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Arrival of the Shepherds.

By Lerolle.



Noel Clayton's Christmas

The Story of a Home-Coming

NOEL CLAYTON was tall and gaunt, with clear, candid, blue eyes, and his white hands, small and nervous-looking, were as well kept as those of a woman.

He was thirty, and a splash of gray on either temple, a strand or two of white in his mustache, made him look older.

He was broad-chested and muscular—by all rules—he should have been a soldier—he looked an "open air" man, but for five years he had been writing short stories, novelettes and serials for the weekly press.

It was good, nervous work. His name was becoming known, for he had the happy knack of blending pathos with humor. He had traveled widely, and an Australian bush lily at the beginning of the week would be followed by a London society story, to be followed again by a story of rustic life in the dear West Country that he loved so well.

He lived quite alone, worked—and smoked—from morning to night, loved his profession, and had practically dropped all his friends—male and female—and when a fit of the not infrequent blues got him by the throat, threw his pen into the grate and ordered up his landlady's children, and pandemonium reigned for an hour.

Sometimes he gave them pennies, but not always—small coin of the realm is not always available to authors—and the romps were huge, and he enjoyed them.

Of course there was a woman at the bottom of the tangle of the man's life, and women complicate things some times—he would have said "always."



On one particular evening he was alone and writing, when Jim Courteney was shown in—and Jim was an old and tried friend—and the only friend the lonely, self-absorbed man had, and so the incomer sat down and lighted his pipe, and did not bother the author for quite a quarter of an hour, and then Noel rose and stretched himself.

"What is it this time, Noel?"

"Oh, the usual thing—love; and candidly, I am getting so sick of writing love stories."

"Ah, you feel like that?"

"Man alive, this is Christmas Eve, and somehow—somehow—my thoughts went back with a jump, and I remembered one Christmas Eve when—"

"Your pipe's out, Noel!"

"Aye, so it is. Well there was one Christmas Eve when—"

"My dear boy, are you worrying about her still?"

"Yes," and then a long pause— It is the privilege of chums to sit silent for a spell.

"And all this happened four or five years ago. I never heard the rights or wrongs of the story."

Noel crossed the room, and digging both hands into his pockets, looked at his chum.

"There is nothing to know. After the four happy years of married life, trouble came and—between us, lies came between us; and—here I am and it's Christmas Eve. Of course our baby was only a mite—a wee, blue-eyed, golden-haired mite; couldn't walk, crawled, you know; but we were awful chums, and when she went and took our mite—well," and the man's laugh hurt his own ears. "Well, then I took to writing love stories—love, old chap, with a happy ending—bishops, bridesmaids, bouquets and blessings, and—his temporary excitement had left him—he added drily: "And it pays! Now go, old chap."

"The girl-wife had been very sweet, very lovable, very beautiful—and had married two lives.

There should be a special place of torment for the person who deliberately comes between two people who love each other and smilingly warps two lives.

Pearl Clayton was as easily led as a child, a soft, emotional weak little woman, and when Noel returned from a few days' holiday he found the house closed and Pearl and Baby had departed.

Noel drifted for a little bit, the shock unmanned him terribly, but his pen was his sole source of income, and it had to be miled if body and soul were to be kept together, and in a very few weeks he had, to some extent, regained his mental balance, and his work improved.

The eve of Christmas and the day itself appeals to most hearts, and on this particular eve Noel kept thinking back and thinking back while he wrote.

How well he remembered the extra-sized stocking he induced the nurse to knit, and how bulky it looked and felt on Christmas morning. And then came school, college, and then married life.

When the scribbling fit was on him Pearl used to draw her low wicker chair close to his writing-table, knitting, or daintily fingering white material, soft and downy and fluffy for the prospective wearer, and the few remarks she made seemed to chime in and identify themselves with what he was writing; but, of course, all this happened five years ago.

One odd little trick Pearl had, and Noel remembered it this evening—and missed it.

When his pen was working extra busily she used to lay the tips of her fingers upon his right hand—just where hand meets wrist. She did not incommode him in the least. He declared her touch inspired him; they were such pink-tipped fingers, and so small, and he had often written with the tiny touch on his wrist almost unconsciously—only peeping up from time to time at a sweet oval face, into deep violet eyes love lit.

But, of course, this was five years ago.

"My dear boy, are you worrying about her still?"

So he wrote on, feeling a little bit

sorry that Chum had not stayed, for after all he only had another half-hour's work before him, and then they could sit and chat, and perhaps drown the sound of the bells that he knew would ring out in a few hours.

He was just in the frame of mind to summon his landlady's children, but except for himself, the house was empty. There was a Christmas Eve party going on, and Mrs. Marsh and her progeny were attending it.

