

THE DAILY CRESCENT

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NEW ORLEANS: SATURDAY MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1849.

Boy's Christmas Tale.

THE HAUNTED MAN AND THE GHOST'S BARGAIN... A FANCY FOR CHRISTMAS-TIME. BY CHARLES DICKENS.

"How odd and shabby he looks!" said Mrs. Terterby, watching him as he neared a change in a man.

"What was a sacrifice?" her husband sourly inquired. Mrs. Terterby shook her head, and without replying...

"If you mean your marriage was a sacrifice, my good woman," said her husband. "I do mean it," said his wife.

"Why, then, I mean to say," pursued Mrs. Terterby, "as selfishly and selfishly as she, that there are two things to that affair."

"I wish it had n't," Terterby, with all his heart and soul, I do assure you," said his wife. "You can wish it more than I do, Terterby."

"I do not know what I saw in it," muttered the newwoman. "I'm sure; certainly, if I saw any thing, it's not there now."

"How old and shabby he looks!" said Mrs. Terterby, watching him as he neared a change in a man.

"I must have been half out of my mind, when I did it," muttered Mrs. Terterby.

"My senses must have forsaken me. That's the only way in which I can explain it to myself," said Mrs. Terterby, with a sigh.

"In this mood they sat down to breakfast. The little Terterbys were not habituated to regard that meal in the light of a sedentary occupation, but discussed it as a dance or trot; rather resembling a savage promenade in the occasional shrill whoops, and brandishing their heads and butters, with which it was accompanied, as well as in the intricate flings off into the street and back again, and the hoppings up and down the door-steps, which were incidental to the performance."

"These children will be the death of me at last!" said Mrs. Terterby, after banishing the culprit. "And the sooner the better," cried Terterby, coming down to have children at all.

"Here! Mother! Father!" cried Johnny, running into the room. "Here's Mrs. William coming down the street."

"And if ever, since the world began, a young boy took a baby from the cradle with the care of an old nurse, and soothed it tenderly, and tottered away with it cheerfully, Johnny was that boy, and Molech was that baby, as they went out together."

"Mr. Terterby put down his cup; Mrs. Terterby put down her cup. Mr. Terterby rubbed his forehead. Mrs. Terterby rubbed hers. Mr. Terterby's face began to glow and brighten; Mrs. Terterby's face began to grow smooth and bright."

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"How could I ever treat him ill again, after all I have said and felt about him?" said Mrs. Terterby, with her apron to her eyes.

"Am I a brute, at all? Sophia! My little woman!" "Dolphus, dear," returned his wife.

"I've been in a state of mind," said Mr. Terterby, "that I can't bear to think of, Sophia. Oh! it's nothing to what I've been in, Dolph!"

"My Sophia," said Mr. Terterby, "I must take on. I never shall forgive myself. I must have nearly broken your heart, I know."

"No, Dolph, no. It was me! Me!" cried Mrs. Terterby. "My little woman," said her husband, "do n't. You make me reproach myself dreadful, when you show such a noble spirit. Sophia, my dear, you do n't know what I thought. I showed it bad enough, no doubt; but what I thought, my little woman?"

"Oh, dear Dolph, do n't! Do n't!" cried his wife. "Sophia," said Mr. Terterby, "I must reveal it. I could n't rest in my conscience unless I mentioned it. My little woman—"

"Mrs. William's very nearly here!" screamed Johnny at the door.

"My little woman, I wondered how," gasped Mr. Terterby, supporting himself by his chair. "I wondered how I had ever admired you—I forgot the precious children you have brought about me, and thought you did n't look as slim as I could wish. I—I never gave a recollection, as I said, to the cares and the work and the trouble and the anxiety you've had as my wife, and along of me and mine, when you might have had hardly any with another man, who got on better, and was luckier than me, (and I quarrelled with you for having aged a little in the rough years you've lightened for me. Can you believe it, my little woman? I hardly can myself.)"

"Mrs. Terterby, in a whirlwind of laughing and crying, caught his face within her hands, and held it there.

