

Christmas Eve

A Story

By Bertha Harwood-Arrowood
(North Shore MacDowell Society)

The streets never seemed so thronged with gay sightseers and shoppers as on this Christmas Eve. The windows displayed trees bedecked with glistening ornaments and toys. Old Santa Claus was making a crowd of children—and grown-ups who had not forgotten they were once young—happy with expectation. Talking and walking dolls and other mechanical toys were displaying their charms. Every merchant seemed to vie with his neighbor in attracting the Santa Claus buyers, but the darkness grew more dense, the pocket-books lighter and, as the various cars passed, each stopped to draw from this busy thoroughfare its load of humanity and freight, for this is one night that to be without bundles is to miss some of the enjoyment of the occasion, and to stumble over boxes or be bruised by an occasional poke from a cart handle or something quite as sharp, becomes a real delight, for it means the happiness of some child, and everything is greeted with a laugh.

The Peachtree car was filled even to its standing capacity, but the ladies, unaccustomed to this mode of travel, made light of their situation and the very atmosphere was merry.

Gradually the crowd in the car diminished, all were now seated and a better opportunity given to view one's fellow-passengers. In one group the shoppers were laughing over the state of their purses—several having found barely enough money to pay their car fare, but it was the laugh of amusement, no thought of regret there. In another corner a discussion over dolls was taking place. Amidst this group was a woman of great wealth and a close observer of human nature. She had upon her lips the words, "My little girl thinks Flossy"—As she said this her eyes rested upon a man opposite, and the sentence was finished mechanically; she had lost the enthusiasm of a few moments before as she saw turned upon her the sickly smile of this man, who, with his heavy heart was endeavoring to enjoy their conversation.

Intuition born of experience, whispered in her ears—help that man. It was repeated with greater stress. She knew the call, but how? He is not a beggar, his clothes, though worn, are not ragged! His hands were as thin and delicate as his face, but the contrast as she glanced around the car was striking: he was the only one poverty seemed to touch. She watched him for about one mile on their journey: his poorly nurtured body meant much to her. At last her street was called; she arose with others. This was fortunate, for it afforded a screen for her and as she passed the man she slipped into his folded hands a ten dollar gold piece. When she reached the sidewalk she looked back and saw through the window that he had turned to watch her—bewildered, but the car was in motion and he could not reach until the next corner was reached. He signaled the car to stop, rushed back in search of his benefactor only to find her gone.

Thwarted in his search, he stood for some moments in thought, then drawing from his inner pocket a little crumpled letter he read:

"Dear Santa Claus, please bring me a drum an' my little sister a dol' an' a bofe of us sum candy."

The Answered Letter

A tremor of joy swept over his weakened body; he returned to the city this time to mingle with the happy throng. He purchased a drum, a doll, some candy, a calico dress for his wife and some food, having still left seven dollars for what—we shall see.

That night as he walked to the door of his little home his wife, with tears in her eyes, met him with outstretched arms. "Dear," he said, "has the landlord been here? Well, wife, dry your eyes, for another Lord that watches over all has sent His angel to us and I have the money to pay our rent: we need not leave our home."

"And these bundles, John, what are they?"

"They—they—why they are to put in those tiny stockings hanging by the chimney there."

Her sweet face was flushed with joy.

"Oh, John! how happy I am! I have sat here ever since our little ones hung up their stockings, hoping and praying that they might be spared a disappointment on Christmas day. But who is this angel?"

At that very moment the angel had gathered around her fireside her dear ones, radiant with her nobleness, and two homes instead of one knew the full meaning of Christmas joy.

Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Carlson of bard Woods celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary on December 19. Thirty-two relatives and friends were present, most of whom

attended the wedding twenty-five years ago.

Klever Klub will hold a party Saturday, December 24, for the young people from the schools and

colleges, and another one on Thursday, December 29, at which time a Cinderella pantomime will be given by the children of Miss Mildred Pierce's dancing class.

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