

Good Will Toward All Men

By ETHEL BARRINGTON



N sharp, bleak gusts the wind swept fitfully through Main street, shaking from their vantage points, on roof and porch, great pointed icicles that hung in glistening array, like crystal prisms on a chandelier.

In the road, thick snow had packed and hardened, while the air vibrated with the jingle of bells decorating alike sleighs and runned wagons.

Yet on Christmas eve, Maris Favor, returning from the office where the rush of holiday work had detained her far beyond her usual hour, paused, wondering what attracted the crowd of her fellow townsmen.

She crossed to the outer edge of the gathering in the roadway, and by a flaring torch, held by a companion of the man who was speaking, she saw a street preacher.

"Good-will towards all men," was the text he preached. "Good-will not alone towards those in our beloved and immediate circle; not alone towards such as we hold in careless tolerant regard, but good-will towards all, whether they have done us good or evil turns.

"Which among you," cried the preacher, his voice risen to accusing note, "which among you, were all secrets known, would not be found to cherish and foster the memory of some special wrong, suffered perhaps years ago, that you hold back, and except when you pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'"

In the second story of the hotel one of the windows had been raised, and Maris, feeling that curious sensation which is caused by an intent regard, glanced up to encounter the concentrated gaze of the mistress of the hostelry, who leaned a little distance between the parted shutters.

Maris, with sullen color mounting to her face, returned the look; power to turn aside being negated by some strange force in the eyes that compelled hers.

She and the woman, who once had been as a mother to her only to slam the door of happiness in her face, continued to stare across the heads of the preacher and his listening audience.

The older woman leaned a little farther and, with imperative finger, beckoned the girl to enter the hotel. The action broke the spell and Maris, with a defiant negation of the head, turned to pursue her way.

manner—as you have done. He's grown hard, and a bit reckless." The girl moved restlessly in her chair.

"I must be going." "It's pleasant to have you, Maris." The woman ignored the suggestion. "We always did sit together on Christmas eve, if you remember—"

Then, as Maris offered no comment, Mrs. Castle drifted into memories of small, intimate happenings of their past daily life, of festivities, and social merriment that marked such seasons as the present one.

"I used to fancy that life would be always the same—"

she continued, her voice low with the restraint she put upon herself. "Maris—"

her thin hand bridged the space between their chairs and softly touched the girl's knee. You can't have lost all your sweetness. You ain't so hard as you would pretend to me?"

"Don't!" The girl rose abruptly, turning her back deliberately to the photograph in the silver frame.

"When we parted I thought you hard, selfish unjust—and I kept my resentment alive, burning deep down in my heart—I wouldn't let it die, just as that preacher down stairs said.

When there's a thing like that in your soul, the little shoots of tenderness of charity, that keep a woman's nature sweet, are nipped and starved. You are right—I am changed. But tonight, for the sake of what you did when I was a forlorn, motherless girl, I'd like to shake hands. Wait—"

She thrust and clasped her hands behind her back as the elder woman rose, a tender longing, suffusing her pallid face, and continued in a strained and breathless sort of voice.

"You thought because Ben was your son, you had a right to decide his life; you thought because you had befriended me, you could dictate my life, too. I see, now, that there was force in both arguments. At the time the hurt was too deep. I had been only the creature of your charity, where I imagined myself, all but in blood, a daughter."

"You were courageous—I watched you, always, though I never let you know."

"Courageous! What gave me courage to face the world after you had cast me from your home? It was the knowledge that it was not in your power to take Ben from me—I sent him away myself."

Theodora's Yule Log

By DOROTHY BLACKMORE



UT we'll have to have a Yule log, won't we?" asked Patricia, the sixteen-year-old member of the Morton family.

"Of course. What would Christmas in the country be without a roaring fire in the grate?" Theodora, two years older, spoke in a take-it-for-granted manner that caused the other members of the large family to look at each other.

"Wood is more easily burned than bought," remarked a still younger sister, "and you know father isn't as rich as a banker this year. Now if I were a boy or if Willie were a little bigger, we could go out in the woods and hunt some stumps and wood for our Christmas fire."

"If," repeated Patricia. "Yes; we really need a big brother, don't we, Willie?" asked Theodora of the small boy who was sitting on the floor trying to make his improvised engine run on two laths for tracks.

"Wood is more easily burned than bought," remarked a still younger sister, "and you know father isn't as rich as a banker this year. Now if I were a boy or if Willie were a little bigger, we could go out in the woods and hunt some stumps and wood for our Christmas fire."

"If," repeated Patricia. "Yes; we really need a big brother, don't we, Willie?" asked Theodora of the small boy who was sitting on the floor trying to make his improvised engine run on two laths for tracks.

"The little lad paid not the slightest attention to the remarks of his sisters. He was surfeited with that sort of relative and they were as so many uninteresting flies to his diminutive masculine mind. He was the youngest of the family and the only boy, much to the regret of the hard-working father and gentle mother."

