

"I am to blame. Oh, I must be terribly in fault if you could ever in your inmost thoughts think my name with mine! He lied when he said that I expected him. He had never found me alone before; he will never find me at home again. Not that he dared breathe of or look like love—fought to me. But he contrived to drop a word of sympathy for me in my loneliness, and to intimate that my tastes and pursuits were not yours. It was very adroitly done, so cleverly managed that I suspect he said it to a dozen other loveliest of their sex. I told him what I thought of you in a few hot and hasty words, and in fewer, hotter and more hasty, I gave him my opinion of men like himself. He got himself out of the house in tolerable order"—laughing nervously—"but he will make no more mistakes of that sort; will make sure next time what manner of neglected wife he tries to console. That was at half past nine. You had said at dinner that your engagement would not detain you long. I alluded to that when I began the remark to Celia that Maida interrupted. It is just possible that Dan may be in early, and he seldom has an evening at home now, was what you would have heard if the runaway had not appeared at that second. I had planned it all in what I was half afraid you would consider an absurdly honey-moonish wish. I ordered a nice supper to be served at half past ten. All of it that is spoiled, and the coffee that isn't made you may see over there in the dining-room, but it was to be eaten in here. You never notice what I wear nowadays, but I hoped you might observe the new gown I had made for this occasion, and possibly recollect that I wore white and wine-color the evening we were engaged, and that it was in Christmas week, and then we would talk it all over and out together. Don't you suppose I have seen that the rush of business is sweeping you one way and the race of pleasure sweeping me another, and had begun to take alarm at it? So I have taken myself to task lately. The truth is, I am awfully tired of meeting the same people and eating the same suppers everywhere, and talking the same frothy, flashy nothings, and the gray is coming out too rapidly in your hair and mustache to please a wife who wants you to live forever. These were but a few of the things we were to talk over to-night. Some of the rest we never speak of to other people. Celia, although she has children of her own, would not have understood why the fact that her sudden illness last Christmas Eve obliged me to take her place, or disappoint her girls and their guests, was not a precedent for my joining her party to-night. I was unjust to you in thinking that you had forgotten our sadly sweet tryst, kept in the dear old times when you were not so cruelly busy and I so criminally gay." Her hands had slid back into his grasp; tender light overpowered her eyes; richer color was stealing into her cheeks; her lips trembled as she went on, her voice sinking to a whisper: "Last of all, I meant to tell you what I have kept to myself until now. Because it was on Christmas Eve that our boy went away with the angels, because on Christmas Eve another little child was born in Bethlehem, I wait until to-night to let you know."

"She said the rest with her lips upon his. The organist of St. Gudule's sang in public so seldom that not one of his chorists suspected how fine was his barytone, and how correct his taste in vocal music. Not a false tone or inexpressive rendering of the Christmas chorale service escaped him; yet he was passably well satisfied when he turned his head from his high seat for a view of the slowly retiring congregation, his fingers straying among the harmonies of a familiar symphony. A discord, unskillfully introduced, made two or three people glance up at the gallery in surprise. He saw only a man and a woman, whose bowed heads were not lifted until the church was nearly empty. They knelt side by side in the pew occupied last night by the solitary devotee.

Had he been nearer he would have observed, being keen of sight and wits, that their hands were clasped. He did detect the shine of tears upon the lashes of the beautiful eyes of the wife, pausing in the aisle, raised to the memorial window, where the victor's crown glowing as with living jewels in the Christmas sunlight, and Heaven's love and promise in her face—stood "the angel of St. Gudule's."

A Saucy Kid. From the Kansas City Times. A small boy made a big fat woman furiously angry and a car load of people very merry this morning. He was sitting down quietly when this portly woman came in. As nobody got up to give her a seat she stood in the aisle at the mercy of the bumps and twists and turns of the road. The car had gone about two blocks when the small boy got up, and in a whisper that could be heard all through the car said: "I'll be one of three men to give the lady a seat!"

