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A Christmas Morning Courtship



"What would you like, pretty maid?" he said.
"Why, I'd like to coast on your Christmas sled."

HOLME'S CHRISTMAS

BY STACY E. BAKER

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IT was Christmas eve. Holme, a stranger in his own land, strolled lonesomely through the streets of his own city nor knew one of the shoving, impatient shoppers who elbowed him from the points of vantage in front of the gift laden windows.

It was seven years since he had been home. His mind mused over his many adventures in foreign lands as he almost affectionately gave shove for shove and forced his way up crowded Broadway. These people were his people—kin of him, fellow citizens. The spirit of the night permeated his whole being.

He thought about Jessy and wondered what had become of him. Probably he had married pretty Beth Allen, and as this thought occurred to Holme a curious little tremor thrilled up from his heart, saying as plainly as a heart can say, "We remember Beth, you and I, my master, and that is the reason why we are come back—to find out."

Once Holme had asked Beth Allen to marry him, and—

"Dick!"

Pale as a statue, the man turned. There at the curb, both hands held out to him, was Beth.

"You!" he gasped as he strode toward her.

"Even so," laughed the girl. "Me! And this is the best Christmas present of all!" Two hands closed convulsively tight over his, and her low voice whispered: "Don't be surprised at anything. I will explain later. And so," she said aloud, "you thought you would surprise me, you naughty boy, and come tonight. I didn't expect you until tomorrow."

She turned quickly, and Holme now noticed that she stood just beside an

tubby little middle aged one merely nodded in response to the other's polite acknowledgment.

And meanwhile Beth Allen, tall, slim and handsome as ever, was babbling of things beyond the ken of the youth—"his handsome present," "his letter" and other allusions too subtle for the comprehension of Holme.

He eyed the girl keenly. She seemed sane, and there were in those clear, well deep eyes only a boundless delight and enthusiasm over the wanderer's return.

Fiance! Beth Allen had refused to marry him seven years before, and this had resulted in the man's voluntary exile. Now she referred to him as her fiance!

Truly explanations were needed. His old love of the girl had pulsed instantly into life again as her warm hands met his. His travels had been useless.

"You must get in," Beth was chattering on. "I am done with my shopping, and we will return to the house. Boyton, home." This last to the chauffeur.

Not a word of explanation came from Beth as the machine silently sped over the frost jeweled streets, but she talked continually of everything—everything—everything but what Holme wanted most to know. In due time they drove up in front of her home, and the three dismounted and entered.

"Ha, Holme!" There was genuine pleasure in the voice of old Major Allen as he strode forward to clasp the hand of the errant in his warm grasp. "Quite a surprise! We didn't expect you until tomorrow. Gad, sir, it seems good to see you!"

The eyes of the youth were on the maid, and he knew in his heart that he wanted her more than he had ever wanted her before. But now she was silent. As her father continued talking one little hand patted a dusky strand back into the ebony mass of her hair. She was beautiful. She was more to be desired than ever.

"And to think," the major was saying, his fine old face alight, "that you and my little girl here have been engaged all these years and we knew nothing about it. Well, I am glad, Holme; extremely glad. There is no

automobile in which was seated a stranger.

"Mr. Crenton," she said, "this is Mr. Richard Holme, my fiance."

Stone faced, without as much as a flicker of an eyelash, Holme acknowledged the introduction.

Crenton was eying him grimly. Evidently this broad shouldered youth with the bronze of warm climes on his beardless cheeks did not appeal to him. "Surlly brute," thought Holme as the one in the world whom I would rather she would have."

The gray veteran had a most sincere admiration for Holme that had manifested itself directly after the youth had "done things" at the battle of San Juan Hill.

Through all the conversation following Crenton was almost boorishly quiet. He responded to questions in throaty monosyllables. His brow wore a heavy frown. All in all, Holme thought Crenton a clog to the joyousness of the evening. He wished that he would go, and finally this is just what Crenton did. After making his adieus to the girl and her father the sullen one turned to Holme. "I suppose I will see you again?" he drawled, a sneer in his voice.

"I doubt it," returned Holme, extending his hand, "at least not right away. I have been gone for some time, and—er—I shall devote the most of my time to my fiancee, and after our marriage we have planned an extended trip."

He looked across at the girl to see how she accepted this Munchausen flight. She smiled.

After the departure of the discomfited Crenton the old major left the room. Holme turned curiously to the girl. She was gazing at him, shame in her eyes and the bright red spots coming and going high on her cheeks.

"I—I can explain," she began eagerly. "Honestly, Dick, I can explain."

"Take it easy, Beth," soothed the young man, half afraid the girl would become hysterical. "There are really no explanations needed unless you want to tell. I am only too glad to let the matter continue just as it is."

The girl gazed at him with eloquent eyes.

"Do you really mean that—after this? After this brazen thing I have done can you marry me?"

"Can I?" exclaimed Holme. "Try me and see!"

"Listen!" began the girl. "I am going to tell you all. Years ago, Dick, when I refused you, I fully expected to marry you later. I thought you would ask me again, and you—didn't."

