

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., January 9, 1914.

THE FORGOTTEN CHRISTMAS.

BY CLARISSA MACKIE.

It was very quiet in the stately home of Roger Burdick. Servants fitted noiselessly through the halls, and now and then the chime of a golden tongued clock broke the silence. From the library came the monotone of Mr. Burdick's voice dictating to his secretary. "That will do for today, Henry," said Mr. Burdick as the young man laid the neatly typed letters on his desk. "Tomorrow morning you may begin on the translation of that Simonieff manuscript. No hurry about it; I shall spend the day at the museum and will not need you for anything else."

"Tomorrow will be Christmas day," said Henry Lees.

"And this is Christmas eve! Well, Henry, that puts another face upon the matter. Of course you will not come tomorrow—and wait a moment, please." He drew his check book toward him and wrote rapidly.

"I wish you a merry Christmas, Henry," he said pleasantly.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Burdick," said Henry, tucking the generous check in his pocket and holding out his hand. "I wish you many happy returns of Christmas day."

For a long while after he was left alone Roger Burdick sat there staring into the glowing heart of the fire.

It was Christmas eve, and he had forgotten.

He closed his eyes, and in retrospect other Christmas eves came and went, from the joyous days of his childhood until the time when he had asked Doris Allen for the greatest gift in her power to bestow and she had refused. That was a black Christmas indeed, and, being a lonely young man, it made him more lonely, so that as time went by he grew to detest the anniversary that brings all hearts together and for a few brief hours makes all men brothers.

"Nonsense!" he chided himself sharply. "I must call up Mr. Hodges and ask him to get out those books for me in readiness for tomorrow. I shall have a busy day."

He drew the telephone toward him and talked with the curator of the museum, who informed him in a tone of reproach that the library of ancient documents as well as all other departments of the institution would be closed the next day.

Roger Burdick pushed back his chair and went to the dining room. Uncle Peter, the butler, had darkened the room, so that Roger in groping for the sideboard, where there was a carafe of water, found himself in the dim coolness of the butler's pantry. The sliding window into the kitchen was wide open, and from that room came the sound of animated voices. Roger's own name mentioned in tones of infinite compassion detained him for a moment.

"Mammy Jo was speaking. 'Pore Massa Roger! He's gettin' to look a heap like his Uncle Roger, who's daid, this berry mornin' cause he loved a lady who wouldn't mab'ry him!'"

"Tain't no sense, nohow, fo' him to get mean and cantankerous and stop k'ep'n' Christmuss becaws he's dis'p'inted in love," grumbled Sukey, the housemaid.

"Dat's right, chile; he can't stop Christmuss comin' right straight er-long eb'ry year!"

"Mammy," said Uncle Peter, "is yo' done got a present fo' Masse Roger?"

"Shore I has!" returned the old woman warmly. "Ain't I been savin' a present fo' him each year and not gittin' no chance to give it to him? 'Cause why? Chille, dat man has made it a p'int to run away eb'ry Christmuss. What he tink I care fo' de dress patterns he ordered sent to me from de store? What Uncle Peter here care fo' de gold spectacles Massa Roger order sent him fo' Christmuss? Hey? Nuffin! Tain't de cost—it's de givin' of it dat I 'preciates. I'd rather Massa Roger say like he useter before dat gass Miss Allen done give him de miltten—say: 'Hi dere, Aunt Jo, merry Christmuss to you! I hopes you done got a big turkey. I's got a Christmuss appetite!' Nowdays he pertends dere ain't no Christmuss. But, Peter!"

"Hey?" asked Peter.

"Massa Roger ain't gwine away dis time. He done fertot it was Christmuss!"

"Lawdy!" ejaculated Peter.

"He shore did. And now all you chillens kin get out dem presents you got laid erway fo' Massa Roger. Dat pore man won't have a yearthly gif' to-morrow mornin' 'cept what you gives him."

The other black servants giggled childishly and broke into an excited chorus as Roger Burdick tiptoed out of the butler's pantry, through the dining room and back to his library, where he stood in the middle of the floor and looked around him with the dazed expression of a man who has just awakened from a long sleep.

"Pore Massa Roger!" he repeated softly. "Pore Massa Roger! The man who runs away from Christmuss—the poor rich man! God forgive my selfishness."

