

Beasley's Christmas Party

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

The maple-bordered street was as still as a country Sunday; so quiet that there seemed an echo to my footsteps. It was four o'clock in the morning; clear October moonlight misted through the thinning foliage to the shadowy sidewalk and lay like a transparent silver fog upon the house of my admiration, as I strode along, returning from my first night's work on the Wainwright Morning Despatch.

I had already marked that house as the finest (to my taste) in Wainwright, though hitherto, on my excursions to this metropolis, the state capital, I was not without a certain native jealousy that Spencerville, the county-seat where I lived, had nothing so good. Now, however, I approached its portals with a pleasure in it quite unalloyed, for I was at last myself a resident (albeit of only one day's standing) of Wainwright, and the house—though I had not even an idea who lived there—part of my possessions as a citizen. Moreover, I might enjoy the warmer pride of a next-door-neighbor, for Mrs. Apperthwaite's, where I had taken a room, was just beyond.

This was the quietest part of Wainwright; business stopped short of it, and the "fashionable residence section" had overlapped this "forgotten backwater," leaving it undisturbed and unchanging, with that look about it which is the quality of few urban quarters, and eventually of none, as a town grows to be a city—the look of still being a neighborhood. This friendliness of appearance was largely the emanation of the homely and beautiful house which so greatly pleased my fancy.

It might be difficult to say why I thought it the "finest" house in Wainwright, for a simpler structure would be hard to imagine; it was merely a big, old-fashioned brick house, painted brown and very plain, set well away from the street among some splendid forest trees, with a fair spread of flat lawn. But it gave back a great deal for your glance, just as some people do. It was a large house, as I say, yet it looked not like a mansion but like a home; and made you wish that you lived in it. Or, driving by, of an evening, you would have liked to stop your car and go in; it spoke so surely of hearty, old-fashioned people living there, who would welcome you merrily.

It looked like a house where there were a grandfather and a grandmother; where holidays were warmly kept; where there were boisterous family reunions to which uncles and aunts, who had been born there, would return from no matter what distances; a house where big turkeys would be on the table often; where one called "the hired man" (and named either Abner or Ole) would crack walnuts upon a flatiron clutched between his knees on the back porch; it looked like a house where they played charades; where there would be long streamers of evergreen and dozens of wreaths of holly at Christmas time; where there were tearful, happy weddings and great throwings of rice after little brides, from the broad front steps; in a word, it was the sort of a house to make the hearts of spinsters and bachelors very lonely and wistful—and that is about as near as I can come to my reason for thinking it the finest house in Wainwright.

The moon hung kindly above its level door in the silence of that October morning, as I checked my gait to loiter along the picket fence; but suddenly the house showed a light of its own. The spurt of a match took my eye to one of the upper windows, then a steadier glow of orange told me that a lamp was lighted. The window was opened, and a man looked out and whistled loudly.

I stopped, thinking he meant to attract my attention; that something might be wrong; that perhaps someone was needed to go for a doctor. My mistake was immediately evident, however; I stood in the shadow of the trees bordering the sidewalk, and the man at the window had not seen me. "Boy! boy!" he called, softly. "Where are you, Simpledoria?"

He leaned from the window, looking downward. "Why, there you are!" he exclaimed, and turned to address some invisible person within the room. "He's right there underneath the window. I'll bring him up." He leaned out again. "Wait there, Simpledoria!" he called. "I'll be down in a jiffy and let you in."

Puzzled, I stared at the vacant lawn before me. The clear moonlight revealed it brightly, and it was empty of any living presence; there were no bushes nor shrubberies—nor even shadows—that could have been mistaken for a boy. If "Simpledoria" was

a boy. There was no dog in sight; there was no cat; there was nothing beneath the window except thick, close-cropped grass.

A light shone in the hallway behind the broad front door; one of these was opened, and revealed in silhouette the tall, thin figure of a man in a long, old-fashioned dressing-gown.

"Simpledoria," he said, addressing the night air with considerable severity, "I don't know what to make of you. You might have caught your death of cold, roving out at such an hour. But there," he continued, more indulgently; "wipe your feet on the mat and come in. You're safe now!"

He closed the door, and I heard him call to some one up-stairs, as he arranged the fastenings:

"Simpledoria is all right—only a little chilled. I'll bring him up to your fire."

I went on my way in a condition of astonishment that engendered, almost, a doubt of my eyes; for if my sight was unimpaired and myself not subject to optical or mental delusion, neither boy nor dog nor bird nor cat, nor any other object of this visible world, had entered that opened door. Was my "finest" house, then, a place of call for wandering ghosts, who came home to roost at four in the morning?