"Oh, Dolph!" she cried, "I am so happy that you thought so; I am so grateful that you thought so! For I thought that you were common-looking, Dolph; and so you are, my dear, and may you be the commonest of all sights in my eyes, till you close them with your own good hands. I thought that you were small; and so you are, and I'll make much of you because you are, and more of you because I love my husband. I thought that you began to stoop; and so you do, and you shall lean on me, and I'll do all I can to keep you up. I thought there was no air about you; but there is, and God bless home once more, and all belonging to it, Dolph!"

"Hurrah! here's Mrs. William!" cried Johnny. "So she was, and all the children with her; and as she came in, they kissed her, and kissed one another, and kissed the baby, and kissed their father and mother, and then ran back and danced and danced about her, tripping on with her in triumph."

spiritually enough. She came among them like the saint of all goodness, affection, gentle consideration, love and domesticity.

"What! are you all so glad to see me, too, this bright Christmas morning?" said Milly, clasping her hands in a pious wonder. "Oh, dear, how delightful this is!"

"More shouting from the children, more kissing, more trooping round her, more happiness, more love, more joy, more honor, on all sides, than she could bear."

"Oh dear!" said Milly, "what delicious tears you make me shed! How can I ever have deserved this! What have I done to be so loved?"

"Who can help it?" cried Mrs. Terterby. "Who can help it?" cried Mrs. Terterby. "Who can help it?" cried Mrs. Terterby.

"I never was so moved," said Milly, drying her eyes. "I have been this morning. I must tell you, as soon as I can speak. Mr. Redlaw came to me at sunrise, and with a tenderness in his manner, more as if I had been his darling daughter than myself, implored me to go with him to where William and George is lying ill. We went together, and all the way back he was so kind, so subdued, and seemed to put such trust and hope in me, that I could not help crying with pleasure."

"When we got to the house, we met a woman at the door (somebody had bruised and hurt her, I am afraid) who caught me by the hand, and blessed me unceasingly."

"She was right!" said Mr. Terterby. Mrs. Terterby said she was right. All the children cried out she was right.

"Al, but there's more than that," said Milly. "When we got up stairs, into the room, the sick man, who had lain for hours in a state from which no effort could rouse him, rose up in his bed, and bursting into tears, stretched out his arms to me, and said that he had led a mispent life, but that he was truly repentant now, in his sorrow for the past, which was all as plain to him as a great prospect, from which a dense black cloud had cleared away."

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Mr. and Mrs. Terterby were not a bit behindhand in the warmth of their reception. They were as much attracted to her as the children were; they ran towards her, kissed her hands, pressed round her, could not receive her ardently or enthusiastically enough.

When they arrived at the Lodge, the old man was sitting in his chair in the chimney-corner, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his son was leaning against the opposite side of the fire-place, looking at him. As she came in at the door, both started, and turned round towards her, and a radiant change came upon their faces.

"Oh dear, dear, dear," they are pleased to see me like the rest!" cried Milly, clasping her hands in an ecstasy, and stopping short. "Here are two more!"

"Pleased to see her! Pleased was no word for it. She ran into her husband's arms, thrown wide open to receive her, and he would have been glad to have her there, with her head lying on his shoulder, though the short winter's day. But the old man could n't spare her. He had arms for her, and he looked her in the face."

"Why, where has my quiet Mouse been all this time?" said the old man. "She has been all this time!" said the old man. "She has been all this time!" said the old man.

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"Do you know me?" asked the Chemist. "I should be glad," returned the other, "if I could assist you in any way."

"The Chemist looked at the man, standing in self-abandonment and degradation before him, and would have looked longer, in an intellectual struggle for enlightenment, but that Milly resumed her late position by his side, and attracted his attentive gaze to her own face."

"See how low he is sunk, how lost he is!" she whispered, stretching out her arm towards him, without looking from the Chemist's face. "If you could remember all that is connected with him, do you not think it would move your pity to reflect that one you ever loved (do not let us mind how long ago, or in what belief that he has forfeited) should come to this?"

"I hope it would," he answered. "I believe I would."

