

## A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Oh! Christmas days of long ago,  
Can you not give me one day to me,  
One of your merry number back,  
Just as it used to be?  
Tis but a little time to spare  
From all the long-gone past,  
That once was mine and now is yours,  
One day too sweet to last.  
You would not miss it from your  
store,  
While I—ah! words are vain—  
And when the evening comes, you  
know,  
I'll give it back again.  
I've given you so much, oh! Past,  
My life, my love, and all beside,  
Yet when I ask this simple boon  
I find myself denied.  
It would not rob a single heart  
To have mine happy, too.  
To have the Christmas Day come in  
Just as it used to be.  
Then why not grant my childish wish?  
Let me forget I'm grown!  
And the past come back again  
In memory alone.

## MARSE ARTHUR

It was the first Christmas after the war. Appomattox had not been forgotten, and desolation still hung over the South like a great black shadow. The plenty of the past, the poverty of the present, the dark uncertainty of the future, haunted memories, and heartaches and tears were in the place of joyous feeling and radiant smiles. The terrors of yesterday, the suffering of the today, and the forebodings of the morrow would form no background for a Christmas like those of the used-to-be.

The James moved on to the sea, washing its muddy waters against the be-bordered banks. A light snow on the hard, unyielding earth only added to the gloom. The wind moaned through the winter-swept pines. Fences strewn the dirt roads still marked by the heavy cuts of artillery. Here and there were the charred and blackened wreck of some barn or outhouse; here the whitened bones of some faithful horse whose rider lay, perhaps, beneath an unmarked mound in the little barren ground about the scattered church, the spire of which just rose above the hills in the distance. What a picture of despair! And it was Christmas morning—Christmas morning! And the great world was echoing with the angelic melody, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

With unbending figure he stood looking against one of the heavy pillars that supported the porch to one of the historic mansions. A black slouch hat was pulled down over the long gray hair. The suit he wore was only partly civilian. The coat was gray and tightly buttoned about the waist—the one relic, besides the sword, of the gallant cavalry that was no more. Was he thinking of the last Christmas in camp, of a forage before sunrise, a mossed pig held over the legs with bayonets, an interrupted feast, and a charge on Christmas eve, when that had written the names of heroes on the page of history? Was it that?

Across the field the smoke drifted upward from the mud-smeared chimney of a hut—several huts. It was where the negroes lived. Two tottering old men, two boys, big enough to work in the field, and one old woman—that was all. The rest had gone. One of the boys was bringing the horse from water. As it followed its master along the road it made a strange contrast with the surrounding forest for fat and sleek, it seemed as if there must be plenty everywhere—just the bare, like everything else, was almost depleted. How closely he watched the animal! From the call to a name until the horse sounded for the first time it had been his constant companion. And then, after all was over, they had come back through Richmond and then to the old home. He smiled when he remembered how he and the boy had looked up the old charger and a solitary mule to a place and worked until the faithful mule had died. There was not enough in the field or the stable for two.

The old men and the boys had joined each other and were coming across to the house. In the kitchen "Auntie" was making corn bread and frying bacon. Christmas morning in a mansion on the James and corn bread and bacon for breakfast! In the dining room she—who who had borne so much—was setting the table two places. How she thought of the faces that had gathered three years ago; some that were no more. She finished, and going up stairs brought down a gingham apron. She made it herself—made it over from an old one she had worn. With eyes full of tears she handed it to the dear old "Auntie" and whispered "Merry Christmas." She could say no more. Memory was bringing up visions of the old days. The Christmas days in the servants' quarters—on a porch for each woman, a dress for each child, with a coin in each pocket. But those days were gone and the slaves had vanished.

The four colored men had stopped in the road and were talking. He came in from the porch and said a word to her, and they sat down by the window. He gazed over the river, and she laid her head on his arm and cried softly to herself. Both were looking into the past, and both saw the same pictures. It was Christmas morning on the plantation. The house was full of young people. In the parlor a log fire crackled on the hearth, and there were laughter and shouts of merriment. And such a breakfast! What stores were brought from the

smokehouse, how proud were all the negro women as they bore them along the board walk that led from the great old-fashioned kitchen to the dining-room in the mansion. Then after the breakfast all had gathered on the front porch. On the steps were all the negro men. How they bowed and scraped as "Marse" Arthur came out of the door with "Missus" on his arm. Then came the black boys with great waters of hot coffee. How the eyes of the men grew big as the cups were handed to them. How each drank it down until a coin at the bottom of the cup struck against his teeth. And then a "Thanks, Marse Arthur; Gawd Bless yo' an' Missus." And then they would go off for a holiday. He looked at her and sighed.

