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## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE AT NIGHT

By ALICE E. ALLEN.

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IT seemed to Ruth as she flew for the dozenth time to her telephone that dreary afternoon of the day before Christmas that she had friends in the grim old city of which she had never known until then—true friends, even if they were humble and too poor to do more than telephone their good wishes.

This special message was from Ruth's proprietor. Could he call that evening? Ruth's "Of course not, Mr. Mayne," was firm. Could he take her out, then—a dinner somewhere, the theater? Just this once, for Christmas' sake? Ruth's refusals as transmitted by the telephone were all firm and relentless. But as she came away and sat down in her chair by the window her eyes were wistful.

"It will never do for the proprietor to call upon his stenographer," she said, with a sorry little smile. "To be sure, there was a time"—when he was her father's clerk—"but times have changed."

Perhaps because it was Christmas eve, when memories, no matter how well behaved at other times and seasons, will walk abroad; perhaps because other things—such as love, joy, peace and good will—were thronging heaven and earth below; perhaps only because Ruth was tired and perplexed

if we wait. I can wait." That was three years ago. At first Ruth had half expected his return. But he never came. And he never sent her a word. Ruth was tired of watching the mails now. And her proud little head told her eager little heart that it was not fair to call Jack back just because life was hard and lonely and almost unbearable sometimes. So she toiled away until toll became work—work that she enjoyed. She had her little rooms by herself, her books, her



SITTING IN HER LITTLE WINDOW.

pictures, enough to eat and wear. What more need anyone ask? Nothing—except at Christmas. At Christmas, to a woman, love is a necessity.

That night, in the middle of the darkest hour, Ruth sat up straight in bed. She was absolutely sure that the telephone bell over her desk had just rung. All was still, so, after a minute of waiting, she lay down again, laughing to herself. The telephone had been so busy all day bringing her messages that she had heard it in her dreams. It could not really have rung.

After a little she drowsed off, only to hear its shrill jingle again and again. It no longer awakened her. But in her dream she went to the telephone, took down the receiver and listened. Out of the darkness and distance a voice spoke—Jack's voice. "Merry Christmas" was its only message. But so strong and clear were the words that when Ruth finally awoke to a sunny Christmas morning, she still tingled to their memory.

Perhaps, when one first awakes, the heart has more control over one than the head. Anyhow, when Ruth sat up and looked out of her window at the already busy streets far below her, her heart was doing the talking.

"Jack is waiting for you—some where," it said. "And he belongs to you. Why not claim your own?"

After a minute Ruth's heart spoke again. "What if you are poor? What if he is not rich? Can't two work together better than apart? Why not give Jack a Christmas gift? The only one he wants?"

Ruth did not give her head time to argue with her heart. As soon as she was dressed she was at the telephone giving Jack's business number. After she had waited what seemed a long, long time her head did remind her.

"Why, of course," she said slowly. "He will be up country today." She was just about to hang up the receiver "Wait a minute," cried her heart. Hearts do know things, especially at Christmas. And then—

"Hello!" said a big, hearty voice out of the distance.

"Oh, Jack!" cried Ruth. "Is it you, really you?"

"Yes, Ruth," said the voice. "Who else? You wanted?"

"To wish you a merry Christmas, Jack," Ruth faltered.

"Thanks. That all?"

"Yes," said Ruth, listening to her head. Then: "No—not quite. I—I want to hear your voice; that's all."

"Is it?" asked the voice Ruth wanted to hear.

"You see, Jack," Ruth hurried on, "I dreamed about you last night. I—I thought you called me up, and—and it was only a dream."

"I came so near it," said the voice. "that I stood here by my phone for an hour. But it was late, and—well, Ruth, I wanted you to call me up this time."

"You're not in the country?"

"Not yet. We go tonight."

"We?"

"Mother and I. She's spending part of Christmas in the city. But we miss the snow and the sleighbells and the home folks."



### CHRISTMAS EVE

"It sounds lovely," cried Ruth, "and so Christmasy. Give your mother my love, Jack, and wish her the merriest Christmas."

