

A Christmas Angel

by Donald Allen

A pretty young girl, well wrapped up against the cold night, and a half-grown boy carrying a large basket, were crossing the street when an automobile swung suddenly around the corner. To save themselves, the girl and the boy had to make a sudden retreat, and in so doing they dropped the basket and it was crushed under the wheels.

There were four young men in the automobile. They were singing and laughing and enjoying the license of Christmas eve. They jeered at the boy for dropping the basket, and they raised their bats in mock courtesy to the girl.

"Miss, I didn't go for to do it!" apologized the boy, who had been hired as a messenger, and who had been told that the basket contained food for poor families in the tenement beyond.

"I know—I know," replied the girl. "It wasn't your fault, but I'm so sorry. The sick woman and her children won't have the food and toys now, but I have a little change in my purse and I can still do something. You needn't go any farther; it is just across the street. Good-night to you."

"Missy," said the boy as she was about to move away, "you gave me a dime to carry the basket. Here it is. Give it to some kid up there who wants a mouth-organ. Oh, you must take it, and if you say so I'll wait here till them fellows come back and hit 'em with a rock."

"But how about your Christmas, Jimmy?" the girl asked.

"Oh, I can skirlish around, same as I always do. Night to you, and I hope that sick woman will get better."

The girl crossed the street and entered the hallway of the tenement and climbed to the third floor. Three children were waiting for her on the landing, and uttered glad shouts at sight of her. She had been there before and had promised them that she would come on Christmas eve. Within the poverty-stricken rooms called home a sick woman was lying on a bed. She smiled and was glad at sight of the girl.

She told them the incident of the auto and the loss of the basket, and then she counted over her scanty change and went downstairs to the nearest grocery. It was little she could buy. There would be Christmas eating, but no feast. The little stockings with their holes would be hung, but there would be no Santa Claus to fill them. The children stood with their faces to the wall and wept, and the girl held the hand of the sick woman and shed tears.

As they sat thus the door opened and let in the cold air from the hall. An old man stood outside. He was ragged and unkempt, and hunger had given him the face of a wolf. There was not a soft line in it. Peering out of his own door on the same floor, he had seen the girl come bearing packages. There was bread on the table before him.

The children cried out as they saw the look on the old man's face, and the girl rose up and barred his way. "I want bread and I'll have it!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"But you can't take it from this sick woman and these helpless children."

"I tell you I'm hungry—I want bread! Why didn't you come to me first? I am old; there is no work for me, but I will not die like a dog. Stand aside! You will not?"

He seized her by the arms and there was a struggle. The children were shouting for help, and the man-wolf was nearing the coveted loaves when some one entered and seized him and whirled him about and thrust him out into the hall, shutting the door on his path and snarl. The children ceased their cries and the girl looked up to see a young man standing in the center of the room, gazing around him.

"It is your fault!" she half-sobbed. "You were in the auto that almost ran me down. You laughed in my face as you raised your hat. But for you there would have been plenty of food and some presents here."

"Yes, I was one of them," the man answered. "It is Christmas eve, and we were out for a lark. Yes, I looked straight into your eyes, and in five minutes I was ashamed of myself. I came back and hunted until I found the boy. When he told me that you were a Christmas angel, and that he had given his last dime to help out, I was still more ashamed of myself and of my friends. Can you forgive me?"

"Yes, it is Christmas eve," she said in a voice hardly above a whisper as she seemed to listen to the merry shouts from the street. "There are tens of thousands of persons on the streets in merry mood, but what have we here? What have we in every room in this old rookery? Were you thinking of it when you crushed the basket, was bringing?—when you smiled into my face?"

"I was a brute," he answered.

"I was bringing my little mite," she

continued in a deprecatory way. "I have a widowed mother to support, and I could not spare much. I was weeks saving up to buy what was in that basket. You are rich, perhaps. It would have been nothing to you."

The children stood hushed and awed, and the sick woman closed her eyes and wondered at it all. The young man and the girl looked straight into each other's eyes as they talked, and her words seemed to cut him like the lash of a whip. When there had been silence for a minute, and the old man-wolf was heard snarling as he paced the hall, the young man said:

"I am ashamed and sorry. Let that answer for the moment. Will you come with me?"

And without the slightest fear in her mind, and with a smile at the mother and her children, she arose. Intuition told her what was in the stranger's thoughts. He carried the bread and butter out into the hall and placed them in the hands of the face-faced old man. He fell to devouring them as if he had, indeed, been a wolf of the forest, and when another tenant came out and asked for crumbs he was frightened away by snarls and growls.

"Now come," said the young man.