"Oh, Arthur," she said. He stroked her head and then arose and walked to the cupboard. He took down a coffee jar and held it to the window. It was scarcely half filled. Then, turning, he called: "Fannie!"

"Auntie" came tottering in. "Yes, Sah," she said, with a low bow. "Make four cups of coffee and bring them to me on a waiter," he said. She took the jar and went to the kitchen. From the window the woman arose and threw her arms about his neck, and they stood by the mantel silent.

Presently Fannie came in the door with the waiter and the cups filled with hot coffee. He pulled from his trousers pocket a purse and, stretching it open, four coins fell to the table. He picked them up and threw the old pocketbook into the fireplace. Then he dropped a coin in each cup and motioned for Fannie to follow him.

Just as she had done years before the war "Missus" took his arm, and they walked through the broad hall to the porch, followed by "Auntie," who proudly carried the waiter above her head. The men were on the steps. They pulled off their hats and bowed low to the ground.

"Good mornin', boys," he said, and there was no quiver in his voice. She held his arm. "I want you all to have a holiday today and remember that it's Christmas."

And then Fannie passed down the steps with the waiter and handed around the hot coffee. The men dropped their hats on the ground and drank, and then broad smiles came over the black faces as the coins struck their teeth.

"Gawd bless yo', Marse Arthur and Missus!" came a chorus, and then they turned to go—all except the oldest.

He looked up to the old master and held out the coin. Tears were streaming down his face. "I can't let it dis me, Marse Arthur," he said. He, standing on the porch, waved his hand, and the oldest of the faithful walked away mumbling to himself. Fannie had gone back to the kitchen. They were in the doorway alone. She looked up at him and he kissed her, and then she turned. He was too much to bear. He took her in his arms and kissed her again and then she went. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and, looking into the hall, called out:

"Guess I'll go over to the stable and feed Bob."

WELLS HAWKS.  
Very Much So.  
First Turkey—So, poor Gobbler met a sudden end?  
Second Turkey—Yes, and the police say it was an inside job.

Christmas Menu.  
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Fish, Continental, Oyster Sauce.  
Browned Potatoes.  
Turkey, Cranberry Molds.  
Creamed Cauliflower.  
Celery, Mayonnaise, Wafers.  
Pumpkin Pie.  
White House Ice Cream.  
Coconut Pointlets.  
Steamed Raisins, Bonbons.  
Crab Cider Coffee.

Didn't Kill Him.  
"Papa, is Santa Claus a really?"  
"Why, certainly."  
"Papa, is it true wot th' Bible says about Ananias?"  
"Of course, Willie."  
"Say, papa! You must have a wonderful constitution!"—Meth News.

The Reason Why  
Mr. Juack—Why did you run so fast when the cook came out?  
Mr. Bronze Gobbler—I'd rather have the family say "Can't he run fast?" than "Don't be taste good?"  
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## TOMMY'S BURGLAR.

By Kate Louise Brown.

There was a great roaring fire on the hearth that autumn night. On one side sat Tommy Joy, on the other Billy Bliss. They were two little cousins who had met for the first time.

Tommy Joy was as round as an apple, with red cheeks and a dimple in his chin.

Billy Bliss was tall for his age, brown almost as an Indian boy, and with very black eyes and hair.

Tommy lived in New York City. Billy's home was on a large farm in the Northwest. They had come to Grandma Clark's in Maine for the golden wedding.

At first the two had very little to say. They stared at one another across the fire, then looked away, only to turn and stare again.

"I have a watch," said Tommy at last, "but it's only a play watch. When I'm bigger I shall have a real one that tells time."

"I have a jack-knife," said Billy. "It's real and cuts. I've cut all my fingers so far."

"Let me see it! I like to cut!" cried Tommy, hopping up from his chair.

"Mother made me leave it at home," replied Billy sadly. "I'd like to see your watch."

There was silence for a moment, the fire alone having some thing to say.

"There's an engine house around the corner of our street," burst out Tommy.

"There's a windmill back of our house on a little hill," said Billy. "It pumps water into the house and all the barns, too."

"Well, I've seen a big machine that cuts down wheat and then ties it in bundles," cried Billy, not to be outdone.

"But you never saw a burglar!"

"My grandpa Bliss saw a bear once!"

"But burglars are worse than bears. A bear makes a noise! You can hear him and run and get a gun. A burglar is very still, but it is not safe to meet him."

