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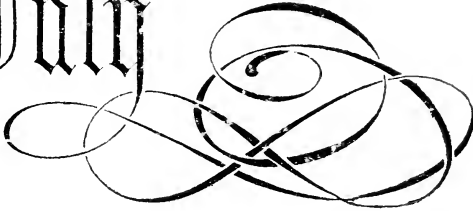
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Christmas

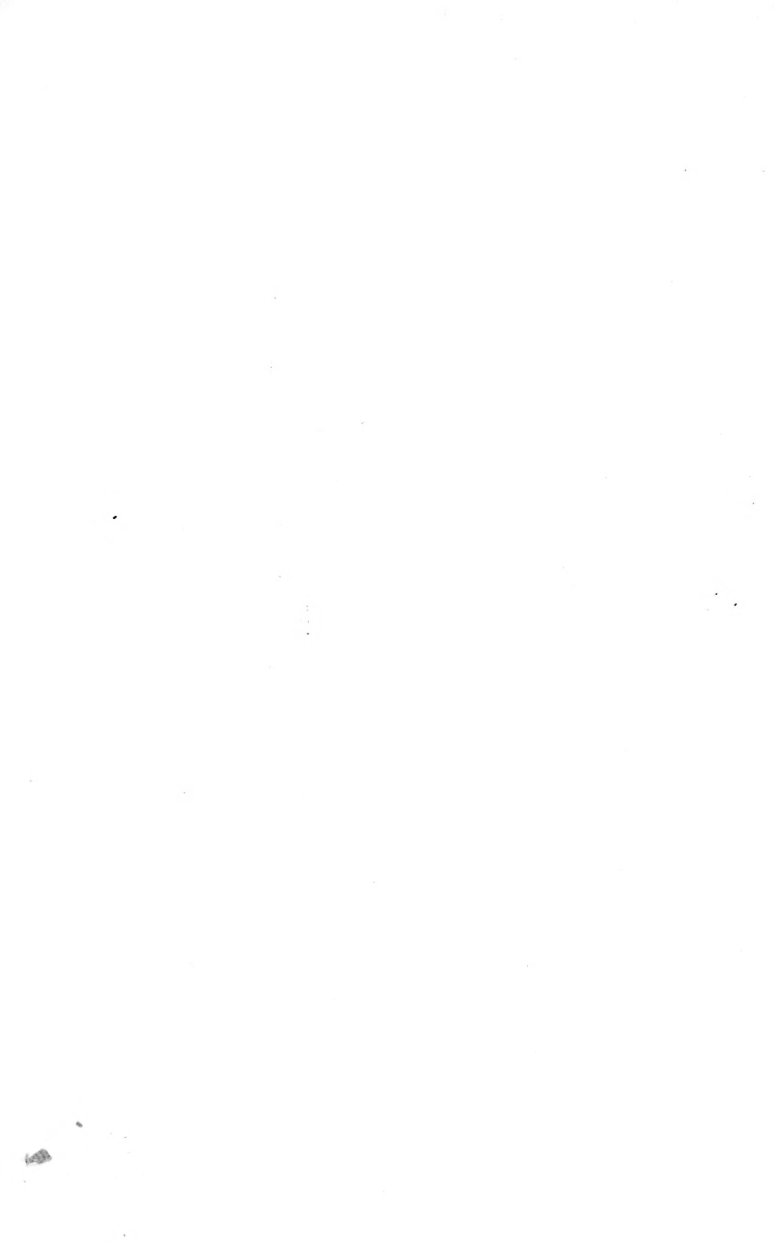
vs

Fourth of

July



By Asenath Carver Coolidge 2



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Christmas vs.
Fourth of July

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ASENATH CARVER COOLIDGE

Christmas vs. Fourth of July Not in 7/23 07

By Asenath Carver Coolidge

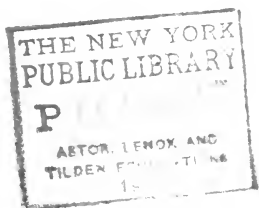
Author of "The Independence Day Horror at Killsbury," "The Modern Blessing, Fire," "Robert Fleming's Christmas Mummery," "The War Wreck," "Prophet of Peace," and many other short stories and poems



WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

1908

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WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

To My Little Grandniece
ELIZABETH JOANNA COOLIDGE
This little story is dedicated
By her Grandaunt
ASENATH CARVER COOLIDGE

Preface

'Twas in nineteen hundred and ninety-nine
A mother went with her little son
To the children's fine old Safety Park,
In the rock-bound town of Antedun.

"O, mother, why were the walls built so high?"
Was the boy's Pythagorean quiz.
"Did they dream that the babes would tumble out?
Jehu! gee-hee! gee-ho and gee-whizz!"

"No, no! my son, but they surely feared
That the grown-ups would come tumbling *in*.
'Twas the age of mad doings and dreams—
Of 'Insane Fourths' and devilish din."

"Insane Fourth! O, mother what did they do
To make it insane?—our nation's day—
With its music and candies and creams
What could they do; tell me quick, I pray!"