Up one street and down another for an hour, they went. Wines and jellies and fruits, they bought for the woman whose ailment was starvation more than disease—food to last for days and days. They selected, next, gifts and new stockings to receive them—whatever money could buy and the two could bundle into their arms, they picked up. And all the time, though neither one knew the name of the other, they talked and laughed and were like children in their delight.

The return to the tenement was like the arrival of a lord and his lady. There was something for other children, too, and a policeman, pausing in



Christmas Candle Shades and a Mica Shade for Protection.

"I Have a Widowed Mother to Support, and I Could Not Spare Much."

the lower hall, heard such shouts of pleasure and so much childish laughter that he glanced up the dimly-lighted stairs and said to himself:

"Old Santa must have changed his route this year and come among the poor."

And at a late hour, when the Christmas angel and her guardian walked downstairs together and she was put into a cab for home, they still talked and still laughed, nor did they know that they would ever meet again. She had lashed him for his heartlessness. She was hoping that he would see that she had forgiven him. He had been almost brutal. He was hoping that she had seen his better side. No cards—no names.

"Good-night," they said at parting; and when he raised his hat she knew that it was in courtesy instead of irony.

Days later, when the girl visited the old tenement again, the sick woman and her children had vanished, but had left word behind for her. The man-wolf was still there, but instead of growling and showing his teeth, he smiled at her. In another place, with light and air and food and comforts in abundance, the girl found the mother and her little ones. It was a glad surprise, and to the look of inquiry the widow, no longer in bed, whispered:

"He did it! He did it all!"

One evening, when long weeks had passed, the young man was waiting at the home of the girl when she came from her place of daily employment.

"I have been talking with the mother," he said, quietly. "She says I may call. What does the Christmas Angel say?"

(Copyright, 1910.)

A Simple Gift.

When one wishes to send little more than a remembrance at Christmas yet does not care to use cards, a novelty that can be made by the girl who paints is a match scratcher in the form of a card.

Have an oblong background of colored cardboard, and on it paint a quaint figure cut from fine emery paper in soft tones of brown, heightened by gay touches in the costume. It is then cut out and pasted on the back, which may be left plain or painted with scenery to correspond.

Sometimes these scratchers are done in entirely monochrome. Children with huge muffs, picturesque colonial or Greuze figures, or quaint Dutch peasants can be copied in colors.

The Christmas Dinner Table

by Julia Bottomley

BEST and merriest of all dinners, that of Christmas, sweetly compels us to take extra thought and put forth extra effort that it may be set forth in state. At the call of some one, whose heart is "good" toward us, we gather round the bright table. Sweet with fir, beautiful with holly, gleaming with white napers and twinkling glass and all lit with rosy candles, it sets the heart aglow, bespeaking a loving kindness, which is the salvation of our workaday world.

The dining room is the heart of the house and its great day is Christmas day. It is really very little trouble to decorate it for a Christmas dinner, and dressing the table cannot be spoken of as a trouble—it is a pleasure.

The dining room must be entirely clean—the windows newly washed and the walls and furniture wiped off and polished up a bit, before the placing of decorations begins. These should be simple and in green so as not to distract the attention from the table.

If a hanging lamp or a chandelier is suspended over the table, nothing is so much more effective than the festoons of green from lamp to the corners of the room. Ropes of evergreen are made by cutting off small branches and winding the stems with dark cord or heavy black thread. The lamp, or chandelier supports, may be dressed with sprays of evergreen and holly and the evergreen festoons arranged along the walls, underneath the plate rail, the festoons to be caught up with sprays of holly. Branches of green over the windows and door casings and wreaths pinned at each window, on the curtains, are the time-honored Christmas decorations that cannot be improved upon and are dear because familiar.

But in setting forth her table the hostess has a chance to exercise her



Christmas Candle Shades and a Mica Shade for Protection.

ingenuity and be as original as she may please.

The table is to be made amply long so that it will not be crowded, and spread with a protecting pad, and an immaculate cloth, smooth and shining. Silver and glassware are to be scoured and polished and the china treated to the same freshening process, until everything shines. Lay a dinner napkin at each place and proceed to decorate the table.

A centerpiece is to be provided. A very handsome one is made of a bolt of No. 80 red satin ribbon. Two lengths of this, each 1½ yards long, are crossed at the middle of the table, lying flat and the ends extending toward the corners of the table. In the center an ornamental fern dish is fashioned of the ribbon about a plain fern dish.

The ribbon is made into standing loops, each about six inches in length. These are placed in a row about the dish with the loops upstanding. The dish used may be an ordinary milk pan previously covered with red paper in crepe or tissue. Fill the pan with moss or sand. In the center stand a miniature Christmas tree, a natural baby tree if possible. Decorate the miniature tree with tiny candles and the smallest of red tinsel balls. The candles are not to be lighted. Place few decorations and have them all in miniature. The effect is charming.