"Well, Jimmie," said Uncle George, as he watched the boy at work on his sled, "ars you polishing up the runners?" "No," said Jimmie. "I'm shinin' up the sleds. Sleds don't run."

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, St. Nick with his reindeers right early was there. But mamma and papa, of course, couldn't sleep. Without stealing down and first taking a peep. The great joy of Christmas—the sweetest that's known— Upon their glad faces is faithfully shown. And, while they are playing "St. Nick" in the dark, A word to "us old folks" we wish to remark.

O, don't you remember with thrills of delight, The waiting and watching for Santa Claus' night. How, eyes all a-sparkle and cheeks all a-flame, You eagerly counted the days till it came. And then, how you "thung by the enimey with care" The biggest long stockings that mamma could spare. And marched with your brothers and sisters to bed, Where visions of sugar plums danced through your head.

O, never a night was so long as that seemed; You couldn't get sleep, you tossed till you dreamed; At last came the morn when you quickly arose Almost too excited to button your clothes! Then downstairs you rushed to the parlor's closed door. Then paused, hardly daring to further explore. Lest naught might be there. Then—Hurr!— what a shout! You gave when you found Santa Claus was about.

That moment supreme you can never forget, Its ever good influence clings to you yet; 'Tis sweet to look back on and fire through again. The joy of your lifetime 'will always remain. So give to your children that memory bright, Of childhood's most wonderful Christmas delight. And hang—not one stocking—but two for each chick. For nothin's so good or too much for St. Nick. —H. C. Dodge, in Goodall's Sun.

Your Wife's Christmas Gift.

About this time your wife is wearing out her nerves in an endeavor to secure something that will gratify you at Christmas as her present to you, says an exchange. Her task is a loving one but wearisome—only wives know how wearisome. There are so few things that are appropriate, and you already have so many of the few. Moreover, she must purchase judiciously. She is limited in ways that you are not in this Christmas business. She must secure the becoming gits at a cost within the imperfectly known limit of your financial ability, while you in buying something for her may be as extravagant as you please, because you can pinch the extravagance out of her allowance for household expenses afterwards.

Besides all this, the gift you get for her costs you nothing but money; the gits she makes to you costs her thought, worry and that most valuable of all things, shopping. She must spend hours in stuffy, overcrowded shops; she must price things here, there; and everywhere; she must consult and consider, in distressing uncertainty as to the fitness of things to satisfy the whimsical masculine taste. And all this she does with a loving tenderness for you which is in itself a gift of priceless worth. Do you think it well on the whole, to reward her toil, her patience and her love by getting off the cheap joke afterwards about your having to pay for your present yourself? There is not any wit in that joke; it is as stale as a loaf of bread from a Pompeian oven, and its utterance is ill-mannered, inconsiderate, brutal. Moreover, it isn't true. If you have a good wife she earns every dollar she spends, whether upon herself or for you. The mere fact she receives the money from you and not from an outsider, and that it goes to her at irregular times and in uncertain sums, makes no manner of difference. The money is hers, and the money is the very smallest part of what she invests in your Christmas present. She puts her precious affections into its procurement, and if you have any true appreciation in your soul you will value her gift for what it signifies, not merely for what it is. Especially will you avoid the mistake of supposing that you paid for it. If you are commonplace enough to entertain such a thought you are bankrupt in the kind of treasure that has gone to purchase your wife's gift to you, and could not have paid for it to save your very small soul.

Excursion to Washington. A series of personality conducted tours to Washington has been arranged, via the Royal Blue Line, for December 29th, January 7th. The tickets include all necessary expenses of a three days' trip, and provide for hotel accommodations at Washington, meals en route, baggage transfers, etc. Rates from New York \$11.50, \$12.50 and \$15.00. Proportionate rates from Boston and other New England points. For programme describing these tours write to Thos. Cook and Son, Agents for B. & O. R. R., at 261 and 1225 Broadway, New York, or 332 Washington street Boston. It