"His eyes wandered to the figure standing near the door, but came back speedily to her, and rubbing his hand gently down with his hand, as if he could not possibly do enough to show an interest in him."

"What a wonderful man you are, father? How are you, father? Are you really pretty healthy, though?" said William, shaking hands with him again, and patting him again, and rubbing him good down again.

"I never was fresher or stouter in my life, my boy."

"What a wonderful man you are, father! But that's exactly where it is," said Mr. William, with enthusiasm. "When I think of all my father's good things, and all the changes and changes, and sorrows and troubles that have happened to him in the course of his long life, and under which his head had grown gray, and years upon years had gathered on it, I feel as if we could n't do enough to honor the old gentleman, and make his last days even at Christmas time. Ha! ha! I'm old enough to remember that; and I remember it well, I do, though I'm eighty-seven. It was after you left here that my poor wife died. You remember my poor wife well, Mr. Redlaw?"

"Yes," said Mr. Redlaw. "She was a dear creature. I recollect you come here one Christmas morning with a young lady—I ask your pardon, Mr. Redlaw, but I think it was a sister you were very much attached to."

"The Chemist looked at him and shook his head. "I had a sister," he said vacantly. He knew no more."

"One Christmas morning," pursued the old man, "that you came here with her—and it began to snow, and my wife invited the young lady to walk in, and sit by the fire that is always a-burning on Christmas-day, in what used to be, before our ten poor gentlemen commuted, our great dinner hall. I was there; and I recollect, as I was stirring up the blaze for the young lady to warm her pretty feet, she read the scroll out aloud that is under that picture. 'Lord, keep my memory green!' She and my poor wife fell talking about it; and it's a strange thing to think of now, that they both said (both being so unlike to die) that it was a good prayer, and that it was one they would put up very earnestly, if they were called away young, with reluctance to those who were dearest to them. 'My brother,' says the young lady—'My husband,' says my poor wife, 'keep my memory of me green! I do not let me be forgotten!'"

"Tears more painful and more bitter than he had ever shed in all his life, coursed down Redlaw's face. Philip, fully occupied in recalling his story, had not observed him until now, nor Milly's anxiety that he should not succeed."

"I have my memory of sorrow, wrong and trouble," said the Chemist, "and with that I have lost all man would remember."

"To see old Philip's pity for him, to see him wheel his own great chair for him to rest in, and look down upon him with a solemn sense of his bereavement, was a new thing to him, how precious to old age such recollections are."

"The boy came running in, and ran to Milly. 'Here's the man,' he said, 'in the other room. I don't want him.'"

"What man does he mean?" asked Mr. William. "I don't know," said Milly. "Obtuse to a sign from her, he and his old father softly withdrew. As they went out, unnoticed, Redlaw beckoned to the boy to the boy to come to him."

"I like the woman best," he answered, holding to her hand. "You are right," said Redlaw, with a faint smile. "But you need n't fear to come to me. I am greater than I was. Of all the world, to you, poor child!"

"The boy still held back at first; but yielding little by little to her urging, he consented to approach, and even to sit down at her feet. As Redlaw laid his hand upon the shoulder of the child, looking on him with compassion and a fellow-feeling, he put out his other hand to Milly. She stooped down on that side of him, so that she could look into his face, and, after silence, said: 'Mr. Redlaw, may I speak to you now?'"

"Yes," he answered, fixing his eyes upon her. "Your voice and music are the same to me." "May I ask you something?" "What you will."

"Do you remember what I said, when I knocked at your door last night? About one who was your friend, and who stood on the verge of destruction?" "Yes; I remember," he said, with some hesitation. "Do you understand it?"

"He smoothed the boy's hair—looking at her fixedly while—she shook his head. "This person," said Milly, in her clear soft voice, which her mild eyes, looking at him, made clear and softer, "I found soon afterwards. I went back to the house, and with Heaven's help, traced him. I was not too soon. A very little, and I should have been too late."

"He took his hand from the boy, and laying it on the back of that hand of hers, whose timid and yet earnest touch addressed him, no less appealingly than her voice and eyes, looked more intently on her."

