

The Gift of the Wise Men

THE GIFT OF THE WISE MEN.

By O. Henry.

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI.

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate her majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard with envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair," asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the washed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain, simple and chased in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror, long, carefully, and critically. "If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. "She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please, God, make Jim think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression upon them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't live through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas,' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you worry me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to us just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise one, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the magi.

USELESS CHRISTMAS GIFTS

From the Youth's Companion.

By this time it seems that our Christmas must inevitably be the same hurried, tumultuous, weary and costly thing that it has always been. We must rush hither and thither, dazed by a strange medley of undesirable objects, and daunted by the prices asked for them. We must storm postoffices, and stand in line before the dingy desks of express companies. We must waste money and strength and time and temper, turning the great feast of the Christian year into a mad scramble for gifts. We must walk down the streets and ask ourselves fearfully what inutilities are coming our way in return for the inutilities we send forth. We must do what we have always done, and wonder, as usual, why we do it.

Here at least is room for practical reform. The call for nation wide economy is not a meaningless word. It represents a real and bitter need. Waste of money, waste of raw material, waste of man power and woman power, all help to bring disaster. We might and we should resolve that this Christmas we will buy—for adults—nothing absolutely useless. The fact that useless things have been made for sale (like Peter Pindar's razors) is no real reason why they should be sold, and certainly no reason why we should purchase them. Useful gifts are more difficult to find and to fit; they are more homely than the glittering trumpery spread on the Christmas counters; but their purpose is known, their dignity apparent, their welcome well assured.

Kathleen Mavourneen.
Kathleen Mavourneen! the gray dawn is breaking.
The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill;
The lark from her light wing the bright dew is shaking—
Kathleen Mavourneen! what, slumbering still?
Oh, hast thou forgotten how soon we meet sever?
Oh, hast thou forgotten this day we must part?
It may be for years, and it may be forever—
Oh, why art thou silent, thou voice of my heart?
Oh! why art thou silent, Kathleen Mavourneen?

Kathleen Mavourneen, awake from thy slumbers!
The blue mountains glow in the sun's golden light;
Ah, where is the spell that once hung on my numbers?
Arise in thy beauty, thou star of my night!
Mavourneen, Mavourneen, my sad tears are falling—
To think that from Erin and thee I must part!
It may be for years, and it may be forever!
Then why art thou silent, thou voice of my heart?
Then why art thou silent, Kathleen Mavourneen?
—Louisa Macartney Crawford.

University 900 Years Old.
From the People's Home Journal.
The University of Cairo was installed in one of the magnificent mosques of that city in the year 988, or more than 900 years ago. The mosque has been the seat of this Arabian university ever since.
The room for prayer of the mosque is also the university lecture room. Its floor is covered with mats and the students enter this holy room only on their bare feet. In the great court in the halls of the sanctuary the students sit on the floor in oriental fashion, assembled in groups about their teachers. With shoulders swaying they repeat their lessons in a loud voice to memorize them or murmur the prayers. Whenever the word Allah occurs in the reading of the Koran the student must incline his head gravely and with proper reverence.
The university numbers 8,000 students from every part of the Mohammedan world. It is maintained by endowments. Every day more than 5,000 loaves of bread are distributed among the scholars, and besides they are invited to free tables in restaurants and boarding houses, and there are also lodging houses in which free accommodations are placed at their disposal. The lectures are poorly paid, but the rector, as head, enjoys a large income.

Beside a Bright Fire.
When winter winds
Set the yellow woods sighing,
Sighing, oh sighing!
When such a time cometh,
I do retire
Into an old room
Beside a bright fire;
Oh, pile a bright fire!
And there I sit,
Reading old things,
Of knights and iron damsels,
While the wind sings—
Oh, drearily sings!
Thus, then, live I,
Till 'mid the gloom,
By heaven! the bold sun
Is with me in the room,
Shining, shining!
Then the clouds part,
Swallows soaring between,
The spring is alive,
Beside the meadows are green,
I jump up,
And away to the meadows,
The meadows again!
—Edward Fitzgerald.

Have You Ever Seen a "Dingonek?"
J. J. Jordan in Wide World.
The dingonek is a huge, unclassified aquatic monster. It resembles in many of its characteristics the extinct dinosaur, a huge reptile of the Mesozoic period, fossils of which have been discovered by paleontologists in the sandstone strata both of the African and American continents.
It lives in Lake Victoria Nyanza and its numerous tributaries, and there is no record of the monster having been seen in any other part of the world. Whether it is a descendant of one of the huge pre-historic saurians that has by a process of adaptation—living as it does in unpenetrable regions far away from the encroachments of civilized man—continued with but slight modifications through prodigious ages to the present time, or whether it is an unclassified reptile or amphibian, it is equally impossible to say, as no specimen exists either of its bones or of its skin. That this monster does exist, however, there can be no particle of doubt, as the testimony of authoritative eyewitnesses cannot be reasonably discredited.

