THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

Love and a Christmas Tree
By Ursula Bloom

The man was standing on the kerb and looking in on the Christmas tree. He watched it as it stood there in the big uncurtained window, with the shadows of a man and a woman moving about it. A tree which every minute was becoming more lovely. Sparkling strings of tinsel, silver stars, a bugle which glittered bravely in the half light, a doll with a cherubic wax face!

The man on the kerb thrust numb fingers into his coat pocket, for he was cold. A few flakes of snow lay in the London gutter, and the moon was a hard light. It was a long time since the man had known a warm fire, and good food, and a welcome. Once he had had all three! He smiled a little grimly.

He had been a violinist. He had played in a theatre orchestra in a thin pit with twenty others, and above them had been enacted a play they had never seen. He had heard voices, words, songs, the patter of feet in a dance, but never more. Then he had heard her voice.

John had fallen in love with Linda Hurst's voice. Later, when he had got to know her, he had fallen in love with the girl. He had been amazed at the complexity of her nature, for she seemed to believe the worst of people, the worst of the world. She blinded herself to so much beauty, and saw instead mercenary motive where only love and kindness were meant. It had been the cynicism of her which had literally stabbed into John's heart. Often she was right; mercenary motive was there, but he himself had the idealist's love of holding fast to a beautiful faith, proof against the tarnishing of a cruel world.

He had told Linda that he loved her.

It had been in the little coffee shop in the alley-way behind the stage door, and she had scorned him.

"Money," she had said. "That is all that counts. It is all I want. I want to be rich!"

"But love?"

"Love won't take you far when you are hungry. No, money counts every time."

Gold-digger! Yet with those eyes she was not all gold-digger; somewhere there was her heart, and he could not touch it. He had cut his job at the theatre for the simple reason that he could not bear to hear the rising beauty of that clear voice, could not bear to be imminent to a presence which attracted him so much and yet hid a heart that was so hard. He had said good-bye to her on just such a Christmas Eve, and she had not even recognized it as being good-bye. After the show they had gone to the coffee shop. A poor enough little shop, and the proprietor had been standing on an old soap box, nailing festoons of laurel and gay paper streamers to the ceiling.

Linda had sat down irresolutely. "So sordid," she had said. "I want to rise above all this."

John had supposed the simple coffee shop to be symbolic of much. The proprietor nailing up his decorations with such care; the general air of simplicity. There had been a certain happiness over it all, a carefree joy allied with the filling of a baby's sock, the singing of a carol, the true Christmas spirit.

"Are you quite sure you have set your standards right?" he had asked.

"Yes."

"Love should matter a lot."

She had shaken her head gravely. "Poor fool! One never gets far in life on those principles. One starves."

So they had said good-bye.

The years had passed, and in truth he had starved. But he had clung to his principles with a dogged tenacity of purpose. He could still afford to be glad. The talkies had cut him out of a cinema orchestra and had left him stranded. It had been a hand to mouth existence, but in some way to-morrow always provided for itself. There is a joy in idealism that few people understand.

Now, as he watched the two people in the room dressing their Christmas tree, he remembered again Linda in the coffee shop and all that had happened since. Linda had made money. She had become a leading lady. He supposed that perhaps people who were mercenary usually did succeed, yet for all that he still loved her for the dream she represented to him. A man cannot destroy his dreams; they are stronger than he is.

The two people had finished dressing their tree. A silver tree, with a fairy doll standing on its apex. A tree garlanded with brave tinsel and glass globules of emerald and blue and ruby red. There was silence now in the deserted little room, a breathless silence full of the coming joy of Christmas.

Still John waited; he did not know why. The tree mesmerized him. In watching it, he seemed to forget that he had been cold and hungry. He stood in the shadows so still that he was almost a shadow himself, and the first light snow powdered his cap and shoulders. Then he saw what was happening and he became tensely still.

Another man, with an ugly, furtive face, was nearing the window. He stepped silently to the ledge and jerked the window upwards with a quick movement. He stepped within. A repulsive-looking man whose business could only be sinister.

John craned forward. Through the tinsel-clad branches of the tree he watched the man. He had gone to a safe which stood against some books and knelt before it.

The silence was ominous.

John forgot that he was poor and ragged. A gross indignation assailed him that at this time any man should think of robbery, and especially when in the very room stood that splendid representation of the season, the triumphant tree in its brave array and with its trappings of frosted silver. He flung himself across the ledge, his feet sunk into the velvet pile of the carpet, and he stole across the intervening space with the prickly fronds of the tree brushing his face. An ornament jarred from the branches and tinkled to the floor. The other man started and sprang up. John felt the sudden harsh impact of a fist full on the jaw; he slid to the ground. He had underrated his weakness, for great wells of darkness received him.