"She'll be glad to hear from you. Ruth; we've been talking of you. Anything else?"

"No."

"Sure, dear?"

Ruth's eyes were so full of tears that, as she said afterward, she couldn't see to talk.

"Sure, dear?" asked the voice again. "That's all," she said bravely. "Only—are you well?"

"Perfectly. And you?"

"Oh, yes. Wasn't it strange I heard the bell when you didn't really ring up last night, Jack?"

"No," said Jack firmly. "Your heart heard mine, little girl. If only you would listen to it oftener."

"I can't always hear it," laughed Ruth. "My head is such a good talker."

"Time's up," said a strange voice somewhere.

"What came next must have surprised even that long suffering, much enduring wire. Sure it is that Ruth's cheeks flamed like red holly berries.

And even before she ran to put her clothes in her suit case, to do her hair and to put on her one good gown, from above her bookcase she took a sprig of scarlet holly. With a red ribbon she tied it over the telephone.

"If ever anything deserved a merry Christmas," she cried, "you do!"

Plum pudding and mince pie are minor but necessary accompaniments of Christmas day, and strangely enough the former was long ago accepted as typical of the riches and spices brought by the three wise men to the child in the manger, while the Christmas pie was held in abhorrence by all members of strict puritanical bodies, who believed:

All plums the prophets' sons deny, And spices broths are too hot; Treason's in the December pie And death within the pot.

"I've been ready,—always, Jack."

"Goodby, Jack, dear?" cried Ruth. But there was no answer.

The next minute she again took down the receiver.

"Get 3896 again; quick!" she said.

"Hello!" said Jack's voice.

"Is that you, Jack?"

"Of course. Something you forgot, dear?"

"No; I didn't forget. I wouldn't say it, but I must. Don't look at me, Jack, but listen. I'm listening to my heart now. There is something I want, Jack."

"Yes."

"It's a big something. Guess. No; don't guess. Wait. It's you." Ruth hung up the receiver and ran to the chair by the window quite the other side of the room.

It was not quite a minute when the telephone bell rang shrilly.

"Is this Miss Hazen?" said the operator's voice.

"Yes," said Ruth.

"Message wasn't finished—wait."

"Hello!" came Jack's voice, big, strong, vibrant with happiness. "That you, Ruth?"

"Yes."

"Coming," said the voice, "mother and I, to take you up state with us. Can you be ready in an hour?"

"Yes," said Ruth. "I've been ready always, Jack."

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## Spot's Friend

By ELDON SPEAKE

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DEAR Mr. Santa, I don't know you. And maybe it's just as well. For, bein' as you never done nothin' for me.

I ain't quite so 'traid to tell what it is that I'd like to have you do. And as quick as ever you can. And maybe some day I can pay you back if I ever grow up to a man.

A dog catcher came here last week and took my puppy away somewhere. And I am so lame that I can't go look and get him away from there. And even if I could go where he's at I haven't no dollar to pay.

And if you will kindly advance me that I'll try and return it some day.

You know, my papa he went and died and left just my mamma and me. And Spot—that's his name—and we cried and cried.

For we missed him a lot, we three. And mamma she works, and we got along. And Spot he stayed home with me. And never went out, for I'm not very strong.

And I have to have some one, you see. The dog man that took him away he said He'd keep him ten days in the pound. And after that time poor Spot'll be dead. And three days from now Spot'll be drownded.

So please, Mr. Santa, if you can spare a dollar to set Spot free, please take it and give to the man up there.

And send home my puppy to me. And please, Mr. Santa, if you haven't got no dollar to spend that way, I wish that at least you would go see Spot.

And tell him we'll meet some day. And if you don't mind that he's not very clean.

And if there's nobody to see, I wish you'd just kinda—be'll know what you mean— Just give him a pat for me.

### Quotations to Go With Christmas Gifts

A PRETTY and original touch may be given a Christmas gift by accompanying it with a dainty card on which are written the recipient's name and some apt quotation of an appropriate nature. A few selected quotations suitable for different gifts may be of interest.

