

Beasley's Christmas Party

By
BOOTH TARKINGTON

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VI—Continued.

Part of the room was clear to our view, though about half of it was shut off from us by the very king of all Christmas trees, glittering with dozens and dozens of candles, sumptuous in silver, sparkling in gold, and laden with Heaven alone knows how many and what delectable enticements. Opposite the Tree, his back against the wall, sat old Bob, clad in a dress of state, part of which consisted of a swallow-tail coat (with an overgrown chrysanthemum in the buttonhole), a red necktie, and a pink-and-silver liberty cap of tissue-paper. He was scrapping a fiddle "like old times come again," and the tune he played was, "Oh, my Liza, po' gal!" My feet shuffled to it in the snow.

No one except old Bob was to be seen in the room, but we watched him and listened breathlessly. When he finished "Liza," he laid the fiddle across his knee, wiped his face with a new and brilliant blue silk handkerchief, and said:

"Now come de big speech." The Honorable David Beasley, carrying a small mahogany table, stepped out from beyond the Christmas tree, advanced to the center of the room; set the table down; disappeared for a moment and returned with a white water-pitcher and a glass. He placed these upon the table, bowed gracefully several times, then spoke:

"Ladies and gentlemen—There he paused.

"Well," said Mr. Simeon Peck, slowly, "don't this beat hell!"

"Look out!" The Journal reporter twitched his sleeve. "Ladies present."

"Where?" said I.

He leaned nearer me and spoke in a low tone.

"Just behind us. She followed us over from your boarding house. She's been standing around near us all along. I supposed she was Dowden's daughter, probably."

"He hasn't any daughter," I said, and stepped back to the hooded figure I had been too absorbed in our quest to notice.

It was Miss Apperthwaite. She had thrown a loose cloak over her head and shoulders; but enveloped in it as she was, and crested and epauletted with white, I knew her at once. There was no mistaking her, even in a blizzard.

She caught my hand with a strong, quick pressure, and, bending her head to mine, said in a soft whisper, close to my ear:

"I heard everything that man said in our hallway. You left the library door open when you called Mr. Dowden out."

"So," I returned, maliciously, "you couldn't help following!"

She released my hand—gently, to my surprise.

"Hush," she whispered. "He's saying something."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Beasley again—and stopped again.

Dowden's voice sounded hysterically in my right ear. (Miss Apperthwaite had whispered in my left.) "The only speech he's ever made in his life—and he's stuck!"

But Beasley wasn't; he was only deliberating.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began—"Mr. and Mrs. Hunchberg, Colonel Hunchberg and Aunt Cooley Hunchberg, Miss Molanna, Miss Queen, and Miss Marble Hunchberg, Mr. Noble, Mr. Tom, and Mr. Grandee Hunchberg, Mr. Corley Linbridge, and Master Hammersley—You see before you tonight, in my person, merely the representative of your real host, Mister Swift. Mister Swift has expressed a wish that there should be a speech, and has deputed me to make it. He requests that the subject he has assigned me should be treated in as dignified a manner as is possible—considering the orator. Ladies and gentlemen—he took a sip of water—"I will now address you upon the following subject: 'Why We Call Christmas Time the Best Time.'

"Christmas time is the best time because it is the kindest time. Nobody ever felt very happy without feeling very kind, and nobody ever felt very kind without feeling at least a little happy. So, of course, either way about, the happiest time is the kindest time—that's this time. The most beautiful things our eyes can see are the stars; and for that reason, and in remembrance of One star, we set candles on the Tree to be stars in the house. So we make Christmas time a time of stars indoors; and they shine warily against the cold outdoors that is like the cold of other seasons not so kind. We set our hundred candles of the Tree and keep them bright throughout the Christmas time, for while they shine upon us we have light to see this life, not as a battle, but as the march of a mighty Fellowship! Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you!"

He bowed to right and left, as to an audience politely applauding, and, lifting the table and its by with

draw; while old Bob again set his fiddle to his chin and started to scrape the preliminary measure of a quadrille. Beasley was back in an instant, shouting as he came: "Take your pardners! Balance all!"

And then and there, and all by himself, he danced a quadrille, performing at one and the same time for four lively couples. Never in my life have I seen such gyrations and capers as were cut by that long-legged, loose-jointed, miraculously flying figure. He was in the wildest motion without cessation, never the fraction of an instant still; calling the figures at the top of his voice and dancing them simultaneously; his expression anxious but polite (as is the habit of other dancers); his hands extended as if to swing his partner or corner, or "opposite lady;" and his feet lifting high and flapping down in an old-fashioned step.

