



Wishing You a Merry Christmas



The Radio and Reddy

By Martha Banning Thomas

PROBABLY no one in the world had more friends than Sally Snow. Friends of all kinds, from the boy who shouted his newspapers in front of her apartment to the policeman on the beat. High friends and low friends had Sally—but Christmas Eve found her alone. She left the office early. There was no particular reason to, however. All her gifts were tied up and mailed. No one was waiting for her at home. There wasn't the slightest pressure or hurry about anything. And Christmas Eve, thought Sally, without bustle and fuss and jostling and merry confusion, wasn't Christmas Eve at all.

She walked up Fifth avenue. She vaguely hoped that some of the holiday spirit of the crowds of New York might enter her veins and thrill her heart. She felt sorry for herself, and cross, and utterly out of sorts. Her pleasant plans had all gone awry. No one could spare time from their families to celebrate with her. And Sally lived too many thousand miles away from home to get there for Christmas. She had been too proud to accept the generous invitations of some of the other girls in the office. They asked her to go home with them. But she knew she would feel out of things, try as she might to be jolly.

Oh, well—she might scrape some one up to go to a play or concert. She walked until she was tired and then took a bus. Once in the crush of people at a street corner she caught her breath. There was a sudden hint of broad shoulders she used to know. A certain high carriage of the head, a quick decisiveness of manner. Then the man was lost to view.

She shook herself for a silly fool.

She thought she had crowded all that nonsense out of her mind long ago. Besides, Reddy had gone on one of those idiotic expeditions to Mongolia, to hunt up ridiculous bones of prehistoric animals. Accounts of his expedition had been in the papers off and on for three years.

Sally found her apartment warm and cozy. She was more tired than she realized. A slow languor spread over her. She decided to stay at home, not even going out for dinner. She had a good book or two, and there was always the radio.

After a nap she chirped up amazingly. She decided she wouldn't grouch any longer. A little tingle of excitement wriggled up her neck. No reason at all—but she felt it and laughed. She sipped gayly on a homemade salad, bread and butter and a piece of left-over cake. Doing up the few dishes she felt positively merry. The old-time, childish excitement about everything concerning Christmas began singing in her heart. She laughed aloud.

"I won't even look up the concerts tonight over the radio," she announced. "I'll just tune in at random and see what happens."

With a little flutter of happiness she manipulated the dials on her small set. A harsh rasping—the clapping of many hands—continued applause!

She listened, keyed up to a high pitch of suspense. Probably some ordinary singer walling out sentimental tunes. Then—silence. Quite a long silence—then a voice.

Sally stiffened in her chair. Color drained out of her face. She scarcely breathed.

"You are kind," said the voice, "to give a weary-worn traveler such a welcome home. I have been in far places—"

There was an interval when Sally's clear brain blurred. She lost the next few sentences. Then she regained her poise and sat intent on every word. Back of what she heard with her ears was the unfolding book of memory. Page after page fluttered through her consciousness. That terrific row she and Reddy had over nothing at all—how he had left in a white fury—how he had said he would go to the end of the world and never come back. They were young and impetuous.

She had not seen him for seven years. In the meantime he had made a name for himself in science. And three years ago he went on this famous expedition. There had been a formal letter or two between them. That was all.

Now he was back—back in New York on Christmas Eve, addressing a large audience!

Sally took off the earphones. She sat a minute longer. Then in a whirl of impulse she threw on her coat and hat and went flying out the door. Like

a hammering pulse three words battered against her brain—I must see him! I must see him!

Somehow she squeezed into the big hall. Somehow she stayed still and listened until it was all over. Somehow afterward she moved to the front of the room near the platform. She walked as in a dream. She must! She must. A power other than her own sent her feet steadily to the place where Reddy stood.

Thinner he was, lean and brown. Heavy lines in his face. Mouth almost grim. But his eyes just the same—quizzical and laughing.

Sally was next now in the waiting group who were congratulating the successful explorer. Her throat quivered. She could scarcely lift her eyes. Then suddenly her voice came, clear, controlled and natural. "Merry Christmas, Daddy!"

They went out to dinner somewhere. Reddy tucked Sally under his arm. They talked and laughed and chatted both at once. They made abject apologies for their stupid behavior to each other seven years ago. They tried to cram a thousand questions and answers into every minute. Never had the head waiter seen a happier couple. They were unashamed of their joy. They didn't care. Which is the way the world over when you really care and your heart is humming like a celestial harp in heaven.

"I knew your voice instantly," said Sally at least a dozen times.

"Do you think you could marry me by New Year's?" persisted Reddy.

"Don't be ridiculous, you absurd boy!"

"Then I'll scoot off for another seven years!"

The threat brought her down. "Come to my apartment for a moment and say 'Merry Christmas' to the radio," she begged.

And Reddy did.

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RECKLESS.

Willie: Ma's going to buy you a couple of neckties for Christmas.

Pop: That's reckless—and hard times, too, she usually only gives me one.

Christmas Joys

By William Banks

The olden days, the golden days
They all come back to me,
As happily the children crowd
Around the Christmas tree,
I see once more the comrades true
March onward by my side,
I hear the echo of their songs
To greet the Christmastide.

In olden days, in golden days
My thoughts were high and bold,
But oh the glory of this hour
When in my arms I hold
The gifts that love has brought to me,
They fill my heart with pride,
As I join in their happy songs
To greet the Christmastide.

Christmas Candles

By Margaret Bruce

THE candle is the true symbol of Christmas. Its flickering taper shining on the sill of the city house or the country cottage sends out the message of "peace on earth" quite as much as the chime of Christmas bells. No Christmas tree is complete until the candles, whether of wax or of electric lights, have been fastened to its boughs.

