

His Last Request

By JULIA GRAY

Even the little old basement dining room had put on quite a festive appearance Christmas morning. It was rather cold, and the furnace was in its usual state of coy reserve, but Farley had stuck holly and evergreen around the old paintings of garlanded fish and "Highland Carlie," and each table had a brave sprig of mistletoe tied with crimson and green ribbon laid beside each plate. That was Beth's special offering.

As each member of the household came in the greetings were hearty and quite satisfactory, even to Beth. She had not thought the experiment would bring out even that much fellowship and good will from the silent, self-absorbed crowd at Mrs. Forbes's.

She put the prettiest bunch of all and a card of Christmas cheer beside Mr. Benchley's plate. Poor, grumpy old Scotchman, nobody ever had a good word for him. In all the months that she had been an inmate of the Forbes domicile she couldn't remember that anyone had ever given him even a pleasant greeting. He came downstairs to breakfast late and always grumbling, grumbled at his food, which Carrie, the colored maid, slid across the table at him, grumbled at the furnace and weather and the millinery at the bonnet and Mrs. Forbes and life in general.

But Beth liked him best of all. That morning she had found outside her door a box of fresh violets and a leaf she had been wishing for inscribed from her sincere friend, Alan Farley. It was the best note she had ever seen that showed the thoughts of the giver, for it was named "The Well Beloved." As Beth glanced through it she had smiled, remembering a verse that Alan liked to repeat from Mrs.

Downing:
 "What shall I give to my beloved?
 A little faith all unimproved,
 That was what he gave to her, only not in small measure, in full rich measure, all his heart's faith and love, asking her to believe in him and be patient for his success. And she could not tell him that she didn't give a rat for his success; that she would rather let a hundred times over have been married to him, even if she had kept on with her own work, and they had been running mates together. So between them was the promise of marriage and to the boarding house at large he was "there sincere friend!"

"The old man's sick in bed," said Carrie briskly, as she swept the crumbs from Beth's place. "He ain't coming down. He's grumbling fearful."

"Oh, dear," Beth pushed back her chair, but Farley was before her, she found him leaning over the old man, bending him like an experienced nurse.

"It's only an attack of acute indigestion," he told her. "He'll be all right. I'm a good doctor." He scuffed down at her, and Mr. Benchley groaned and turned over to see who had come in.

"May I wish you Merry Christmas, Mr. Benchley?" Beth asked. "I'm so sorry you don't feel well."

"Don't feel well! Look, now, how the hell you feel! Get more hot water. There's a bit of a wood-fuddle I had the night, but it left me drowsy. Faint cake and wine after ten o'clock is 'fading me down on my back, by the way, methinks, heh-heh!"

He was aware of faces but there was a redoubt in his eyes. Alan raised him up and placed a couple of pillows behind him for support.

"Now, you're ray enough, sir," he said.

Benchley looked from one face to the other, one on each side of his head, and his eyes gleamed from under their bank of heavy gray brows.

"You'll be married the day," he mumbled slowly. "I once loved a lass in my own time, Alan. She was to wed for me, and I put foot against my door for her and she married a linc-legged lout in the next town. I'm telling you now, they was na was na. The sex is changeable. I've set my heart on seeing you married before I get another turn for the worst."

"Oh, Mr. Benchley, you're all right!" began Beth, hostile, but he put his hand up warningly.

"Don't shock me or alarm me, and don't be arguing w' me, neither, for my heart's no too strong at that. I've talked this out w' Alan before you come at all, an' he's beginning to see light already. I've been watching both of you this long while, and I'm sick of the hallelujahing and wailing. You run go quietly over the river to Jersey and be married right away, and I'll pay the bill. Get ready, lass!"

Alan's eyes begged her to be yielding, but it was the old set face lying back on the pillows that moved her to get as he wished, and she slipped up to her own room without a word to any one.

When they came back it was the dinner hour, two o'clock on holidays, and as they came down stairs together Beth heard a voice in the dining room, a reasonable, hearty, strong voice, Mr. Benchley speaking.

"I had to use subterfuge w' them," he was saying. "They're both obstinate, but so am I, and I've married them off safe and sound by making it my dying request. An' when you see them coming in you're to let them a cheer."

He stopped short. Beth came first, blushing and wide-eyed, with a spasm of suspicion on her breast and another in her fair hair. And the old fellow smiled breathlessly till she came near. Bending over her, he kissed her on her cheek.

"And may God bless you both, the day," he finished.

(Overnight)

"Not Our Business"

A story is told of a little girl who in her evening prayer, told of a child she had seen in the street that day. "He was tall and thin, I guess he was odd," prayed the little worshiper, "and that he's any of our business, is it?" That is the attitude of some people at Christmas time. They do not seem to realize that it is their business to look out for joy outside their own family little circle, and such was the heart of the day of days. Girl's Companion.

Christmas Morning



Good gracious! Look what Santa brought! A stocking full of joy, and a Teddy Bear that couldn't get in. All for a good little boy.

CHRISTMAS REUNIONS

HOW many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide in the restless struggles of life are on this day reunited and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good will which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world that the religious belief of the most civilized nations and the rude traditions of the roughest savages alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence provided for the best and happiest! How many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas time awaken!—Charles Dickens.

Daily Thought.
 Patience and a holly leaf will make a silk gown.—A Chinese inscription.

Send Your Solder Boy Candy

There is no gift you can send him that will bring him more genuine Christmas cheer than a great big choice box of candy. After all he's only a boy, you know, and there never was a boy who didn't like candy. No matter what else you send him you should include some good home made candies from The Colonial.

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The Birth of Christ

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 around about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angels 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, the Savior, 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."—St. Luke 2:8-14.

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"It isn't the headache they are proud of, but the fact that they had enough money to acquire one!"

SANTA CLAUS IS A FAITH

Take Kris Kringle Away From Children and You Rob Christmas of Half Its Joy.

Some very honest people are such stoilers for truth that they are concerned about our firm belief in Santa Claus. Well, it is a good thing to stand up for truth, if we really know the truth. But we know that a great many very learned people have been wrangling about what truth is for several thousand years, and yet it does not seem to be definitely settled. But for the most of us truth is what we truly believe. It is the faith that is in us, and Santa Claus is a faith, if not a fact, and so we say again that we do believe in Santa Claus, says an exchange.

Take Santa Claus away from the children and you rob Christmas of half its joy. (Remember though we may be

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