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Her Christmas Joy

(By J. L. Glover)

"It won't be a very merry Christmas to me, this year," said Miss Ellen FitzHugh to herself, a little sadly, but bravely too, as one quietly accepting the inevitable. "It's not to be expected," she went on, moving gently about her little parlor and setting it to rights. It was quite neat already, but she put away a stray magazine, and dusted the table with her handkerchief, and then went to the mantel and rearranged the group of photographs in neat little ten-cent-store frames, gazing lovingly at the young faces as she did so. They were the pictures of a handsome, sturdy lad, and two pretty, fluffy-haired girls. The bright faces smiled at her, and she returned the smiles tenderly.

"Who would ever have thought they would turn out so well—my dear children!" she mused. "When my poor Mary died a widow, and left me her three little ones to bring up, it seemed at first, as if I could not do it—not at my age. But I couldn't bear to separate the little things and put them in orphanages—though some of them are nice places I don't deny. But they'd have grown up strangers to each other, and it seemed lonely for them, and I thought I'd try to keep them together, if the Lord would help me. And He did. I never could have done it without His aid. It was wonderful how I managed to get work, one way and another, and to keep those children warm and well and fat. And it wasn't till they were all through school and old enough to work that my strength gave out, and I had to sell my own little home and take this room in the Old Ladies' Home, and I'm sure it's been a comfortable place to me, with the children all doing so well, and paying my board and coming in every week to see me. I can't believe it's my Violet and Mabel that have those fine positions down town, and Bob studying law, and so clever. I know the Lord helped me. I never could have raised such clever children alone."

She had made the round of the room. It was perfectly tidy, in case one of the old ladies should "take a notion to drop in." She sat down before her tiny stove, and poured out her cup of tea, dreaming still in the warm twilight.

"I wish they could have seen their way to come to see me this Christmas—but there! I know they would have loved to come, but Violet said in her note that they were going to such a nice house party for Christmas and how could I be so selfish as to expect them to give up such a pleasure, just for me! I haven't room for them all here anyway, at once. They'll come one at a time to see me, after Christmas. Bless them! they won't forget their old Auntie! But it's funny Rob hasn't sent me his usual cheque. He never forgets it. There I am again! Of course he needs all his money just now, and he'll send it later. It will do just as well, and he knew I would understand. There's the postman—maybe it's come!"

But the postman brought her only a greeting card from one of the old ladies in the Home. She swallowed her disappointment, and

Some Xmas Traditions

Continued from Page One.

on their shoulders, ready to receive the "Calenigs," which are usually a piece of cheese, some oatcakes and a penny. There was an old superstition that if a loaf were left on the table on Christmas Eve there would be no lack of bread in the house during the coming year.

The "Yule Doughs" or "Dows" of by-gone days were often made merely of white flour, perhaps of slightly finer quality than usual, with the addition of sugar and currants. These ancient "Yule Doughs," often known as "Baby Cakes," were formed in the shape of little images of the Madonna and Holy Child, or were of a round form, with a rough representation of the Nativity stamped upon them hence the Puritan dislike of the Christmas cakes.

Sing Ho, a Xmas Carol

By Marjorie Howe Dixon

Grandmother was humming a faintly familiar old tune last night, as she sat in her favorite rocking chair, knitting a fascinator with long wooden needles. My, what Grandmother does not know about knitting! Here it is just before Christmas, and look at the mittens and scarfs, as well as a life-size sweater, she has already to send!

Grandmother was never so happy as when knitting and humming to herself, but last night she sang a different tune from any I had ever heard before.

"Where did you learn that song, Grandmother?" I asked.

"Oh, sonny, I've sort of always known that. It's an old, old English carol which my grandfather taught me. My how the years have flown. I can remember clearly his telling of the country Christmas celebration in England. In those days pleasures were simple. The Squire of the Manor threw open his doors for his tenants and poor relations and the whole community gathered up to the grandest and happiest holidays of the year. Young and old joined in the games, dances, feasts, governed by the jolly "Lord of Misrule." Music and carols were on every tongue, from the little children who awakened the whole household with their shrill voice, to the family singing around the fireplace, with the mother sometimes leading with her knitting needle, or in the real old days they gathered before the burning Yule log.

Grandmother paused to complete an intricate stitch in her knitting. "My grandfather," she went on, "always spoke of the nocturnal serenades, 'the Calling of the Waits,' which kept up even in his time in rural England. For seven successive nights singers and players paraded before every large home and chanted Christmas songs and carols."

"How awfully interesting, Grandmother," I said. "Won't you sing me a carol?"

"I'm afraid I've forgotten most all I've learned, but I'll try. This one I believe is called 'Master's in the Hall.'"

To Bethlehem did they go, the shepherds three—
To Bethlehem did they go to see
where it were so or no
Whether Christ were born or no
To set them free.
Master's in the Hall,
Hear ye news to-day,
Brought over sea,
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!
Sing we clear!
Holpen are all folk on earth,
Born is God's son so dear.
"Why, what a queer song that is, Grandmother," I exclaimed. "I like the tune but what does 'Nowell' mean and 'holpen'?"