Then the yellow piercing light penetrated his consciousness and he found himself recovering in a room brightly lit. He was lying on a leather sofa with a woman kneeling by his side.

"Drink 'this!" Mechanically, he drank. The liquid stung his throat; he found himself choking, and suddenly his vision cleared. It was no longer blurred. The room became vivified, the woman closer. It was Linda.

Now he remembered he had known that she lived somewhere in this street and that almost subconsciously that knowledge had brought him here—just to look. He was ashamed of himself. He hoped in the fraction of a second that she would not recognize him; he had gone back while she had progressed; she looked much the same, save that time had matured her. She was softer, kinder. Behind her glistened the tree, ready for the morrow, ready for Linda's children. He closed his eyes again. Success changes but little, though defeat clutches with marring fingers. His face was hollowed and pitted, his mouth sagged; there were caverns about his eyes.

"John," she said, tenderly. "You?"

The safe on the right was opened wide, many of its papers were strewn about the floor, but the other man had escaped. John knew Linda of old. She would obviously thing the worst of him, and of course she would be justified. Starving, down and out, she would suppose he had tripped and fallen in his hurry to escape. He could piece it all together as she would do with her material mentality. He sighed.

"John," she said, "I have tried so hard to find you. What became of you, my dear? I had very silly ideas in those days, I wanted to explain——"

He smiled whimsically. "Odd that I should come here to-night, of all the houses in the world."

"You poor darling. I was a little fool. I didn't know what I was saying. Oh, John, have you remembered me a little? Don't say you have forgotten?"

He listened to the new Linda, and deep down in his heart he believed he had suddenly walked into Heaven. It had been Christmas Eve when they had parted; Christmas Eve when they were re-united. And it was the new Linda who had found her true self and had separated true worth from dross. Eyes like gentians and dark, silky hair drawn like a cap about her head.

Then he saw behind her the tall tree with the silver trappings, and he thought of the husband who had helped her to trim it, and the children who would receive it, and he saw it no longer as a thing of beauty but as a menace to his happiness. A tall tree between him and his love—dividing them. He twisted his mouth into a wry smile.

"Men forget more easily than women," he said, huskily.

"You did not come here to steal?" she asked.

"Instantly he grasped at the idea. "Don't I look as though I needed the money?"

"Yes, but not that way, John, not that way."

"It's the easiest way,' he stammered.

She shook her head. "You couldn't. I've learned to understand you better than that. From the day I lost you I made money, but somehow I knew I had lost the only precious thing in my life. You had meant everything to me. What happened to you?"

He smiled grimly. "I starved," he said.

"John, dear, if you are wanting a job we're short now at the theatre. We want someone who has real music in him."

Truly it was a little Heaven that he was treading.

From outside came the echo of children singing in their little shrill voices:—

Good King Wenselas looked out
On the feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay all about
Crisp, and fresh, and even.
Brightly. . . .

He felt the tears welling into his throat and he saw again standing between them a tall tree, significant of children, of joy, a joy he could not mar. He must be loyal.

"I guess I'm happier as I am," he stuttered.

"Oh, John. John——"

The door opened and a tiny child entered. She rushed to Linda and hid a shy face in her lap. Because he could not bear the sight he turned away.

"Kismus tree," lisped the child, peering up at it shyly. "Kismus tree. Oh, Auntie!"

John's eyes turned sharply and met Linda's. She nodded.

"This is my brother's house,' she said. "I came to live here last year when his wife was ill——"

John hid his face. He felt the comfort of her hands on his, of her cheek against his own.

"I thought you were married,' he whispered. "I didn't understand, that is why."

She received him into her arms. From outside there came the voices singing Good King Wenceslaus. The child slipped down; she went across and stood there staring at the silver tree with its ornaments, wondering at the beauty of it.

"Kismus tree," she said solemnly to herself.—"Tit-Bits" (London).

Lady Luck Visits Winnipeg Family

Mr. and Mrs. T. R. Ganley of Winnipeg won $122,400 in the Manchester handicap sweep. Mrs. Ganley's parents had bought a half share in the ticket for 50 cents. Result, $61,200. But the rest is n the family.

Christmas Customs

Christmas has many customs which we all like to keep. But how few of us know the way in which they first came into being.