"Come here, my son, read the lesson in stone
On the pillars and arch of the gate.
Two gods stand there each side of the throne
Where '*The Innocents*' frolic and wait."

"Oh, mother dear! what a terrible fiend
God Moloch was; and, O, what a sight
To just see him fling his victims in;
Yet he maimed them not, he killed outright.

"While the god of greed—the treacherous brute
Who professes to be a good god
Puts into the little outstretched hands
The deadly pistol and dynamite rod!

"O, mother, how Lucifer must have smiled
When he called them angels and elves!
When he swore he never would hurt a child
Then sold children things to hurt themselves!"

“Thank God, you know why the walls were built high
And with gates and watch towers, my son!
They needed them all to guard young life
In the rock-bound town of Antedun.

“And why the good giver of Safety Park—
The gracious lady, so rich and rare,
Spent the *gold* of her purse and the *love* of her heart
To place four guardian angels there.”

ASENATH CARVER COOLIDGE

Watertown, N. Y.

June, 1908

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PART I.

“IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

SAY, Debby, what do you expect to receive for Christmas presents?” said Jerry to his sister, who was two years his senior.

“I don’t expect to receive. That isn’t what I’m thinking about,” said Debby.

“Whew!” exclaimed Jerry, of course you will. You had a dozen last year, almost as many as I did. What in creation makes you think you won’t have any this?”

“I’m older’n I was last year,” said Debby, straightening up in a dignified way; “and when folks get older they make presents to others. They don’t think ’bout what they’re going to get all the time.”

“Then I don’t want to grow old,” said Jerry. “Not ’till I’ve got a lot more things than I’ve got now. I don’t want to make presents. You see I’d have to draw on my bank, an’ then I should be ‘dead broke’ as the coachman says.”

“Jerry, don’t you know what we had on our Sunday school cards last week?”

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"Yes," said Jerry, scratching his head, "but I can't fetch it just now. It was somethin' 'bout Christmas wasn't it?"

"No, Jerry, no. It said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

"Don't know 'bout that, sis, an' I don't 'member things I don't know 'bout."

"Wy' Jerry! they took that out of the Bible, so of course it's true."

"Guess they didn't mean little boys like me, if they did any kind o' boys."

"Of course they mean boys as well as girls," said Debby firmly, "but say, Jerry, I thought you didn't like to be called little any more and you've just called yourself little."

"No sir, I don't, if I'm playing soldier at the head of my regiment," said Jerry, stiffening up into a military attitude, "an' pop 'ud go my gun at the first little imp that 'ud durst call me little; and I've got the stuff for my gun. I bought it with my jack-knife."

"O Jerry, that would be awful to shoot at a little fellow for calling you what you look like. You might put his eyes out or kill him," said Debby, turning pale, "and then I don't know what they'd do to you. 'Twould be almost worse than throwin' fire-crackers under a horse's heels and makin' it throw a poor woman out and break her arm all to pieces, as you did three Fourth o' July's ago."

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“I don’t care if I did,” replied Jerry, sulkily, “she’d no business to had such a queer looking bunnet on.”

“Yes she had, Jerry. She was a Quaker and that’s the kind o’ bunnets they wear. And she was a real sweet little woman and her daughter was beautiful. I don’t believe papa knows you’ve got some powder. Don’t you remember what a lot of money he paid to get the woman’s arm all mended up straight? Don’t you remember how the big tears rolled down Uncle Nat’s cheeks, when he was carrying her in? And how he took her into his own beautiful rooms and he slept in the hall bedroom? O dear, Jerry, you won’t shoot anybody will you, if they do call you little when you go marchin’? I don’t see as it’s any worse to be called little one time than another—I don’t.”

“Of course you don’t,” said Jerry, bristling up. “Silly girls, who don’t want to fight or let off cannons Fourth o’ July, jes’ as soon be called little as not. Say sis, I’d hate to be a girl, like pizen. They can’t ’mount to nothin’, never. They allus hav’ to be bossed. They can’t get to be Pres’dents or Gen’rals or Adm’erls or nothin’ else I’d like to be. No sir! A boy’d be a great gump if he’d want to be a girl.”

This was a bluffer. Debby understood it well enough but she was not inclined to think her brother brutish or selfish; and she was too young to have anything more than a glimmering of the

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principle involved; but it was a gleam in the right direction. So thought Uncle Nat who sat in the next room reading the morning papers. Uncle Nat was a bachelor but not so old or shut out but what he could listen to the children's talk and pick out kernels of wisdom now and then; but this time it had struck a more sensitive chord; or rather several chords. His first impulse was to take hold of that boy and give him a thorough shaking. The second was to take hold of the Fourth of July customs and straighten them out.

Jerry's family had supposed that the terrible consequences of his mad prank, alluded to by his sister, would be an object lesson sufficient to cure him of any further evils of the kind, but to make sure, they had emphasized it every year since, by refusing to let him have any of the explosives by which our national day is honored or—insulted; and now to hear him talk of buying powder, touching off Fourth o' July cannons, and shooting a boy for a fancied insult.