"I say, Willie," persisted his sister, "why aren't you big enough to get us some logs for the Christmas fire? We want you to hurry up and be a big brother."

"I'm as big as Carl Jenkins, an' he's bigger'n his sister," argued Willie half-heartedly, still struggling with his obstreperous engine.

"That's logic for you," laughed Patricia, patting the bland curls on the head at her feet.

"It's logic—not logic—we're crazy for," added Theodora, wisely.

"And I might inform you, incidentally that that is the lowest form of humor—it isn't even respectable, my dear sister," observed the sixteen-year-old, with a withering glance.

but to them—Theodora and her sweetheart—it was as a matter of life and death. How could he understand that it had been one of her proudest possessions—her ability to hold the friendship of all the boys she had known as a child? Why, she had argued with him, should she deny this boy the friendship that had been theirs almost since babyhood, just because a new man—a different sort of man altogether—had come into her life.

If he could not be broad enough to let her have her friends—they were better apart. If he couldn't believe in her sufficiently to accept her word that there was nothing more than a staunch friendship existing elsewhere, he did not love her. Had she not been taught in her catechism at Sunday school to believe first—then to love?

The breach had been widening with an unhappy lover at either end of it. Harold had thought of it all day long and as he wended his way slowly homeward on the suburban train and got off at the little suburban station among commuters, Christmas-bundle-laden and laughing and joking with the very spirit of the holidays, his heart was as heavy as if he had committed a crime.

Soft flakes of snow were flying here and there and he turned up his collar and put his face down as he climbed the hill to his home. He did not once turn in the direction of the Morton home on the opposite side of the street. At his feet, and being quickly covered with snow flakes, he noticed a tiny blue envelope. Almost indifferently, he stooped and picked it up.

In a childish—almost baby hand—was the crude little pencil scrawl that Harold made out to be Santa Claus. What should he do? If he did not open it and read it, it would be covered with snow and the childish wish go ungratified—for he knew it must be a baby's letter to his good St. Nick.

"Please I want a big brother to gather logs, Santa Claus. I want a track for my engine and anything else I wish one could be quite, quite sincere!" she said. "I wish we could give only what and to whom the heart prompts."

"The head permits—and the purse makes possible," he finished. "Give me back my pipe, girl! By the way, what did you send to—Fannie?"

Joanna jumped from her seat and faced him from the mantel, her little head high, her pretty face flushed, but her eye cold, her tongue silent.

"Nothing," she said at last. "She deserves nothing. She tried to separate us by her wiles, and her slander—and almost succeeded, as you know! I don't care if we were brought up together almost like sisters. And her runaway marriage—and a divorce in three months after, and her indiscretion making everyone talk! What, I would like to know, could I send her?"

"Her husband's eyes kindled with his thought. "What could you send her? How about the gift of mercy—of forgiveness. How about the real gifts? I thought we had both held them in mind this year?" She stared at him, but comprehendingly. She had not thought of forgiving—Fannie.

"Do you doubt—my love, Jo?" She came over to his arms, and shook her head. "You surely know I never—care for her! You are surely unhappy jealous. And she was—very unhappy about Bert Fountain. I am sure she thought you managed to get him interested in May Saunders, and so she told those stories out of pure revenge!"

"She was—outraged," flamed the young wife of hardly two years. But Walter persisted. He wanted peace, even with this foolish third cousin.

"Well, nothing is too outrageous to forgive! and remember that our set has more or less cut her ever since—and that she did not get Bert whom she certainly loved. She was more unfortunate than to blame in her marriage, but nobody will forgive her and take her back to favor until you do."

"She's in Europe—What's the difference?" "No—she's come back. I saw it in the paper this afternoon. She's at the Burkley. You see she's come home for Christmas, Jo." He turned his wife's sweet face so that he could see it, but a hard look settled about her mouth. He made haste to change the subject, knowing he had said enough, and that she would remember his words.

"How about the dinner tomorrow? Everybody safe to come? I just gave the cook \$5 and a lot of deserved praise—it may polish off her perfection as well as her good nature! Who've you got for Bert Fountain to take out?"

And the Greatest Is Charity

By LOUISE OLNEY



JOANNA THURSTON dispatched the last little ribbon-tied, holly-sprigged packet by a messenger boy, and came in from the hall with a sigh of relief. It was late afternoon, and Walter Thurston sat before the open fire in masculine

peace midst the pre-Christmas swirl of the household—and of the world. He was smoking, and his wife sat upon the arm of his chair and took his pipe from him.

"There! The family duty is done for another year! Nobody forgotten—I remembered last year's troubles and kept a list. Your folks, and my folks, our servants, our friends—"

"Our near-friends, and our might-be foes!" he interrupted with a little laugh. "I'll wager that my good wife didn't neglect the Bentons, second cousin Tessie—even Mrs. Winkler!"

"The Bentons can harm—or help your business, cousin Tessie might leave you her fortune, and anyway she's old and alone; Mrs. Winkler has a most scandalous tongue, and one instinctively keeps on her right side, and she gave us an extravagant wedding gift, you know." Walter Thurston nodded his head, and sighed in unison with his wife.

