

CLARE'S HOLIDAY

By LDITH M. BLANCHARD

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OUTSIDE, the snow lay thick and white. Inside, a young girl stared out upon it with unseeing eyes. Some fine lace that she was making had slipped unheeded to her lap, and she did not notice the tiny blasts of cold that swept in through the cracks near the window, sometimes with such force that they stirred the locks of her rich brown hair.

For a long time she sat thinking; then, suddenly, a sleigh dashed rapidly by, leaving a confused picture of splendid horses, flashing harnesses, fur robes and tinkling bells. She drew back quickly; but not before the man in the sleigh had seen her and lifted his cap. With a tinge of color in her cheeks she picked up the lace and began to work rapidly, just as the door was thrown open.

"Well, Clare, working as hard as ever, I see!" was the visitor's greeting. She was very fashionably dressed. Even her voice had the latest fashionable drawl. Clare thought involuntarily of a fashion plate as she helped remove the costly furs and expensive hat.

"I passed the senator as I came in," she remarked, with a sharp, inquisitive glance, seating herself on the wide window seat, where she could see everything inside or outside the room. A trifle more color came to Clare's cheeks.

"Yes, I saw his drive by," she answered. Then there was silence. The visitor drummed on the window pane.

"Well," she finally inquired, "haven't you anything to tell me? Isn't it settled yet? Haven't you seen the folly of sticking here, when you might have more money than you could spend?"

"And a disreputable old man thrown in!" flashed Clare. "Now, let's not go all over the old ground again. We have done it so often before, you know, with no good results. I have as much right to my opinions as you have to yours. You made your own choice, and took wealth and position—and the man! But why bother about me? You have everything you want."

"Yes, and some things I don't want—among them a sister who disgraces me!"

Clare looked up proudly. "You will apologize for that word, or you and I will never meet again," she said, calmly. Mrs. Singleton saw the danger signal in her eyes.

"Oh, I will, of course!" she exclaimed. "But I really do not know what word to use in its place. You are the one thing that keeps me back, socially; every once in a while people mention my 'seamstress sister.' Ever since Lady Herford heard it she has taken pains to inquire for you every time we meet. I was not invited to her last dinner, either, and I am sure it was on account of you," she finished, in an aggrieved tone.

"Poor Julia!" exclaimed her sister, half mockingly. "I am not a seamstress. But don't you think they would better call me one than to say I sold myself for gold?"

Mrs. Singleton shrugged her shoulders. "If you are going to get personal, I think I'll go," she said, rising. "But, Clare, if you won't say 'yes' to the senator, please, oh, please leave all this and live with me. Perhaps society will take you back after a while."

A peculiar smile flitted across Clare's face. "Do you really think so?" she inquired. Mrs. Singleton pondered.

"Yes, I do," she finally said. "Of course it will mean a lot of hard work; they won't forget for a long while. But I think it might be managed."

Then Clare laughed outright, and laughed again at Mrs. Singleton's surprise. "Let me see, Julia," she said gently. "It is now six months since father died and I came here to earn my own living by painting and making lace. Yes, I know I refused to share your home, and insisted on coming to this 'unfashionable street.' And this, you say, has cost me my position in society? Will you open that top drawer of the desk? See what is there."

"Why, it is full of letters—invitations!" exclaimed Mrs. Singleton, doing as she was requested. "What! Do you mean to say you've been receiving them all the time?"

"Several every day," carelessly. "And you never told me! You always were the oddest person I ever saw, and—what's this? The Hon. George Verner's dinner and Louis Beresford's!" she exclaimed, enviously. "Lady Herford's, too!" she almost screamed. "And you refused invitations that half the town would have given anything to get! Are you crazy?"

"No, not quite," laughed Clare. "But I think I shall be if you do not go soon, Julia. You get me all 'muddled up,' as old mammy used to say, and I can't work so well. Here, let me hold your coat."

Mrs. Singleton dressed silently. She was too dazed to speak. As she started to go she brightened up for a moment.

"Of course they knew you would decline," she explained, "and they invited you just to spite me. Good-by, dear!"

The lace fell unheeded again when Clare was once more alone.

"And that is the world I have left!" she whispered. "And the world that is calling me to return! Never!" she exclaimed aloud. "I was undecided before Julia came; now, I am sure of myself. It is clear that I can never live with her, nor allow her to help me; and better live here alone forever than marry the senator, or any other man simply for money. There, I will settle that matter at once."

Flinging her work aside she crossed to the desk and wrote rapidly. Then she ran down the stairs and dropped the note into a letter box just across the street. When she returned she waltzed gaily around the room. She had acquired the habit of talking to herself, for at times it was a relief to hear even her own voice break the silence.

"Good-by to the senator forever," she sang. "Farewell to his money and all that it can buy! Why, I believe I feel better already. I believe it was that money that was making me blue. Now I will work hard; for I like work and the life here—all but Sundays and holidays—they drag!"

Thanksgiving day had just passed. Clare had spent it alone, trying to think of a long list of reasons for being thankful. Some way the list was rather short. Her mind had persisted in veering off to a certain young man with boyish face and laughing eyes—a friend of long ago. She kept wondering why he had gone away so suddenly. At times she had thought that his eyes told a story that would have been worth listening to; but he had gone without a word. Since she had been living alone she had thought of him often.

The senator, and all the advantages he could offer, being definitely refused, Clare grew brighter, and the tired look left her face. She often sang light-heartedly, as the days flew on toward Christmas. All invitations were refused, and on Christmas morning she arose as usual and began to paint. Soon she threw down her brush in despair.

"It's no use; I can't to-day!" she said, mournfully. "I do really hate holidays. Everything will go all right to-morrow, but for to-day—I must give it up!"