A charming elderly lady of my acquaintance gives each child in the neighborhood every year a "Twelfth Night" candle. This is a very large cathedral candle, which is to be lighted on Christmas eve and placed on the windowsill set in a wreath of holly and so placed that its flame burns at the center of a Christmas wreath hanging in the window. It is then kept burning every evening until the eve of Twelfth Night, January fifth. The Twelfth Night eve, the unburned



portion of the candle and all the Christmas greens are placed in the open fireplace and consumed, thus ending the Christmas season.

The significance of this pretty rite is as follows: The candle is symbolic of the star which the wise men saw in the East, and it is kept shining through the twelve days during which the wise men were following the star on their journey to the manger where the young child lay.

Children especially love this beautiful custom of having a lighted candle represent the Christmas star, and in some of the homes where the Twelfth Night candle is kept burning, each child cares for the candle for an evening, all taking turns. The candle is lighted, the wreath lowered to encircle its flame, and when the child goes to bed it is his duty to blow the candle out. A Twelfth Night candle, with hand-printed instructions as to how to burn it, makes a simple but significant Christmas gift, either for children or their elders.

(Copyright.)

Hurry, Santa



"Do you expect Santa Claus to be very good to you this Christmas?"

"He only has one more pay day before Christmas, so I can't say."

Spirit Church Bells

In olden times it was believed that at Christmas the sound of church bells could be heard wherever a church had stood, though no trace remain.



Santa Sure Will See Them

Santa Claus and Holly

By Frank Herbert Sweet

A BIG touring car swung in at a small south Georgia junction to get a Christmas box, then had to wait for a train to stop and pass before the expressman could be at leisure.

Going back toward his car, the owner noticed a white-haired woman gazing up the track anxiously. He wanted to make a record distance this day, and was impatient at losing time. But he paused at her irresolution.

"Anything I can do?" he asked.

"No, sir, thank you. Only I'm afraid I've missed my train, and I'm not much on traveling. My car broke down, and the colored boy didn't know what to do. If a neighbor hadn't rescued me," with a laugh, "I don't suppose I'd ever have got here. It's twelve miles to my plantation."

"Going far?"

"Yes, a long way—to Lakeland, Florida."

The man started, and glanced toward his chauffeur, who was standing by the car door.

"Too bad!" he said. "I suppose you are planning to get through to Lakeland for Christmas. Why—have you your baggage anywhere handy?"

"Only a suitcase and a package of Christmas cooking I got ready last night in a hurry. You see, I'm just making a flying visit to see my daughter before she leaves. She's just married."

"Well," with sudden briskness coming into his voice, "hop into my car. There's plenty of room, with only my wife and daughter. We're bound for Lakeland, too, and will be there the day before Christmas. My man will get your baggage."

"Yes, in my car, with the train's poor connection. I don't—"

"Hop in," he repeated, taking her arm and urging her to the car. "We're glad to have company to talk with. Here you are," as the chauffeur came with the suitcase and a small box. "Now we're off!"

It had all happened so swiftly that the old woman hardly realized it before they shot out of the town and were speeding on their way toward Lakeland at better than fifty miles an hour.

But still she did not realize it. Fifteen miles over the rough country roads in the decrepit plantation flivver had all the sensations of more rapid and dangerous travel than sixty in this big, easy-running car. She settled back luxuriously. The women were nice, too.

Another thing was revolving pleasantly in her mind, and presently she had to mention it.

"The plantation house servants and field hands all expect a little remembrance, my going so far and its being Christmas," she mused. "Then there's Josephine. I didn't see how I could do it all, but not having to pay train fare down will make it all right," happily. "Plantations don't yield much spare money these days."

"Christmas is too much of a burden for light pocketbooks," objected the car owner. "I don't believe in them anyway. I gave up Christmas-giving long ago. Foolish habit. I tell my daughter that, but she won't listen. The Christmas box I stopped for was for her. Wastes money, time and patience. Give money outright, if you have to."

"That's what I'm going to do, partly," apologized the old woman. "Half is presents for the help at home, but the other half to my daughter. She's just married, and her husband starts for Mexico Christmas Day. Got work there, she writes, and it stands to reason he can't have much money. Maybe this will help Josephine and Harry."

"Eh? E-h? Harry—Josephine—Mexico." Then he closed his lips tightly and looked straight ahead.

An hour or so later, while going through an unsettled piece of country, the old woman's hand fell softly on his shoulder.

"Please stop just a minute," she breathed. "I never saw such a holly tree, so full of berries! I want some."

"Christmas stuff is nothing but foolishness and bother, and—oh, I beg your pardon. Of course! James, you help cut the branches."

Before they got in, with the chauffeur's help, she insisted on fastening bunches of holly all about the car.

At first the owner scowled. Then presently his gaze began to wander from sprig to sprig, and the scowl began to change to something like a grin. At Jacksonville he drew up before a big Christmas store.

"Got to get something to match that holly," he muttered. "Foolish to have all that stuff outside and no Santa in. And maybe Josephine will expect something."

"Josephine? eagerly. "You got one, too?"

"Same one," the grin expanding. "My son's just married. Don't give presents, though—in money. Tom don't need any, for he's going to manage a chain of banks. Still and all, I expect they'll appreciate the half you spoke of. And yes, better come in the store with me and pick out a basketful of clap-trash for those darkies."

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Unlucky

In some countries it is regarded as unlucky to carry anything from the house Christmas morning until something has been brought in.

Outgrow Toys

After the children have outgrown toys father doesn't have much fun on Christmas.