



By Long Distance
by ELIZA WALLACE DURBIN

DAVIS brought out the presents he intended to send home and laid them together on the table. He wanted to know the space they would take in packing. The cardigan jacket for his father would make the package bulky, but he was rather proud of that jacket; it would be just the thing for his father to wear about the farm. Davis smiled as he thought of the ugly old wamus he remembered his father wearing and then he went down to see the janitor.

"Miller, have you got a box about so large?" he asked, spreading out his hands in estimation of width and length.

The old German put up a pudgy hand to hold his pipe while he nodded.

"Die do?" he asked, producing a green pasteboard box from a collection he had brought home several days before in anticipation of the tips their possession would insure.

"I take de package down fer you," he added, as his intelligent fingers read the marks on the coin Davis slipped into them.

"No, I'm going down myself," answered Davis happily. He heard the postman ring his number and he stopped for the letter. His happy eyes clouded as he saw his mother's cramped writing. She seldom wrote, being ashamed of her crude composition and poor spelling, and he had a premonition why she had not left this letter to his sister Mary. He was not mistaken.

"Dear son—Can't you come home for Christmas? I wish you would I am so lonesome to see you. John I haunt seen you for most eight years an' I am old."

"with love"

"from mother."

Davis' eyes turned misty, but he resolutely put the letter away. He could not go now, go and give up those two weeks of sharing house-party life with Myrtle Chester. Then there were his roles in the theatricals and the singing. He could not leave her in the lurch. It was impossible. He would go home to mother for a few days in January. She would be just as pleased. Perhaps he could tell her—a wonderful light flashed into his eyes and he returned to his packing. But there was no longer any joy in it. Even the soft black dress that Miss Chester had helped him to select no longer stirred any anticipations of his mother's pleasure. It had sort of a crepe feel to him now, and in his mind, crepe was associated only with funerals. Even the doll for Mary's little girl, whose blue eyes still held for him the delightfully critical inspection of Miss Chester's gray ones, he thrust hastily into the box, almost forgetting to protect its head with the jaunty fur cap and gloves he had

bought for the boy. How heavenly kind she had been that day, and how his heart had leaped at thought of always having her to go Christmas shopping with him for these youngsters—and others. His heart grew lighter again.

He stood a moment as he opened the door on Park avenue, calculating the distance to Forty-second street. He liked to walk, but he had been working late these last nights that he might be entirely free for the Chester house party. Last night he had not slept at all and he was tired; so he walked up Ninety-second street to Madison avenue and took a car.

At the express office he handed in his package with a sigh of relief and leaned wearily against the window while the agent made out his receipt.

"I'll write and tell mother I'll come next month," he thought, dreamily; and then, as the glare of lightning zig-zaged through the sky, there flamed into his brain this message: John Davis, 101 East Ninety-second street; Mother dying. Come, Mary."

He straightened with a start and stood in bewilderment, striving to comprehend what had happened to him. He had not been asleep. It had been no dream—that he knew. Yet not one of the bustling throng was heeding him, no one there was concerned in that message. He seized the change and receipt which the agent was holding out to him and hurried outside. A conviction that he could not reason against urged him home to meet the message that he felt was coming to him there.

As his car whirled on, Davis tried to keep his mind from going beyond the question of that message itself to the meaning in that message, but sometimes the "mother dying" broke through his brain's defense, and the high piles of brick and stone sank into the earth and left a little old farmhouse with a leaning porch, on which stood a woman, stooped and aging, to whom he waved adieu from beside his father on the seat of the old spring wagon.

As he swung off at Ninety-second street he saw a messenger boy half way up from Lexington avenue. Davis hurried and reached his door first.

"Here, is that for me, John Davis?" he asked, putting out his hand. He scrawled his name as the boy held out the book, then tore open the yellow envelope and saw: "John Davis. Mother dying. Come, Mary."

"Come." It was the message of his mother's longing, the yearning heart-call of eight hungry years of mother-love, and his dull senses had never heard it until now. As he stumbled up the stairs, urged on by the great dread, his memory dropped through the years to the time when he had stumbled up the rickety steps of the old back porch calling his mother to deliver him from the angry

turkey gobbler behind. How quickly she had answered his call! How quickly she had always answered it! He lived his youth anew in the flare of the flashlight that moved across his memory, and only her gentle, patient eyes kept him from cursing the manhood that had forgotten. He was not a religious man, but the God

for the first time, that it was headed Cedar Bluffs, Iowa. His home was in Ohio. He turned to summon the janitor, but thought of Miller's slowness and ran down to him instead.

