

MISS ALADDIN
By Christine Whiting Parmenter
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"Well, no whistle came that night, and at last, bitterly disappointed, fearful for his safety as she always was at any untoward delay, my mother crept into the big bed and dropped asleep. No doubt her pillow was wet with tears; but things looked brighter in the morning. It was a beautiful day, and I, of course, was twittering with excitement. She could scarcely persuade me to eat breakfast I was so eager to examine every ornament and open the two parcels tied to the topmost branch of my small tree.

"At last she pushed aside our soiled dishes. This morning they could wait, for after all, Christmas comes but once a year. She drew a chair close to the little tree; took me on her lap and put into my hands one of the gifts she had prepared so lovingly. You see, she had contrived two dolls out of homemade clothespins - painted their faces very cleverly, and dressed them in scarlet flannel from an old petticoat, wrapping them separately so that I would have more to open."

For a moment Miss Columbine sat silent, as if thinking; then she went on: "I do not, of course, remember every detail of this story; but it was told so often that the scene rises before me very clearly. I was so enthralled with my doll that I forgot to be curious about the other package; and as I sat there on my mother's knee, caressing this new baby, something, possibly the sense of being watched, drew her eyes away from me for a moment, and at what she saw her poor heart almost stopped beating. For there was a face at the window, peering in at us—the face of an Indian!"

"My soul!" breathed Aurora in an awed whisper; and as if not hearing her, Miss Columbine continued: "Perhaps you young folks can't realize what that meant to a pioneer woman alone in her cabin save for a little child. Instinctively her glance rose to the rifle lying ready for use on a shelf behind the stove; then fell to the fir tree; that emblem of 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men'; and just as the door latch rattled ominously, she came to a decision.

"She was a courageous woman, my mother, but I have sometimes wondered what was in her heart as she set me on my feet and moved toward that door unarmed. Did she expect to confront a band of roving savages? What met her eyes was a single brave, and a boy of, possibly seven years old. No doubt the Indian looked sinister enough. Only the week before a woman not many miles away had been scalped and mutilated. The horror of that story was still upon her; yet she did what may have been the only thing that protected herself and me. My mother smiled. It was, I imagine, a smile born out of terror; but to that grim-visaged Indian it was a gesture of friendliness. Who knows but had there been more such gestures, one page of our history would have been less tragic. And then, although her hands were so tightly clenched that (she found later) the nails had pierced her flesh, she looked straight up at him and said two words—words which sounded strange to her own ears in such a moment. Perhaps you have guessed them, for what my wonderful little mother said was: 'Merry Christmas!'"

Miss Columbine paused, and there was silence until Aurora Tubbs exclaimed: "But you ain't tellin' us that that wild Indjun knew what she said. Miss Columbine! It's not believable."

The old lady seemed to be looking at something far away.

"Not the words," she answered, "but perhaps he understood the smile; and she spoke gently. He came into the room, followed by his boy, and stood, arms folded,

looking down at that small gay tree and that happy little girl who knew no fear. For a moment; then, glancing up suddenly, I laughed with pleasure. Here was another child! I held my doll aloft so that the Indian boy could see it. "Look!" I cried joyously. "My new baby! See!"

"The boy reached out and took it from me, his white teeth gleaming in a quick smile. The man grunted

something unintelligible and moved nearer the tree. He seemed, my mother told me, both puzzled and admiring, like a big child wondering what it was all about. He touched a yellow butterfly made from a scrap of paper; said something more, letting his gaze rove slowly about the room. Her heart quickened as his eyes rested on the rifle; then subsided when he made no move to touch it. The boy, still admiring my homemade doll, said something rapidly and took from his neck a string of beads, holding them out to me. It was, my moth-



"My New Baby! See!"

er understood, meant as an exchange for my clothespin baby, and fearing trouble should I rebel, she said: "See, darling, he has brought you a Christmas gift! Let him keep your dolly. I have another exactly like it for you; and this poor boy has no lovely tree, perhaps no mother. Tell him to keep it."

"My lips trembled; but she took the beads and put them about my neck, and suddenly I was enraptured with this new treasure. Apparently I was desirous of doing something for the other Indian, for I lifted the paper butterfly from its branch and held it out to him, saying: 'It's your Kismus gif, man! Merry Kismus!'"

A breath of pleasure swept through her audience as Cousin Columbine ceased speaking; then she continued: "I seem to remember the Indian stooping to take my offering. I know he smiled, though that is something my mother never corroborated. He grunted a word or two, intended, she was sure, as thanks; gave one more curious look at the small tree; and then they left us, those strange, strange Christmas guests, mounting their ponies and riding into the forest, disarmed, my father used to say, by a smile of welcome."

"And did you ever see them again?" questioned Eve Adam; her low voice was very gentle.

"Never again. What they came for—where they were going, we never knew. And only a half hour later there sounded close to that well-barred door, the clear, sweet note of a hermit thrush! Not until then did my valiant mother give way to tears."

Said Matthew Adam, gravely: "That is the nicest Christmas story I ever heard. Miss Columbine."

"And now," suggested his mother, going to the melodeon, "let's end our evening by singing some of the good old carols."

Later that night when the guests had departed and the Nelson mansion stood quiet in the moonlight, Nance went to her tower and gazed for a moment at the snowy Peak. It had been a long exciting day, and suddenly conscious of being tired, the girl opened the window and slipped gratefully into her big black walnut bed.

Continued next week)

Eight Killed on State Highways

Highway accidents accounted for eight deaths in North Carolina over the past week-end, survey showed Monday. Wet highways and dirt roads suffering from the recent rains were the cause of the majority of the accidents. Of the deaths five were in Western Carolina while the remainder were in the east.

Holloway's Hits
Jas. H. Holloway, Raleigh

NATIONAL

President Roosevelt is the first man in all human history who had Five Billion Dollars to spend at one time. If the business depression can survive the expenditure of this vast sum the country will be in a bad way in more ways than one. Millions of our citizens will be pauperized and our national credit will have been almost destroyed. Statistics from various sources seem to support the administration claim of far reaching business improvement. The main trouble is the large and increasing number of people out of work on Relief. This condition may adjust itself before the fall in which event the country will be safe for the future.

STATE

The General Assembly is still here and apparently no nearer agreement on the Revenue and Appropriation bills than they were two months ago. Following the example of the House the State Senate votes one way today and the opposite way tomorrow. It does seem that men of integrity and honor would at least maintain a consistent attitude in their votes from day to day and not raise the presumption in the minds of the people that they were either very unstable or under the dominion of the lobbyist and the predatory interest. Conditions in the General Assembly have become so bad that even the Lieutenant Governor has openly stated in the Press that this was not an outstanding body. No one can possibly blame the Governor for the record the legislature has made. He presented reasonable recommendations at the beginning of the session and it was up to the General Assembly to accept or reject his proposals. After more than three months they have nothing to show for their work but a lot of rotten local laws that will only add to the confusion of the citizens of the state. It is extremely doubtful whether one-half the members know just what they have done.



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