It was only a step to Mrs. Apperthwaite's; I let myself in with the key that good lady had given me, stole up to my room, went to my window, and stared across the yard at the house next door. The front window in the second story, I decided, necessarily belonged to that room in which the



Mrs. Apperthwaite Was the Kind of Woman Whom You Would Expect to Have a Beautiful Daughter, and Miss Apperthwaite More Than Fulfilled Her Mother's Promise.

lamp had been lighted; but all was dark there now. I went to bed, and dreamed that I was out at sea in a fog, having embarked on a transparent vessel whose preposterous name, inscribed upon glass life-belts, depending here and there from an invisible rail, was "Simpledoria."

Mrs. Apperthwaite was a comports old house, the greater part of it of about the same age, I judged, as its neighbor; but the late Mr. Apperthwaite had caught the Mansard fever of the late 'Seventies, and of the building disease, once fastened upon him, had never known a convalescence, but, rather, a series of relapses, the tokens of which, in the nature of a cupola and a couple of frame turrets, were terrifyingly apparent. These romantic misplacements seemed to me not inharmonious with the library, a cheerful and pleasantly shabby apartment down-stairs, where I found (over a substratum of history, encyclopedia, and family Bible) some worn old volumes of "Godey's Lady's Book," an early edition of Cooper's works; Scott, Bulwer, Macaulay, Byron, and Tennyson, complete; some old volumes of Victor Hugo, of the elder Dumas, of Flaubert, of Gautier, and of Balzac; "Clarissa," "Lalla Rookh," "The Alhambra," "Bouffant," "Uarda," "Lucile," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ben-Hur," "Triby," "She," "Little Lord Fauntleroy;" and of a later decade, there were novels about those delicately tan-

gled emotions experienced by the supreme few; and scores of adventurous royalty; tales of "clean-limbed young American manhood;" and some thin volumes of rather precious verse.

'Twas amid these romantic scenes that I awaited the sound of the lunch-bell (which for me was the announcement of breakfast), when I arose from my first night's slumbers under Mrs. Apperthwaite's roof; and I wondered if the books were a fair mirror of Miss Apperthwaite's mind (I had been told that Mrs. Apperthwaite had a daughter). Mrs. Apperthwaite herself, in her youth, might have sat to an illustrator of Scott or Bulwer. Even now you could see she had come as near being romantically beautiful as was consistently proper for such a timid, gentle little gentlewoman as she was. Reduced, by her husband's insolvency (coincident with his demise) to "keeping boarders," she did it gracefully, as if the urgency thereto were only a spirit of quiet hospitality. It should be added in haste that she set an excellent table.

Moreover, the guests who gathered at her board were of a very attractive description, as I decided the instant my eye fell upon the lady who sat opposite me at lunch. I knew at once that she was Miss Apperthwaite, she "went so," as they say, with her mother; nothing could have been more suitable. Mrs. Apperthwaite was the kind of woman whom you would expect to have a beautiful daughter, and Miss Apperthwaite more than fulfilled her mother's promise.

I guessed her to be more than Juliet Capulet's age, indeed, yet still between that and the perfect age of woman. She was of a larger, fuller, more striking type than Mrs. Apperthwaite, a bolder type one might put it—though she might have been a great deal bolder than Mrs. Apperthwaite without being bold. Certainly she was handsome enough to make it difficult for a young fellow to keep from staring at her. She had an abundance of very soft, dark hair, worn almost austere; as if its profusion necessitated repression; and I am compelled to admit that her fine eyes expressed a distant contemplation—obviously of habit not of mood—so pronounced that one of her enemies (if she had any) might have described them as "dreamy."

Only one other of my own sex was present at the lunch table, a Mr. Dowden, an elderly lawyer and politician of whom I had heard, and to whom Mrs. Apperthwaite, coming in after the rest of us were seated, introduced me. She made the presentation general; and I had the experience of receiving a nod and a slow glance, in which there was a sort of dusky, estimating brilliance, from the beautiful lady opposite me.

It might have been better mannered for me to address myself to Mr. Dowden, or one of the very nice elderly women, who were my fellow-guests, than to open a conversation with Miss Apperthwaite; but I did not stop to think of that.

"You have a splendid old house next door to you here, Miss Apperthwaite," I said. "It's a privilege to find it in view from my window."

There was a faint stir as of some consternation in the little company. The elderly ladies stopped talking abruptly and exchanged glances, though this was not of my observation at the moment, I think, but occurred to my consciousness later, when I had perceived my blunder.

"May I ask who lives there?" I pursued.

Miss Apperthwaite allowed her noticeable lashes to cover her eyes for an instant, then looked up again. "A Mr. Beasley," she said.

"Not the Honorable David Beasley?" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she returned with a certain gravity which I afterward wished had checked me. "Do you know him?"

"Not in person," I explained. "You see, I've written a good deal about him. I was with the Spencerville Journal until a few days ago, and even in the country we know who's who in politics over the state. Beasley's the man that went to Congress and never made a speech—never made even a motion to adjourn—but got everything his district wanted. There's talk of him for governor."