"Is there another John A. Davis in the house?" he demanded, so excitedly that the placid German took his pipe from his mouth without the extra inhalation with which he usually indented his sentences.

"Yes, he come last week to Mrs. Allen, flat 5. He her relation, she says, lookin' fer job, I tink. You git him letter?"

Davis stood still long enough to draw a long breath. Then he went to hunt the other Davis. Luckily it was too early for the latter to have gone for his breakfast.

He found a slim, boyish namesake, in whose somber eyes Davis saw the record of the homeliness of his own first days in the city. Davis wished he had found a man of the world, resourceful, reserved, instead of this pitiful, unversed lad whose weakness kept the lump in his own throat. He helped the boy pack, looked up his train, and took him to the depot, wondering all the time how he had changed to get that message. Was it because of the keener receptive sensitive-

ness of his childhood, his mother's God, came back to him, with the old reality, and a pathetic little prayer crept out from under the worldliness in his heart as he packed his valise.

When he was ready he stood for a moment, looking about the room. There was something he wanted, but not until his eyes fell upon his mother's letter did he realize what it was. He dropped his face against it for a moment as though it were his mother's cheek. As he put the letter away he picked up the telegram to see when it had been sent, and his heart gave a great leap as he noticed

of his childhood, his mother's God, came back to him, with the old reality, and a pathetic little prayer crept out from under the worldliness in his heart as he packed his valise.

When he was ready he stood for a moment, looking about the room. There was something he wanted, but not until his eyes fell upon his mother's letter did he realize what it was. He dropped his face against it for a moment as though it were his mother's cheek. As he put the letter away he picked up the telegram to see when it had been sent, and his heart gave a great leap as he noticed

was a telegraph office. When a mere boy Davis had learned telegraphy as the only thing in his village that offered a way to his higher ambition, and when he had stood there some subconsciousness had caught the message as it clicked off, and the names had startled his numb senses into recognition.

He had the younger man good-by with a warmth that made the other treasure the memory gratefully, then he hurried back and sent his sister Mary a message that he was coming home at once.

There was now no need that he should go away without seeing Miss Chester, so he turned up Park avenue toward the contractor's home. It was early, but he thought as he went up the steps that he would not tell the servant he was leaving; he would let her come to him depend upon her inclination. But when the man waited to take his card he weakened and wrote across it, "Going away."

Davis had often wondered how Chester, in whom there was no more leaven of imagination than in one of his contracts, and his commonplace way came to have as daughter this girl with a face like a cameo and the air of a higher atmosphere. Davis was quite at his ease with

morning, and I meant to postpone the rehearsal until to-morrow. How much later must I put it to get my star performer in?"

At another time Davis would have heard all things sweet in her reboiling possessive, but now he was too troubled by her misunderstanding to take comfort.

"Oh, I'm not coming back, that is, not until after the holidays," he said awkwardly.

"But my theatricals, my house party," she exclaimed in dismay.

"I am overwhelmed," he said, abjectly, "but perhaps Dick Adams—"

She sometimes had a way of putting him beyond the pale of her consciousness with a careless droop of her lids. She did it now.

"Of course, Dick will do capitally. He sings almost as well as you, and he has played the part before, he told me. A merry Christmas to you then, and a happy New Year. Don't let the matter trouble your good time."

"Thank you," he replied, chilled to the heart. He wanted to explain, but that would seem like playing on her sympathy. So he said lamely: "I'm going home for a few weeks."

"Oh," she said, coldly, "you thought last week you couldn't go. I'm glad you are freer." And then he looked so distressed that she added appealingly: "Must you go? Why not stay with us and go later? I asked you first, long before last week."

He smiled.

"Mother has been asking me for eight years. The fact that I put your invitation first shows how selfish I am," he replied soberly; and if the meaning in his words could be mistaken the light in his eyes deepened and she looked past him to the street, but her mouth remained cold.

"There comes Mr. Adams now," she said suddenly.

Adams came in cheerily. He repeated as Miss Chester explained. "Yes, I know. I stood behind him in the office while he sent word to Mary that he was coming. He was so engrossed that he never noticed me."

"It was my sister," said Davis, with a cold dignity that made Adams grin.

He went out into the street with a heart unattuned to the Christmas joy in the atmosphere. He was bitterly jealous of these coming days which Dick Adams would have with Myrtle Chester. And she was displeased with his going. That hurt him most, for it warred with his conception of the woman he loved that she did not understand.

