

# A KINSMAN of THE HEART

A Christmas Story

By JOHN J. a'BECKET

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The touch of a hand, the glance of an eye Or a word exchanged with a passerby; The glimpse of a face in a crowded street, And afterward life is incomplete.

—W. R. Hereford.

"Do you think she is a bride?" The duchess dropped the sugar into her tea without removing her glance from the young woman in question. It was Christmas day at Shepherd's, in Cairo. The subject of her inquiry was interesting enough to seem a grateful present to the guests.

"Could any one doubt it?" replied Baldwin. "It is as evident as that the smart, disagreeable male is the husband."

"Disagreeable!" The surprise, almost protest, in the duchess' tone had warrant. The young gentleman was tall, of elegant carriage and with the hall mark of breeding. His clothes were quite de rigueur. Her grace would have pronounced him distinguished without feeling constrained to qualify his moral or intellectual traits. After another quick appraising look at the man she said bluntly, "You think she is so very charming?"

"Your grace must see that she is charming," returned the young man calmly. "It was the man, not the girl, who betrayed his disagreeableness. Look at that!"

The girl had drawn closer to her companion and said something. He impressed his thin lips and gave a short nod of his head in acceptance of her remark without turning toward her. He was impatiently pushing on after the porter, the girl pressing after with a gliding briskness which kept her close at his heels.

The duchess smiled again. "Of course he might have turned," she said indulgently. "But there's the luggage."

"Of course they should have turned. There's the bride," returned Baldwin dogmatically.

"Granting you the merit of your discovery," the duchess resumed with playful sarcasm, "there are other obvious points. For instance, they are Americans. That is as palpable as usual."

"Accept an American's thanks," murmured Baldwin, "not for the truth, but your forgiving tone. Yet, do you know, the note of the thoroughbred American is to be facetiously cosmopolitan—solivitur cosmopolitanda."

"So few of that kind come abroad," replied the duchess absently. "But how very rude of me! My dear fellow, I never realize you as an American. You always seem to me a charming alien interloper at the United States embassy in London. Do American women know Latin, by the way?"

"Your grace knows everything." The young attaché assumed the air of being driven into a commonplace as he added, "Ignorance with you seems a courteous affectation."

"You have seen me put three lumps of sugar in my tea," replied the duchess archly, "and know that I like sweet things. Don't imagine that I shall protest because you pay extravagantly pretty compliments."

She smiled brightly, then settled back comfortably in her chair, raised her loggnette in a businesslike manner and went on: "Let us pursue our analysis of your interesting countrymen. Set me right if I go wrong. She is—eight—"

And from—New York? Not acquainted as yet, aux fonds, with Mr. Husband? He is very rich." Then, dropping the rising inflection, she added, with an assurance that excluded doubt: "She has a Raudnitz traveling gown on. She will wear a smart Worth gown at dinner."

"I need not tell you that you are right about the gowns. I can only know that such an exquisite figure deserves to be clothed as acceptably as possible. As to her age, you are possibly right; almost certainly so as regards the disagreeable husband's means. Girls of her type marry money. As to her habit, I hardly think it is New York. The New York girl is quick and too proudly knowing to hesitate in thought or movement. But she does not hurry. That is New England or western. Yet her soft, gliding grace unmistakably shows the southern girl."

By this time the couple under discussion had disappeared within the hotel. They had evidently just arrived on the afternoon train from Alexandria. Shepherd's was crowded that year. The little tables on the terrace in front of the hotel were nearly all occupied by people, chattering and laughing as they beguiled that delightful hour of the Cairo day with afternoon tea. New arrivals are lawful prey for lodgers' comments, and to have come two days before is to hold a resident's vantage ground, which warrants a critical inspection. Young married people, moreover, newly arrived or not, are ever and whosoever targets for tongue shafts. Two youthful beings mated and licensed for happiness surely suggest the fullness of life. The human doubt as to whether they have it makes conjecture interesting.

The young attaché consulted the register later and learned that they were Mr. and Mrs. Lucien Bonvale, whereupon he recalled what friends had told him of their marriage at the American chapel in Paris in the beginning of December. The groom was from Borden-town and, as the duchess had surmised,

rich. He not only belonged by birth to the class which is not obliged "to do anything for a living," but electively pertained to that unhappy portion of it which assumes the ennuil of an existence stimulated by no fixed ambition, lightened by no definite endeavor. Such vital hardship has been known to drive a man to drink.

The bride was one of two sisters celebrated in European centers for esprit and beauty. They were of fine New England stock, both parents descending from families of high repute for political and literary achievement. Baldwin was forced to admit that for once a glowing report had not paved the way to a disappointing reality. He had not supposed the girl was so young; still less had he imagined the compulsion of her charms.

Charles Bonvale was so radiantly beautiful that the most blase observer could not but surrender to some thrall. Her face was aristocratically oval. Her clear olive skin, smooth as a rose leaf, was suffused with the most delicate pink, as if Cupid were breathing on her cheeks; a well modeled nose, a mouth with clean cut, subtle curves and sensitive to a degree, which revealed perfect teeth when the lips parted and lent a lurking mobility, almost childlike, to her lower face. But her eyes and hair were the girl's crowning glory—such round, lustrous eyes, so brilliantly soft and, despite a keen alertness in their glance, inconspicuously beseeching. The long, silky lashes, with their upward curve, failed to lend even a suspicion of language to their brightness. The delicately arched eyebrows were an added note of wistfulness. In the wavy masses of hair there was a subdued glint as of burnished copper. On her hands, which were very temperamental, two or three unique gems flashed with dignified splendor.