"Indeed?"

"And so it's the Honorable David Beasley who lives in that splendid place. How curious that is!"

"Why?" asked Miss Apperthwaite.

"It seems too big for one man," I answered; "and I've always had the impression Mr. Beasley was a bachelor."

"Yes," she said, rather slowly, "he is."

"But of course he doesn't live there all alone," I supposed, aloud. "Probably he has—"

"No. There's no one else—except a couple of colored servants."

"What a crime!" I exclaimed. "If there ever was a house meant for a large family, that one is. Can't you almost hear it crying out for heaps and heaps of romping children? I should think—"

I was interrupted by a loud cough from Mr. Dowden, so abrupt and artificial that his intention to check the flow of my innocent prattle was embarrassingly obvious—even to me!

"Can you tell me," he said, leaning forward and following up the interruption as hastily as possible, "what the farmers were getting for their wheat when you left Spencerville?"

"I mean he's a man of no imagination. None in the world. Not one ounce of imagination. Not one grain!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Green Christmas

By Christopher G. Hazard

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IT WAS not a very cheerful boy that was looking out of the window at what little dirty ice the winter thaw had left upon the hill in front of the house. Through the fine coating days he had heard the happy noise of the siding while the doctor had said that he could not go out and join in it, and now, though he might soon be out of doors again, there was no surety of as good a hill again and small prospect of sport.

It wasn't a very cheerful house, either. Mr. Bondage was a chainmaker, and when he came home from his iron works he always seemed to bring his business with him. The house of Bondage was big and strong, but it was hard, and still, and dark, and too orderly. From the outside it looked like a fort, and inside, the chairs stood at attention, like soldiers. The parlor was a solemn place, where the stiff furniture was seldom prevented from looking at itself in the gilded mirror. The dining room didn't get the sun until towards evening, when the motto, "Be Good and You Will Be Happy" could be as plainly seen as the one on the opposite wall, "Children Should Be Seen but Not Heard." When the boy put on his hated bib there, it exhorted him with, "Don't Eat Too Much."

Chained to the front porch was an iron dog, whose fixed and ferocious snarl was a standing insult to all the village dogs that could get through the iron fence to dispute with him. There was some fun about the place; it was when a surprised dog retired from the attack with a new respect for the tough guardian of the Bondage interests. Even the iron-clad knight in the front hall seemed to laugh through his visor then.

Besides all this, Ishmael had had no Christmas. Mr. Bondage did not believe in Christmas; to him Santa Claus was a foolish imagination and a hurtful superstition. He had joined "The Society for the Prevention of Useless Giving," and was glad to be called a Spuz. On December 25th he had presented to his son a picture of himself, standing in front of his office with the scowl upon his face that represented his idea of the expression of greatness, but the only comfort of the day for the boy had been the sweet contents of the small package that his mother had smuggled into his room just before daylight.

But Ishmael Bondage had an Aunt Sarah! And Aunt Sarah had the pleasantest home in the country. It was a low, wide, rambling old house, in the midst of the trees and hugged by the climbing vines that loved it. There wasn't a place in it too good to be used and in its snowy whiteness it seemed to shine out upon the fenceless grounds with an invitation to the hospitality of its gardens and the good



Aunt Sarah Carried Ishmael Off.

cheer of its friendly owners. That was the bright spot for Ishmael. When he went out there his aunt would hang his Fauntleroy suit up in the closet and give him a leather suit that could not be torn and tell him to go it. He could eat without a bib and there was not a motto in sight. By the time that vacation was over he was a real boy. The other boys stopped calling him "Sissy" and no longer asked him if his mother knew he was out. Indeed, he up and thrashed a bullying boy who had knocked over one of his companions who was about half his size. After this there was nothing that he could not have among his crowd. So, every vacation sent a prim but joyful boy to Aunt Sarah and closed with a more robust but rather dejected one on his way home.

But Aunt Sarah also had a mind of her own. She had so much mind that she had concluded that winter to go and give Benjamin Bondage a piece of it. She considered Ishmael's state and situation and resolved to give his father "a good talking to." When she

appeared Mr. Bondage felt that his time had probably come. When she had finished he knew it had. She told him that he had forgotten that he was ever a boy, if, indeed, he had ever been one, that he had made himself into an iron man, that he was blinded and hard-hearted, that he seemed determined to fasten all his chains upon Ishmael and make his son as stiff and cold as an icicle.

Mrs. Bondage, behind the door, expected her husband to object in loud and angry tones, but, to her astonishment, he was silent. He seemed to remember an old motto, "Discretion Is the Better Part of Valor," profitably, and did not interfere, even when Aunt Sarah, flushed, but triumphant, carried Ishmael off.