I could see Grandmother was somewhat shocked at my calling her song a "queer" one, but my request for definitions disarmed her.

"'Nowell' is a word we do not use nowadays, but it was a joyous shout at the Birth of the Savior, and 'holpen' means helped."

Grandmother again picked up her

Her Christmas Joy

they are visiting, and have so many things to do and you'll find they haven't forgotten you. They'll just spread out the Christmas happiness that's all!"

She wrapped her new shawl about her, put on the pink slippers, and with the box of candy in her lap, sat down by the window to watch the pleasant stir of Christmas in the streets. A big automobile slid up to the gate of the Old Ladies' Home, and stopped.

"It's old Mrs. Lynwood's grandchildren; they always come to see her," thought Miss Ellen, watching with interest from her window.

Two girlish figures, wrapped in furs—a broad-shouldered young fellow in a big overcoat, helping them out. It looked like—but no, it couldn't be—

But it was. Up the stairs light feet were springing; young voices whispered and laughed outside her door. A tap—then, before she could say "Come in!" they were all around her, the girls' arms about her neck, the boy hugging her from behind—all crying at once.

"Merry Christmas! Auntie! Oh, Merry Christmas, and lots of them! In our own home, Auntie! Hurry and get your things on. I can't wait!"

"My dear children!" Miss Ellen, bewildered with joy, tried to catch her breath, which had been squeezed out of her by their vehement hugs. "I don't understand. How could you get here? I thought you were at the party!"

"Toll her, Violet, while I get her cloak and things?" ordered Mabel; and Violet and Rob together tried to tell the story coherently.

"You see, Auntie, darling, we were talking it over one day, and we found we were tired of boarding and being scattered, and having you vegetating here by yourself. And so we just thought we'd try to get a home together once more—a home with you in the middle to make it a real one. And Rob managed to find the dearest little house, just big enough to hold the four of us; and a stove; and that's our Christmas gift to ourselves and to you, Auntie, and we are going to eat our Christmas dinner this very day in our own little home. There! what do you think of our Christmas surprise?"

"Think!" Miss Ellen gasped. "Oh, my darlings, to think I could ever have doubted you for one single instant, or fancy that it was possible you could forget me on Christmas!"

"Forget! oh, Auntie!" Mabel was on her knees beside her, the tears rolling down her face. "Violet! Rob! told you we ought not to deceive her, even for a minute! That we let her think we forgot her!"

"Dearest!" pleaded Violet, "it was only for a Christmas surprise. You didn't really think so?"

"No—no! I trusted you all through," sobbed Miss Ellen. "But about the house party? How could you get away so soon?"

"It was our own house party," laughed Mabel. "We spent yesterday fixing up the house, and to-day the party comes off—our very first in our own house, Auntie. Everything is ready. Here's your cloak and bonnet. Come on, we can't wait another minute!"

And presently the big automobile was gliding smoothly over the snow with its load of Christmas happiness, and Miss Ellen was waving joyously to herself.

"A home with the children again! it seems almost too good to be true, except that it's Christmas, and nothing is too good to be true, then. And they did not forget me, and that is the best of all, for

"With all the joys of Christmas blest
To be remembered is the best."
—American Messenger.

Small Edgar had accompanied his mother to church and on the way home, he said: "Mamma, why do they call the minister 'Never-end'?"

"He is called 'reverend,' my dear; not 'neverend,'" explained the mother.

"Well," replied Edgar, "I thought he would never end to-day."

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That would make me very happy. "My favorite carol is 'God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen,'" she went on, "and if you will be quiet and not make any more 'queer' remarks, I'll sing it to you. 'I'll promise if I don't forget.'"

She sang:
God rest you merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,
Was born upon this day.
To Save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray,
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,
Was born on Christmas Day.
"That's a lovely carol," I exclaimed, "and I just want to tell you I have thought of a brand new idea for a Christmas present for you. Let's go over to the phonograph shop and pick out all the carols they have."

That night shall be the birthnight
Of Christ our heavenly King."

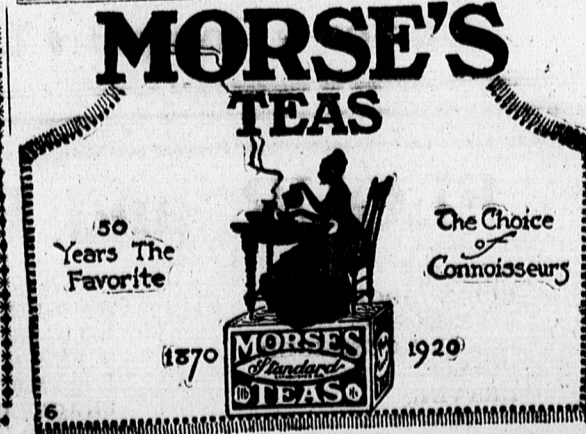
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