"First four, forward and back!" he shouted. "Forward and salute! Balance to corners! Swing pardners! Gr-r-rand Right-and-Left!"

I think the combination of abandon and decorum with which he performed that "Grand Right-and-Left" was the funniest thing I have ever seen. But I didn't laugh at it.

Neither did Miss Apperthwaite, at my side.

"Now do you believe me?" Peck was arguing, fiercely, with Mr. Schultze. "Is he crazy, or ain't he?"

"He is," Grist agreed, hoarsely. "He is a stark, starin', ravin', roarin' lunatic! And the nigger's humorin' him!"

"They were all staring, open-mouthed and aghast, into the lighted room."

"Do you see where it puts us?" Simeon Peck's rasping voice rose high.

"I guess I do!" said Grist. "We come out to buy a barn, and got a house and lot for the same money. It's the greatest night's work you ever done, Sim Peck!"

"I guess it is!"

"Shake on it, Sim."

They shook hands, exalted with triumph.

"This'll do the work," giggled Peck. "It's about two-thousand per cent better than the story we started to git. Why, Dave Beasley'll be in a padded cell in a month! It'll be all over town tomorrow, and he'll have as much chance for governor as that nigger in there!" In his ecstasy he smote Dowden deliriously in the ribs. "What do you think of your candidate now?"

"Wait," said Dowden. "Who came in the cabs that Grist saw?"

This staggered Mr. Peck. He rubbed his mitten over his woolen cap as if scratching his head. "Why," he said, slowly—"who in Halifax did come in them cabs?"

"The Hunchbergs? Where—"

"Listen," said Dowden.

"First couple, face out!" shouted Beasley, facing out with an invisible lady on his akimboed arm, while old Bob sawed madly at "A New Coon in Town."

"Second couple, fall in!" Beasley wheeled about and enacted the second couple.

"Third couple!" He fell in behind himself again.

"Fourth couple, if you please! Balance—ALL!—I beg your pardon, Miss Dowden."

"My soul!" said the Journal reporter, gasping. "And he did all that—just to please a little sick kid!"

"I can't figure it out," murmured Sim Peck, piteously.

"I can," said the Journal reporter. "This story will be all over town tomorrow." He glanced at me, and I nodded. "It'll be all over town," he continued, "though not in any of the papers—and I don't believe it's going to hurt Dave Beasley's chances any."

Mr. Peck and his companions turned toward the street and went silently.

The young man from the Journal overlooked them. "Thank you for sending for me," he said, cordially. "You've given me a treat. I'm for Beasley!"

Dowden put his hand on my shoulder. He had not observed the third figure still remaining.

"Well, sir," he remarked, shaking the snow from his coat, "they were right about one thing: it certainly was mighty low down of Dave not to invite me—and you, too—to his Christmas party. Let him go to thunder with his old invitations, I'm going in, anyway! Come on. I'm plum froze."

There was a side door just beyond the bay window, and Dowden went to it and rang, loud and long. It was Beasley himself who opened it.

"What in the name—" he began, as the ruddy light fell upon Dowden's face and upon me, standing a little way behind. "What are you two—snow-banks? What on earth are you fellows doing out here?"

"We've come to your Christmas party, you old horse-thief!" Thus Mr. Dowden.

"Hoo-ray!" said Beasley.

Dowden turned to me. "Aren't you coming?"

"What are you waiting for, old fellow?" said Beasley.

I waited a moment longer, and then it happened.

She came out of the shadow and went to the foot of the steps, her cloak falling from her shoulders as she passed me. I picked it up.

She lifted her arms pleadingly, though her head was bent with what seemed to me a beautiful sort of shame. She stood there with the snow driving against her and did not speak. Beasley drew his hand slowly across his eyes—to see if they were really there, I think.

"David," she said, at last. "You've got so many lovely people in your house tonight, isn't there room for just one fool? It's Christmas time!"

Opposite the Tree, his Back Against the Wall, Sat Old Bob.

Molanna, I'm afraid I stepped on your train.—Sashay All!"

After the "sashay"—the noblest and most dashing bit of gymnastics displayed in the whole quadrille—he bowed profoundly to his invisible partner and came to a pause, wiping his streaming face. Old Bob dexterously swung a "A New Coon" into the stately measures of a triumphal march.

"And now," Beasley announced, in stentorian tones, "if the ladies will be so kind as to take the gentlemen's arms, we will proceed to the dining room and partake of a slight collation."

Thereupon came a slender piping of joy from that part of the room which had been screened from us by screened from us by the Tree.

