

A CHRISTMAS TRUCE.

The Story of an American Boy in Paris.

BY ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS.

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FOR some inexplicable reason they pass over Christmas day in France and celebrate the New Year instead. There is no cheer on Christmas day, no holly and no plum pudding. There was no use in hanging up a stocking the night before because there was nobody to fill it. Besides, unhappily, my stocking hanging time is over.

We had expected something like it—Daddy, the boy from Milwaukee, and I. We had been prepared by the Swede with the long yellow mustache who sat at the foot of the table. "It will be just like any other day," he had said, and it had been, only worse.

In the first place, it rained; in the second place, it not only rained, but it poured, and, in the third place, Daddy and I had quarreled.

If you want fully to appreciate an American boy like Daddy, you must first live in England awhile. Then he bursts upon you with the radiance of a no-day sun. Daddy could hardly say that I failed to appreciate him. He never cracked a joke that I didn't laugh until the tears came. If he told a story, he considered me practically being the only American at the table and consequently the only individual in possession of a sense of humor sufficient for the understanding of it—his sole audience. Thus between much telling of stories and more laughing at them our friendship appeared to be cemented, to be planted squarely upon a sure and firm foundation, but it is about just such things as that that you can never tell.

It was over next to nothing that we quarreled, the simplest thing in the world. It was this: The first time I saw him he came into the dining room with his head shaved close. "I went into a barber shop," he told us, "and look what the man did to me! I knew enough French to start him, and then I didn't know enough to get him to stop."

That struck me as hilariously funny. Even the foreigners laughed when it was



"LOOK WHAT THE MAN DID TO ME!"

translated to them. So it happened that in writing back I mentioned Daddy and related this anecdote of him.

How could I know that they would hand my private letter over to an editor and that the editor would proceed promptly to publish it? How could I know even that the papers, always on the lookout for a glint of fun, would copy the little story here, there and everywhere, and that in four or five weeks' time those same papers would appear upon the tables of every American reading room in Paris, and, worse still, that numerous friends of the boy would hand him copies and laugh? For, alas, I had given his name!

This was my first intimation of it. I was sitting in my room mending my glove when there came a knock at the door. "Entrez!" I called out in my newly acquired French. The door opened, and there stood Daddy.

I sprang up, threw the glove aside and ran to meet him, glad, as I always am, to see the boy from Milwaukee.

"Come in! Come in!" I cried. "I am dead lonesome. Bring your mandolin and let's have a jig. I have learned the piano accompaniment by now."

But there was never an answering smile on the boy's countenance. He faced me with a look that struck cold to my heart. The smile died on mine. I started back as if I had had a blow and stared. Could this be my dear old Daddy?

"I should like to see you for one moment," he said in a manner as cold as his face and in the firm, severe tones of a full grown man.

"Why, certainly," I gasped, "for two if you like! Where—in the little kitchen that isn't used or in the hall or out in the big hall, with the concierge looking on?" For there was no salon, and the precision of Daddy's manner called for a salon or something, if possible, even more impressive.

"This is no joke," said he, and there was not the twinkle of a laugh at the corners of his mouth or in his eyes. "Look here!"

Reaching in the pocket of his vest, he produced a slip cut from a paper and thrust it at me. I took it wonderingly and read a scrap from my letter with the account of Daddy and his cute little hair-cutting joke. I read to the finish, then looked up at him.

"Well, what of it?" I inquired. "What of it?" he blazed. "Nothing, only they have been poking the thing at me the whole day long; nothing, only I am the laughing stock of the establishment, I am the joke of Paris, the boy who didn't know enough French to get his hair cut. That's all!"

"Oh, Daddy! Oh, Daddy!" I sighed. "And after a time, very humbly, 'I didn't mean it that way,' I explained. 'It was a private letter. I never expected it to be published. How could I know that it would get into the hands of an editor?'"

"You ought to have known," he stormed, "since you write. You writers, you have no respect for the private affairs of people, so you make money out of them, you publish anything. Nothing is private to you. Nothing is sacred."

"Daddy," I remonstrated, "that was no private affair. You said it right there at the table with a dozen listening. Didn't you?"

"I did," he acknowledged defiantly, "but do you suppose I thought once of you? The accent on that 'you' came near bringing the tears. I forgot you were a penny-a-liner; that you were sitting there taking the thing down, congratulating yourself that you were to get so much a word for it."

"A penny-a-liner!" "So much a word!" A penny-a-liner doesn't get so much a word even.