There was some winter play left and to come at Sweetfield, but Aunt Sarah wasn't satisfied as easily as that, for she had made up the rest of her mind into an idea that Ishmael should have the Christmas that he hadn't had, after all. It wasn't much of a Christmas day when the belated Christmas tree blossomed and bore fruit, but it was a fine tree. The snow and ice had disappeared and a warm wind made the late winter seem like early spring, but Aunt Sarah said that evergreen trees kept Christmas all the year round, and that every day was their day. Cer-



"A Wonderful Pocketknife."

tainly it was the most interesting tree that Ishmael had ever seen, from the bundle at the bottom, through all the ornaments, lights and gifts, to the mysterious package at the top of it shone with kind and thoughtful love and sparkled with merry wishes and glad promise. They and the children from the neighborhood who had come to share the joy and the presents that Aunt Sarah had prepared were wondering what would be found in that last parcel at the top, until it was taken down, and then a part of the party, at least, was surprised when the wrapping was taken off and a wonderful pocketknife, beside a first-class football, conveyed merry wishes from Mr. Bondage to his son. Aunt Sarah said afterwards that at this she nearly "went off the handle."

When May came it seemed time for Ishmael to go home, but he was not very happy at the prospect. Indeed, he was rather unhappy about it. He felt something like one on his way to jail, and even shed tears at the thought of leaving Sweetfield, so that a squirrel, seeing him wiping his eyes under a tree, exclaimed "Oh, what a rainy boy!" but the day came and Ishmael went.

Another surprise awaited him, however, for, as he neared home and entered it, everything seemed changed. The house looked sunny and pleasant in its new colors, the fence had disappeared, the iron dog had been moved to the barn, and the mailed knight had gone down to the ironworks to be turned into plowshares.

When Mr. Bondage went out to Sweetfield to visit his sister and to report upon Ishmael's progress, Aunt Sarah had her reward. "It is all your doing, Sarah," said he. "I needed someone to show me up to myself."

"Well, brother," said Aunt Sarah, "a Stitch in Time Saves Nine," as the proverb has it, and you certainly will be proud of our boy yet, as proud of him as I am of my big, new brother."

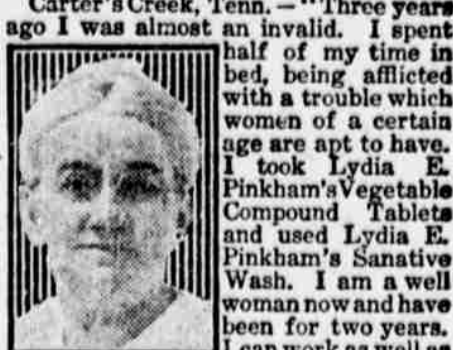
When December came blustering around again and brought Santa Claus and all his load of love and jollity, there was no place that more warmly welcomed him than Mount Freedom, as Mr. Bondage's home had come to be called, and of all the happy Christmas parties of that year, none was fuller of mirth and good cheer than the one at Mount Freedom. They danced about the tree and under the motto that hung from the top of it with its message of good will to everybody, the football was kicked all over the floor and they shouted in their glee. The squeaking toys, the tooting whistles, the happy songs, all made the time as merry as it could always be, while the gifts spoke messages of love.

Ishmael had prospered enough in his studies to make a picture of Sweetfield, it hung over the mantel shelf in the living room and under it he had written, "The Home of the Green Christmas." When anyone asked him about it he would tell them how spring once came in a wintry time; he would say that while Christmas comes but once a year, it sometimes comes twice, and that whenever it comes it brings good cheer; but he was never able to make a picture of his Aunt Sarah that seemed to him good enough.

SPENT HALF HER TIME IN BED

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Carter's Creek, Tenn. — "Three years ago I was almost an invalid. I spent half of my time in bed, being afflicted with a trouble which women of a certain age are apt to have. I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Tablets and used Lydia E. Pinkham's Sanative Wash. I am a well woman now and have been for two years.



any one who is younger and as I am a farmer's wife I have plenty to do for I cultivate my own garden, raise my own chickens and do my own housework. You may publish this letter as I am ready to do anything to help other women as I have been so well and happy since my troubles are past."—Mrs. E. T. GALLOWAY, Carter's Creek, Tenn.

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Loyal.

She—So you kissed that painted creature.

He—Yes. I saluted the colors.

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Frank Copen-haven, Ponca, Neb., says: "I had lumbago and I couldn't walk straight. Sharp pains caught me through my kidneys and my kidneys acted frequently. The sensations were highly colored. A friend gave me a box of Doan's Kidney Pills and in three days the lumbago was gone and my back was straight. The cure has lasted."

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This is some big rat tale, but nevertheless, it is so. Just thought would write to let you know that your rat paste is good.

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