It came on to snow that afternoon, and soon the air was full of thick white flakes. Uncle Peter looked from the front door at the film of white overlaying streets and housetops and uttered a mental prayer that there was to be a "white Christmas."

"Hucum dat wagon a-stoppin' heah?" he queried as a long cart laden with Christmas trees stopped before the door.

Fifteen minutes later Uncle Peter hobbled into the kitchen, his eyes showing great expanses of white and his mouth open in amazed excitement.

"Lawdy!" he breathed heavily. "Yo' kin never guess what's happened. Josie!"

Aunt Jo looked up from the nuts she was cracking.

"Speak up, nigger," she said calmly.

"Massa Roger's done sent up a Christmuss tree and a big lot of wreaths fo' de doors and windows. De florin' man's up dere now fixin' 'em. I'm all of a heap, Josie; my stummick's weak."

Aunt Jo pushed a brown pitcher full of cider toward her excited spouse.

"Take some of dat cider, Peter, and ca'm yo'self. If what yo' say is true den Massa Roger done lose his haid. He's crazy, crazy as a loon!"

Up in the drawing room the florist and his assistant were working rapidly, transforming the stiff apartment into a bower of greenery with ropes of evergreen and holly and with festoons about the pictures and doors and wreaths gay with holly in every window. From room to room they went, not forgetting the library and the big hall. When the men had gone the servants formed an awestricken group in the dining room, which breathed the atmosphere of Christmas from chandeliers to roomy fireplace.

"Pore Massa Roger! He's mad as a hatter," was the general conclusion as they went about their tasks.

Roger Burdick scarcely recognized himself as he whirled in a taxicab from one shop to another, each time emerging with an armful of packages which he put in his cab to start afresh in another direction.

Almost before he knew it the grave student, the man who had forgotten Christmas, had caught the spirit of the Christmas crowd of shoppers. He exchanged laughing glances with other men who were as heavily laden as himself. He whistled cheerily as he went to and fro.

Once he met Hodges, the curator of the museum, and that withered and ancient gentleman was conveying two eager girls and a boy through the toy department of one of the shops.

"My grandchildren," smiled Hodges, and Burdick, who had never given thought whether the curator was married or single or otherwise than a walking bundle of useful information, smiled back and gave a hearty Christmas greeting.

It was while he was puzzling his brain over the choice of an apron for Sukey, the housemaid, that he heard a low, rich note of laughter at his elbow.

He turned and saw Doris Allen, stately and more beautiful than the promise of her early girlhood when he had known her. She had lived abroad for many years with a married sister, and they had never met since that fateful Christmas day so many years ago.

"Roger Burdick!" Doris held out a little gloved hand, and it was immediately lost in Roger's large grasp. "Isn't Christmas the very best season of all? It brings out old friends who appear to be buried the greater part of the year."

"I am just beginning to learn the real blessings of Christmas," said Roger, suddenly feeling very young.

"What are you trying to buy—an apron?" smiled Doris.

Roger nodded. "For Sukey, my housemaid. Which do you like best, Doris, this fancy one with the pink bows or the plain one?"

"I'm sure Sukey would like the pink bows," replied Doris seriously. "Is Uncle Peter still with you, and Aunt Jo?"

"Yes. You know my father's servants remained with me. I'm doing some Christmas shopping for them. There isn't any one else to make Christmas for." He said it quite practically while he was paying the saleswoman for his purchases.

When he turned around the first thing he saw was the beautiful left hand of Doris resting on the counter. She had removed the glove, and on the little finger there shone a lovely sapphire ring, its sole adornment.

"Doris," he said softly under cover of the Christmas clamor about them—"Doris, have you ever regretted that you were not kinder to me that Christmas day long ago?"

Her beautiful hazel eyes were lifted to his for a brief instant and fell beneath the ardor of his glance.

"Roger, I've been mighty sorry that you—that you were not more persistent!" she admitted. "You know I was a willful girl and—"

"That's enough, darling," whispered Roger. "Come with me and help me keep Christmas tomorrow!"

"I will come to your Christmas tree," evaded Doris. "Now my friends are waiting for me, and I must go!" And she vanished as quickly as she had appeared.

"It am de wonderfulest Christmas dis house has ever seen!" cried Aunt Jo as they all gathered about the brilliantly lighted tree the next day. "My hab't's overflowin' wid dis jublilashun," she ended, wiping the tears from her eyes at sight of Roger's happiness.