"Yes, it is true as gospel, what the sweet mother said," groaned Uncle Nat.

Every word came back to him with convincing power, although nearly four years had elapsed since their utterance. "The barbarous old customs are to blame more than the boy. As the Fourth of July is now celebrated, it is an object lesson in crime to the youth of the land. One such day is enough to upset all the Christly teachings

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of the Sunday schools for the whole year. Enough to set at naught all the tender care and watching of the parents over their infant children. A mother who would give her tender-skinned babe a fire brand to play with, would be called a monster. A father who fills the pockets of his innocent boy with dangerous explosives, his hands with matches, and pushes him into the street with permission to do his worst is looked upon as a man doing his patriotic duty. It is the new outcrop of the old barbarous custom of sacrificing children and lambs on the altar—anciently called ‘God’s Altar’—now called the ‘altar of country.’ It is the spirit of Anti-Christ in full flame. The fiery fiend that leads to murder and war and all unholy things!”

Then Rachel said in her sweet voice, “No more sermons to-day mother. Too much talking isn’t good for thee. Let me tell this young man how the day might be made lovely and nobody hurt. How the Doukhobor family we were with last summer thought it should be celebrated. They were going to Canada to teach their people—the Russian Quakers who refused to take lessons in killing their fellow men, and who petitioned the Czar to let them leave his realm on account of their persecutions there. I shouldn’t wonder if their leaving would be the means of converting the Czar to peace principles,” she added naively.

But Uncle Nat had no clear remembrance of

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the Doukhobor plan for celebrating our Fourth; but what he did remember, was a confusion of words, like roses, pond lilies, ferns, fragrant cedar, shining peace and love mottoes, falling from lips which he was growing wild to kiss.

Jerry's father paid the surgeon's bill, as Debby intimated. Paid it generously, according to the world's estimate; for the country is permitted to go mad on that day or any other, when war and warriors are to be honored. A rich sharper would not have paid anything—would not have paid any attention whatever to the poor victims, but Jerry's father was not of this kind; neither was Nathan Holbert of his kind, for he recognized the fact that in this, as in all such injuries, there was a heavy balance of wrecked nerves to be taken into account. This was the part of the cost of Jerry's mad frolic, that he had taken upon himself to pay—or rather vowed to himself that he would pay, as soon as such injury could be properly estimated.

Why he had failed to do so, was a question which came back to him now, with bitter force. Jerry's brutish excuse for his mischievous deed, was a new revelation, not only so far as the boy was concerned but it had a sting in it for himself. He ought to have known and he did know, that these gentle women had an aversion to the pomp and circumstance of the social world, akin to their aversion to the "pomp and circumstance of war."

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That gifts of jewels and fine clothes would only be regarded in one way; but in his blind and selfish passion he heeded it not. Yes it was his selfishness that had wrought the failure. Selfishness was in the family blood. Jerry showed it on all sides and worst of all towards the mother. Jerry's uncle had shown it in his attitude to both mother and daughter, to whom he should have discharged his sacred obligation first of all and without hope of reward.

No wonder that his last evening with them was stamped on his memory with fiery distinctness. It was a plan—a selfish scheme as he saw it now. By wiles which young innocent souls know not of, he had managed to get, even in the mother's presence, an expression of love from the daughter, more potent than words. Instead of a generous response, he clutched and gloated over it, as Jerry gloated over his bank—receiving but not divulging, seeking to add to his coveted store by rudely snatching a kiss at parting.

Then came the beautiful dress, with the gay fan, necklace and invitation to the opera. He expected a scene. He feared it not. He had planned to have one—one worth having, ultimately. When it came, the victory would be his and he would repay all and receive all. Meanwhile he must serve self. He must play the tyrant a little. He must take the delectable risk of stabbing tender human

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love, that the love might be proved more enduring and the exultation greater.

The scene never occurred. When he returned from his club whither he had fled with the stolen kiss on his lips, his rooms were vacant. They had gone and taken nothing but his first simple gift—a little book of poems, on the fly-leaf of which he had written, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

Quite a long sitting Nathan Holbert had with his soul, after the children went out. The bright sunshine came in, before the conference ended. It ended as conferences are apt to end; with clearer views of right; but with no power to establish the right. His opportunity had gone by. From now to his dying or atoning day, he would see the vision of the dear love-lit face, with its crown of reddish-gold hair—then the hurt look, the gathering tears, and hear the sweet mother's sigh of disappointment.

His first feeling after their flight, had been strongly touched with resentment against—fate of course—the ideal creature usually made up of our own shortcomings. He made himself believe that this cruel wretch had taken a mean advantage of him—or to put it in photographic phrase—a snap-shot at him, when none at all should have been taken.

But now he saw more clearly. He tempted Mistress Fate and he deserved the picturing he got.

