

Beasley's Christmas Party

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

The maple-bordered street was as still as a country Sunday; so quiet that there seemed an echo to my foot-steps. It was four o'clock in the morning; clear October moonlight misted through the thinning foliage to the shadowy sidewalk and lay like a transparent sliver of fog upon the house of my admiration, as I strode along, returning from my first night's work on the Wainwright Morning Despatch.

I had already marked that house as the finest (to my taste) in Wainwright, though hitherto, on my excursions to this metropolis, the state capital, I was not without a certain native jealousy that Spencerville, the county-seat where I lived, had nothing so good. Now, however, I approached its purlieus with a pleasure in it quite unalloyed, for I was at last myself a resident (albeit of only one day's standing) of Wainwright, and the house—though I had not even an idea who lived there—part of my possessions as a citizen. Moreover, I might enjoy the warmer pride of a next-door-neighbor, for Mrs. Apperthwaite's, where I had taken a room, was just beyond.

This was the quietest part of Wainwright; business stopped short of it, and the "fashionable residence section" had overleaped this "forgotten backwater," leaving it undisturbed and unchanging, with that look about it which is the quality of few urban quarters, and eventually of none, as a town grows to be a city—the look of still being a neighborhood. This friendliness of appearance was largely the emanation of the homely and beautiful house which so greatly pleased my fancy.

It might be difficult to say why I thought it the "finest" house in Wainwright, for a simpler structure would be hard to imagine; it was merely a big, old-fashioned brick house, painted brown and very plain, set well away from the street among some splendid forest trees, with a fair spread of flat lawn. But it gave back a great deal for your glance, just as some people do. It was a large house, as I say, yet it looked not like a mansion but like a home; and made you wish that you lived in it. Or, driving by, of an evening, you would have liked to stop your car and go in; it spoke so surely of hearty, old-fashioned people living there, who would welcome you merrily.

It looked like a house where there were a grandfather and a grandmother; where holidays were warmly kept; where there were bolsherois family reunions to which uncles and aunts, who had been born there, would return from no matter what distances; a house where big turkeys would be on the table often; where one called "the hired man," (and named either Abner or Ole) would crack walnuts upon a flatiron clutched between his knees on the back porch; it looked like a house where they played charades; where there would be long streamers of evergreen and dozens of wreaths of holly at Christmas time; where there were tearful, happy weddings and great throwings of rice after little brides, from the broad front steps; in a word, it was the sort of a house to make the hearts of spinsters and bachelors very lonely and wistful—and that is about as near as I can come to my reason for thinking it the finest house in Wainwright.

The moon hung kindly above its level door in the silence of that October morning, as I checked my gait to loiter along the picket fence; but suddenly the house showed a light of its own. The spurt of a match took my eye to one of the upper windows then a steadier glow of orange told me that a lamp was lighted. The window was opened, and a man looked out and whistled loudly.

I stopped, thinking he meant to attract my attention; that something might be wrong; that perhaps someone was needed to go for a doctor. My mistake was immediately evident, however; I stood in the shadow of the trees bordering the sidewalk, and the man at the window had not seen me. "Boy! boy!" he called, softly. "Where are you, Simplerdora?" He leaned from the window, looking downward. "Why, there you are!" he exclaimed, and turned to address some invisible person within the room. "He's right there underneath the window. I'll bring him up." He leaned out again. "Wait there, Simplerdora!" he called. "I'll be down in a jiffy and let you in."

Puzzled, I stared at the vacant lawn before me. The clear moonlight revealed it brightly, and it was empty of any living presence; there were no bushes nor shrubs—nor even shadows—that could have been mistaken for a boy, if "Simplerdora" was

a boy. There was no dog in sight; there was no cat; there was nothing beneath the window except thick, close-cropped grass.

A light shone in the hallway behind the broad front door; one of these was opened, and revealed in silhouette the tall, thin figure of a man in a long, old-fashioned dressing-gown.

"Simplerdora," he said, addressing the night air with considerable severity, "I don't know what to make of you. You might have caught your death of cold, roving out at such an hour. But there," he continued, more indulgently; "wipe your feet on the mat and come in. You're safe now!"

He closed the door, and I heard him call to some one up-stairs, as he arranged the fastenings: "Simplerdora is all right—only a little chilled. I'll bring him up to your fire."

I went on my way in a condition of astonishment that engendered, almost, a doubt of my eyes; for if my sight was unimpaired and myself not subject to optical or mental delusion, neither boy nor dog nor bird nor cat, nor any other object of this visible world, had entered that opened door. Was my "finest" house, then, a place of call for wandering ghosts, who came home to roost at four in the morning?

It was only a step to Mrs. Apperthwaite's; I let myself in with the key that good lady had given me, stole up to my room, went to my window, and stared across the yard at the house next door. The front window in the second story, I decided, necessarily belonged to that room in which the



Mrs. Apperthwaite Was the Kind of Woman Whom You Would Expect to Have a Beautiful Daughter, and Miss Apperthwaite More Than Fulfilled Her Mother's Promise.

lamp had been lighted; but all was dark there now. I went to bed, and dreamed that I was out at sea in a fog, having embarked on a transparent vessel whose preposterous name, inscribed upon glass life-belts, depending here and there from an invisible rail, was "Simplerdora."