He had been writing for half an hour since Chum had left him, and felt the old familiar touch on his wrist. It was imagination of course, he did not even turn his head, and then he was looking into blue eyes, in the round golden-curved framed face of a boy of four, who laughed up at him and presented a rosebud to be kissed.

"Goodness, child—where on earth do you come from? and who—who brought you. What is your name?"

"Eric," and the child began to make preparations for climbing a lofty tree.

"Who brought you here, Baby Eric? How did you come?"

Noel felt like an Irish member of Parliament, for "no answer was given," but a wee form, full of hugs and kisses, got fast hold upon him, and said gravely, and yet with a sweet air of command:

"Just come'd—and now if you're not too busy, mister Father—"

"Yes, my son."

"But, my child—my little son—who brought you here? Where is your mother?" and the tall man paced up and down.

Of course, Chum had left the door open, and someone had told the child to walk straight in—and the child had—straight in.

The author—his tiny son was on the floor now, saying things to the cat, and it deserved every word, being a cat that likes stamps off letters, and loves bacon and boiled eggs—thrust his hands deep into his pockets and looked down, sad eyed, at little Sunny-face.

"Yes, perhaps you had better come to bed."

If Chum would only come, if something would only happen to break the silence, a silence only cleft by the sigh of a child.

The church was only at the end of the street.

He could hear the bell-ringers shuffling along the frosty pavement, in a few minutes—and he bent to his work.

Half asleep, half awake, he was conscious of the old, almost forgotten touch upon his wrist—a dream doubtless—but he could not shake it off, and then he looked down.

Knelling as of yore beside him, blue eyes tear-dimmed, was Pearl.

"I have returned, Noel." It was a quivering little voice, but it thrilled him.

How like she was to their child.

The Pinata.

An Important Member of the Mexican Christmas Party.

One of the important members of the Mexican Christmas party is the pinata, which may be the figure of a clown, a ballet dancer or a bull fighter, but is always dressed in a pair of bloomers stuffed with good things. One of the children, blindfolded and armed with a long pole, attempts to break these bloomers.

It attempts, but fails ingloriously, says the Ledger Monthly, for there seems to be a sort of centrifugal force about the pinata. And the pole strikes far wide of its mark, not even coming



within a few feet of its enemy. Then the combatant is unblindfolded and some other child is given a chance to strike the pinata, who seems to wax wroth at these futile attempts of onslaught and say, "Hit me if you dare."

Again an attempt is made, centrifugal force begins to assert itself, and a gay sandal comes plunging madly down upon the head of some unfortunate victim.

This provokes a laugh from the crowd, even the person struck joining in, though, on account of his suddenly aching head, his laugh may be a faint, assumed one. So, one by one, the children are given a chance to rend assunder, if not to dislodge, the pinata, and should they all fail, one by one the adults arm themselves with the hitherto futile weapon.

Wildly they strike—purposely in mid-air, to evoke laughter from the gleeful children—until finally the bloomers and blouse are ripped assunder. Then a deluge of sweets, the contents of the olla which

THE ATLANTA RETURNED

American War Vessel Leave Colombian Water.

Colon, By Cable.—The United States cruiser Atlanta, Commander William H. Turner returned Friday night from the Gulf of Darien. She discovered December 15 a detachment of Colombian troops, numbering apparently about 500 men, but, according to their statements, totalling 1,500 or 2,000 men at Titumati, on the western side of the gulf, just north of the mouth of the Attrato river. The commander of the Atlanta sent ashore an officer, who conversed with the Colombian commander. The latter protested energetically against the presence of American warships in Colombian waters, in so much as war between Colombia and the United States had not been declared, and politely requested the Atlanta to leave the gulf because it belonged to Colombia. Commander Turner ignored the request, and the Atlanta returned to Colon to report to Rear Admiral Coghlan.

The Colombians are clearly busy with protective and strengthening measures. Although they treated the Americans courteously, they decidedly resented the presence of the Atlanta's landing party. The Colombian force was composed partly of the men landed recently at the Attrato river by the Colombian cruisers Cartagena and General Pinzon.

Early in the morning of December 15, the Atlanta sighted a small schooner in the centre of the Gulf of Darien, and followed her to the western shore, where the schooner attempted to hide behind an islet. Lieut. Harlan P. Perrill was ordered to board her, and thereupon a whale-boat was lowered and pulled towards the schooner.

Through the courtesy of the naval officers the correspondent of the Associated Press accompanied the party. It was found that the schooner had on board 100 armed Colombian soldiers, commanded by General Rafael Ortiz, commander-in-chief of the Colombian forces of the Atlantic and Pacific, had a large camp a mile away, on the mainland. General Ortiz requested Lieut. Perrill to land and confer with General Ortiz.