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He deserved to have the double debt thrown back on his heart and conscience. He had no call to make a brute of himself with those pure hearted women and he had made a brute, if not a criminal of himself; for what could a beautiful young girl do when thrown upon the world with an invalid mother to support? Money was pouring in every day from his large business, but they could not be found and he could do nothing for them.

What Nathan Holbert did do after exhausting himself with vain regrets was to rifle his pockets of all the change he had and put it into Debby's toy bank.

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PART II.

Debby stood firmly by her determination to use all she had in the bank to make Christmas presents with.

"Who are you going to make presents to?" asked Uncle Nat, who was more interested than he cared to show.

"O, I'm goin' to give all I have, every cent, to poor little children who have to go into the stormy, snowy streets, without shoes and stockin's and have to go into their hard beds cryin' for something to eat."

"Where do they live?" asked Uncle Nat.

"O, way down to the bottom of the city, in horrid, dark, nasty places, that arn't half good enough for a dog. Teacher says so."

"O then it's your teacher that wants you to give, is it?" said Uncle Nat.

"No, no, I want to give my own self. Teacher told us about 'em when she gave us the cards; but I kept thinkin' and thinkin' and dreamin' and dreamin' 'bout it, 'til I couldn't help wantin' to give, and I told teacher so, and she said she'd take me with her to where they were, if mama would let me go, and mama will."

"Now I'm going to see how much I've got in my bank," added Debby. She climbed up in a

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chair and brought down the wonderful institution, which she insisted on depositing on Uncle Nat's knee.

"You see you are elected for president of this bank," said Debby, "Jerry is his own president, he says; but I'd rather have you. I don't want to be mine."

"O dear! what a lot of money I've got," exclaimed Debby, as the copper, silver and gold pieces of various values rolled out. "How did I ever happen to have so much? O I know some rich fairy has been down my bank's chimney."

"Will you spend all that, just for Christmas presents to poor children?" queried Uncle Nat.

"Yes I will and more too if I have it. I never could see any good in keepin' money in banks. Jerry loves his bank. He won't take a single cent out of it. But I don't see why anybody wants to keep money. It isn't pretty and if ev'rybody kept it all shut up poor little children would all starve to death."

"Yes, Debby, but if you hadn't kept yours shut up, you'd have spent it for candy, and now you wouldn't have any to give to the poor."

"Yes that's so Uncle, I didn't think. I'm going to keep shut up 'til Christmas every year and then I'll always open. Dear! Dear! I wonder if I'll always have so much."

"Perhaps you'll have more than enough to go 'round, what will you do then?" asked Uncle Nat.

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“Let’s me see,” said Debby, knitting her brows over the problem, for the space of about half a minute, then she cried out in great glee: “Oh I tell you what I’ll do Uncle, I’ll give everything I have left, to the poor children *I know*, to give to the poor children *they know* so they can be just as happy as I am—cause you know it makes anybody so happy to give things—so much happier than to have things given to them; but they can’t do it ’less they have something to give, can they, Uncle?”

Uncle Nat assured her they could not; and having tested her generosity, ceased to question her. After that he was her most helpful friend.

But the struggle with Jerry was a hard one. She had been taught to love her little brother, and divide all her goodies with him. As soon as the sharp little rascal found out how much money she had, and that she was going to spend it all for gifts, he classed it among the goodies and superfluities, and tried to make her give him half of it, to increase his bank stock. He said she “ought to be ashamed to waste so much on nasty children, who stole cakes out of the shop windows.”

“I guess we’d be nasty too,” said Debby, “if we hadn’t anybody but mama to wash for us, and she was sick, or had to go out to work, or if we lived in a nasty place ’mong coal yards, horse stables and all sorts of black, nasty shops. If we all lived in one room with no closet to hang our

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clothes in to keep 'em clean. If we had to keep 'em between the beds and cover up with 'em so we wouldn't freeze nights. That's what they have to do, I heard teacher tell about it, and I guess they don't steal cakes for the fun of it, but because they're so hungry they can't help it; and I guess they don't wear poor, nasty clothes because they like 'em better'n good, clean ones."

"I know they don't, and I'm goin' to save every cent I can, to buy clothes and cakes for 'em so they won't have to go dirty and hungry all the time, anyway."

As a last resort, Jerry (the budding banker, or financier), got into a great rage and kicked and cried and tried to *make* his mother *make* Debby give him part of her money; but his mother *was too wise* to indulge him in a selfishness so clearly or kickfully apparent. Besides she had a long talk with brother Nat about the children and was better armed than ever against her small household tyrant. She had taken the gun and sly-bought powder from his store and when he asked for them his lesson would be ready.

Uncle Nat hated shopping but finally consented to go with Debby and her teacher, Miss Dix, to buy the Christmas gifts. Debby assured him it would not be like other shopping and he was led to confess that buying needful things for the poor, was more to his mind than buying jewels and costly apparel for the rich, though he was no great be-

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liever in charity so called—charity of the thin-spread, penny to a soul kind. He thought if perfect justice were done, charity would be seldom called upon; but if once invoked she should be truly charitable and not only help the down-fallen to their feet but keep on helping as long as the feet were too tender for the rough places, over which all such must go.