Tomorrow Naver Arrives.
Always lookin' forward to an easy-goin' time,
When the world seems movin' careles
like a bit of idle time;
A day when there is nothin' that kin
make you sigh or fret;
Always lookin' forward—but I haven't
seen it yet.
—Washington Sta.

The Viewpoint.
He—This world is too full of shams—
She—Oh, John, I got such lovely ones
at such a barrow today.

EPIDEMIC OF MEASLES STILL GRIPS U. S. CAMPS

Washington, D. C., Dec. 14.—The measles epidemic in the camps of the Thirtieth and Thirty-first, Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth divisions of the national guard troops no longer constitutes a menace, according to a report for the week ending December 7, made public today by Surgeon General Gorgas.

The epidemic has spread somewhat, however, in the Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth divisions and to a greater extent in the Thirty-sixth. Pneumonia following measles, is particularly increased in the Thirty-sixth division and slightly in the Thirty-fourth, Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth.

All other national guard camps show a decrease in measles, although there have been a number of cases of pneumonia independent of measles in all national army and national guard camps.

The reports shows 190 deaths during the week in the national guard of which 171 were from pneumonia; 94 deaths in the national army of which 47 were from pneumonia.

ANOTHER STORM MOVES FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA

Washington, D. C., Dec. 14.—Most of the country was in the grip of storms and cold weather today and under cover of snow throughout its northern parts almost from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Rail and wire traffic were much impeded. The unseasonable cold extends to the gulf states.

Snow was heaviest in the east from the Great Lakes to the coast, with a fall of a foot or more in interior New York. Gales of heavy forces prevailed along the New England coast this morning and storm warnings were up from Delaware breakwater to Eastport, Me.

The second pronounced storm is moving southeastward from British Columbia causing rains in Washington and snow over the north Rocky mountain and plateau regions.

In the south temperatures are very low for that region.

AUSTRIAN WAR DIRECTOR TALKS DISARMAMENT

Amsterdam, Dec. 14.—The Austro-Hungarian war minister, General Steoger-Steiner, is quoted by the Neue Freie Presse, of Vienna, to the effect that the relief resulting from an armistice with Russia would depend upon the details of the agreement, but that in any case it would relax considerably the strain on the transportation system.

Discussing the question of disarmament, the general said he agreed with the recent statement of Count Czernin, the foreign minister, that army and navy expenditures had reached a level it was almost impossible to maintain permanently.

Austria and her allies, he said, dared not place themselves in such a position as to permit the rest of the world to dictate to them; less than ever today, when the ranks of military states have been increased by two great powers, the United States and Great Britain.

AUSTRO-GERMAN TROOPS SENT TO BARRACKS DUTY

Washington, D. C., Dec. 14.—First steps to place soldiers of German or Austro-Hungarian birth or extraction at duty apart from the actual fighting forces appear in today's army orders.

Orders show that the transfer of nearly 100 enlisted men of the regular or national army to duty with the disciplinary barracks guard at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. The list contains hardly a name that does not appear to be of German, Austrian or Hungarian origin.

There are several non-commissioned officers, including Sergeant Martin A. Stolz of the quartermaster's corps at Fort Nebraska. All will be privates in the barracks guard.

Three men come from the American expeditionary forces in France and in other cases it is evident that men were withdrawn from recruits about to sail to join General Pershing's command.

PORTUGUESE REVOLTERS ENCOURAGES SOLDIERS

Lisbon, (Thursday), Dec. 13.—The government established in consequence of the recent revolution, has telegraphed greetings and messages of encouragement to the Portuguese troops which are fighting the Germans in France and Africa. The Portuguese legations have been informed of the establishment of the revolutionary government.

Bernardino Machado, the deposed president, has been asked whether he desires to leave Portugal by land or sea, it having been determined that he must live abroad until the expiration of the term for which he was elected. The cabinet has not decided what disposition to make of former Premier Costa and former Foreign Minister Soares, who are being held aboard a warship.

FIREMEN CALLED OUT, NEW BLAZE STARTED

Wilmington, Del., Dec. 14.—One man is dead and five injured as a result of a fire which followed an explosion today at an acid plant of the Dupont Powder company, 18 miles from here. After the firemen had been summoned from this city, the fire broke out in Wilmington power house, cutting off all light and electric service.

GERMANS RUSH SUPPLIES FOR VAST OFFENSIVE

Geneva, Switzerland, Dec. 14.—Swiss travelers crossing the frontier from Germany tell of immense preparations going on there for an offensive of the western front. Ammunition, provisions and materials of every kind are being concentrated in upper Rhine towns through which military trains pass frequently bound west. Ordinary night traffic has been suspended for 10 days.