"Daddy," I said presently, quite calmly, "but do you suppose I thought once of you? The accent on that 'you' came near bringing the tears. I forgot you were a penny-a-liner; that you were sitting there taking the thing down, congratulating yourself that you were to get so much a word for it."

I was stricken to the dust—mute. In a storm of anger he flung himself out of the room and slammed the door.

After that he sat dumb and unresponsive at one end of the long table, and I sat silently at the other. It was impossible to catch his eye. He refused by so much as a look to reveal his cognizance of my existence.

Then Christmas day approached. We had arranged for the day, Daddy and I. We had prepared to ward off homesickness, to a certain extent at least. He was to make me a present, and I was to make him one.

"There is a little bust of Napoleon in a shop down in the Rue St. Honoré that I want," I told him. "You get it for me, and I will buy you a cigarette case in the same shop. They cost about the same money. Is it a go?"

"It's a go," answered he, and we shook hands on it.

As a matter of fact, I had already purchased the cigarette case. It was stowed away in the bottom of my armoire drawer for safe keeping. Now and again I took it out and looked at it, thinking how proud the boy would be to offer his cigarettes in that pretty new case in the place of his old one, which was finger marked and worn at the edges.

And now it was all over. Perhaps he would soon to take it from me, a penny-a-liner, a scribbler who mixed up her imagination with facts in so alarming a manner that she had at last arrived at a stage wherein she could no longer speak the truth.

The morning arrived, and, as I say, it not only rained, but it poured. I deposited a franc or two in the hand of Bethé, who brought me my chocolate, to remind myself that it was Christmas day, and occupied myself briskly with my toilet to keep from thinking what a royal good time they were all having at home. Then I gave a few francs to Florence of the velvet foot and to Aime, the cook, after which I went out into the rain to the Gare St. Lazare, where I bought a great bunch of French roses for mademoiselle, presented them to her, received her thanks and compliments, profusely expressed in English so fractured as to be scarcely recognizable, and, retiring to my room, worked all day long at that penny-a-liner business for which I was so looked down upon by the boy from Milwaukee, trying to pretend that it was only an ordinary every day and not Christmas at all.

From my window I could see the rain descending dimly into the court, the palms huddled in one corner and the big drenched bronze girl, whose uplifted arms, holding up the lamp, gave me at times a feeling of such intense weariness.

One bright spot alone gleamed through the window of the concierge's room, which was opposite mine, two stories below. It was his fire over which he bent, reading all the letters before he sent them up to the rooms.

The day passed somehow, and it was evening. The boy had not come to dinner. I sat waiting for him in my room. I waited a long time. I had his cigarette case in my hand ready, for after a Christmas day of such loneliness I was determined, if possible, to make friends with him again. I was afraid of going to sleep and dreaming the day all over again otherwise.

At last I heard his latchkey in the door and his footstep in the hall. I waited until he should have had time to light his candles, then, softly opening my door, I went out and halted, looking at him.

He was standing by the heavy mahogany table upon which flickered his candle. I haven't much pride when it comes to a question of happiness or unhappiness. In a lowly manner I approached him. He started at seeing me, but glanced up with

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out a smile. His face in the light of the candle hurt my heart. "Won't you forgive me, Daddy?" I implored. "I will never do it again—never! I promise you."



I closed my fingers over the cigarette case. I was afraid to give it to him just yet—afraid he might fling it back at me.

"Dropped his chin on his young breast, or bang it on the floor, for Daddy was so young that I often wondered how his mother happened to let him stray so far from home.

"What sort of Christmas have you had?" I ventured, talking high and light, as if nothing at all had happened.

"I haven't been over here six months, and, by Jove, they have forgotten all about me."

They hadn't. The mails had been delayed. That was all. But the day had passed.

Opposite the table is a big carved chair. He went over to it, doubled himself up in a disconsolate heap there, clasped his two hands about his knees and dropped his chin on his young breast, which heaved.

I hesitated for one moment only. Then I went to him, took his head in my hands, drew it back, bent forward and kissed him.

With a sob he threw his arms around me and gave me a bear hug that took away my breath.

"Quit!" I cried. "You are killing me!" He hugged me all the tighter. Looking up radiantly, he whispered: "Let's forget those people back there. They have forgotten us. Let's be married, you and I, and live in a little flat and be happy ever after."

"Would you marry a penny-a-liner?" I asked.

"Don't be mean," he commanded, frowning.

By this time I had rescued myself. I stood a little way off.

"I will marry you," I told him from there, "when you have got to be as old as I am and I as young as you."

"But that will never be," he objected wistfully.

