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DOROTHY'S CHRISTMAS.

A TALE OF THE FIRST RECOGNITION OF THE DAY IN CONNECTICUT COLONY.

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HEAVY snow had fallen in the night, so that upon the morning of the 25th of December, 1682, the broad common of Guilford town in the Connecticut colony, was hidden by it, and as far as the eye could see the thick blanket had been unbroken except by trees and houses.

Deacon Abner, stood at the window of his kitchen on that morning, looking through the little panes of wrinkled glass, that he might discover whether the storm was over.

Although a few flakes fluttered in the air, yet they began to glisten as the rays of the sun that were breaking through the clouds fell upon them, and when Abner perceived that the day would soon be fine he called, saying, "Samuel! Samuel! Hear me!"

A sinewy young man, of rosy cheeks, and eyes that were bright because of health and exercise, put a huge log upon the fireplace, and having brushed the snow from his arms, went to Abner that he might receive his master's commands.

"The magistrate will come by noon, I think, for the storm is over. Samuel, you must break a way through the snow upon the highway at once. Take the stub horned oxen, for the steers are not yet heavy enough for such a snow as this.

Having received this command, Samuel put on a fur cap and muffler, and with heavy mittens on his hands went away.

"Surely the magistrate will not come today," said a gentle woman, with soft spoken voice. "It is fifteen miles to New Haven when the roads are good, but with this snow on them it will be as good as twice as far."

"Will not come, mother, did you say? Before the sun was up the magistrate was on his way, I trow."

As he spoke, Abner, spying something that gave him interest, looked intently across the common. At last he said: "Come here, mother, and tell me if that is not the maid Dorothy that I see yonder in the doorway of Governor Lee's store."

The wife went to the window, and the sight that she saw caused her to be silent, longing to see more. Across the common, 200 yards away, stood the store where the governor of the colony, Mr. Leete, had his business. The wind had drawn the snow against one side of it so high that, with the overhanging fringe from the roof, there was formed a bank of white, broken in two places by the faint outlines of the windows. From the door, on another side, there was thrust a heavily hooded head that seemed to be slyly looking each way as if fearful of discovery. At one moment this head was thrust out, and then for an instant was withdrawn to be again put out a little farther.

At last the door was opened wide and there stepped out into the drift the figure of a woman. She was well wrapped and she walked with ease.

"That is Dorothy," said Mother Alling. "It is a strange performance," said Abner. "Why does she come so slyly from the governor's store at this early hour when the men have not yet all gone out to break the roads?"

"She has a bundle under her cloak. I knew that Dorothy was a maid disposed to be fond of frivolous things, but I did not think that she was sly," said the mother.

"To be sly means deceit; that is something that must be punished. Ah, there she comes with the oxen. He breaks the path well. But now he sees Dorothy, and will, I trow, stop and speak to her, for I have surmised mother, that he likes that maid too well."

"He does, husband."

"So long as he is my apprentice at the forge, and as I shall woo no maid, least of all this frivolous one, I greatly fear, with her sly ways, does cause our governor to relax as he does." He even permitted her to swear a troth upon the Lord's day. We must discipline the maid today. Truly, I will summon her before the magistrate. I lie not; I will. See, Samuel is speaking with her."

The girl had gone through the snow until she was near the meeting house, some sixty yards away from the store, and there the young man, Samuel, met her. He had seen her as she came from the store, and although her head was well hooded, yet the young man knew her as well as if he saw her eyes, that always greeted him, and her lips, that always bestowed upon him a smile. He turned the oxen, and with unobtrusive force forced them to break a path from the governor's house, where the girl lived, to the place where he met her. Then he said to her:

"Why, Master Samuel?"

"Why? You know well why. You know what is to happen today. I am your master, and so sweet do you appear this morning, my Dorothy, that I wish it was today, for I have your promise to wed me on that day. Now tell me, how is it that you are out so early, and what is under your cloak?"

"I will answer neither of your questions, Master Samuel. Are you not content to have me here? Come, put me on the sledge, for I must be back to Mr. Leete's at once."

The young man put his strong arms gently about her and lifted her to the sledge, where she stamped the snow from her feet, and then, with an arm thrown around a stake, she held securely on, while Samuel started the oxen away. Then he came and walked by her side.

"Why did you peek so curiously from the door a moment ago?" he asked.

"She knew that he was half jesting, half serious. She would not answer him, but she said: "Oh, Samuel, you made me forget my purpose. I wish you a merry Christmas, sir."

He looked at her perplexed, wondering what she meant, for he had never heard these words before, and he knew that no one in the town had ever repeated them.