"How do you know?" Did you ever see one, Tommy?"

"There was one in the next house last winter. He may come to us this winter. I shall not be afraid!"

"What will you do?" cried Billy hopping out of his chair.

"I'll run at him and tip him down stairs," cried Tommy, and over went the candle stand with its dish of apples.

"Dear me, dear me! What's this?" cried Grandma Clark, jumping up from her knitting.

"It tipped itself! I never meant to touch it!" said Tommy, very much scared. "I was showing Billy how I would tip a burglar downstairs. Will that dish cost a great deal, grandma? Must I pay for it out of my five cents a week?"

"On the one hand broken, said dear grandma. "Just help me pick up the apples and I'll set the stand in the corner. There isn't room for boys and candle-stands, too."

The cousins were to sleep in the same room at the end of the house.

When Tommy sank down in the feather bed, he cried out, "Where am I going?" Billy was too sleepy to giggle. He thought Tommy Joy a funny fellow.

The candle was taken away and both boys closed their eyes. In another moment they would have been sound asleep.

Tommy started up in bed. "What's that?" he cried. From the attic above came the sound of heavy footsteps just over their heads.

"It's a burglar!" he cried, diving under the clothes.

"You said—burglars—didn't make any noise," said Billy, in a very shaky whisper.

Tommy didn't reply, for the footsteps sounded again, louder, heavier than ever.

"Let's go up and see," said Billy, with sudden courage.

"I—I—can't," gasped Tommy. "He'll—he'll—kill—us."

"Let's go downstairs and tell grandma."

"I'm afraid," replied Tommy, in a very small voice.

"So am I," replied Billy, his courage dying away.

At last Tommy began to cry. Grandma came to see what the matter was.

"It's a burglar up in the attic," moaned Tommy. "Yes," chimed in Billy. "Hear his feet!"

Grandma laughed so she had to sit down. "I'll go and get the burglar, boys," she said.

"Don't go! He'll kill you!" wailed the boys.

"Don't you be scared, grandma's little man," said the dear old lady.

"That burglar and I are the best of friends. He won't hurt me."

Little Billy then pulled down the sheet until grandma could see two head tops, two nose tips, and two pairs of eyes. Grandma held in her arms Vilas, the big house cat.

"Here's your burglar, boys! Vilas sleeps all day but at night he likes to go up into the attic to watch for mice. He does step heavy, almost as heavy as a man,—good old kitty!"

Grandma put the old cat down on the bed. Vilas walked over the spread and kissed each boy. Then he lay down between them and began to sing. In less time than it takes to say it both boys were asleep and their burglar, too.

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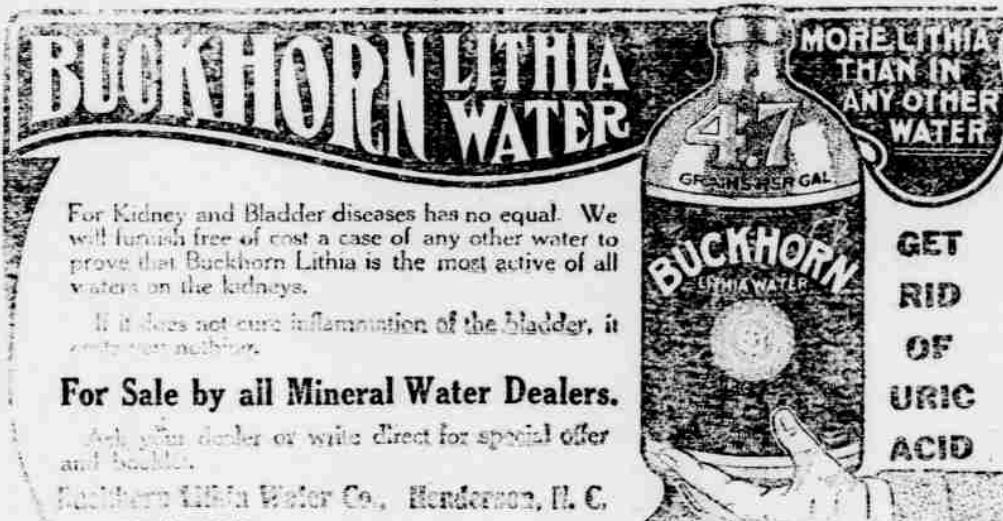
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This November 26th 1908.

**W. T. RUFFIN,**  
Admr. W. H. Harrell, Decd.  
Kitehin & Smith, Attorneys.  
11-26-08

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