

The Selfishness of Mrs. Waterby

by George Ade

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WATERBY remarked to his wife: "I'm still tempted by that set of Poe. I saw it in the window today, marked down to fifteen dollars."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Waterby, with a sudden gasp of emotion, it seemed to him.

"Yes—I believe I'll have to get it." "I wouldn't if I were you, Alfred," she said. "You have so many books now."

"I know I have, my dear, but I haven't any set of Poe; and that's what I've been wanting for a long time. This edition is telling you about is beautifully gotten up."

"Oh, I wouldn't buy it, Alfred," she repeated, and there was a note of pleading earnestness in her voice.

"It's so much money to spend for a few books."

"Well, I know, but—" and then he paused for the lack of words to express his mortified surprise.

Mr. Waterby had tried to be an indulgent husband. He took a selfish pleasure in giving, and found it more blessed than receiving.

Every salary day he turned over to Mrs. Waterby a fixed sum for household expenses. He added to this an allowance for her spending money. He set aside a small amount for his personal expenses and deposited the remainder in the bank. He flattered himself that he approximated the model husband.

Mr. Waterby had no costly habits and no prevailing appetite for anything expensive. Like every other man, he had one or two hobbies, and one of his particular hobbies was Edgar Allan Poe. He believed that Poe, of all American writers, was the one unmistakable "genius."

The word "genius" has been banded around the country until it has come to be applied to a long-haired man out of work or a stout lady who writes poetry. In the case of Poe, Mr. Waterby maintained that "genius" meant one who was not governed by the common mental processes, but "who spoke from inspiration, his mind involuntarily taking superhuman flight into the realm of pure imagination"—or something of that sort. At any rate, Mr. Waterby liked Poe, and he wanted a set of Poe. He allowed himself not more than one luxury a year and he determined that this year the luxury should be a set of Poe.

Therefore, imagine the hurt to his feelings when his wife objected to his expending fifteen dollars for that which he coveted above anything else in the world.

As he went to his work that day he reflected on Mrs. Waterby's conduct. Did she not have her allowance of spending money? Did he ever find fault with her extravagance? Was he an unreasonable husband in asking that he be allowed to spend this small sum for that which would give him many hours of pleasure and which would belong to Mrs. Waterby as much as to him?

He told himself that many a husband would have bought the books without consulting his wife. But he (Waterby) had deferred to his wife in all matters touching family finances, and he said to himself, with a tincture of bitterness in his thoughts, that probably he had put himself into the attitude of a mere dependent.

For had she not forbidden him to buy a few books for himself? Well, no, she had not forbidden him, but it amounted to the same thing. She had declared that she was firmly opposed to the purchase of Poe. Mr. Waterby wondered if it were possible that he was just beginning to know his wife. Was she a selfish woman at heart? Was she complacent and good-natured only while she was having her own way? Wouldn't she prove to be an entirely different sort of woman if he should do as many husbands do—spend his income on clubs and cigars and private amusements, and give her the pickings of small change?

Nothing in Mr. Waterby's experience as a married man had so wrenched his sensibilities and disturbed his faith as Mrs. Waterby's objection to the purchase of a set of Poe. There was but one way to account for it. She wanted all the money for herself or else she wanted him to put it into the bank so that she could come into it after he—but this was too monstrous.

However, Mrs. Waterby's conduct helped to give strength to Mr. Waterby's meanest suspicions.

Two or three days after the first conversation she asked: "You didn't buy that set of Poe, did you Alfred?"

"No, I didn't buy it," he answered, as coldly and with as much hauteur as possible.

He hoped to hear her say: "Well, why don't you go and get it? I'm sure that you want it, and I'd like to see you buy something for yourself once in a while."

But she merely said: "That's right; don't buy it," and he was utterly unhappy, for he realized that he had married a woman who did not love him and who simply desired to use him as a pack-horse for all household burdens.

As soon as Mr. Waterby had learned the horrible truth about his wife he began to recall little episodes dating back years, and now he pieced them together to convince himself that he was a deeply wronged person.

Small at the time and almost unnoticed, they were now accumulating to prove that Mrs. Waterby had no real anxiety for her husband's happiness. Also, Mr. Waterby began to observe her closely, and he believed that he found new evidences of her unworthiness. For one thing, while he was in gloom over his discovery and harassed by doubts of what the future might reveal to him, she was content and eventempered.

The holiday season approached and Mr. Waterby made a resolution. He decided that if she would not permit him to spend a little money on himself he would not buy the customary Christmas present for her.

"Selfishness is a game at which two can play," he said.

Furthermore, he determined that if she asked him for any extra money for Christmas he would say: "I'm sorry, my dear, but I can't spare any. I am so hard up that I can't even afford to buy a few books that I've been wanting a long time. Don't you remember that you told me that I couldn't afford to buy that set of Poe?"