II.
Mrs. Apperthwaite's was a commodious old house, the greater part of it of about the same age, I judged, as its neighbors; but the late Mr. Apperthwaite had caught the Mansard fever of the late Seventies, and the building disease, once fastened upon him, had never known a convalescence, but, rather, a series of relapses, the tokens of which, in the nature of a cupola and a couple of frame turrets, were terrifically apparent. These romantic misplacements seemed to me not inharmonious with the library, a cheerful and pleasantly shabby apartment down-stairs, where I found (over a substratum of history, encyclopaedia, and family Bible) some worn old volumes of "Godey's Lady's Book," an early edition of Cooper's works; Scott, Bulwer, Macaulay, Byron, and Tennyson, complete; some old volumes of Victor Hugo, of the elder Dumas, of Flaubert, of Gautier, and of Balzac; "Clarissa," "Lalla Rookh," "The Alhambra," "Benlah," "Uarda," "Lucile," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ben-Hur," "Tribby," "She," "Little Lord Fauntleroy;" and of a later decade, there were novels about those delicately tan-

gled emotions experienced by the supreme few; and stories of adventurous-royalty; tales of "clean-limbed young American manhood;" and some thin volumes of rather precious verse.

'Twas amid these romantic scenes that I awaited the sound of the lunch-bell (which for me was the announcement of breakfast), when I arose from my first night's slumbers under Mrs. Apperthwaite's roof; and I wondered if the books were a fair mirror of Miss Apperthwaite's mind (I had been told that Mrs. Apperthwaite had a daughter). Mrs. Apperthwaite herself, in her youth, might have sat to an illustrator of Scott or Bulwer. Even now you could see she had come as near being romantically beautiful as was consistently proper for such a timid, gentle little gentlewoman as she was. Reduced, by her husband's insolvency (coincident with his demise) to "keeping boarders," she did it gracefully, as if the urgency thereto were only a spirit, of quiet hospitality. It should be added in haste that she set an excellent table.

Moreover, the guests who gathered at her board were of a very attractive description, as I decided the instant my eye fell upon the lady who sat opposite me at lunch. I knew at once that she was Miss Apperthwaite, she "went so," as they say, with her mother; nothing could have been more suitable. Mrs. Apperthwaite was the kind of woman whom you would expect to have a beautiful daughter, and Miss Apperthwaite more than fulfilled her mother's promise.

I guessed her to be more than Juliet Capulet's age, indeed, yet still between that and the perfect age of woman. She was of a larger, fuller, more striking type than Mrs. Apperthwaite, a bolder type one might put it—though she might have been a great deal bolder than Mrs. Apperthwaite without being bold. Certainly she was handsome enough to make it difficult for a young fellow to keep from staring at her. She had an abundance of very soft, dark hair, worn almost austerely, as if its profusion necessitated repression; and I am compelled to admit that her fine eyes expressed a distant contemplation—obviously of habit not of mood—so pronounced that one of her enemies (if she had any) might have described them as "dreamy."

Only one other of my own sex was present at the lunch table, a Mr. Dowden, an elderly lawyer and politician of whom I had heard, and to whom Mrs. Apperthwaite, coming in after the rest of us were seated, introduced me. She made the presentation general; and I had the experience of receiving a nod and a slow glance, in which there was a sort of dusky, estimating brilliance, from the beautiful lady opposite me.

It might have been better manners for me to address myself to Mr. Dowden, or one of the very nice elderly women, who were my fellow-guests, than to open a conversation with Miss Apperthwaite; but I did not stop to think of that.

"You have a splendid old house next door to you here, Miss Apperthwaite," I said. "It's a privilege to find it in view from my window."

There was a faint stir as of some consternation in the little company. The elderly ladies stopped talking abruptly and exchanged glances, though this was not of my observation at the moment, I think, but recurred to my consciousness later, when I had perceived my blunder.

"May I ask who lives there?" I pursued.

Miss Apperthwaite allowed her noticeable lashes to cover her eyes for an instant, then looked up again.

"A Mr. Beasley," she said.

"Not the Honorable David Beasley?" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she returned with a certain gravity which I afterward wished had checked me. "Do you know him?"

"Not in person," I explained. "You see, I've written a good deal about him. I was with the Spencerville Journal until a few days ago, and even in the country we know who's who in politics over the state. Beasley's the man that went to Congress and never made a speech—never made even a motion to adjourn—but got everything his district wanted. There's talk of him for governor."

"Indeed?"

"And so it's the Honorable David Beasley who lives in that splendid place. How curious that is!"

"Why?" asked Miss Apperthwaite.

"It seems too big for one man," I answered; "and I've always had the impression Mr. Beasley was a bachelor."

