Merrie Christmas

THE NIGHT BEFORE—

Merry Christmas, and Paid in Full

How Silas Vaughan Contributed to Yuletide Cheer of the Needy.

By FRANK HERBERT SWEET

IT WAS an eloquent plea for the public building, an urge for its beauty, its value to the town, the educational gift to the eyes of youth. The speaker was hypnotic. He had been engaged for that.

Purse strings were loosened. Money poured freely—twenty, fifty, a hundred, five hundred. And it was Christmas.

They went to Silas Vaughan, the grocer leader, a wealthy man of the town. People looked surreptitiously to see what munificent sum he would give.

At first a hand went into his pocket like the others, then came out and

the arms were folded. There was an audible gasp from watchful eyes.

More pleas came, more solicitors went round, man to man.

But Silas sat there, arms folded, rigid, unmoved.

"Times are too hard," he was heard to say in answer to an importunate beggar. "It is a bad year for such a building."

"Not bad for me, and all those who yield to noble impulses," said a neighbor in a voice that all could hear.

The next day was Christmas, with the grocery and drug stores open for a few hours. Silas Vaughan went to his desk and took out twice as many bills as ever had been allowed to accumulate before. Times were hard, and more were obliged to charge.

Fully half of the accounts were selected from the others, and several words written at the bottoms. That took nearly an hour. Then he slipped the bills into his pocket, put on his hat and coat, and went out, leaving the store to the clerks.

It was nearly closing time when he came back. This he occupied with packing and arranging a number of baskets with fruit and nuts and candy, which he sent out anonymously.

In the evening came a big church community Christmas tree.

Most of the donors of the public building were there, rather proud of themselves and not above circulating bits of criticism. When Silas entered, there was no uncertain air of chilliness in the room. A few nodded to him, but frigidly.

Silas appeared to take no notice, and found a seat near the front, where apparently he sat calm and unruffled.

A poorly-dressed man down in front had been looking about expectantly, as though waiting for some one to speak. Suddenly he rose.

"I ain't no speaker," he called, loudly, "but I got suthin' to say. 'Bout the new buildin', I ain't nothin' to say, only seems too much money for real need. An' I never liked horn-blowin'. Now, it's been an awful hard time for workin' folks, on 'count o' there bein' so much slack. First time I couldn't pay up in twenty years. I couldn't see no Christmas for me. Now, listen: This mornin' a feller carried papers all round. I got one. First, I felt 't was a sheriff thing, like.

Then I read on the bottom, 'I hope this will be the beginning of better things. Merry Christmas. Paid in full. Silas Vaughan.' Mine was thirty dollars. Si must 'a' given away more'n a thousand."

He sat down. Silas had lost all his composure. He tried to slip away. But hands and apologies were appearing from all sides. He was pushed to the platform and told to make a speech. He would have made a mess of it, but all were cheering so wildly no one could hear. So it did not matter.

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CHRISTMAS ZEST

CHRISTMAS zest warms the heart and makes the heart glow. Do not let any outside cynicism rob you of this glow.

Do not curl your lip and say you know the elevator man or the grocer's boy or the many others to whom you give a little Christmas joy is just looking for the present and is being polite for that reason.

Enjoy their pleasure in receiving. Enjoy, yourself, in giving. And doesn't every one enjoy presents? When you say:

"He's looking for a Christmas present," you lose half your own joy.

When you say:

"What an opportunity to add a little present to another person's Christmas," you have your own full measure of joy.

Christmas zest must not be bereft of any of its spirit.—Mary Graham Bonner.

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Merry Open House on Christmas Eve

Seamstress Finds a Warm Welcome and Assists at Social Function.

By MARTHA BANNING THOMAS

BEACON HILL was ablaze with candles. They shone in every window. They gleamed through the glass panes of the doorways. Tall candles, short candles; candles of every size and color. For was it not Christmas Eve? And is it not a custom to make merry at this special time in a very charming way?

Groups of Carolers Stood at Street Corners and Sang.

Groups of carolers stood at street corners and sang. Hundreds of people strolled up and down. There was an atmosphere of good will that pervaded the place as surely as wreaths hung in the windows.

There was one house in particular that glowed with a shining brilliance. Part of this light was due to a pyramid formation of candles on the window-sill, and part came from the happy sounds which issued forth through the open door. This place was keeping "open house" with a vengeance. It looked like a glorified Christmas card.

Miss Mixter never knew exactly how it happened. She was hurrying home after a hard day's sewing in a dressmaker's shop. She was tired and hungry. Christmas Eve to her merely meant that she was wearier than usual. She stopped for a moment to look in through the door of this happy, shining house. And then, almost unaware of what she did, she walked in. Yes, she actually did. And she had no more idea of who lived there than a maple tree on Boston Common! Something drew her straight to the fireplace. She went as naturally as a bee seeks honey.