Could anything be more biting as to sarcasm or more crushing as to logic? He rehearsed this speech

and had it all ready for her, as he pictured to himself her humiliation and surprise at discovering that he had some spirit after all and a considerable say-so whenever money was involved.

Unfortunately for his plan, she did not ask for any extra spending money and so he had to rely on the other mode of punishment. He would withhold the expected Christmas present. In order that she might fully understand his purpose, he would give presents to both of the children.

It was a harsh measure, he admitted, but perhaps it would teach her to have some consideration for the wishes of others.

It must be said that Mr. Waterby was not wholly proud of his revenge when he arose on Christmas morning. He felt that he had accomplished his purpose and he told himself that his motives had been good and pure, but still he was not satisfied with himself.

He went to the dining room and there on the table in front of his plate was a long paper box containing ten books each marked "Poe." It was the edition he had coveted.

"What's this?" he asked, winking slowly, for his mind could not grasp in one moment the fact of his awful shame.

"I should think you ought to know, Alfred," said Mrs. Waterby, flushed and giggling like a school girl.

"Oh, it was you—"

"My goodness, you've had me so frightened. That was the first day when you spoke of buying them and I told you not to, I was just sure that you suspected something. I bought them a week before that."

"Yes—yes," said Mr. Waterby, feeling the salt water in his eyes. At that moment he had the soul of a wretch being whipped at the stake.

"I was determined not to ask you for any money to pay for your own presents," Mrs. Waterby continued.

Do you know I had to save for you and the children out of my regular allowance. Why, last week I nearly starved you and you never noticed it at all—I was afraid you would."

"No, I—didn't notice it," said Mr. Waterby brokenly, for he was confused and giddy. This self-sacrificing angel—and he had bought no Christmas present for her!

It was a fearful situation, and he lied his way out of it.

"How did you like your present?" he asked.

"Why, I haven't seen it yet," she responded, looking across at him in surprise.

"You haven't? I told them to send it up yesterday."

The children were shouting and laughing over their gifts in the next room and he felt it his duty to lie for their sake.

"Well, don't tell me what it is," interrupted Mrs. Waterby. "Wait until it comes."

"I'll go after it." He did go after it although he had to drag a jeweler away from his home on Christmas Day and have him open his great safe. The ring which he selected was beyond his means, it is true, but when a man has to buy back his self-respect the price is never too high.

Knights on Christmas Day. The word, sirloin was not heard until during the time of the merry monarch, Charles I. He is said to have bestowed the name upon this part of the beef. A fine baron of beef was set before him one Christmas day at dinner, and he asked his cook the name of this great piece of meat. He was answered that it had no name, but was from the loin of the beef.

"It is fit to be knighted," replied the king, and borrowing the sword of one of his gentlemen, the king patted the beef with the flat side of the blade, and made it "knight, Sir Loin."

Christmas Atmosphere. Christmas! Why the very word kindles thoughts of good will in our hearts, it seems to bring forth our best and natural instincts—the manliness of man—a desire to make the world happier. There's something noble and inspiring in the very atmosphere of "Christmas."

New Christmas Day Was Set. December 25 is the reputed anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, and one of the greatest festivals of the Protestant, Catholic, and Greek churches. It is a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing—a day of good cheer toward all mankind. It is not known for sure whether December 25 is the exact anniversary of Christ's nativity. In the fourth century, however, Pope Julius had St. Cyril make an inquiry

as to the exact date, and the result was that December 25 was established as the date for the festival at Rome. Before the end of the century that date had been accepted by all Christian nations.

When Frost Destroys Dahlias. After frost has destroyed the dahlias and cannas, cut the stalks off six or eight inches from the tubers, dig them and place in a dry, airy location until they are dusty, then place in bags and hang in a frost-proof cellar where you keep potatoes.

The frost must not be allowed to nip them, either while in the ground or drying, and the cellar must not be too warm.

Brute. Wife (to dinner)—"You don't seem to like rice." Husband—"No, it's associated with one of the greatest mistakes of my life."—London Sketch.

VINEGAR FROM FRUIT PARINGS

Will Be Found Equally, if Not More Satisfactory Than That Bought at the Store.

It is not every one who can make his own cider vinegar, and it is almost impossible to buy vinegar with the assurance that you are getting the real article; but every housekeeper in the land may have a good, wholesome vinegar by saving that which usually goes to waste.

Fruit parings of all kinds, and grape pulp make excellent vinegar. Place them in a wooden barrel or enameled vessel—never in a tin or galvanized water cooler.

When they have stood thus for several days, and are visibly fermenting, so that the pulp easily comes to pieces, strain the liquid portion off into another clean vessel and add water sweetened with sugar, house molasses or sorghum. Tack a cloth over the opening instead of stopping tightly, so that the air can escape, and in a few months you will have a vinegar equal almost to cider.