Once in the whirl of shopping it was inspiring just to look at Debby and see how happy she was and how amazed at the quantities of things they were buying with her money. Whole strings of mittens of all sizes and colors! O, how nice and warm they looked! Whole boxes of red, blue and black stockings! Handkerchiefs by the dozen with such cunning borders and embroidered letters—all the letters of the alphabet! Then the scarfs, O such scarfs and hoods and jackets, as soft and fluffy as eider down almost! “O, it *is* more blessed to give—” cried Debby, too full of exclamation points to finish the sentence.

But it was not until they began to buy for the sick and dying that Uncle Nat’s sympathies were fully aroused; or, as Miss Dix put it, “those who would never need any more clothes, nothing but cordials, jellies and medicines.”

“From what diseases do your poor suffer most?” asked Uncle Nat, after they were seated in the carriage which was to take them to his large wholesale house on the other side of the city.

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“From overwork at unhealthy trades, I should judge; the victims of so many trades are on my list. A furrier, a flint maker and a needle polisher are dying of throat disease, a stone-cutter with consumption. One poor fellow got ‘the bends’ from working in a damp mine. Another has the ‘brass workers’ ague,’ but the most pitiful is the poor boy who got his death stroke treading in a bleaching vat. Only think of it, Mr. Holbert, a tender-skinned creature, stripped and put into a cauldron of steaming poison, to do the work that a machine could do just as well!” exclaimed Miss Dix with tears, for woman-like she always cried when she thought of it; but she never saw any man shed tears over it until now. Yes, she was sure of it. The day was not cold enough to make Mr. Holbert’s eyes look so filmy.

“There ought to be a law against such barbarity,” said Mr. Holbert.

“Yes, there ought to be; but Government is too busy with foreign barbarisms to attend to those at home. Yes,” she went on passionately, “too busy burning up millions in horrible wars, and battleships, foolish celebrations and monument-raising. Talk of heathens and their idols! We are making idols as fast as we can. Forsaking our *Ideals* and making idols—idols of the few and wrecks and paupers of the many! Raising monuments all over the country! If we keep on at the present pace we shall soon have more monuments than men! As

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big a surplus as Rome had in Pliny's time! Talk of American liberty, equality, fraternity and progression; with the present steering we are veering 'round to heathenism as fast as we can."

"O, I hope not, Miss Dix, something will avert. I feel sure of it now. Your *discouraging* words are so *encouraging*," said Mr. Holbert. "When an enthused woman like yourself sees the danger, humanity's hosts must be coming. Let the Americans alone for mastering the situation when once they get a clear idea of it."

"God grant," said Miss Dix, "but it will come too late for my poor sick ones."

"Will any of them ever get well?"

"O, yes, yes," replied Miss Dix, her voice still shaker with tears, at least they will live—some that had better die. The most dreadful case of this kind is my '*Fourth of July*' victim—a little boy terribly defaced and utterly blind. His father gave him a toy pistol and liberty to go in the streets and do as he chose with it. He was brought home with features torn and blackened beyond recognition. Never until I saw that sight, Mr. Holbert, did I fully realize the idiocy, the barbarity, the awful sin of celebrating our national day as we do. We have made it a day to be dreaded instead of revered. A fiery juggernaut to which more lives have been sacrificed than were lost in the war of the Revolution itself."

"O Uncle," cried Debby, "Jerry ought to hear

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'bout that. May be he'd never want to buy any more powder. May be, he'd feel sorry for the poor boy and go and play with him some time. May be he'd give him something out of his bank—next year anyhow."

"Can nothing more be done for him—nothing to repair the injury?" asked Uncle Nat, huskily.

"Nothing, I fear," replied Miss Dix. "Surgeons do wonderful things; but skilled surgery is very costly and it has to be very skillful when it comes to rebuilding the features. His sight never can be restored. He might possibly be made less dreadful to look at and would be, I suppose, if his father were a millionaire; but for him there is nothing except little comforts and amusements such as Debby suggests. To amuse him long at a time would be too much for most nerves. I think, though there's an artist on the top floor who spends almost every evening with him. They call her 'The Angel,' but I fear even an angel would have to be careful. I should caution her but she has a habit of flying up when I come."

The conversation was broken off by their arrival at the great wholesale house, where they were to order whole boxes of things suitable for the sick. Debby was wild with delight when she found that she had enough money left to buy big packages of guava-jelly and beef extracts.

The next day was full of happy surprises for Debby. Boxes and bundles of all sorts and sizes

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came pouring in, and her mother and uncle added precious things to her store. Altogether there was such a time about it, that Jerry was quite jealous, and almost made up his mind to make presents himself next year. To have so many things to do as he chose with, he began to think would be jollier than having a regiment of fractious boys to boss, or to play at "*killing Spaniards*," which last had become his favorite game since the breaking out of the Americo-Spanish war, and, was carried on with a blood-thirsty vigor which nothing but Government example could inspire. He was conscious of having won his first important victory in this field, for he had fought off the interference of the family by averring that it was as right for him to play "kill Spaniards," as it was for Debby to play, "whip her doll baby." She expected to have real babies to correct when she grew up, and he expected to have to kill real Spaniards when he got to be a man, and he must be learning how to do it—an argument that could not be answered except by denouncing the whole war system; and as his family were neither Doukhobors nor Quakers, there seemed to be no better way than to set the matter aside, and steer as clear of it as possible for the future.