Christmas Fare.—On the occasion of a festival, it is always the proper thing to feast on the richest and most delicate viands. This is why we have so many good things to eat at Christmas, including turkey, plum-pudding and mince pies.

Santa Claus. — Father Christmas, Santa Claus of Saint Nicholas, to give him some of his names, who is supposed to come down the chimney and fill the children's stockings, is well known in every country. The name Santa Claus is really a corruption of St. Nicholas, the guardian and patron saint of children, who gave secret presents to needy youngsters.

Carols.—Songs of joy and praise, often accompanied by dances, have been sung by the English for more than a thousand years, being handed on from the Druids to the Christian Church. "On Christmas Day in the Morning" and "The Cherry-tree Carol," are found in many languages, with slightly different words.

Crackers.—It has long been the custom in France to sell packets of sweets in colored wrappers twisted at the end to keep the contents from falling out. The French called them cosaques. They were introduced into England about 80 years ago, and from them the cracker was developed. Some millions of crackers are made every year and sold all over the world.

Vanity

Vanity finds in self-love so powerful an ally that it storms, as it were, by a coup de main, the citadel of our heads, having blinded the two watchmen, it readily descends into the heart. —Colton.

5½ Foot Letter Designed For Stop Sign in Chicago

Chicago.—The usual stop sign painted on the pavement to halt motorists before a dangerous intersection usually is speedily run over, not because of carelessness but because a warning in ordinary shaped letters cannot be read until it is too late to stop.

However, let the letters be scretched until they are tall and thin, and then the warning can be read easily at three to four times the former distance, the National Safety League Council suggests.

"At a distance of six or eight yards ordinary letters are so foreshortened as to become illegible,' 'it was stated. "But if the letters are five and one-half feet high and seven inches wide, they will appear approximately square at a distance of fifteen yards, and may be read easily at a much greater distance."

Some letters have been designed to give best results for distances from twenty to forty yards. This in general gives time enough to stop.

"I understand Brown is taking lessons from a memory teacher."

"He ought to. The last time I played a game with him he forgot about twenty strokes."

"Dime" Derived from Latin To Denote Tenth of Dollar

"Dime" is derived from the Latin "decem," meaning ten or "decimus," one-tenth. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries "dime" was applied in England to the tithe, or tenth, part of one's income paid to the Church. According to the King James version of the Bible, the last part of Genesis, 14-20, reads: "He gave him tithes of all. John Wycliff translated this passage: "He gave him dymes of alle thingis."

The American 10-cent piece was called a dime because it represented the tenth part of a dollar, the national monetary unit.—The Pathfinder.

For the third time since its organization the staff of the Lone Scout Depatment of the Boy Scouts Association extend to all the Lone Scouts of Ontario their very best wishes for a Happy Christmas, and in this greeting they are joined by "Lone E" and the editor and staff of this paper.

They hope that you have done your very best to help Lone Scout Santa Claus to perform his gigantic annual "Good Turn", and in return you may be assured that "Santa" will not forget you as he goes his rounds.

Isn't it a wonderful feeling to know that you have made someone else happy by just a little effort on your part?

It is quite an interesting comparison to note that at Christmas, 1929, the Lone Scout Department sent out a Christmas Card to all Lone Scouts of Ontario on the back of which was printed the names of all the Lone Patrols in the province, and the total number of Lone Scouts in Ontario. This number was 125, including two Scoutmasters. We note that four of the Lone Patrols mentioned in that list are now Regular Troops at Paris, Sault Ste. Marie, Cobalt and Beamsville.

A recent census of the Lone Scout Department informs us that there are now about 320 Lonies on the books, and, in addition, five Leaders. In addition to this, nine regular troops have been organized as a result of Lone Scout progress. Isn't this a splendid record of steady growth?

We are glad to note how enthusiastically the Lone Scouts are working on that Disarmament Petition for the League of Nations Society. One Lonie had his form filled in and returned before all the letters had been mailed, and he has since filled out two more and asked for an additional three.

That fellow is a worker, isn't he.

Have you seen the new "Humane Calendar"?

This is a calendar which is published every year by the Toronto Humane Society of 11 St. Alban's Street, Toronto Each year this calendar contains twelve most beautiful colored pictures of birds, animals, etc., and the 1932 edition contains pictures by Major Alan Brooks of Canadian Animals, and these include the bear, fox, beaver, lynx, wolf, moose, deer, buffalo, etc. Not only is this a very useful calendar, but each one of the pictures is well worth a frame, and will make delightful decoration for your Patrol Den or for any Lone Scout's bedroom.

