

# Beasley's Christmas Party

By BOOTH TARKINGTON



### HAMILTON SWIFT, JR.

**SYNOPSIS**—Newcomer in a small town, a young newspaper man, who tells the story, is amazed by the unaccountable actions of a man who, from the window of a fine house, apparently has converse with invisible personages, particularly mentioning one "Simpledoria." Next morning he discovers his strange neighbor is the Hon. David Beasley, prominent politician, and universally respected. With Miss Apperthwaite, he is an unseen witness of a purely imaginary jumping contest between Beasley and a "Bill Hammersley." Miss Apperthwaite appears deeply concerned. The reporter learns that Beasley and Miss Apperthwaite had at one time been engaged, and that the young lady had broken the engagement because of Beasley's "lack of imagination."

III—Continued.

"Poor David! Outside of his law-books, I don't believe he's ever read anything but 'Robinson Crusoe' and the Bible and Mark Twain. Oh, you should have heard her talk about it—I couldn't bear it another day," she said, "I couldn't stand it! In all the time I've known him I don't believe he's ever asked me a single question—except when he asked me if I'd marry him. He never says anything—never speaks at all!" she said. "You don't know a blessing when you see it, I told her. 'Blessing!' she said. 'There's nothing in the man! He has no depths! He hasn't any more imagination than the chair he sits and sits and sits in! Half the time he answers what I say to him by nodding and saying "um-hum," with that same old foolish, contented smile of his. I'd have gone mad if it had lasted any longer!" I asked her if she thought married life consisted very largely of conversations between husband and wife; and she answered that even married life ought to have some poetry in it. "Some romance," she said, "some soul! And he just comes and sits, she said, and sits and sits and sits and sits! And I can't bear it any longer, and I've told him so."

"Poor Mr. Beasley," I said. "I think, 'Poor Ann Apperthwaite!'" retorted my cousin. "I'd like to know if there's anything nicer than just to sit and sit and sit with as lovely a man as that—a man who understands things, and thinks and listens and smiles—instead of everlasting talking!"

"As it happens," I remarked, "I've heard Mr. Beasley talk."

"Why, of course he talks," she returned, "when there's any real use in it. And he talks to children; he's that kind of a man."

"I meant a particular instance," I began; meaning to see if she could give me any clue to Bill Hammersley and Simpledoria, but at that moment the gate clicked under the hand of another caller. My cousin rose to greet him, and presently I took my leave without having been able to get back upon the subject of Beasley.

Thus, once more baffled, I returned to Mrs. Apperthwaite's—and within the hour came into full possession of the very heart of that dark and subtle mystery which overhung the house next door and so perplexed my soul.

### IV.

Finding that I had still some leisure before me, I got a book from my room and repaired to the bench in the garden. But I did not read; I had but opened the book when my attention was arrested by sounds from the other side of the high fence—low and tremulous croonings of distinctly African derivation:

"Ah met mah sista in a-mawin'. She 'uz a-wazin' up de hill so pale! 'Sista, you mus' git a rastle in doo time. B'fo de hevumy do's cloze—iz!"

It was the voice of an aged negro; and the simultaneous slight creaking of a small hub and axle seemed to indicate that he was pushing or pulling a child's wagon or perambulator up and down the walk from the kitchen door to the stable. Whiles, he proffered soothing music; over and over he repeated the chant, though with variations; encountering in turn his brother, his daughter, each of his parents, his uncle, his cousin, and his second-cousin, one after the other ascending the same slope with the same perillous leisure.

"Lay still, honey." He interrupted his applications to the second-cousin. "Des keep on a-nappin' an' a-breavin' de fesh air. Dass wha's go' mek you good an' well agin."

Then there spoke the strangest voice that ever fell upon my ear; it was not like a child's, neither was it like a very old person's voice; it might

have been a grasshopper's, it was so thin and little, and made of such tiny wavers and quavers and creakings.

"I—want—Bill—Hammersley!"

The shabby car which had passed my cousin's house was drawing up to the curb near Beasley's gate. Evidently the old negro saw it.