"Yes," she said, rather slowly, "he is."

"But of course he doesn't live there all alone," I supposed, aloud, "probably he has—"

"No. There's no one else—except a couple of colored servants."

"What a crime!" I exclaimed. "If there ever was a house meant for a large family, that one is. Can't you almost hear it crying out for heaps and heaps of romping children? I should think—"

I was interrupted by a loud cough from Mr. Dowden, so abrupt and artificial that his intention to check the flow of my innocent prattle was embarrassingly obvious—even to me!

"Can you tell me," he said, leaning forward and following up the interruption as hastily as possible, "what the farmers were getting for their wheat when you left Spencerville?"

"I mean he's a man of no imagination. None in the world. Not one ounce of imagination. Not one grain!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

In Winter Fabrics

Brocade in Crepe and Satin Is in the Modish List.

Shimmering Weaves Have Suppleness Adapted to Draperies That Distinguish Straight Silhouette.

It is quite certain that some lovely costumes will be introduced during the season for the sumptuous fabrics now in vogue cannot fail to prove an inspiration to the designers at home and abroad, observes a fashion authority.

For the last two seasons there has been an insistent demand for soft, clinging draperies. There was an infinite variety of black crepes and later on, or, to be perfectly accurate, this summer, there was a transforming of a somber world into a flower garden. This reaction from the dull black crepe to the more elaborate and colorful materials of the moment is now seen in the increasing enthusiasm for the blistered silks which are so favored in Paris and which promise to be even more so during the present season. Colors for day-time may be subdued for the more formal winter modes, but the vogue for figured fabrics is steadily increasing.

Crepe de chine will continue to hold the foremost position among winter fabrics, but the crepes with dull surfaces, which have hitherto been supreme, have now yielded first place to the lustrous varieties. These shimmering weaves possess a suppleness perfectly adapted to the draperies that distinguish the straight silhouette of today.

Brocades in crepes and satins in brilliant colors are expected to figure prominently on the modish list.

Lace, especially the metal patterns, is sure to be much in evidence this winter. These metal laces are produced in new and interesting ways. For example, gold and silver threads may be combined, and then the woven threads dyed any color, so that the silk thread takes the tint and gives tone to the whole tissue. This gives a fragile effect with a mere hint of color, interwoven with the metallic

THE LONG RIBBON STREAMERS



Radiating from the center of the crown of her hat over the brim with short lengths in front, lengthening toward the back are ribbon streamers, row upon row. At the back, the streamers reach to the very hem of the skirt, fastened in at the waistline to give an effect charming and distinctive. The dahlias which trim the crown of the hat and the girdle are made of very narrow ribbon, row upon row, surrounding a tiny button.

threads. Then there is a new trimming lace in either gold or silver—in which a fine braid is used to form great motifs of leaves which are joined together, in the most exquisite patterns. Combined with the rather dull gold or silver leaves made of solid braiding is a solid bright gold flower, the metal thread being used in an effect which is called in French moss-leaf and which is, indeed, only mossy in character.

TRIMMED WITH MONKEY FUR



Black matelasse makes an up-to-the-minute jacket. The monkey fur trimming adds a note of interest.

CHIC JACKET WITHOUT SLEEVES

French Maker Devises Interesting Garment to Be Worn With Afternoon Dresses.

Many of the most important dress-makers disclaim any effort toward the sensational silhouette. To meet the demand for new styles they vary their characteristic lines by beautiful fabrics, striking colors and trimming details.

Chanel has made no basic changes in the styles which she exploits. Her dresses are straightline, many of them with beautiful embroideries. She uses laces profusely. Among her prettiest models are some frocks of flowered silks, the flowers scattered over a plain background in the form of large motifs. These silks are veiled with lace, giving an extremely pleasing effect. Several of her afternoon dresses are accompanied by little sleeveless jackets. Such models frequently carry Russian embroideries.

The greatest change in the models made by Callot is in the colorings. There is a considerable showing of paler shades of blue and rose. She has given preference to these paler hues over the rich oriental shades which she used last season. She also used many silks in pompadour effects. Other than in color Callot has done

Tam o' Shanter.
A new version of the always becoming draped but on Tam o' Shanter lines is displayed in a particularly flattering model of brilliant steel-blue velvet with an ornament of silver.

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The Gift House.
There had been a veritable deluge of blotters. For days May had brought her offerings to the teacher's desk—mysterious looking packages which always proved to be the inevitable blotters. Finally in perplexity the teacher called May to her and said, "It's lovely of you, dear, to bring these blotters, but really, I've so many now—"

"Oh, that's all right," was the answer, "we've got so many at home, mamma said: 'What'll we ever do with all these blotters? Why don't you take 'em to your teacher?'"

Novelties.
"Do you think the country needs a new party?"

"No," replied Senator Sorghum, "if the old parties keep on modifying their platforms for a few more years, they'll offer all the political novelties anybody could reasonably desire."

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