If it seems too weak when sour, add more molasses or brown sugar. Another thing that will aid fermentation is a little cooked mush.

When the vinegar is made, it should be kept off or put into clean vessels and racked tightly closed, as any sediment will soon cause a bitter taste. If no apple parings are used, a decided apple flavor may be imparted by adding some boiled dried apples while fermenting.

Ready for Emergencies. A problem that confronts the suburban hostess is her ability to produce a good meal on short notice to the unexpected visitor.

True hospitality consists in welcoming your guests with cordiality and seating them to whatever menu is served the family.

By keeping a shelf in the pantry supplied with articles necessary to furnish the extras which are needed for a hurry call, you can bolster up these reserves with confidence with these reserves you can amuse any meal with soup, salad or cold meat, and have the nerve-racking experiences of those who find themselves confronted with unexpected guests and a deficit in the supply shelf.

This emergency shelf should always be supplied with standard soups, vegetable, a package of macaroni, a jar of cheese, olives, pickles and a bottle of salad dressing, a tumbler or two of jelly, some fruit preserves, a can of chicken, ox tongue and veal or ham loaf.

Fondle of Cheese. Grate cheese and crush broken and dried bread crumbs into fine crumbs. Have twice as much bread as cheese. If you have two cups use about two cups of milk (in which a pinch of soda has been dissolved) to moisten the crumbs. Beat two eggs tight, white and yolks separately; whip the yolks into the crumbs with a tablespoonful of melted butter. Season with salt and a dust of cayenne, add the frothed whites deftly and rapidly; bake in a greased pudding dish in a brisk oven, keeping the dish covered until the fondle is puffed high and is crusty on top. Uncover, brown slightly and serve at once. Pass crackers and pickles with this.

To Keep Grapes Fresh. The great thing in keeping grapes fresh is to keep them from the drying up process, but they must not be immersed in water or handled in any way. In cutting grapes to be kept fresh, an inch or two of stalk is left on each side of the twig that bears them, and to each end of this stalk is pitted a bulb of rubber or glass containing sterilized water. The whole is then hung up where the grapes will swing free and the water in bulbs is sucked up by the stalks.

The water can be renewed as often as is necessary, without touching the grapes. Two grapes will keep three or four months by this process.

Apple and Onion Salad. Two apples, one onion, one teaspoon mustard, one cup vinegar, one teaspoon cornstarch, half teaspoon salt, one-fourth teaspoon white pepper, one egg. Boil the vinegar; if too strong, use half water. Mix the mustard with the cornstarch, add salt, pepper and egg well beaten. Stir this into boiling vinegar, cook until creamy. Pour it over two mildly acid apples and onion chopped fine. Serve in lettuce nests.

About Ferns. Ferns will thrive in your north window, if given plenty of moisture. The native ones do admirably when transplanted in their natural soil. But remember that some of them dwell in deep, cool ravines, and may rebel if the room is kept too warm. A moss covering of the soil will help to retain root-moisture, as well as add to the beauty of your floral piece. Spray often, and the native ferns will prove most desirable.

Stewed Oysters. Drain the liquor from two dozen oysters, mix with it a small teaspoonful of hot water, add a little salt and pepper, and set over the fire in a saucepan. When it comes to a boil, take off the scum and add a cupful of milk. Let it boil up quickly, then put in the oysters, and allow to boil for three minutes longer. Add some butter, and when this is melted take from the fire and serve at once.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN PARIS Elaborate Preparations Made for Celebrating the Festival in the French Capital.

If you are an artist at heart, if you cherish your dreams, go to Paris for Christmas; they will be realized, O. F. tells writes in Leslie's. For days before the great festive preparations for as we call it. All along the main a continuous line of booths up the sidewalks on the 11th, advertising for a few cents at

most everything in existence. The normal routine of life is altogether upset. The traffic is trebled, and if you are about in the early morning, you will see huge carts coming in from the surrounding country laden with the mistletoe which France supplies to every part of Europe. If you enter one of the great stores in search of the common necessities of life you will find it almost impossible to obtain them. The ironmongery department will have been swept away to make place for a huge toy fair, and where you generally seek needles you are confronted with a Christmas tree

150 feet high, staved with iron girders and bearing on its branches every conceivable object from a five cent toy to a fur coat or a canoe.

To you, a foreigner in exile, all these busy preparations for the supreme festival of conviviality and domestic rejoicings have had the reverse effect that they have on the visible rising spirits of the Parisians themselves. The very happiness of this particularly happy people seems to you selfish, and while you wonder among the crowds you are obliged to recognize that, after all, they are but little different from those that are even now filling

the streets of "little old New York" or, say, Chicago. And the very similarity makes you homesick.

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