"Of course not, foolish." I had arrived at my door. "Anyway," I concluded, with my hand on the knob, "laying the question of marriage aside, here is your old cigarette case I promised you." And I threw it at him.

In my room I stood before the mirror arranging my crushed pompadour and smiling at myself, so glad was I to be friends with the boy once more, when there came a tap at my door.

I tiptoed to it, opened it and peeped out.

The hall was dark. It was empty. But there on my threshold, in all the bravery of cockade and cuirass, stood the little Napoleon.

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MIDWINTER FESTIVAL

CHRISTMAS PERPETUATES
An Ancient Custom. :: :: ::

CHRIStMAS to all the civilized world is the day for which all other days were made. The trade of the world so far as it relates to personal wants, the commerce of the world so far as it concerns the luxuries and indeed many of the necessities of civilized man, circle about Christmas, says the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. For a year the makers of toys and bric-a-brac, the manufacturers of the thousand and one articles which our complex life demands, look forward to Christmas, labor to be ready for Christmas and in every way show their appreciation of the fact that the season of general rejoicing is their time of harvest.

We have accustomed ourselves to look upon this festival season as in a peculiar sense the heritage of the Christian nations, and we sometimes indulge in self congratulations at the thought that we alone possess the most inspiring of festivals, the feast of childhood, the season of universal merrymaking. So far as its present form and name are concerned we are doubtless in the right, but at the same time it is well to remember that while holiday seasons change name and form their value is rarely altered, for in celebrating Christmas we are simply perpetuating a custom so ancient that its origin is lost in those ages of myth when written record was not and tradition was the only guide.

Among all nations north of the equator there has from time immemorial existed a midwinter festival to hail the return of the sun from the south, and, according to the degree of civilization, this time of the year has always been celebrated with popular rejoicings. There is little doubt that the earliest form of religion is found in sun worship. Recognizing the fact that the king of day is the author of life and heat and comfort, he was revered accordingly and under various names and often with diverse attributes was honored as the source of all existence.

Christmas Menu.

- Blue Point.
- Cream of Chestnuts. Bread Sticks.
- Roast Goose with Baked Apples.
- Escaloped Onions.
- Glazed Sweet Potatoes.
- Spiced Figs. Celery.
- Fruit Salad. Cheese Wafers.
- Pom. Pudding. Hard Sauce.
- Caramel Mousse. Cake.
- Nuts. Fruit.
- Black Coffee. Roquefort Cheese.

Luck in Mince Pie.

In some parts of rural England every mince pie partaken of under a different roof during the Christmas season insures a happy month during the coming year. Every housekeeper has a stock of pies on hand to offer her friends, and no excuse for not eating is permissible except, "Thanks; I have eaten my 12."

The Christmas Rabbit.

The colored boy who finds a hare in his traps on Christmas day expects confidently to be lucky during the coming year. The left hind foot of such a rabbit is second in value as a charm only to that of one killed in a graveyard in the dark of the moon.

Escaloped Onions.

Pour boiling salted water over them, cook five minutes and change water, doing this twice. Boil until tender. If large quarters, cover with white sauce with buttered bread crumbs on top and bake until the crumbs are brown.

ON THE WINGS OF FAITH.

A little maid, in white arrayed,
Knelt by the dainty trundle bed;
With liping lip she softly prayed,
And this is what she said:

"Dear God, 'tis Christmas eve, you know,
And, oh, please do one thing for me,
I want to close my eyes and go,
In dreams, to papa o'er the sea!"

"I hung his stockings by the side
Of mine and mamma's on the tree,
And mamma hugged me tight and cried
And cried, 'cause papa couldn't see."

A soldier watching in Luzon
Paced slow, a weary sentinel,
He saw the flash of coming dawn
And cried the watchword, "All is well!"

So, sudden, in the solemn hush
That brooded o'er his lonely place
He heard the wings of angels rush
And felt sweet kisses on his face!

To play upon that big red drum.
R. K. MCKENITRICK.

Her Challenge.

A woman in Cape Colony on trial for some offense was told that she might "challenge" any one on the jury to whom she objected. She immediately took advantage of the permission by challenging a highly respectable farmer. On being asked afterward what her reason had been for doing so she explained that she had supposed she was obliged to object to some one, so she had picked out the ugliest.

Concerning Woman.

Miss Spittker (giggling)—Oh, Mr. Sharp, you know a woman is only as old as she looks.

Mr. Sharp—She ought to be thankful she isn't as young as she acts.—Detroit Free Press.

When potatoes were first introduced in Germany, they were for a long time, like tomatoes, cultivated merely as a curiosity. No one ate them, even pigs refusing them.



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