In that merry, well-dressed throng she looked a bit rusty. Her hat was entirely too old. There was something wrong in the cut of her coat. Her gloves had seen hard service. And her shoes, well—her shoes were the despair of cobblers.

Miss Mixter began talking to a laughing-eyed woman dressed in green. "You look like a daffodil," said Miss Mixter. And this pleased her hostess so much that she burst into a peal of merriment.

From that moment they seemed to have a great deal to say to each other. Then, suddenly looking about her, Miss Mixter saw she was the center of attention. Dozens of interested people were regarding her with amused eyes.

A quick reaction swept over her. She felt lonely and afraid. Why was she here? Who were these people? Why had she come into this house?

She felt a quiet hand on her arm. "Do stay, won't you?" begged the hostess in green," I need someone to help me. Couldn't you spare a moment on Christmas Eve to aid a daffodil in distress! Just keep your eye on these people and tell me who is served and who is not. It's so difficult."

Miss Mixter looked up keenly into the smiling face. And she knew she was genuinely wanted.

"I'll stay," announced Miss Mixter, "and," she grew spirited, "the first person who needs a cup of coffee is myself."

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Christmas Song

Why do bells for Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?

Once a lovely, shining star,
Seen by shepherds from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger-cradle bright.
There a darling baby lay
Pillowed soft among the hay.
And his mother sang and smiled,
"This is Christ, the Holy Child."

So the bells for Christmas ring,
So the little children sing.
—Lydia Avery Coonley Ward

The Gladness of the World

When o'er the moonlit, misty fields,
Dumb with the world's great joy,
The shepherds sought the white-walled town,
Where lay the baby boy—
And, oh, the gladness of the world,
The glory of the skies,
Because the longed-for Christ looked up
In happy Mary's eyes!

—Margaret Deland

Christmas Lesson for Miss Belinda

Promise to Teach Maid to Read and Write, Most Welcome Gift.

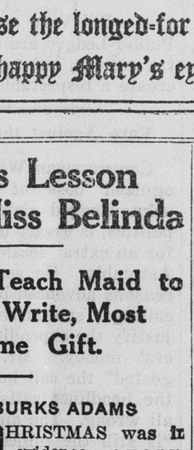
By EMILY BURKS ADAMS

CHRISTMAS was in evidence everywhere. The whole household were happy, save perhaps one—Belinda, the German maid, who had for six months lived with the Thoburns, a well-to-do family.

"Sure, Mrs. Toburn, I've done all I thought is right to do already, and I'm pleased dot you like it."

"Yes, Belinda, and the house never looked prettier. You're quite an artist as well as a cook. I'm glad you gave up going to visit your sister, for the good dinner tomorrow depends upon you. We shall try to make it up to you, Belinda, in some way."

"Oh, do you tink so, Mrs. Toburn; I am sure pleased to know dot I am ob service to you, and you are so good to me already," said Belinda, with a sigh, as she retired to her room.



The Thoburns, old and young, were radio enthusiasts, and were being entertained with Christmas greetings and carols.

"Mother, did you notice that Belinda seemed sad — something unusual for her? I wonder if we have gotten her enough for Christmas?—let's see—there's her beads, handkerchief, hose. She will feel all right tomorrow. She really doesn't mind missing the visit with her sister, does she? She'd rather be doing all this for us, for serving others is what makes one happy, isn't it, mother?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so, if the service isn't too hard."

"Mother, what do you mean by service being too hard? I think we should enjoy doing things for others. I can never forget the quotation: 'To live in the hearts of others is not to die!' I think we should enjoy doing things for others and not think it hard. What—"

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Thoburn, "you seem to think service hard, as you wouldn't write those letters for Belinda last evening, and one was a Christmas letter to her sister. That, probably was the cause of her sigh."

Amy was listening in and heard over the radio: "Let every true American, as a gift to himself, give the promise that he will teach one foreigner how to read and write, and in so doing, help drive illiteracy from our land. A wonderful gift to your self and to the one taught—'As ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.' Merry Christmas to all."

Amy looked at the others, her face beaming. "Oh, mother, our slogan for Educational week was: 'Each one teach one; ballots, not bullets.'"

"A fine slogan, Amy, if put into practice," remarked Mrs. Thoburn.

Christmas morning all gathered around the tree to open their packages. Belinda stood in the background, beaming at the happiness of the others, for next to our own happiness is watching that of others. Box after box was handed to Belinda, but the most beautiful of all was saved until the last and presented by Amy. "Here, Belinda, a lot of love with this box; it contains paper, pencils, and a book and my promise to you that I'll teach you to read and write before another Christmas."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Amy; dis is vot I most vanted already. Gott bless you!"

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The Willing Worker

Now father makes a dozeful pause,
A tired and slightly blue man.
A merry myth is Santa Claus,
But father's only human.