When Debby saw him looking wistfully at her Christmas boxes, she thought to tell him of the poor boy who had injured himself so terribly with the toy pistol. Instead, however, of expressing

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any sympathy he made a reply so callous as to shock the sensibilities of the whole family circle, so it will not be wondered at, that when he proposed later on, to go with Debby and Miss Dix to help give out the Christmas gifts, he was peremptorily denied—and furthermore reminded that he had not given his money nor any other evidence of being worthy of sharing the honor. When it further transpired that he was to be left alone nearly all day, with only the cook and Uncle Nat in the house, his heart was full of a species of revengeful wrath, which set him to studying up what he could do that they disliked, to make the time pass most agreeably to himself. The first things he thought of were his gun and smuggled powder. His plan was soon made. He would play “kill Spaniards,” as he had never played it before. He would put some powder in his gun. He would make b’lieve the cat was his Spaniard, he would chase him into ambush—(that is, the closet or some corner) and then shoot him without mercy. Full of this mad plan he ran to get his gun and powder, but to his great surprise both were gone. His first impulse was to raise an outcry and get back the stolen goods, but Uncle Nat was there, and of all persons he was the one of whom he had a wholesome fear. He had also a vague idea of Uncle Nat’s attitude toward him—Uncle Nat who loved him and wanted him to do right, who stood ready to help him, to save him from the brutish-

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ness and evil teaching of the world, and from the wretched blunders which he himself had made; but he also had in extreme degree, the boy's instinctive aversion to being watched or bossed, which leads so many young men to early wreck or life-long sorrow.

It was Uncle Nat's day for writing letters, and he was writing a long one to an old college chum, who had a genius for surgery, and was now on a tour of inspection to the European hospitals.

He wrote him about Miss Dix's "Fourth of July victim," hoping he might be able to do something for him on his return. He said he would go to see the poor fellow, but he was sure it was a case for educated nerves, such as he did not possess. He did not believe in enforced misery, and he wondered if the time would ever come, when the useless accidents—the beastly human sacrifices would end. There are enough that can't be helped, without having any that can. But there is no hope as long as the adverse teaching goes on. No wonder we have so much trouble with contrary children, as long as the teachings are so contrary! Only think of it, dear Doc! At home and at church we are taught to be loving and forgiving. To speak the truth and 'do no murder.' In the world we are taught to fight, to hate, to cheat, to ruin or imprison, if possible, all who cross our interests, while over all is the Government with its blood-spilling wars and judicial murders!"

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The bell rang sharply and Debby came rushing in with a message from Miss Dix, asking him to come at once and bring Dr. Marie Linneus.

Nathan Holbert lost no time in obeying the startling summons; and he and the Doctor were soon climbing the dingy stairs of the poor tenement house. Miss Dix met them at the fourth landing and said in a hushed voice, as she led them into a poor but cheerful little room, "It's the Angel I told you about." She motioned him to an arm chair under the skylight and disappeared with the doctor behind the partition that led to the sleeping room of the suite. It was only a garret but it had its pretensions. It was the tip-top story which boasts of having more space and more compartments than the lower stories for the same price, more quiet and purer air, better adapted to artists and brain-workers in search of skylight and seclusion. So said the sharp agent to the lady who came there with easel and paint-boxes less than two months ago.

Only a garret, but it had an air of refinement about it, the touch of a delicate hand here and there, the sign of an artist's eye in the arrangement of bits of colored prints and draperies. Nathan Holbert felt it at once; and more than this, he felt strangely at home sitting in the old arm chair with the sky light dropping down on the easel in front of him. It had an unfinished picture on it, doubtless; but it was veiled and that

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made it as safe from Mr. Holbert's eyes as tho' it had been under lock and key. To lift the veil would have seemed like a sacrilege to the creature lying so still and helpless in the next room. The next things that attracted his eye were the books, lying around in little packages ready for use, magazines opened and turned back, leaving marked articles on the outside. Here was a temptation for finding out the name of the tenant of these poor rooms; but it was no temptation to Nathan Holbert, who was almost inhuman in his lack of curiosity on such points. A human being was simply a human being to him and must be treated as such. He was here to help this poor creature, whoever it might be, and the name which might be found by rummaging through the books was of no account.

He lifted up his cloak and drew it around him, for he began to feel a little chilly from the prolonged sitting. As he did so another book was revealed which proved a revelation indeed; for on the fly-leaf, written in his own hand, were the words, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

No words could do justice to the fierce but wordless argument which ensued between the doctor and Nathan Holbert, just outside the patient's room. Suffice it to say, that the doctor had two interesting patients to attend that night. The next morning, however, found patient number two sufficiently recovered to listen to reason.