The price of this calendar is only 50 cents, and we would recommend every Lone Scout to try to secure a copy.

And, talking of calendars reminds us that there is a New Year coming!

What will your New Year resolution be?

We hope that if you are not a Scout it will be a resolution to join the great world-wide Brotherhood of Scouting.

If you are already a Scout, then let your resolution be to make your Scout program for 1932 a really active and progressive one!

Information about the Lone Scouts of Ontario may be obtained from the Lone Scout Department, Boy Scouts Association, 330 Bay Street, Toronto, 2. Write to-day.

"LONE E."

Subdivision Love

Oh, fly with me to Boomside Heights,
my lovely bride-to-be,
And we will close an option on a villa
by the sea;
To a careful restricted shore allotment
we will fly,
Where a board of commerce sunset
tints the subdivided sky

At Boomside Heights love's dream
comes true — the blueprints
prove it so.
In Section Six, Addition Two, projected roses grow.
Here's a broker's affidavit that the
moon is oversized;
That the ocean and the starlight are
the same as advertised.

Oh, fly with me to Boomside Heights,
nor tarry in your flight;
Dear, hand in hand we'll roam the
land that doubles over night.
Come, view God's handiwork—the season's niftiest buy—
Where a board of commerce sunset
tints the subdivid.l sky.

—Pressly Phillips, in Judge.

Buffalo Increase Rapidly In Dominion Parks

The increase of buffalo in Canada's national parks since the establishment of the main herd in 1908 has been little short of phenomenal. From an original herd of less than 800, the total increase has reached more than 20,000, including animals shipped to Wood Buffalo Park in the Northwest territories and those otherwise disposed of.

There are at present about 6,000 head in Buffalo National Park and 1,000 in Elk Island Park, Alberta. In these large fenced reserves the beasts roam over sections of their natural habitat much as they did in the early days.

A Welcome

The sweetest thing in life is the unclouded welcome of a wife. — N. P. Willis.

Constitution In Spain Soon to Go Into Effect

Madrid — The Cortes Constitution is rapidly approaching the termination of its task of drawing up a constitution for the Second Spanish Republic, and it is quite possible that the new regime will shortly have its organic law as well as a president.

In spite of the numerous difficulties it succeeded in bringing together here the Cortes Constituyentes on July 14, exactly three months after the proclamation of the republic. As things now stand, it is expected that early in December the constitution will be approved by the Cortes. After it is proclaimed as being in effect, an interval of a few days will probably ensue and then the Cortes will proceed to the election of the first President of the Republic.

Don Niceto Alcala-Zamora, who did so much to bring about the downfall of King Alfonso XIII, and who was Premier in the first government organized under the republic (from April 14 to October 14), political observers here believe, will be elected to the presidency. The term starts as soon as the oath is taken, and is for six years.

Inter-Empire Trade

Birmingham Post (Cons.)—A British tariff must be designed in the first place, as Dominion tariffs are designed, with an eye upon domestic necessities. Yet, even so, a tariff once established can be varied, lightened, adjusted as circumstances—including the objectives of Imperial policy—may suggest. And the timid who fear lest by showing favor to the Dominions we should offend the susceptibilities of foreign countries may be reminded that as far as the world in general is concerned the legitimacy of special family arrangements within the Empire is already fully admitted. No new issue will be raised if a system already actively in operation, on the side of the Dominions, is adopted by ourselves.

New Life-Saving Suit

A life-saving suit, resembling a pair of overalls or a one-piece suit of clothes, is being put on the market for those who ride in speedboats or hydroplanes and are subject to their dangers. It is made of waterproof tissue and constructed on a system of watertight compartments.

Crisis Hits Pearl Fishing Industry

Basrah.—A glut of pearls has resulted from the world crisis and many villages of the Persian Gulf, which depended upon the pearl fishing industry, are poverty stricken.

Canada's Pulpwood Resources

The Forest Service, Department of the Interior, states that on about 200,000,000 acres of the productive and accessible forest land of Canada the timber is of merchantable size, at least for pulpwood, and on 355,000,000 acres there is young growth of various species and ages.

Many Visit Victoria Observatory

Over 32,800 persons visited the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory of the Department of the Interior at Victoria, British Columbia, during the year ended March 31, 1931.

New "Pocket Edition" Plane

This new pocket plane only requires 15 yards landing place. Furthermore it folds up neatly and can be parked in a garage. Average speed 90 miles an hour.