

Good Christmas Lesson

for Bennie, the Thief
BENNIE chuckled, slipping through the dark with the stolen jewelry. Suddenly he drew back, close against the wall. Some one had entered the next room.

"Grandmother, do you really believe in prayers?"—It was a girl's voice. "Certainly, dearie. We prayed that we might hear from George on Christmas day, you know, and the day isn't quite over."

"But—"
"Listen, dearie, I'll tell you about a prayer I had answered once."
Bennie's lips curled. Nobody believed in that stuff any more. If there was really a being that knew things, Bennie wouldn't steal. He'd be afraid. The story told by the sincere older voice made Bennie nervous. She seemed to mean it!

"Grandma, Christmas day will be over in half an hour—"

"In a half hour many things can happen."

Minutes passed. Bennie heard whispered prayers. Finally he grinned in relief. A minute to twelve!

Then, a sound at the door and two women cried happily, "George!"

In a minute Bennie slipped away, but he left the jewelry.—Clara Agee Hays.

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Unexpected Surprises
Welcomed at Christmas

DOROTHY sat up, startled, at the sound of the grate fire. To have tourists out just before Christmas was bad enough, but to be waiting for a sweetheart and to know that there was a forwarded letter in another girl's hand-writing, also anything but a happy surprise.

"Hello, Dot," in breezed Jack, all joy and Christmas gaiety. He leaned over and kissed her tenderly.

"You poor kid. It's sure tough, at Christmas, too."

Dorothy smiled and pointed to the letter on the table.

"Who, the divorce?" Jack slit the envelope, glanced over it and thrust it into his pocket. "Why waste time reading your letters when I've got you—but it was sure good of you to have Mary write me."

Dorothy's eyes brightened and her throat seemed almost well. What a goose she was to have forgotten that she had asked Mary to write Jack and tell him how she was. What a wonderful time Christmas was with its unexpected surprises!—Florence Harris Wells.

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Really Merry Christmas
Making Old Folks Happy

IT WAS Christmas night; one of those cold, clear nights when it is a delight to sit by the fire. Jack and Nancy Lee were doing just this, and they were very happy.

"Wasn't Christmas wonderful?" Nancy's eyes glowed.

Jack's arm went round her. "Nancy, you were an angel to do it," he said. "Anyone but you would have just fretted in a strange city. Instead, you got up a big dinner and everything for a lot of lonely old people. It—it was great! Honest, I almost cried as I watched them open up their gifts beside the Christmas tree!"

"I felt the same way, Jack. I was tempted to just fret about being away from our folks; but, oh, Jack, I'm so glad I didn't! It was wonderful to see those old people so happy! And—and we had a wonderful Christmas, too, didn't we? A really merry Christmas!"—Katherine Edelin.

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WISE BOY

She—Mother won't let me accept expensive presents from boys at Christmas.

He—I found that out before we got engaged.

Baby Dolls Are Adorable

The baby dolls are quite the most adorable of all. They come in triplet, twin or single additions and they are as real looking as it would seem possible to make them.—Wallace's Farmer.

Spain's Christmas Dish

A favorite Christmas dish in Spain is a soup of sweet almonds and cream.

Girls' Opinion of Christmas

Most girls have a candid opinion of Christmas.

A Picture for Christmas

By Clara Agee Hays

CHRISTMAS eve Marion surveyed her apartment—wreaths of holly in the windows and a tiny tree with colored lights in the living room. For three Christmases—all alone—she'd done this. Even baked a chicken to well—man, it seem Christmas. Anyway, she wasn't hungry or homeless. Marion's smile was wistful and perhaps a little bitter. There was no one in the whole city to share her Christmas. She'd worked up to a good job, but her business acquaintances all had their own family festivities. How the girls who worked under her had planned and chattered for the holiday weeks! They called Marion "Miss Morris" and were timid before her. Of course, she couldn't break the ice with, "I'm only a lonely girl! Don't think of me as a boss. Let me share your fun."

Marion paused, now, as she passed "Jack's" picture on her table. Playfully she screwed up her face. She'd get him a present, of course. A—A cigarette case with his initials—neat but simple. That's the way the girls at the office sounded. And he'd get her a—She dropped the envelope and hurried to rescue the potatoes—scorched for supper.