"He is the father of Mr. Edmund, the young gentleman we saw just now. His real name is Longford. You recollect the name?" "I recollect the name."

"No, not the man. Did he ever wrong me?" "Yes!" "Ah! then it's hopeless—hopeless!" He shook his head and softly bent upon the hand he held, as though mutely asking her commiseration.

"I did not go to Mr. Edmund last night," said Milly. "You will listen to me just the same as if you did remember all."

"To every syllable you say."

"Both, because I did not know then, that this really was his father, and because I was fearful of the effect of such intelligence upon him, after his illness, if it should be. Since I have known more of this person, I have no doubt either; but that is for another reason. He has long been separated from his wife and son—has been a stranger to his home almost from the son's infancy. I learn from him—and has abandoned and deserted what he should have held most dear. In all that time he has been falling from the state of a gentleman more and more, until he has become a man of straw for a moment, returned, accompanied by the wreck that Redlaw had held last night."

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in age and gray hair, such as father's, it is present; saying that if too tight have lived to be old, long and long after you and I were gone, and to have needed the respect and love of younger people."

"Her quiet voice was quieter than ever, as she took her husband's arm and laid her head against it. 'Children love me so, that sometimes I half fancy—it's a silly fancy, William—for my little child, and me, and understanding why they love me so precious to me. If I have been quiet since, I have been more happy, William, in a hundred ways. Not least happy, dear, in this—that even when my little child was born and dead but a few days, and I was weak and ill, and could not help grieving a little, I should meet in Heaven a bright creature, who would call me Mother!'"

"Redlaw fell upon his knees with a loud cry. 'O Thou,' he said, 'who, through the teaching of pure love, had graciously restored me to the memory which was the memory of Christ upon the cross, and of all the good who perished in his cause, receive my thanks, and bless her!'"

"Then he folded her to his heart; and Milly, sobbing more than ever, cried, she laughed. 'He is come back to himself! He likes me very much indeed, too! Oh, dear, dear, dear me, here's another!'"

"Then the student entered, leading by the hand a lovely girl, who was afraid to come. And Redlaw, so changed towards him, seeing in him and in his youthful choice the softened shadow of that chattering passage in his own life, to which, as to a shadowy tree, he had so long imprisoned his solitary ark, might fly for rest and company, fell upon his neck, entreating them to be his children."

"Then, as Christmas is a time in which, of all times in the year, the memory of every remarkable sorrow, wrong and trouble in the world around us should be active with us, not less than our own experiences for all good, he laid his hand upon the boy, and silently calling on his witness who laid his hand on children in old time, rebuking in the majesty of his prophetic knowledge, those who kept them from him, vowed to protect him, teach him, and reclaim him."

"Then he gave his right hand cheerily to Philip, and said that they would that day hold a Christmas dinner in what used to be, before the ten poor gentlemen commuted, their great dinner hall, and that they would bid to it as many of that Swidger family, who, his son had told him, were so numerous that they might justly have made a ring round the England, as could be brought together on so short a notice."

"And it was that day done. There were so many Swidgers there, grown up and children, that an attempt to state them in round numbers might endanger the dominion, in the vicinity of the city, of this history. Therefore the attempt shall not be made. But there were, by dozens and scores—and there was good news and good hope there, ready for them, of George, who had been visited again by his father and brother, and by Milly, and again left in quiet sleep. But there were, of the other two, were the sleepers, including young Adolphus, who arrived in his prismatic comforter, in good time for the beef. Johnny and the baby were too late, of course, and came in all on one side, the one exhausted, the other in a supposed state of doubtfulness; but that was customary, and not alarming."

"It was to see the child who had no name or lineage, watching the other children as they played, not knowing how to talk with them, or sport with them, and more strange to the ways of childhood than a rough dog. It was sad, though in a different way, to see what an instinctive knowledge the youngest children there had of his being different from all the rest, and how they made timid approaches to him with soft words and touches, and with little presents, that he might not be unhappy. But he kept by Milly, and began to love her—that was another, as she said; and as they all liked her, they were glad that she was there, and when they saw him peeping at them from behind her chair, they were pleased that he was