"Hi dar!" he exclaimed. "Look at dat! Hain' Bill a comin' yonah des edzactly on de dot an' to de vey spot an' instink when you 'quish fo' 'im, honey? Dar come Mist' Dave, right on de minute, an' you kin fet yo' 'as hund dollahs he got dat Bill Hammersley wif 'im! Come along, honey-chile! Ah's go' to pull you 'roun in de side yod fo' to meet 'em."

The small wagon creaked away, the chant resuming as it went.

Mr. Dowden jumped out of the car with a wave of his hand to the driver, Beasley himself, who drove through his open carriage-gates and down the drive on the other side of the house, where he was lost to my view.

Dowden, entering our own gate, nodded in a friendly fashion to me, and I advanced to meet him.

"Some day I want to take you over next door," he said cordially, as I came up. "You ought to know Beasley, especially as I hear you're doing some political reporting. Dave Beasley's going to be the next governor of this state, you know." He laughed, offered me a cigar, and we sat down together on the front steps.

"From all I hear," I rejoined, "you ought to know who'll get it." (It was said in town that Dowden would "come pretty near having the nomination in his pocket.")

"I expect you thought I shifted the subject pretty briskly the other day?" He glanced at me quizzically from under the brim of his black felt hat. "I meant to tell you about that, but the opportunity didn't occur. You see—"

"I understand," I interrupted. "I've heard the story. You thought it might be embarrassing to Miss Apperthwaite."

"I expect I was pretty clumsy about it," said Dowden, cheerfully. "Well, well—" he flicked his cigar with a smothered ejaculation that was half a sigh and half a laugh; "it's a mighty strange case. Here they keep on living next door to each other, year after year, each going on alone when they might just as well—"

He left the sentence unfinished, save for a vocal click of compassion. "They bow when they happen to meet, but they haven't exchanged a word since the night she sent him away, long ago." He shook his head, then his countenance cleared



"I Think, 'Poor Ann Apperthwaite!'" Retorted My Cousin.

and he chuckled. "Well, sir, Dave's got something at home to keep him busy enough, these days, I expect!"

"Do you mind telling me?" I inquired. "Is his name 'Simpledoria'?"

Mr. Dowden threw back his head and laughed loudly. "Lord, no! What on earth made you think that?"

I told him. It was my second success with this narrative; however, there was a difference: my former auditor listened with flushed and breathless excitement, whereas the present one laughed comically throughout. Especially he laughed with a great laughter at the picture of Beasley's

coming down at four in the morning to open the door for nothing on sea or land or in the waters under the earth. I gave account, also, of the miraculous jumping contest (though I did not mention Miss Apperthwaite's having been with me), and of the elfin voice I had just now overheard demanding "Bill Hammersley."

"So I expect you must have decided," he chuckled, when I concluded, "that David Beasley has gone just plain insane."

"Not a bit of it. Nobody could look at him and not know better than that."

"You're right there!" said Dowden, heartily. "And now I'll tell you all there is to it. You see, Dave grew up with a cousin of his named Hamilton Swift; they were boys together; went to the same school, and then to college. I don't believe there was ever a high word spoken between them. Nobody in this life ever got a quarrel out of Dave Beasley, and Hamilton Swift was a mighty good sort of a fellow, too. He went East to live, after they got out of college, yet they always managed to get together once a year, generally about Christmas time. You couldn't pass them on the street without hearing their laughter ringing out louder than the sleigh-bells, maybe over some old joke between them, or some fool thing they did, perhaps, when they were boys. But finally Hamilton Swift's business took him over to the other side of the water to live; and he married an English girl,

an orphan without any kin. That was about seven years ago. Well, sir, this last summer he and his wife were taking a trip down in Switzerland, and they were both drowned—tipped over out of a rowboat in Lake Lucerne—and word came that Hamilton Swift's will appointed Dave guardian of the one child they had, a little boy—Hamilton Swift, Junior's, his name. He was sent across the ocean in charge of a doctor, and Dave went on to New York to meet him. He brought him home here the very day before you passed the house and saw poor Dave getting up at four in the morning to let that ghost in. And a mighty funny ghost Simpledoria is!"



"Simpledoria is Supposed to Be Hamilton Swift, Jr.'s, St. Bernard Dog."