Great excitement prevailed among the Colombians on the whale-boat's approach. There were repeated cries of "Viva Colombia," and there was a sudden concentration of about 150 Colombian soldiers on the beach. For some moments the situation appeared dangerous, but the appearance of an ambulance, General Ortiz appeared on the beach, when Lieut. Perrill went ashore, the whale-boat, in the meantime, lying close by. General Ortiz insisted that Lieut. Perrill should fly the Colombian flag at the bow of the whale-boat or lower the American flag at her stern, because she was in Colombian waters. Lieut. Perrill replied that he did not have a Colombian flag and refused to lower the stars and stripes. General Ortiz did not insist upon his so doing, but he protested in writing against the presence of the Americans in Colombian waters. Lieut. Perrill accepted the protest and conveyed it to Commander Turner, who handed it to Rear Admiral Coghlan on his arrival here.

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WORK OF CONGRESS

A Lot of Discussion and Little Practical Business.

The Senate spent more than five hours Saturday discussing the Cuban reciprocity bill and during that time three speeches were made. Mr. Foster, of Louisiana, led the discussion and occupied the greater part of the day with an argument in opposition to the measure. He declared that its passage would greatly injure the sugar industry of the United States. Senator Depeu, on the Republican side, and Senator Clay, of the Democratic side, supported the bill as a measure in the interest of both countries. Senator Clay said that he accepted it as a provision for the reduction of duties on the part of both countries. Mr. Foster declared that there is no moral obligation on the part of this government to enter into the proposed arrangement with Cuba. He said we are standing at the "open door" of the far East saying we can compete with England and other foreign countries if given equality of rights, while we are entering into a contrary arrangement in our own hemisphere. Speaking of the claim from the standpoint of business, he contended that even without the proposed reciprocal arrangement the manufacturers of the United States could get the Cuban trade if they would ask for it. He also declared that the reduction of our revenues which would result from the enactment of the proposed law in the five years that the law was to continue in force would be \$35,000,000 of \$40,000,000. This money must go either to the Cuban sugar planters or to the sugar trust. In either event the policy was one contrary to our own best interests. The speaker pronounced the treaty not only a political and economic blunder, but declared it falls short of a legislative crime. The fundamental error of the measure, he said, is the taking of the fruits and vegetables of Florida and the far West, the tobacco and sugar products of the country and placing them in competition with the Cuban products in which the tariff is reduced of 20 per cent. He predicted that the preferential provision of the treaty will bring on a tariff war with foreign countries, because anything coming from foreign countries will be discriminated against. Reciprocity, he said, was called by some Republicans the hand-maid of protection and by some Democrats the hand-maid of free trade, but in this age of commercialism, if he might so term it, he declared reciprocity to be the hand-maid of special interests. Senator Foster declared that behind the treaty are every power and influence of the sugar trust, giving as his reasons that the building up of the beet sugar industry of the West depends on the down-pulling of the sugar trust.

Rural free delivery, reciprocity with Canada and the new republic of Panama were topics of discussion in the House Tuesday. The subject of rural free delivery was introduced by Mr. Maddox, Democrat, who claimed that certain States had been favored in the establishment of routes, which resulted in a lively discussion. Mr. Hepburn, Republican, of Iowa, and Mr. Hemenway, Republican, of Indiana, were among the others on the Republican side.

Mr. Crumpacker, Democrat, of Indiana, defended the course pursued by the administration in dealing with the Central American situation and replied to criticisms which have been made on the opposite side of the chamber.

Washington, Special.—By the decisive vote of 57 to 18 the Senate passed the bill carrying into effect the reciprocity treaty with Cuba. The final vote was taken at the close of a day that was marked by a debate which, while at times animated, was never acrimonious. The principal speeches of the day were made by Mr. Spooner for the bill and by Mr. Bailey against it. Both Senators were subjected to frequent interruptions. In his remarks Mr. Bailey referred to the recent agreement of the Democratic caucus to stand solidly on parliamentary questions, and warned the Republicans that in the future they could not depend on straggling Democratic votes in support of Republican measures, regardless of whether they were or were not in accord with Democratic doctrine. The vote in detail was as follows:

Yeas—Aldrich, Alger, Allee, Allison, Ankeny, Bacon, Ball, Beveridge, Blackburn, Burnham, Burrows, Burton, Clapp, Clark, Wyoming, Clay, Cokerell, Cullem, Dewey, Dillingham, Dooliver, Dryden, Elkins, Fairbanks, Foraker, Foster, Washington, Frye, Fulton, Gallinger, Gorman, Hale, Hanna, Hansbrough, Heyburn, Hoar, Hopkins, Kean, Lodge, Long, McComas, McCready, McCumber, Mitchell, Nelson, Overman, Penrose, Perkins, Platt, Connecticut; Platt, New York; Proctor, Quarles, Scott, Simmons, Smoot, Spooner, Stewart, Stone, Wetmore—57.