"I wish one could be quite, quite sincere!" she said. "I wish we could give only what and to whom the heart prompts."

"The head permits—and the purse makes possible," he finished. "Give me back my pipe, girl! By the way, what did you send to—Fannie?"

Joanna jumped from her seat and faced him from the mantel, her little head high, her pretty face flushed, but her eye cold, her tongue silent.

"Nothing," she said at last. "She deserves nothing. She tried to separate us by her wiles, and her slander—and almost succeeded, as you know! I don't care if we were brought up together almost like sisters. And her runaway marriage—and a divorce in three months after, and her indiscretion making everyone talk! What, I would like to know, could I send her?"

"Her husband's eyes kindled with his thought. "What could you send her? How about the gift of mercy—of forgiveness. How about the real gifts? I thought we had both held them in mind this year?" She stared at him, but comprehendingly. She had not thought of forgiving—Fannie.

"Do you doubt—my love, Jo?" She came over to his arms, and shook her head. "You surely know I never—care for her! You are surely unhappy jealous. And she was—very unhappy about Bert Fountain. I am sure she thought you managed to get him interested in May Saunders, and so she told those stories out of pure revenge!"

"She was—outraged," flamed the young wife of hardly two years. But Walter persisted. He wanted peace, even with this foolish third cousin.

big chair and sat thinking. She looked about the pretty room, thought about her perfect married happiness, her well-ordered house, the social authority which as a young matron was following on her popularity and correctness as a young girl.

Presently she rose and went over the house, already perfect in every detail. She conferred again with the cook, and finally was recalled to the living-room by the ringing of the 'phone. It was May Saunders with a sorry tale of illness in her home, whither she must start at once, and of real grief that she must give up the dinner and the house party. She hoped Joanna would not be put out, either, but it was so hard to get any one so late in such a gay season and so many out of town for the holidays.

Joanna went back to the fire and, foot on fender, stood looking down at the flames. Whom should she have in Mary's stead? Then her gaze came back to the mantel, and fell on a little illuminated card received in the last mail from an old aunt.

It was a Scripture verse and made her think of her childhood and the rewards of merit at Sunday school. She picked it up and read it.

"And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." She repeated the last phrase to herself, and remembered her generous check for the city's poor, her class at the settlement, the young girl she kept in clothes, even the widow who came nightly to her kitchen for left-over food—her generosity to her family and friends. Was this charity? Perhaps—but not all—not enough. What had her husband said of mercy?—forgiveness? Then her mind returned to the missing dinner guest—and to Fannie, poor, silly,

mistaken, unhappy Fannie. She stood, still with the card in her hand. Then she dropped it and went to the 'phone.

She searched the book for a number, called for the Burkley, and Mrs. Frances Stone. She held the receiver to her ear and waited.

"Is that you, Fannie? Yes—guess who. No! no! It's Jo, Joanna Thurston! I just learned that you are at home again. I have an invitation for you, and under the circumstances I hope you will waive ceremony and accept, even if it is at the eleventh hour! Of course I could not know you would be back. Walter and I are giving a Christmas dinner—the old crowd—you'll know them all, about thirty for about, and a house party after for about ten people—our most intimate friends. Could you come? Yes? Well, can you put up with Bert Fountain to take you out?"

Then she listened for some little time, and the tears came to her eyes. "Why, Fan! Please don't—why, are you crying over the 'phone. Somebody will hear you, child, even if the booth is closed! Walter and I don't hold anything against you—not a thing!—probably we misjudged you, too." Her voice rang true and sincere, for she never did things by halves. Since she was to forgive, she would forgive freely, and follow the forgiveness by forgetfulness. Another bit of generous trust occurred to her, and she spoke once more.

"Fannie, can't you come out to the house for a little talk tonight? I'll send Walter to bring you—about eight. All right; be ready! Good-by, dear!" Fannie's plea for forgiveness, her evident joy at being received back into friendship and favor, affected Joanna as she would not have believed. Her eyes shone with tears and her cheeks were flushed. She rose from the 'phone chair—and faced her husband, who stood calmly listening.

"Walter, you heard me! See what your preaching did to soften an unforgiving spirit," she laughed. He drew her close, then held her off to look at her, and pulled her with him back to the fire.

"Such a little brick! Such a wife!" he exclaimed. Then he stooped to pick up the little illuminated Christmas card from the rug.

"Your text," she submitted, demurely, "and a very good text indeed! I think I can repeat it, as I used to when I came home from church and was going to show grandfather how very good I was. 'And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' Walter—Fan actually—cried!"

He reached for his wife's hand, and the two stood in the firelight and the peace and good will of the Christmas spirit erect with its blessing into their open hearts.



And Rachel Castle Stood Listening—Her Face Turned Towards the Door.



And I Might Inform You Incidentally That That is the Lowest Form of Humor.



What Could You Send Her? How About the Gift of Mercy?