To pass the time away she began to look through some of her father's old books; but her mind still wandered off to the laughing blue eyes. She remembered, with a start, that it was just one year since she had seen him. There had been company—she had slipped away to the library for a stolen glimpse of a book she was reading. He had followed and they had a happy half hour together. Then some one called, and when at last she returned the room was empty! She had never seen him since. What was it she had been reading? Oh, yes, 'Vanity Fair!' She looked through the books, and when she found it touched it tenderly. They had discussed it together! Someway, the laughing blue eyes seemed very near her now.

"If he had said only one word," she murmured.

Suddenly something white and bulky fell from the book to her lap. She caught her breath as she saw that it was a letter with an unbroken seal. She knew the writing—and her hands trembled. In a flash she saw it all. He had left it in the book she had been reading, thinking she would find it at once. And she had not opened the book since! As she read, tears filled her eyes; it was the outpouring of a boyish soul, revealing his love and asking her to wait. When she reached the end she bowed her head and wept tears of joy.

"I would rather have one letter like this," she sobbed, "than a thousand senators, with all their money! I do not think I dislike holidays so much, after all!"

Christmas evening was spent in writing page after page of explanations. There were so many that the letter was much over weight. The last days of the year slipped rapidly by, and no reply came. Clare began to look anxious. All sorts of fears beset her; she could not account for his silence. Finally came the last day of the year—and still no reply.

"Another holiday to-morrow!" Clare groaned. "How I hate them!" She retired early and cried herself to sleep, dreaming all night of deaths, sickness, murders, fires and many horrible, impossible things. A vigorous knocking awoke her early in the morning.

"Telegram, ma'am!" said a voice. Clare dressed as hastily as possible, a terrible fear at her heart. Her dreams must have meant trouble of some kind, and she felt that it had come. Trembling, she tore open the envelope.

"Happy New Year for us both. Will arrive to-day. Letter just received."

"FRANK."

"Oh, I wish I had never said such horrid things about holidays!" exclaimed Clare, with solemn joy.

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A singular method of protecting rolls of butter from deterioration due to outside influences is practiced in Germany. It consists simply in coating the butter with a glaze of melted sugar laid on with a soft brush. The surface of the butter is slightly melted and a protective varnish is formed. The process has recently been employed on a large scale in England.

As an encouragement to school children to be regular and punctual in their attendance at school, the Surrey county (England) education committee has decided to give them picture postcards bearing views of places of historic and local interest in the county.

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Short Telegrams FROM THE Theater of War

FIERCE BLAZE RAGED AT PORT ARTHUR.
St. Petersburg, Nov. 25.—Unofficial advices only bring affairs at the front up to November 23, and the absence of official news of later date, either from the Japanese or the Russian side, arouses the belief that more important operations than heretofore may be progressing. Reports from correspondents at the front indicate renewed skirmishing, culminating the night of November 22 in a fresh attack on Poutloff (Lone Tree) Hill, in which the Japanese were repulsed with heavy loss, and also a severe fight with Chinese bandits near Kailuan.

London, Nov. 25.—The correspondent at Moscow of the Daily Telegraph claims authority for the statement that Gen. Stoessel's dispatch sent by the torpedo boat Rastoropny informed Emperor Nicholas that the Port Arthur garrison was being starved out.

Tokio, Nov. 25.—Telegraphing yesterday the headquarters of the army before Port Arthur reports: "The conflagration in the buildings near the arsenal, caused by our naval guns, which began about noon November 22, continued until 2 o'clock on the morning of November 23. It is probable that the coal stores have been burned."

Manchurian headquarters in a telegram dated November 23, reports: "At midnight November 22, 600 of the enemy's infantry attacked Singluntun. Our advanced pickets, after resisting the attack for several hours, safely retired to the main body. The village was entirely burned by the enemy."

"At dawn November 23 the enemy made several surprise attacks near the Shalke railway bridge and at Paotzuven, but the attacks were entirely repulsed."

Chefoo, Nov. 25.—The report that the steamer Tungchow, laden with 30,000 tons of meat, was captured by the Japanese on Wednesday while trying to enter Port Arthur, appears to be correct. The Tungchow was a British vessel.

Headquarters of the Third Japanese Army before Port Arthur, Nov. 25.—The only permanent forts in the possession of the Japanese are the two Panlung forts captured in August. They hold the advance works of the Rihlung redoubt, called Fort Kuropatkin, an entrenched hill miscalled Pfort, Koba Hill, Sachitakyama and One Hundred and Seventy-four Meter Hill.

They also occupy the galleries and moats of the two Rihlung forts and North Kekwan fort.

—O—O—O—

EMPEROR NICHOLAS CAVE ZEMSTOVISTS A HEARING.

St. Petersburg, Nov. 26.—The unexpected may happen after all. The meeting of Zemstovists may indeed mark the inauguration of a new era for Russia. Emperor Nicholas, the initiator of the plan for universal disarmament, may turn back upon the reactionaries and crown his reign by granting to his subjects the constitution which his grandfather had already prepared when he fell by the hand of an assassin.

The basis of such a possibility is the significant fact that yesterday the emperor received in the palace at Tsarskoe-Selo four prominent members of the Zemstvo congress.

They explained fully their position and reiterated the views expressed by the memorial that the salvation of the empire from ruin by revolution lay in the adoption of the ideas expressed in the memorial. The emperor was greatly impressed by what he heard and asked many questions. While it is understood that he gave no indication of his purposes except the sympathy he displayed, the deputation, when they returned to St. Petersburg, were in high spirits.

St. Petersburg, Nov. 26.—There is an entire lack of news from the front. The report that the Japanese are concentrating their energies for a desperate assault on Port Arthur, in view of the approach of the Baltic squadron, is generally credited.

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