Last year "Jack" had been a present from herself. Her brother, Ben, thousands of miles away, had sent a snapshot of himself taken with a young man. "My pal and I—He's a real fellow." Ben had scrawled across the back. Marion had studied the fine face in the picture and yearning born of a long unrealized dream of romance stirred her. Finally when next Christmas came she had guiltily cut her brother's picture off and had the other enlarged, tinted, and framed.

"The color of his eyes?" asked the artist.

"Oh—er—brown," she said and blushed. That was what she wanted him to have. She had called him "Jack." And ever since "Jack" had been her confidant, her pal, her fiancé.

"Here on business. . . . Told Ben I'd look you up."

The long evenings passed more easily when she looked into the large brown eyes and dreamed of the time she and "Jack" might have a home of their own.

But, tonight, another empty Christmas eve, imaginative Marion with twinkling eyes, became matter-of-fact Miss Morris of the office. "It's ridiculous!" she scolded. "Completely in love with a picture! I must be losing my mind!"

"Indicatively she thrust "Jack" into a drawer and sat down to make herself read and forget.

Suddenly the door bell rang. Marion opened the door cautiously. Then she gasped.

When David Bruce entered he wondered why the attractive sister of his pal stared at him as if she could not believe her eyes and sank weakly into a chair.

"Here on business. . . . Told Ben I'd look you up," he explained a little nervously. "Shouldn't have broken in on your Christmas—a perfect stranger—I—ah—was a little homesick. I guess."

Marion managed to say softly, "I'm glad you came." And David, looking at her felt that, somehow, she was.

There'd been lots to talk about. David leaving late, anticipated with actual eagerness the dinner with her tomorrow. And Marion's heart sang as she got up early on Christmas to "get things done." David came early, too, and Marion, planning a special natural. She and he had been friends in her imagination so long! The afternoon passed swiftly. In the evening they went to a theater.

When they returned, "A look at the tree before you go?" invited Marion. David stepped in—for a look at Marion. He flushed and glanced down.

"I told Ben—if his sister was as attractive as the picture he showed me, I'd want to bring her back with me and—" He looked up seriously. "Please don't think me cheeky. I've got to return so soon and—well, she's better than the picture. I—"

A minute later he held her in his arms.

"Oh, Jack!" Marion gasped in happy confusion and then flushed. But David's brown eyes had read hers and what her lips said didn't matter.

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Thoughts for Christmas

By Edward L. Lazon

In Boston Globe

LOOK not through the glass darkly, If nerves are taut, And you are wrought, Seek ever for the light.

The word unkind disdain, To others giving pain, Beauty around you everywhere, Never the view dispel, On moody thoughts to dwell.

And do not troubles grow— "Breathing joy and hope, One will never more."

Make life a picture fine, Forget unpleasant things, Full measure gladness bring, Be responsive to the touch Of friendship, love,

Place faith in God above, Though hazards clog the way, Fush on in thankfulness, To gain full happiness.

A Christmas Greeting

A Merry Christmas morning To each and every one! The rose has kissed the dawn, And the gold is in the sun.

And may the Christmas splendor A joyous greeting bear, Of love that's true and tender.

And faith that's sweet and fair.

A luxury is something that usually costs more to sell than it does to make.—Louisville Times.

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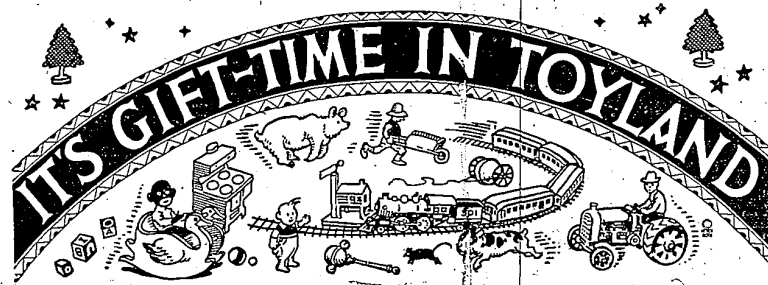
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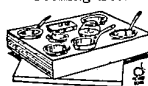
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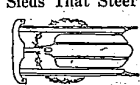
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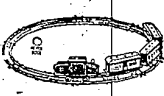
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