"Oh, Cousin David Beasley, that was the beautifullest quadrille ever danced in the world! And now, please, won't you take Mrs. Hunchberg out to supper?"

(THE END.)

Then into the vision of our paralyzed and dumfounded watchers came the little wagon, pulled by the old colored woman, Bob's wife, in her best, and there, propped upon pillows, lay Hamilton Swift, Junior, his soul shining rapture out of his great eyes, a bright spot of color on each of his thin cheeks.

He lifted himself on one elbow, and for an instant something seemed to be wrong with the brace which was under his chin.

Beasley sprang to him and adjusted it tenderly. Then he bowed elaborately toward the mantel-piece.

"Mrs. Hunchberg," he said, "may I have the honor?" And offered his arm.

"And I must have Mister Hunchberg," chirped Hamilton. "He must walk with me."

"He tells me," said Beasley, "he'll be mighty glad to. And there's a plate of bones for Simeon."

"You lead the way," cried the child; "you and Mrs. Hunchberg."

"Are we all in line?" Beasley glanced back over his shoulder. "Hoo-ray! Now, let us on. Ho! Music there!"

"Br-r-ra-vo!" applauded Mister Swift.

And Beasley, his head thrown back and his chest out, proudly led the way,

stepping nobly and in time to the exhilarating measures. Hamilton Swift, Junior, towed by the beaming old mammy, followed in his wagon, his thin little arm uplifted and his fingers curled as if they held a trusted hand.

When they reached the door, old Bob rose, turned in after them, and, still fiddling, played the procession and himself down the hall.

And so they marched away, and we were left staring into the empty room.

"You Lead the Way," Cried the Child; "You and Mrs. Hunchberg."



Commander of Portland (Ore.) Legion Post Asserts Ex-Service Men Should Have Preference.

The ex-service man who has equal or better qualifications for a city government position is entitled to preference in appointment or election, according to James J. Crossley, of Portland, Ore., commander of Portland post, No. 1, of the American Legion.

Carrying his theory into action, Mr. Crossley was instrumental in the organization of a committee in his post charged with the duty of seeing that all veterans of the World war received a square deal in obtaining municipal positions. Working in close co-operation with the mayor and city commissioners, men and women recommended by the Legion have been named as municipal judge, superintendent of the women's bureau of the police department and chief clerk of the park bureau.

In many cases ex-service men have led the list of applicants for positions in the civil service examinations, according to Mr. Crossley. In the examination for chief clerk of the park bureau, Albert Rufner, an ex-service man, finished first.

FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

President of Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' League of Australia Urges Co-operation.

On the eve of American Education week, during which the American Legion urged that importance of ability to read and write the English language should be emphasized, Alvin Owsley, Legion national commander, received a telegram from G. J. C. Dyett, president of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' league of Australia, stating that the "continued close co-operation of English-speaking peoples is the only safeguard to the peace and happiness of humanity."

Mr. Dyett, who brought the greetings of his organization to the recent Legion national convention in New Orleans, recently called for his home.

Replying to a message from Commander Owsley to Australian ex-service men, Mr. Dyett stated:

"I profoundly appreciate the sentiments conveyed in your message to Australian soldiers which absolutely coincide with those uttered in my address at the Legion national convention. I desire to reiterate our admiration of American soldiers and the sincere friendship of the people of America, and trust for continued close co-operation of English-speaking peoples as the only safeguard to the peace and happiness of humanity."

ENTITLED TO THE POSITIONS

MISS BESS B. WETHERHOLT OF OHIO RECEIVES IMPORTANT POSITION IN NATIONAL ORGANIZATION.

MISS BESS B. WETHERHOLT OF GALLIPOLIS, O., HAS RECENTLY BEEN APPOINTED NATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY BY DR. KATE WALLER-BARRETT, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION WHICH IS COMPOSED OF MOTHERS, WIVES, SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS OF LEGION MEMBERS AND MEN WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE.

THE AMERICAN LEGION

(Copy for This Department Supplied by the American Legion News Service.)

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FITTS IS BACK IN HOSPITAL

Past Commander of California Department Incapacitated as Result of Recent Campaign.

In a Los Angeles hospital lies Buron R. Fitts, past commander of the California department of the American Legion, with the knee that was shattered by shrapnel in the Argonne one more in splints as a result of his strenuous activity in the campaign which obtains farm and homelands for needy veterans.