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"That's right," said the doctor, as she entered Holbert's room, "tears are the best relief for your kind of brain."

"O, I know I was all wrong doctor, but I couldn't help it."

"Certainly not. Temporary insanity. Very temporary, but very violent while it lasted. Forgive me for such rough insistence, but that beautiful woman's life depended on it. Don't ask any questions. I'll tell you all you ought to know. I found her at death's door. The least excitement might have sent her beyond. She is slightly improved this morning, but it will be many weeks before she is out of danger, and many months before she is fully recovered."

"Then she will recover, God bless you, Doctor?"

"Yes, if that pesky tenement house can be kept decently quiet. I wouldn't take the risk of removing her."

"Tell me if I can do anything. Tell me quickly!"

"That's just what you can do," said the doctor, "you can keep that whole place quiet and comfortable, I know you can, and I'm sure you ought. Miss Dix has paved the way but it would be too heavy a task for her alone, and come to think of it, it would be a shame to let her do it. Tomorrow will be a trying day down there, with the feasting and drinking and merry-making."

In less than an hour, Nathan was at the tenement house, with a plan of campaign by which he

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hoped to reduce the place to the quiet and sanitation of a first-class hospital. Miss Dix approved, and he went immediately about it. He not only called at every room and asked the tenants to be as quiet as possible, but he made it possible for every one to be quiet.

Soft soled shoes for every person—carpets and pads for the halls and stairs, and rugs for the rooms, were supplied and put in place as if by magic. A good Christmas dinner was ordered for the whole number at a large hotel near by, and those who could not go out, had it brought to them by velvet shod waiters. To each one was given a ticket for the theatre, opera or lecture. None were to be cheated out of their Christmas dinner or Christmas frolic. By such arrangements the establishment was not only relieved of noise and fiendish odors, but the poor mothers were relieved of a day's drudgery over the cook-stove and dish-pan. They really had time for once to "wash up," "dress up," and sit down to rest their tired hands on Christ's sweet day. All this, and yet Nathan insisted that it was no charity. He had asked great favors of them and he was simply trying to get even; and so the change, already made, continued day after day, and others were added until the poor tenement house had become a pleasant place to live in. Even the proprietor had been swept into the whirl of improvement and had done his rightful share.

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Going now, up to the top floor, was like taking a flight into paradise; for, as might be expected, Nathan had done his best there. Everything that could be done for neatness, cheerfulness and comfort, without noise and confusion, was done; and it is astonishing how much can be done, in heavenly silence, if King Quietus once makes up his mind to employ the necessary hands and materials. Soft rugs were pushed up even to the very door where the patient lay, in what was called by the people below stairs, "A long swoon." Some went so far as to say, "She'll never come to enough to know the loving things he's done for her."

"It's a rare case I admit," said the doctor to Nathan Holbert, "but she has a rare physique. The excessive stillness, broken only by excessive quivering at sudden or unusual noises, tells the story. Miss Dix said she was dying of hunger; but there's more than one kind of hunger you see. There's social hunger as well as physical. Then there may have been as much as one aggravating circumstance. Perhaps you can imagine what it would be to live in such a place as this, with no money to shed. With no society but the poor de-faced boy"—

"Good God!" burst out Nathan Holbert, "Say no more or I shall go crazy and throw prudence to the winds."

"O, no you won't," said the doctor, smiling,

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with a nod of triumph, “you’ll jog right along and keep the *money-shed* in good repair. It’s all that’s needed just now. She is improving in flesh and color every day. She takes liquid foods, instinctively—like a baby, to date, but I’m pulling myself together for the time when she will turn upon me like a wolf, and demand a good beef-steak. After I have carried her through the physical hunger crisis, I shall turn her over to you without mercy.”

The time came sooner than expected and the doctor’s threatened transfer was a very informal one. There were no witnesses and consequently no irreverent tongues to tell exactly what happened in the poor garret; no longer poor, for heaven’s sunlight filtered down through golden curtains, adding rich flecks to shining draperies and the wondrous hair, which was again gathered into a crown of glory on the beautiful head; but all else was as nothing compared to the love which Schiller describes: “Love that can sun the realms of night.” Love that counts it more blessed to give than to receive—that in clasping the best loved to its heart, opens wide the flood-gates to every suffering creature.

“But the poor boy, what can we do for him?” inquired Rachel, when evening came.

“Rebuild him and make a Fourth of July missionary of him, how would that do, dearie? I’ve got a letter in my pocket from a skilful surgeon friend

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who thinks he can do it—that is, the rebuilding. We can instruct dear Miss Dix to do the rest,” said Nathan, in great glee.

“Truly?”

“Yes, truly, but not too soon, dearie. Not ’til after—after—tell me when—we could meet the surgical friend abroad and bring him home.”