"Since you went away father somehow came to the belief that I had refused you in order to sacrifice myself to him. I have been doubly affection-

ate toward him since my mother died—poor old man—but he looked upon my continued—er—coldness toward matrimony with distress, and to alleviate this I told him that I was engaged to you; that we were to be married upon your return from India.

"I didn't think that he would mention it to a soul. I thought I had cautioned him that it was a secret engagement, but it seems I did not, and I verily believe that he has told it a dozen times to every one who has called here during your absence.

"It was terribly embarrassing to me, but I knew you, and I hoped in the event of your returning single—this was the biggest boggy—you would acknowledge the engagement and then later I would release you."

"I shall not accept a release," murmured Holme.

The girl continued: "Crenton has been a most persistent suitor. He has money—millions—but no manners." She shuddered. "Oh, I never could marry that man, but—but I believe he guessed my secret. He used to smile whenever your name was mentioned and leer—positively leer—at me. I hated him, but I was afraid.

"You can imagine with what mingled feelings I saw you as we came from that store. I waited for you at the curb. I—I couldn't do otherwise. Besides, I wished to show that persistent Crenton that at least I knew you.

"Then I became bolder, and I introduced you as my fiance." The girl's face was crimson. "And now," she finished sadly, "we must cancel the engagement. I—I can't literally throw myself at your head, you know, and then accept your whole souled offer to let the farce continue."

"But it isn't a farce," protested the man. "I love you, and I want you to marry me if you will. Why, dearest, that is why I came home."

He strode over to the girl and lifted her chin until her eyes were level with his.

"Thank God!" he said and kissed her.



County Government.

Representative—G. W. Wilson.
Clerk Superior Court—T. T. Loftis.
Sheriff and Tax Collector—C. C. Kilpatrick.
Treasurer—Z. W. Nicholls.
Register of Deeds—B. A. Gillespie.
Coroner—Dr. W. J. Wallis.
Surveyor—A. L. Hardin.
Commissioners—W. M. Henry, Ch'n; G. T. Lyday, W. E. Galloway.
Superintendent of Schools—T. C. Henderson.
Physician—Dr. Goode Cheatham.
Attorney—R. L. Gash.

Town Government.

Mayor—W. E. Breese, jr.
Board of Aldermen—T. H. Shipman, J. M. Kilpatrick, T. M. Mitchell, F. L. DeVane, E. W. Carter.
Marshal—J. A. Galloway.
Clerk and Tax Collector—T. H. Galloway.
Treasurer—T. H. Shipman.
Health Officer—Dr. C. W. Hunt.
Regular meetings—First Monday night in each month.

Professional Cards.

R. L. GASH,
LAWYER
11 and 12 McMinn Building
Notary Public.

H. G. BAILEY
Civil and Consulting Engineer
and Surveyor
CITY ENGINEER — HENDERSONVILLE, N. C.

NOTICE OF EXECUTRIX.

Having qualified as executrix of the last will and testament of Washington E. Galloway, late of the county of Transylvania, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the said testator, to present their claims to the undersigned on or before the 9th day of July, 1911, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will make immediate settlement. This July 9th, 1910.

SARAH LUCINDA GALLOWAY,
Welch Galloway, atty. *Executrix.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of J. C. McGaha, deceased, late of Transylvania county, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at office of R. L. Gash, Esq., Brevard, N. C., on or before the 27th day of May, 1911, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This 20th day of May, 1910.
V. B. MCGAHA,
Adm'r estate of J. C. McGaha, deceased

Entry No. 2568.

W. J. Owen enters and claims six hundred and forty (640) acres of land, lying in Hogback Township, on the waters of Indian creek. Beginning on a white oak, E. D. Owen's corner, and runs thence north 66 deg. east sixty (60) poles to a hickory stump on top of the Blue Ridge; thence south 24 degrees east with S. A. Owen's line to a stone, S. A. Owen's corner, on top of the Blue Ridge; thence south with the top of the Blue Ridge to a black oak, John Kizer's corner; thence west, running so as to include all the vacant land on Indian creek.
B. A. GILLESPIE,
Entry Taker.

The Rev. Irl R. Hicks 1911 Almanac

The Rev. Irl R. Hicks Almanac for 1911, that guardian Angel in a hundred thousand homes, is now ready. Not many are now willing to be without it and the Rev. Irl R. Hicks Magazine, Word and Works. The two are only One Dollar a year. The Almanac is 35c prepaid. No home or office should fail to send for them to Word and Works Publishing Company, St. Louis, Mo.

One Week to Christmas



And WISE ONES Surely Won't Delay Christmas Shopping Another Day

Christmas-New Year Holiday Rates.

The Southern Railway announce the sale of Christmas Holiday round trip tickets at reduced rates, to be sold on the following days: Dec. 15th, 16th, 17th, 21st, 22nd, 23d, 24th, 25th and 31st and Jan. 1st, 1911. Tickets good returning to reach original starting point not later than midnight of January 8, 1911. For further information call on the undersigned.

J. H. WOOD, D. P. A.,
Asheville, N. C.
E. W. CARTER, T. A., Brevard, N. C.