Nays—Bailey, Bard, Bate, Carmack, Culberson, Daniel, Dnibus, Foster, Louisiana; McEnery, McLaurin, Malory, Martin, Newlands, Pettus, Tallafiero, Teller, Tillman—18.

The bill passed carried into execution the treaty between the United States and Cuba, which was ratified last March. The treaty provides for a reduction of 20 per cent of the rates of duty under the Dingley law on all Cuban articles imported into the United States and a varying reduction of from 20 to 40 per cent on the established Cuban duty on articles imported into Cuba from the United States.

Stand Against Russia. Tokyo, by Cable.—In consequence of Russia's reply, a special conference of the elder statesmen of Japan, including the Marquis Ito, and the cabinet ministers, is proceeding here. It is understood that the statesmen are considering the adoption of a firm stand against Russia. General Kodama, the War Minister, was present for the first time at the conference. There is renewed activity at the admiralty, in view of a possible naval demonstration.

Shot From Ambush. Shreveport, La., Special.—The body of George Manuel, the negro who was thought to have killed his employer, J. T. Watkins, of Bayou Pierre, in Red River parish, was found about 300 yards from the scene of the killing. His head had been almost shot away. It now develops that both the planter and his negro servant were shot from ambush by unknown men whose motive was robbery.

News Notes. The czar of Russia has appointed a commission to investigate the cause of the death of little Princess Elizabeth, who was reported to have been poisoned.

J. W. Davidson, United States Consul at Tamsui, Formosa, reported that Russia had 200,000 troops in Manchuria.

Japanese marines landed at Mokto, Korea, and suppressed a riot.

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MR. DAVIS RETURNS

The Turkish Government Expected to Make Reparation.

THE CONSUL WILL HAVE WARSHIP

The State Department Takes a Firm Stand in the Matter of the Assault on the United States Consul at Alexandretta.

Washington, Special.—As a result of Minister Leishman's advice respecting the Alexandretta affair, the State Department has requested the Navy Department to place a warship at the disposal of Consul Davis, now at Beirut upon which he might return to Alexandretta, at his pleasure. The Navy Department accordingly cabled instructions to Admiral Cotton on board the flagship Brooklyn, at Alexandria, Egypt, to place a vessel at the disposal of Mr. Davis. It is believed the Brooklyn to arrange the terms of his reception.

Acting Secretary of State Adee has taken a firm stand in the matter of the assault upon United States Consul W. R. Davis, by Turkish officials and police, at Alexandretta. He has called Minister Leishman to present the facts to the Turkish government and inform that government the case is one seeming to invite an expression of regret and reparation. The State Department does not indicate what measure of reparation is expected, but it is understood that the Turkish government will by removal or otherwise punish the offending Turkish officials at Alexandretta and compensate Atrian for the losses and injuries he has sustained. The Turkish government is willing to compensate Atrian and deport him. It is understood that the main offense is the assault upon the United States consul, a matter of gravity in international law. The information that has reached the Department is to the effect that Mr. Davis was entirely within his rights and powers and that while engaged in protecting, as was his duty, a naturalized American citizen, he was not upon by five Turkish policemen and dragged along the ground. It was also reported incidentally that upon recovering his footing the consul promptly and soundly thrashed all five of the policemen.

D. Iends General Wood. Washington, Special.—The Senate committee on military affairs concluded its investigation of the charges against General Leonard Wood. Secretary Root was the only witness today. He was on the stand for two and a half hours at the forenoon session, and occupied the attention of the committee Wednesday night from 5 o'clock until 11:29 o'clock. The committee will meet again to prepare its report. It is understood that confirmation will be recommended by a vote of 8 to 2. A minority report will be made by the opposing members of the committee.

The testimony of Secretary Root is practically the only defense that has been made of General Wood. The testimony, however, covered the entire range of evidence produced against General Wood and was supported in many instances with correspondence and other data taken from records at the War Department covering the period of General Wood's administration as Governor General of Cuba. Secretary Root undertook to assume the whole responsibility for the orders issued by General Wood affecting the judicial system in Cuba and concerning the concession granted to the Jal Alai Company at Havana. He justified the acceptance by General Wood of the present of a silver set from the Jal Alai Company.

Flotilla Sails. Newport News, Special.—The flotilla of torpedo boats, which has been in Hampton Roads for the past several weeks, sailed for Port Royal, S. C. the first stop in the long voyage to the Philippines. The flotilla included the cruiser Baltimore and the destroyers Decatur, Bainbridge, Barry and Dale. Calculations made by Lieutenant Chandler, the flotilla commander, contemplate about 70 days of actual running time. Steps will be made at the various points touched, and they will aggregate about 90 days the voyage thus being expected to consume nearly five months.

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