“Yes,” sighed Rachel, “but I’m so happy here, in the nest thou’st made so soft and cozy. How can I bear to leave it and the poor ones—so very, very poor, it makes me unhappy to think of it. Unhappy to think of having anything I can’t divide with them.”

“Tell me what I can do for them,” said Nathan, kissing away the tears. “I tried to do something but I’m a poor bungler. I might do better with your help.”

“But it would take so much of that—that dreadful—‘root of all evil.’”

“I’ve got plenty of that, dearie; I had some to burn after you left me, but now thank God for it. With your help I will try to turn it to something better than ashes. Only tell me ‘*when*’ to begin. They are suffering! and I am”—

“O, how can I go away from this sweet place!” pleaded Rachel.

“Then, suppose we delay a little. Suppose we get married right here.”

She kissed him delightedly.

“Suppose again that we invite everybody in the

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house to the wedding and give each one a handsome wedding suit to wear.”

“O Nathan, how good!”

“Suppose again, that we have the whole place sweetened and rectified—wreathed with roses and ferns—lighted with soft shining lanterns, with peace and love mottoes and furnished up about as it is here.”

“You couldn’t afford it, could you?”

“Yes dearie, *I* could; and then *we* could give them a luscious wedding supper at the big old hotel over on the corner. *We* could write their names all down in a book and *we* could see to it that none of them ever went ragged or hungry as long as we and ours have plenty and to spare.

Tremble not dearie. I am going to write to your mother early in the morning and ask her consent. She must come to the wedding and bring her Doukhobor friends. They must keep house for us while we are abroad and live with us forever after.”

“O Nathan! Nathan! I must tell you something. Her Doukhobor friends would not come and I am sure she would not be willing to leave them. They are having a great struggle now with some of their class and they need her good cheer and wise counsel. They are in a strange land and they are a very strange people.”

“Of course they are,” laughed Nathan. “They

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don't believe in war; but we can overlook that, can't we dear? It's such a lovely unbelief!"

"Yes! Yes! but they *don't* believe in a great many things that we *do* believe in, Nathan."

"Private ownership of land, for instance. I heard that some of them got so wrought up on on the subject, that they deserted their fine farms and went off on a pilgrimage, "*to seek Jesus.*" The Government didn't like that. It was like saying there was no Jesus in the English Government and perhaps it's partly true of the English as well as other Governments," added Nathan. "You see dear, I've been studying up the Doukhobors during these four lonely years. Your sweet words about them, set me to thinking and I think better of them than I did. They are so humane! So tender toward every living thing!"

"Yes, Nathan, but they were so cruel to themselves and families. They turned their oxen loose and then harnessed their wives and daughters to their plows!—as tho' it would hurt great strong oxen to work."

"That *was* cruel dearie; and it was foolish to refuse to take the superfluous wool from their sheeps' backs, to make themselves warm clothing; but I wonder if that was as bad as deserting families entirely and going off to kill men, slaughter whole herds of animals, burn cities and destroy neighboring countries, as so many of our military-madmen do?"

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“Truly not, Nathan; and it was not so bad to see them resist the military men that the Government sent to capture them and take them back to their homes, as it would have been to see them shooting and stoning them. They would not even curse or strike them. They chanted in a loud voice ‘We go to seek Jesus.’ They twisted their strong arms around each other and held their captors at bay for a long time and in a raging snow storm!”

“And you saw that sight dear! You heard ‘the voice of their roaring’ and thanked the Lord that it was not so awful as the roaring of cannon which we are obliged to hear so often on our national day.”

“No! No! Nathan. I was simply frightened. I thought they were crazy. I was afraid to go near them; but mother pitied them and tried to quiet them. She said ‘their action resulted from their hard, life-long struggle to do exactly right in a world that was always doing something wrong; but one young girl *did* go stark mad. She was beautiful. Her skin was as white as snow. Her eyes were purplish blue like violets. She dressed herself in white and proclaimed herself to be *‘the mother of Jesus.’*”

“What did your mother say of her?”

“She said she was consumptive and that nature might be pointing the way for her release from the Great White Plague. She trusted that tramp-

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ing through the frozen north and taking in its invigorating air at every breath, would give her the healing she needed; and so she would not discourage her; but she was sorely distressed about me, and I think that was the reason why she consented so readily to have me leave that region and come here."

"And so you really wanted to come," broke in Nathan, glowing with new found delight.

"O! I was dying to come, Nathan! and Mother saw it and gave her consent."

"*Blessed* mother! *Wise* mother! *Our* mother!" exclaimed Nathan. "How can I ever repay the debt I owe her? The double debt of money and gratitude! The debt of money I can and will pay with interest at once and I trust the gratitude will be paid later on; but there is another debt you know what it is and to whom it is due. It will take a life time to pay it. It is the debt of—

"Enough! Enough! cried Rachael, staying the omnipotent word with her sweet lips. Then she named the happy day for which he was pleading when the Doukhobor matter intervened and it was just far enough off to make Nathan Holbert's generous scheme of wedding preparations, possible of fulfilment.

[THE END.]