"What do you mean by that? What thing is this you wish me—a merry Christmas? What is that?"

"It is Christmas day, Samuel," said she softly.

"I do not comprehend. It is Wednesday."

"This day it was that Christ was born, and in the countries across the sea it is the habit of the people to bring it to mind by saying as they meet, 'I wish you a merry Christmas.'"

He perceived that she was very thoughtful, and there was self reproach in her tones as she said, "I cannot tell you now; I will some day, Samuel."

He made no answer, for he was perplexed. They had now come abreast the gate of the governor's house. He lifted her from the sledge and let her gently down upon the door step.

An hour after Samuel returned to his home, having broken his share of paths. He put on his leather apron, rolled his sleeve over his mighty arm and blew a fire at the forge, and a moment later the music of the anvil revealed his energy.



SAMUEL AND DOROTHY.

Deacon Abner went to him at once and reproved him. "You spoke too long with the maid, Samuel. I bade you go and break paths, not to chatter with a frivolous young woman."

"The paths are broken."

"What did you do with the maid about? Tell me. Did she tell you why she went out into the snow so early?"

"She did not, I asked her, but she would not tell."

"Oh, there is some mystery. The maid is deceitful."

"Nay, master, Dorothy is not deceitful. I was sure on her lies."

"I will accuse her before the magistrate, and when the governor returns home I will narrate this thing she has done."

"There is no evil, I am sure, but there is some mystery. Tell me, master, what does it mean when any person says, 'I wish you a merry Christmas?' She said a heavenly minded man had told her that."

"Oh, she said that? What heavenly minded man? She is deceiving you, Samuel, and we will know the truth of it. Pay no heed to her words."

Then Abner went away, and with mighty strides crossed the common, and having entered the house of Governor Leete demanded that Dorothy be summoned.

At this moment there entered the room a sweet faced maid leading a child with whom she was making merry, but when, looking up, she met the awful glance with which Deacon Abner received her she faltered and stood waiting to hear him speak.

"Lie not to me," said he, "for it will be even worse for you."

"I speak the truth always or I speak not at all," she said gently.

"Then you will not deny that you were at the store this morning?"

"Nay, I will not deny that."

"What had you under your cloak?"

"I cannot say. Why were you there?"

"I cannot tell."

"You said these words to Samuel, 'I wish you a merry Christmas.'"

"Yes, I said those words."

"Well, who bade you a merry Christmas this day?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Did you not tell Samuel it was a heavenly man?"

"Aye, that is the truth. I did not mean to say so much, but I lie not."

"Who? This word was uttered in thunder tone."

Now the magistrate and deputies were amazed, for they had never before seen so strange a sight as this, so they consulted with each other what they should do, and they fixed upon a punishment for the young man. But when they looked up to pronounce sentence on him they saw another sight which amazed them even more for these stood before them, for as of strange appearance. His head was as white as the snow and long like that of a prophet. His hair fell upon his shoulders. His dress was concealed by a long cloak, and he had placed one hand upon the head of the maid, while the other was uplifted with admonitory gesture.

When he spoke his voice was soft, but like one who has authority, and his manner was solemn, and not like the manner of any man whom they had ever seen.

"This child has done no evil," he began. "If there be evil done I did it, for I taught her this morning that for all who love our Lord this is the day that commemorates his birth. To that blessed country where God reigns I soon, I trust, shall go, for I have kept the faith against such adversities as you have never met. I warn you, oh, you proud magistrate, lift no arm of punishment against this child, for as truly as God reads all hearts he reads in hers as sinless a record as mortals can ever make. The judgment of God be upon you if you permit wrong to be done this child."

He spoke as one inspired, and as he stood with one hand uplifted he seemed like a prophet among them.

"Who are you?" the magistrate asked with hesitating voice.

"God's servant, and I say that this maid shall be blessed and her children shall rise and call her blessed, because she has this day served him."

When the magistrate and the deputies heard these words they spoke with one another for some moments, and when they lifted their eyes again the old man had gone as silently and mysteriously as he came.

For an hour the magistrate and the deputies consulted together. Then the constable was commanded to take the girl and execute the sentence, but as he approached her Samuel put her behind him and faced the constable. His look was terrible, and the constable knew the strength of his arm, so they stood silently facing one another. Suddenly a noise like the coming of horses was heard. The door opened and there entered some of the king's officers, and with them the governor of the colony, Mr. Leete.

"In his majesty's name, if you know where Edward Whalley and William Goffe, two of the judges who caused Charles the First to be beheaded, he concealed I charge you to deliver them!" said an officer.

"The regicides!" said the magistrate, speaking in broken tones.