Another pretty centerpiece is made with five ordinary tin candlesticks, supporting five red or white candles. Set one of these on an inverted pasteboard box in the center of the table and the four remaining candles one at each corner of the box, on the table. Use a small box, not larger than the bottom of the candlestick. Cover the candlesticks and the box with sprays of evergreen and holly and sprinkle over these the "diamond dust" which may be bought, or made by cutting a piece of tinsel rope into little particles. Make shades for the candles, using red paper. Buy the fireproof kind for safety.

The shades are very easily made by cutting four petals of paper and mounting them over an isinglass protector on the brass shade holders. Pull out the edges of the paper to get the ruffled effect. Tie the shades about their support with a small cord. Over this place a piece of tinsel, finishing it in a little bow or knot. Each candle will appear to spring from a nest of green. The candles are to be lighted when the dessert is served. A candle shade such as is described is shown in the picture.

A third pretty centerpiece is made of a small round hand mirror and silver tinsel in the form of a five-pointed

star. Cut the star from a piece of white wrapping paper, making it 12 to 18 inches across. Lay the paper star in the center of the table and place the small mirror in the center of the star. Cover the paper star completely with silver tinsel. Place a tall slender vase in clear glass on the mirror and fill it with poinsettia blossoms or red carnations or bright red roses. If natural flowers are not available a tall candle in a glass stick, surrounded by shorter candles in shorter candlesticks, will do nicely.

At each place at table, a little basket is to be set containing salted peanuts or almonds, or red cinnamon drops and green mints. These bas-



A Bonbon Basket for the Dinner Table.

kets are made of red paper with a little spray of holly fastened to the handle. Or they are pretty made of brown tissue paper twisted into cords and gilded with gold paint. A basket of this kind is shown in the illustration.

If the table is long, candles may be placed at intervals around it, but otherwise, the centerpiece, with one or two candles at opposite ends of the table, will be the better arrangement. Place these candles diagonally opposite. White candles with red shades are as pretty as red ones for the dinner table.

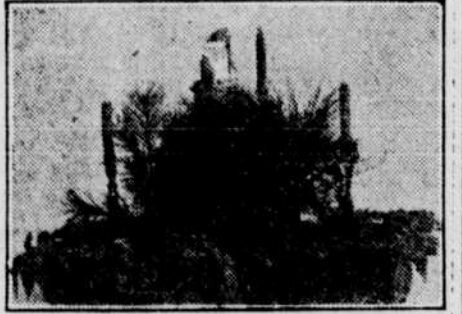
Cranberry jelly, which is nearly always a part of the menu, served in glass dishes, or set in a glass bowl, is decorative. Gelatin in two colors (red and green) in tall sherbet glasses is also fine as an aid in carrying out the Christmas color scheme. Triangular slices of bread or rolls of bread tied with red baby ribbon and placed on the bread and butter plates gives an additional little finishing touch.

When the silver is laid and the water glasses placed, a small spray of holly for the buttonhole or corsage is to be placed for each person at the table. It rests on the napkins.

In order that the candles may last out the dinner it is as well to postpone lighting them until the dessert is served. Other lights may be turned lower at this time. The effect of glowing candles is very inspiring to the guests.

Often the Christmas dinner must be served in the early afternoon. If artificial lights are desired the hostess must darken the dining room. But there are pretty decorations from which candle light is omitted. The centerpiece for such a table may represent any familiar winter or Christmas scene. One may buy, at a trifling cost, a Santa Claus, on a chimney top, about to descend. These are made of painted pasteboard and a doll. At the confectioners' there are all sorts of Christmas pieces in the form of large candy boxes. Santa Claus and his reindeers are fine for the centerpiece mounted on a small box, concealed by evergreens and holly.

A table for daytime light may be arranged with a small mirror in the center about 18 inches square. Surround this by evergreens to represent a skating pond. Dress two or more



Decorations for the Christmas Dinner Table.

tiny dolls to represent skaters. The closer you can come to making it look like a real pond in miniature the more you and your guests will be delighted. At the ten-cent stores one may buy small red houses and even glass icicles. Icicles may be represented by little pieces of tinsel also. After you once get to work the thing will grow under your hands and you will be enthusiastic at the end. When all is finished the Christmas table justifies the thought and work put on it—the play is indeed worth the candle.

If one must count expenses carefully the decorations will be found to be more a matter of ingenuity than money. Evergreens and red paper, wax candles and cheap candlesticks are within reach of nearly all of us. Of all days Christmas is, for that very reason, the one for which we should make our very best endeavor.

Christmas Precaution.
"Mother, if Santa Claus comes down the chimney, he'll have to walk through the kitchen, won't he?"
"I suppose he will, dear."
"Well, don't you think we'd maybe perhaps better lock up the preserves?"

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