"I begin to understand," I said, "and to feel pretty silly, too."

"Not at all," he rejoined, heartily. "That little chap's freaks would mystify anybody, especially with Dave humoring 'em the ridiculous way he does. Hamilton Swift, Junior, is the curiosest child I ever saw—and the good Lord knows He made all children powerful mysterious! This poor little cuss has a complication of infirmities that have kept him on his back most of his life, never knowing other children, never playing, or anything; and he's got ideas and ways that I never saw the best of! He was born sick, as I understand it—his bones and nerves and insides are all wrong, somehow—but it's supposed he gets a little better from year to year. He wears a pretty elaborate set of braces, and he's subject to attacks, too—I don't know the name for 'em—and loses what little voice he has sometimes, all but a whisper. He had one, I know, the day after Beasley brought him home, and that was probably the reason you thought Dave was carrying on all to himself about that jumping-match out in the back-yard. The boy must have been lying there in the little wagon they have for him, while Dave cut up shines with 'Bill Hammersley.' Of course, most children have make-believe friends and companions, especially if they haven't any brothers or sisters, but this lonely little fellow's got his people worked out in his mind and materialized beyond any I ever heard of. Dave got well acquainted with 'em on the train on the way home, and they certainly are giving him a lively time. Ho, ho! Getting him up at four in the morning—"

Mr. Dowden's mirth overcame him for a moment; when he had mastered it, he continued: "Simpledoria—now where do you suppose he got that name?—well, anyway, Simpledoria is supposed to be Hamilton Swift, Junior's, St. Bernard dog. Beasley had to bathe him the other day, he told me! And Bill Hammersley is supposed to be a boy of Hamilton Swift, Junior's own age, but very big and strong; he has rosy cheeks, and he can do more in athletics than a whole college track-team. That's the reason he out-jumped Dave so far, you see."

"I'm glad there's somebody in that house at last with a little imagination."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

### Latest in Winter Millinery;

### Frocks for Young Girlhood

THE story of winter millinery is ended—except for those beautiful, frivolous and ephemeral affairs for dances and the theater, that are its epilogue. Designers must now turn their thoughts to spring.

The dignity and beauty of this season's shapes seemed to demand velvet and it has played the star part among millinery fabrics. A representative dress hat, shown at the upper left, in the group of four hats pictured, reveals a graceful shade with droop-

the ranks of unimportant things. But the awkward age, like the stone age, has passed almost into oblivion. When designers began to specialize in children's apparel, they uncovered the charms of the half-grown girl.

A frock for all ordinary dress-up times, and a party frock, for the younger girls, are shown here—the party frock at the right of the two pictured. This is merely a new form of the petal frock, made of taffeta silk in light colors. Fashion smiles



Group of Beautiful Winter Hats.

ing brim and soft crown. It is made of black velvet. A soft rope of ostrich plumes about the crown ends in many falling plumes at the right side. Shaded ostrich in several colors is used in this way on velvet hats in velvet or black. In spite of the velvet vogue, duvetine is well represented in winter hats and the model shown at the upper right has made a success. Narrow ribbon and fur contrive to adorn it with the effect of embroidery, the fur placed in ornaments at the front and sides. At the lower left, a black and white hat has a peculiar trim covered with embossed white velvet with appliques of black hatter's plush. The applique makes a background for a decoration of white bugle

again on light blue, pink, lilac, yellow and green taffeta for young folks, and in simple styles and lines. The party frock has a long bodice with alternating panels of plaid and wrinkled silk, ending in a short peplum, cut into pointed scallops at the bottom. The bodice is sleeveless and has a bateau neck line, becoming to slim necks, with a petal finish about it. A pointed band across the top of the arm corresponds with the neck finish. The skirt is covered with overlapping strips of taffeta cut on one edge into pointed scallops. All these edges are pleated. The dress is prettily finished with a small fancy garle in silver. The dress at the left of brown velvet is unusually graceful. It is cut



Frock for Ordinary Dress-Up and Party Frock.

beads in figures that conform to the outlines of the applied plush. The crown is soft and a spray of curving feathers provides the graceful trimming.