"A transplanted Helen," thought Baldwin after a critical survey of the beautiful young creature. She was a type, and he relished a new type of the "eternal feminine" more than he would a bottle of Johannesberger from Prince Metternich's own cave. During his dinner he watched her from his table with keen but well cloaked vigilance.

The duchess was right again. The girl's hair wore a Worth dinner gown elaborately wrought out in the highest elegance of the prevailing mode. Her neck was so round and plastic that Baldwin felt it a delight to see the shapely head pivot on it, while the tempered modesty with which her corsage screened her exquisite bosom showed a masterly knowledge of the value of modified exposure.

The groom? Why, he was the groom, a side light on the bride. Baldwin regarded him solely as a correlated being, an accompaniment to his wife, a worthy one so far as externals went. He was not above noting that Mrs. Bonvale partook moderately of the champagne which Mr. Bonvale ordered. He consumed most of it and with something more than the relish with which a gentleman drinks wine at dinner.

"They are married, and it is the honeymoon," Baldwin remarked airily to the duchess as he passed her table.

During the evening in his role of benevolent spectator and student of his kind Baldwin did not neglect to observe that the young husband left his wife alone two or three times, though as yet she had apparently discovered no acquaintances at Shepherd's. These withdrawals were to repair the fatigue of travel by supplanting the wine at dinner with more potent if smaller drafts. Besides his absence of desire to supply his wife with any other companionship than his own, the perfumery character of Mr. Bonvale's attentions attested no tender solicitude to make himself as agreeable as possible. He seemed to guard rather than protect his wife.

Later on Baldwin felt the young wife's artlessly roving gaze veering in his direction. He considerably abstracted his own. When he let his glance drift her way again, thinking she would have passed him by, he was momentarily flattered to find her eyes fixed on him dreamily. Almost at the moment her husband turned and, with what Baldwin thought a tactless quickness, let his own eyes follow the direction of his wife's to ascertain the object of her regard. With still less tact he brought his thin lips tightly together, and his white forehead puckered like a peevish child's. He must have intimated to the lady his desire to withdraw, for he brusquely rose and looked about with the repellent air with which some people insinuate their exclusiveness. She got up at once and followed him from the room with graceful deference.

"He seems to like to stalk ahead and let his woman trail after him a la the aboriginal lords of creation," reflected Baldwin with a somewhat contemptuous smile. "The honeymoon is dwindling to a crescent, I fancy, and I should not wonder if there were a Bonvale impaled on its horns before long. But which?"

The Bonvales spent six weeks in Egypt. Mrs. Bonvale had that oriental sojourn in her memory ever after with something of the feeling with which the children of Israel may have reverted to their bondage in that land. She had little expected in a region saturated with antiquity to make acquaintance

## A LONG CHRISTMASTIDE.

Holidays That Extend Into the New Year.

While in this country, as in England, Germany and other parts of Europe, the joyous spirit of the Christmas festival is by no means limited to Dec. 25, but finds expression in many ways in the life and amusement of the people both before and after that day itself, comparatively little attention is paid here to the observance of the numerous designated holidays which in other lands go to make up Christmastide. The period opens with St. Thomas' day, which falls on Dec. 21, and closes with St. Duff's day, on Jan. 7. The first named festival is known in some parts of England as "Doling day," on account of the distribution of the bounty of charitable individuals, and in most English cities at the present time the day is given up largely to the anniversaries of charitable societies and the distribution of benefits among the poor and needy. It is also the day chosen for the election of church officers, a custom adopted here in some denominations, and it appears also from the old rhyme that certain public officials were elected at the same time:

My masters all, this is St. Thomas' day,  
And Christmas now can't be far off, you'll say,  
And when you to the ward moles do repair,  
I hope such good men will be chosen there  
As constables for the ensuing year  
As will not grudge the watchman good strong beer.

As for St. Duff's day, which closed the merry round of Christmastide, that anniversary is now rarely observed anywhere, but in the good old times in England it was not the least among the happy festivals of the year. It takes its name from the fact that on this day it was the custom for women to resume for a few hours their labors at the distaff or the spinning wheel. It was sometimes called "Rock day" in honor of the rock, which is another name for distaff.—Leslie's Weekly.

## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

From the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chapter II, Verses 7-20.

And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

"And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them.

## Druids and Mistletoe.

The Druids always sought the mistletoe by the full moon and, when they found it, rejoiced and worshipped. After cutting off its twigs with a golden sickle they sacrificed two milk white bulls beneath the tree. The sacred shrub was then immersed in water, and the resulting concoction became their remedy for all diseases. The early Christians would not permit the use of the mistletoe in their churches because of its heathenish origin; consequently it was hung only within the private abode and usually in the kitchen. Any maid caught standing beneath a branch had to forfeit a kiss to the gallant eagerly awaiting his opportunity. With each kiss a berry was plucked, and when all of the berries disappeared the bare branch was useless to the young man who wished to claim the privilege of thus saluting the fair damsel thereafter. The mistletoe was said to have been the original magical shrub or forbidden tree in the garden of Eden.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

## Christmas at Ninety in the Shade.

Christmas in the West Indies is very well observed. To meander about among palm trees or orange groves and fields of sugar cane on Christmas day, with the thermometer at 90 degrees in the shade, certainly has the zest of novelty to a northerner. If you are in the British West Indies on Christmas day your attention will be most attracted in all the Christmas gatherings of which you form a part, whether in the streets, the home or the church, by the close association of whites and blacks. The "color line" is not a live question.

## Boots as Stockings.

German children do not, as a general practice, hang up their stockings Christmas eve, but use their father's big boots instead.

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