In efforts to obtain support for the ex-service men's measures before the recent election Mr. Fitts made one of the greatest speaking tours ever undertaken in any state. He made 165 speeches in 154 towns in all parts of California. The physical and mental strain undermined the health of the Legion leader. In addition, in trying to keep all of his speaking engagements he often used an airplane. One of the planes in which he was riding crashed near Carpinteria, pinning Mr. Fitts under the wreckage and injuring his shattered leg. Recovering consciousness, in the hospital, he began writing telegrams to be sent over California, urging the people to vote for the two issues he had fought for.

The measures the Legion heretofore fought for were accepted by the people of California by a 2 to 1 majority. Fitts' sacrifices will mean that California veterans may obtain farms or homes of their own at a low rate of interest and on easy, long-time payments. Also thousands of acres of California lands—provided for by the last legislature—will be settled by veterans with this aid. Taxation is not increased. The provisions are in no way a bonus, but every cent is to be repaid by the veterans with interest.

Mr. Fitts is a deputy district attorney of Los Angeles county. He obtained national note for his efforts in behalf of disabled ex-service men as vice commander, commander and national executive committeeman of the California department.

EX-SERVICE MEN VALUABLE

Director of Welfare Division of Large Concern Says Boys Have Lost Restlessness.

Men who fought in the World war have lost their restlessness and are becoming the most valuable employees of big business establishments, according to Henry A. Reninger of Allentown, Pa., director of the safety and welfare division of a large cement company.

Mr. Reninger stated that the policy of his company was to give every man who went to war his old job or a better one when he returned and that ex-service men are given preference in employment which has developed since the war.

"There are a number of American Legion members on our safety and welfare committee," said Mr. Reninger. "Their service is of the highest order and they have become the hardest workers on our staff."

Before Mr. Reninger and his Legion assistants tackled the job of reducing accidents among the 5,000 employees of his company, 75 working days out of 100,000 were lost because of accidents. This year Mr. Reninger believes that the number of days lost will be only 25.

Mr. Reninger is a member of the Legion post at Allentown and has taken a prominent part in the Legion's activities in Pennsylvania.

NAMED TO DEAL WITH CRIME

H. Findlay French, Representing Legion, Elected Secretary Baltimore Criminal Justice Commission.

A survey of the courts, prisons, pardon and parole system, social conditions and all other elements of the community life bearing upon the prevention and punishment of crime is part of the work of H. Findlay French, recently elected secretary of the Baltimore criminal justice commission.

The commission has been formed by the Baltimore American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, Clearing House association, Women's Civic league and similar organizations. Mr. French, who is American Legion national executive committeeman from Maryland, represents the Legion on the commission.

Mr. French has stated that the commission has received the heartiest co-operation from the similar commission in Chicago, which has been in existence for two years, and from the Cleveland commission, which is a year old. The Baltimore commission, he said, will be guided largely by the experience of these commissions.

The aim of the commission is to make recommendations for improvement of the means of apprehending and punishing criminals and preventing the conditions that breed crime.

During the World war Mr. French served with the Eightieth division.

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Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

Colds	Headache
Toothache	Lumbago
Furache	Rheumatism
Neuralgia	Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Drugists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacturing of Monocetleandester of Salicylicacid.—Advertisement.

Laugh at other people's jokes. It is the most tactful compliment—and a good-hearted.

Red Cross Ball Blue is the finest product of its kind in the world. Every woman who has used it knows this statement to be true.—Advertisement.

The spider is seldom in danger when his life is hanging by a thread.

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WOMAN SUFFERED THREE MONTHS

Pains in Back and Nervousness. Made Well by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Montevideo, Minn.—"I suffered for three months with pain in my back and sides, and was awful nervous that I was unfit to do my work. After I began taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I grew strong and now I weigh 150 pounds. I keep house and am able to lift and do any kind of work. I have got wonderful results from the Vegetable Compound and recommend it very highly to my friends. I give you permission to publish my testimonial."—Mrs. OLS BERTSON, 210 8th St. So., Montevideo, Minnesota.

Another Nervous Woman Finds Relief

Port Huron, Mich.—"I suffered for two years with pains in my side, and if I worked very much I was nervous and just as tired in the morning as when I went to bed. I was sleepy all the day and didn't feel like doing anything, and was so nervous I would bite my finger nails. One of my friends told me about Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and it helped me so much that I soon felt fine."—Mrs. CHARLES BEILER, 1910 Elk Street, Port Huron, Mich.

Women Made Young

Bright eyes, a clear skin and a body full of youth and health may be yours if you will keep your system in order by taking

LATHROP'S GOLD MEDAL HAARLEM OIL CAPSULES

The world's standard remedy for kidney, liver, bladder and uric acid troubles, the enemies of life and looks. In use since 1896. All druggists, three sizes. Look for the same Gold Medal on every box and accept no imitation

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