"Aye, the regicides. We have heard they are concealed here."

"Had one a venerable beard?"

"Aye, William Goffe."

"Was he, Cromwell's general," said the magistrate, as though speaking to himself.

"'Twas he," said the deputies solemnly. Then Abner said to the officer, "One of them was here an hour ago."

"But is here no longer," said Governor Leete, speaking for the first time. "These men came to me many days ago and asked for shelter. As I had not then received the king's command to deliver them I permitted them to lie in the cellar beneath this room. For though I am loyal to the king I am no people-eater. Cromwell and his lieutenant, My maid Dorothy has for many days taken them food, and she and I alone knew of their presence. I charged her to tell no man. But when the king's commands I obey, and I have brought the officers here. Yet I am glad to say that within the hour, being warned of your coming, but not by me, they have escaped. You will see their tracks in the snow, and they are now rapidly sailing in a vessel on the Long Island sound. What do you here, Dorothy?"

"They have sentenced me to the lash, master, because I kept my promise to you, and 'twas this heavenly minded man who greeted me this morning with these words, 'I wish you a merry Christmas.'"

"To the lash!"

"Yes, master."

"And were about to administer it?"

"But for Samuel they would already have whipped me."

"God be praised that this maid would have suffered the lash rather than betray either her word or these persecuted and righteous men, Goffe and Whalley. She shall henceforth be not my maid but my daughter, and the governor, embracing the girl. Then turning to the magistrate he said: 'I will remit her sentence, and because it is indeed the Christmas day I will remit the sentences of all these prisoners. Let my house be opened this day. Let all come and make merry. It shall be made a merry Christmas for all, as I used to know it when I was a child in England.'"

And it was as the governor had ordered on that day and after. And then through Dorothy Deal's suffering and peril there began in that colony the habit, as in other lands, of merry making and good cheer upon Christmas day.

The prophecy of the regicide Goffe was fulfilled. The children of Samuel and Dorothy became men of authority; and they did call her blessed. E. J. EDWARDS.

Notice Probate of Will. THE STATE OF NEBRASKA, in and for Lancaster county, Nebraska. In Court at Lancaster, Nebraska, this 24th day of December, A. D. 1910, before said County Court, at the hour of 2 o'clock p. m., at which time any person interested may appear and contest the same; and notice of this proceeding is hereby published three weeks successively in the official newspaper of said county, to-wit: the Lincoln Star, published in this State.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of the County Court at Lancaster county, State of Nebraska, this 24th day of December, A. D. 1910. W. E. STEWART, County Judge.

Notice to Defendant. JOHN CREIGHTON BALLINGER will take notice that on the 1st day of December, 1910, John D. Cunningham and Chas. A. Hanna, plaintiffs herein, filed their petition in the District Court of Lancaster county, State of Nebraska, against said defendant, the object and prayer of which are to foreclose a certain mortgage executed by John Z. Ballinger and Emma E. Ballinger to the plaintiff herein, the following described premises, to-wit: Lot 6, Block 9, of Second East Park Addition to the City of Lincoln, Lancaster county, State of Nebraska, to secure the payment of a certain promissory note, dated the 10th day of March, 1906, for the sum of \$500, due and payable in monthly installments from the 15th day of May, 1906, \$15, payable each month with interest on the entire amount remaining from time to time until the date of the maturity of said note, from the 10th day of March, 1906, payable monthly.

Plaintiffs pray for a decree that defendants be required to pay same or that the premises may be sold to satisfy the amount found due. You are required to answer said petition on or before the 30th day of January, 1911. Dated December 3, 1910. JNO. B. CUNNINGHAM, Atty. for Plaintiffs.

A. M. DAVIS & SON, Fall and Winter Carpets and Draperies, 1112 O St Telephone 219.

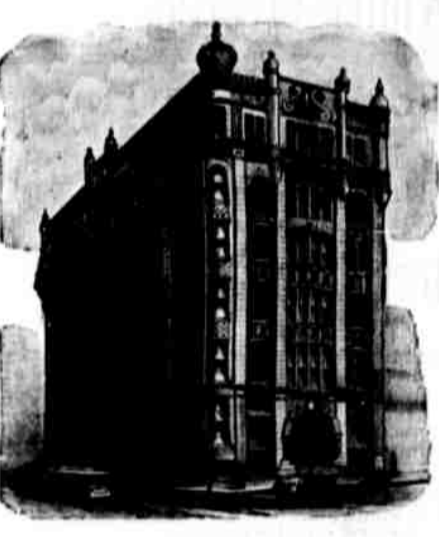


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