- For a postal card album: Kind messages that pass from land to land.—Longfellow.
- For a set of books by a well known author: The chief glory of every people arises from its authors.—Dr. Johnson.
- For a small afternoon tea caddy: Tea, thou soft, thou sober, sage and venerable liquid.—Colley Cibber.
- For a useful purse: The best friends are in the purse.—German Proverb.
- Happy the man who, void of cares and strife, in silken or in leathern purse retains A splendid shilling.—John Phillips.

- With a pack of cards: The cards beat all the players, be they never so skillful.—Emerson.
- With a pair of gloves: Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand:—Romeo and Juliet.
- With a silver handglass: The heart, like a mirror, should reflect all objects, without being sullied by any.—Confucius.
- With a "tear off" calendar: The longest day must have an end.—Italian Proverb.
- A Christmas gift of a ring for a fiancée or wife: So let our love As endless prove And pure as gold forever.—Robert Herrick.

- For the last baby: Much is she worth, and even more is made of her.—W. E. Henley.
- With an umbrella: The year, most part deformed with dripping rains.—Cowper.
- With a cookbook: The taste of the kitchen is better than the smell.—Old Proverb.
- With an electric torch lamp: To a great night a great lantern.—Old Proverb.
- With a needlecase: Who hath need of a hundred eyes.—Old Proverb.
- With a photograph: Generally music feedeth the disposition of spirit which it findeth.—Bacon.

### HOW TO SPEND CHRISTMAS.

Forget Yourself For the Day and Try to Make Others Happy.

DAY off, a few remembrances from relatives and friends and a good dinner—is that all that Christmas means to you? Surely you are going to make it an occasion for more than usual rejoicing this year, a real old-fashioned Christmas. Surely you are going to be more liberal in spirit than ever before and scatter merriment on all sides. Have you been a little selfish, have you devoted so much time to enjoying yourself that you have forgotten other folks? Those you have forgotten are good folks, aren't they, the best folks in the world? And you are just going to show them how appreciative you are. You don't like this modern way of turning dear old Christmas into an occasion for trading and exchanging gifts. You are going to see all the friends you can on that day and shake hands with as many; pat them on the back and tell them how glad you are to be with them. And to those you cannot see you are going to write cheery, warm hearted letters and tell them you want to hear from them oftener. Isn't that how you feel about the greatest of all birthdays?

### Two Farms for Sale.

113 acres including 24 3/4 acres good bottom and a large feed barn. Also 51 1/2 acres including a two room house. These farms are a part of the late John Greenwood farm 10 miles West of Mount Airy, N. C. and is fine for Tobacco, Fruit, Grain etc. For description and prices write or see, Isom Dimmette, Dimmette, N. C.



HER REFRUALS WERE FIRM AND RESOLUTE.

ed and lonely—whatever the reason—sitting there in her little window, looking down upon the street, with its throng of gay, good natured shoppers. Ruth did what she had sternly forbidden herself to do—she went back over the years which had made such changes in her life. There was her father's business disgrace, the loss of everything, followed by his death. Then came her own beginning in business in spite of herself, Ruth smiled to think of what her old friends would say could they know what a capable little business woman necessity had made of her. But not one of them all knew where she was. Not one had traced her to this great city—that is, except Jack. Jack? As soon as Ruth admitted that name into her thoughts, it dominated all else. It brought back its owner—strong, manly, insistent—one of the won't-take-no-for-an-answer kind. Ruth found herself wondering—almost—that Jack had taken her no as final. Apparently he had. It had surely been as strong as she could make it. And he had gone away—and had not come back. With the many friends who had rung up to ask how she was and to say "Merry Christmas" there had been no Jack—Jack of the strong face, the loyal heart, the tender eyes and voice. How had she ever let him go? "Some time you will want me, Ruth," he had said. Above the rush and roar of the great city Ruth heard the words again just as she had heard them every day and every night since Jack had gone away. "I could urge you now, but I want you of your own free will, dear. And you will come some day. I do not even need to ask a promise—I know. What is ours does come to us."