"And so is mine, Aunt Jo," said Roger as he took Doris by the hand and led her forward. "This has been the happiest Christmas I have ever known. First I forgot it was Christmas; then you, Aunt Jo, made me remember it, and now Miss Allen has given herself to me for a Christmas gift. I shall never forget it!"

"Amen!" said Uncle Peter solemnly.

Splinters and Finger Nails.

When a splinter gets under a finger nail it is often very hard to draw out. In such a case if a cold water bandage is put round the top of the finger and then kept wet and cold it will in time both draw out splinter and keep the finger from festering.

Couldn't.

She—What was the doctor's diagnosis? He—Painitation of the heart. She—Well, why doesn't he keep away from her?—Judge.

An Education From a Nickel.

A young girl who lived in Mississippi asked her brother to give her the money to go to college. He told her he could not afford it and, tossing her a nickel, added, "Unless you can go on that."

The plucky girl took the five cent piece and bought some calico, from which she made a bonnet that she sold for 25 cents. With this money she bought more calico and made more bonnets. After she had made several dollars in this way she determined to raise potatoes. She did all the work in the field except the plowing. The venture was a success, and she had enough money to start at school. She did not stop work, however, and it is not surprising that a girl of so much determination was able to borrow enough money to supplement what she made.

She was graduated with honor from the State College for Women, attended a medical school, still earning all her expenses, got her degree and is now a successful practicing physician in a large town in the south, and it all began with a nickel!—Youth's Companion.

Curious Ways of the Papuans.

In the Girara country, Papua, a district of New Guinea, where the country is almost entirely submerged, the natives are said to claim descent from the dog. They possess five totems, which are drawn on all their houses. Their villages are erected on hillocks so as to be clear of the water, and the people of each village inhabit one large common house, sometimes as much as four to five hundred feet long and sixty to eighty feet in width. The center of this huge building is a kind of common hall, which is used only by the men, while the walls of the structure are divided into cubicles in three or four floors, access to which is gained by means of ladders. The women are not allowed to enter the building by the same door as the men. A great deal of sorcery prevails in the western division. In the wilder parts of the country the chief is himself a head sorcerer. He claims to be able to separate his spirit from his body and to send it on various missions, including that of killing people.—Argonaut.

The Savannah River.

No one will take seriously the suggestion of a correspondent of the Atlanta Constitution that there is a "legend" to the effect that the Savannah river was so named because an Indian chief asked somebody to "Save Anna," his daughter, who had fallen from a boat into the river. But the recurrence of the puerile joke in the form of the suggestion gives occasion to say that the word "savannah" is a very old one, and philologists tracing it to its origin go back to ancient Greek through old Spanish. The English meaning of the word, spelled with out the final "h," is a tract of level land covered with vegetation, usually grass or reeds, and void of trees or with trees occurring only occasionally. From the savannas along its banks the river was named. In the level, grassy savanna is observed some resemblance to a "sheet," which was one meaning of the word in Greek. Also it meant a towel.—Savannah News.

Turkish Baths.

The proper way to take a Turkish bath is to devote plenty of time to the process. On entering stay in the first room, the moderately hot one, until all feeling of oppression has passed off. Then move on into the second, the hot room, as it is called. The third one, called the oven, should seldom be used, as the heat is too intense to be safe. It is best to be content with a mild perspiration at first and to stay in too short a time rather than too long. People are apt to think that the more they perspire the better they will be, but that is not the case, and what is more, there is an element of danger in prolonging the process. Taken quietly and with discrimination, Turkish baths are one of the greatest boons to suffering humanity.—New York Telegram.

Billiard Cues.

Billiard cues are made of ash, with usually a lighter wood at the handle. A good cue should balance if a man's finger be placed under the middle of it, and as it tapers the butt must be of lighter wood than the shaft. But there is a vast amount of individuality in cues. The making of leather billiard cue tips has been an industry of a particular class of French peasants time out of mind.—Washington Star.

Plaster of Paris.

When mixing plaster of paris for mending cracks in plaster use vinegar instead of water. It should be of the consistency of putty, and when the cracks are filled the top should be smoothed over with a knife. The mixture will not harden for about half an hour.

Cause and Effect.

Comedian—I say, old chap, your nose and chin will fight ere long; they approach each other very menacingly! Old Actor—I'm afraid so myself, for a great many words have passed between them already!—London Telegraph.

Florida's Tip.

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