There was a time when people were not much interested in clothes for their younger girls, it was when they believed in "the awkward age." Girls were supposed to arrive at a period in their development when nothing could be made to look well upon them, a sort of pin-feather stage, and their clothes were relegated to

on straight lines with kimono sleeves hanging in points below the elbow and faced with light crepe de chine. A narrow girdle of metallic ribbon is tied at the left side where hanging loops and ends finish it. Crepe de chine tabs, simply decorated with needlework of colored silk floss, make a pretty collar for the neck.

Julius Bottomly

### Daddy's Evening Fairy Tale

MARY GRAHAM BONNER

### THE MOON'S HINTS

Mr. Moon heard that the Fairy Queen was going to give a party and he was greatly excited about it.

"I'd like to be present at the party," he said to himself. "I do hope it will be an evening party."

"I like evening parties, I must say. Daytime parties aren't at all in my line. No, they're not in my line at all."

"Well, I must see when the party is to be. Of course, I don't want to hint or anything like that. But maybe I'll suggest to the Fairy Queen that the evening is a lovely time in which to give a party."

"Perhaps she'll take the suggestion and won't see that I'm hinting just a little bit."

"Well, I'll try."

So the next time the Fairy Queen came up to see the Blue Mountain Top Fairies Mr. Moon was just getting up.

"Good evening, Fairy Queen," he said, and grinned his best and most attractive grin.

"Good evening, Mr. Moon," said the Fairy Queen. "How are you this evening?"

"Oh, nicely, ma'am. Nicely, your majesty."

"And how are you this evening, Wondrous Fairy?"

"Oh, I feel splendid," said the Fairy Queen.

"Good," said Mr. Moon.

Then he thought for a moment and then he said:

"These evenings are wonderful evenings for all sorts of things. I don't mean anything special, but they're fine for—well—let us say, entertainments, recitals, possibly illustrated lectures."

He didn't want to say the word "parties" right out for fear the Fairy Queen would think he was hinting.

"Yes," said the Fairy Queen, "these evenings are nice enough for anything."

Mr. Moon was a little sad at that. The Fairy Queen was not thinking of her party, evidently.

"Well," said Mr. Moon after another moment, "I suppose you are quite busy these fine evenings?"

"Not unusually so," answered the Fairy Queen.

"No?" said Mr. Moon, becoming a little bolder. "I had an idea you were."

"Oh, no," said the Fairy Queen, "I've not been so busy. But I will be busy from now on."

Well, this was exciting. Mr. Moon could hardly keep from saying right



"This is a Surprise."

out. "You mean because of your party?"

But instead he said, "Oh, have you much to do from now on?"

"Yes," the Fairy Queen answered, "quite a lot."

"Well," said Mr. Moon, "I suppose there is a lot of work to be done at this time of the year."

He thought to himself that that was a foolish remark to have made.

Why would any one be so very much busier now than at any other time?

But still he had said this and so he wouldn't change his speech now or try to improve upon it.

"No, I really couldn't call it work," said the Fairy Queen.

"Well, that's good," said Mr. Moon. "I'm glad it is to be pleasure. I like to feel there is to be more pleasure going on."

He had almost said that he liked to feel there was going to be a party. How nearly he had said that.

He was very glad he wasn't given to blushing, for he knew he would have blushed at that hint of his if it had been a habit of his to blush.

"Well," said the Fairy Queen after a moment, "I love to chat with you, Mr. Moon, but I must be going."

"And one of the things I particularly wanted to say—in fact, one of the reasons I came to the mountain top this evening—was to invite you to my party tomorrow evening."

"Oh, Fairy Queen, this is a surprise!" said Mr. Moon, and then he felt a little guilty and yet it had been a surprise to have been invited like that—all of a sudden. Still he must be perfectly truthful, so he said, "I heard rumors of a party, your majesty, but I didn't know whether or not it was a night-time affair. I am so glad it is."

"So glad you can come," said the Fairy Queen.

But after she had gone Mr. Moon laughed to himself. "She had come to invite me and here I had hinted and hinted and she had not taken the hints because she had meant me to have an invitation, anyway!"