KAISER CALLS MUNITIONS MEN.

Amsterdam, Dec. 14.—The Rheinische Westfälische Zeitung, of Essen, Germany, reports that the president of the war board of German industry, the Central Union of Manufacturers and the League of Manufacturers have been summoned to a conference at German great headquarters.

PRAIRIE OIL DIVIDEND.

Independence, Kan., Dec. 14.—The Prairie Oil & Gas Co., today declared a quarterly dividend of \$3 and an extra dividend of \$2, payable January 31, to stock of record of December 31.

NEW OFFENSIVE HASTENS PEACE

Kaiser Plays Into Hands of Allies by Sending Men to Slaughter in Great Effort, Mason Says.

PRECEDES PEACE DRIVE

British Expert Says Entente Must Expect 500,000 Fresh Men, Guns and Airplanes in West.

BY J. W. T. MASON.
(Written for the United Press.)

New York, Dec. 15.—An effort by the Germans at this time to develop a major offensive along the west front against the British and French will be playing the allies' own game. Reports that Hindenburg has such a move in contemplation are almost too good to be true.

Should the increasing unrest of the German people at home cause the German war lords to entertain the hope that the Anglo-French lines are capable of being shattered and drive the Germans into a western offensive the war will be brought much nearer to the allies' winning point.

Flower of Army Wasted.

If one fact has been demonstrated conclusively since the battle of the Marne it is that the Anglo-French line is impregnable to Teuton assaults. During the battle of Flanders and of Verdun the Germans tested the allies' western lines with large supplies of men, guns, ammunitions and provisions and could not pass. The German troops then consisted of the very flower of the military strength of the German empire. All of this considered, it is folly to believe that with the crippled armies now available any better success could be had.

The allies can and will hold fast to all they have and their chief object now is to keep on killing German soldiers and thus reduce the man power of the central powers to the point where the kaiser will be forced to admit his defeat.

PRECEDES PEACE DRIVE.

London, Dec. 15.—Germany's much advertised forthcoming west front drive is preliminary to another peace offensive. She hopes to achieve some measure of success in the drive at some point on the west front.

Then she will urge on the people at home the necessity for peace concessions because of the crippled army, and hopes to accomplish all this before America brings into play her millions of men and untold stores of all kinds.

The kaiser by his well known wiles has induced the Austrians to sacrifice their men by the thousands in Italy to achieve the advantages that have been gained there. The same thing is being done on the west front.

The new peace drive is the explanation, according to best informed men here.

EXPECTS 500,000 FRESH MEN.

"We must expect 500,000 fresh German fighters on the west front and many more guns and aircraft," declared Colonel Refington, trained military expert, in a signed article today. He gave emphatic warning that Germany is preparing to make a supreme military effort, that she is able to do so because of the Russian situation and the Italian defeat.

Many men have already been transported to the west front, he says. He asserts the central powers now have 2,200,000 men on the western front and approximately 75 divisions still on the east.

RUSS GENERAL DIES AT GERMAN QUARTERS

General Skalon Said to Have Committed Suicide While Making Peace Pact.

Petrograd, Dec. 15.—General Skalon, of the Russian staff, committed suicide under sensational circumstances today. Just prior to assembling of the peace conference and German for the armistice conference, according to information received from Brest.

Full details were withheld. It was stated, however, that he shot himself. The shooting appears to have occurred at German army headquarters.

PUSH ORGANIZATION OF LABOR RESOURCES

Washington, D. C., Dec. 15.—To meet the rapidly increasing war demand for labor a new system of labor exchanges to be known as the war emergency employment service is being organized by the international service section of the council of national defense.

L. C. Marshall, chief of the section, announced today that all state councils of defense had been asked to form labor exchanges in co-operation with the federal department of labor. Many shipyards were said to be in need of workers and in the near future the need is likely to be felt equally by munition steel, lumber, mining, transportation and all the other essential industries.

TRAINING STATION MEN GET CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY

Chicago, Dec. 14.—A five days holiday at home either at Christmas or New Years for every one of the 29,000 jockies at the Great Lakes naval training station is promised by Capt. William P. Moffett, commandant. The five days will be granted in addition to whatever travel time is necessary to reach their homes and return.

Half of the men will be drawn for the Christmas holiday and the other 10,000 will go immediately on the return of the first contingent.

In addition to the unexpected leave of absence, Captain Moffett has arranged that each of the men will leave with a well filled purse.

Dishop Henderson, of Detroit, Mich., has issued an order that every Methodist church in his diocese shall display the stars and stripes for the duration of the war.