He straightened resolutely. He would not go home to his mother in a self-sacrificing mood. He passed a florist's window and he stopped to get some flowers to take with him. Just inside the door stood a large vase filled with glossy, thick green sprays, and tucked between the leaves was a card bearing the words: "Myrtle, which is chiefly—" for love."

Davis swung into the shop and bought the whole green mass. No one else should have aught of it. Scrawling the quotation across his card he slipped it into the box himself, and wrote Myrtle Chester's address for the man. Whatever his doubts were, she should have none. Then he bought his mother's flowers, and went to his train.

When he turned in at his father's gate he saw his mother coming from the chicken yard, and a pang shot through him as he noted how bowed she was. It was snowing and she put her hands up to shield her eyes as she looked to see who was coming. As Davis leaped over the flower mound, covered with evergreen boughs, she dropped the pan and spoon she carried and hobbled toward him with outstretched hands. Even before he reached her he noted the great knots on the knuckles—the rheumatism of which Mary had written, and he kissed them

before he laid his head down against hers.

"Oh, John, you did come," she cried. "Didn't Mary get my message?" he asked.

"Mary is with your Aunt Lucy. She's sick. Let me ring the bell for father; he'll think I've got an early dinner." She smiled happily.

"I'll go meet him," said Davis, feeling that he could not endure the strain of feeding two pairs of hungry old eyes at a time.

His father had always seemed much older than his mother, but Davis was not surprised to find him younger now. A gap between father and son is not spanned by a hand-clasp so easily as with a mother, but it seemed to Davis he was closer to his unemphatic father than ever before.

"I'm glad you've come, John. I can see mother had been frettin' to look over the old man, she said, heartily. The mother, watching, saw them turn to look over the farm."

"I hope father won't take him to look over the place now," she said aloud, for in these years of yearning for her boy she had taken to talking to herself, as though he were present.

"Grandma, grandma," called a childish voice, and a boy of five popped excitedly out of the kitchen door, "the phone's ringing."

The telephone was an innovation with which Mrs. Davis would have naught to do.

"Run and tell your grandpa, Harry. And there's your Uncle John up there. Run and meet him."

Davis saw him coming and held out his hand, but the boy veered off to his grandfather's side.

"The phone's ringing, grandpa," he announced, with his eyes on the stranger's face.

"All right. But this is your Uncle John, Harry."

"Uncle John, what my mamma told me told the big Santa Claus to send me something?" demanded the child, eyeing Davis.

"Sure! And he said he'd bring it, too," declared Davis.

"The boy's tone became wheedling. "What did you tell him, Uncle John?"

"A nice fur cap, and fur gloves," replied Davis, with emphasis.

The lad's face fell. He reached for his grandfather's hand, as though to help himself over a disappointment.

"What's the matter? Don't you like that?" exclaimed Davis, abashed before the sadder baby eyes. "What's the matter, Harry? Tell Uncle John. If Uncle didn't tell Santa right, he'll see him again."

The child looked at him wistfully.

"Do you tink he would charge it fer a pair of rubber boots?" he asked, mingled hope and despondency writing a pathetic expression on his little face.

"Sure! I'll see to it this afternoon," declared Davis, not daring to join his father's laugh, till the boy ran ahead to tell his grandfather the news.

"You go to the phone, John, while I wash my hands," said the father, and Davis hurried after his mother to the sitting-room. His eyes swept the place lovingly while he called up central. It was a call from New York, the girl said. He would not go back to-day, he was thinking, not for any business in the world, when a woman's voice roused him.

"Is this John Davis?" it asked, and he, not quite sure, answered, "Yes."

"I wanted to thank—oh, this is Myrtle Chester."

"Myrtle, which is chiefly—" it seemed to him she must hear his heart beating.

"Myrtle, which is—altogether—" the sweet voice, hesitated.

"Love," he prompted, tenderly.

"Love," she echoed, softly.

(Copyright, 1906, by Homer Sprague.)



"Myrtle, which is—altogether—" the sweet voice hesitated. "Love," he prompted tenderly.

Herald Want Ads will be received at S. Kamm's Sons & Co., Information Bureau, and promptly forwarded to the main office.

DIAMONDS CREDIT JEWELRY

Buy Better Gifts.

Buy on Credit

Give DIAMONDS, WATCHES, or JEWELRY—gifts that talk, last, and carry a feeling of love or friendship. It's just as easy as buying cheap things. You can pay us a little a week after Christmas.

A DOLLAR OR SO A WEEK.

7 Days to Christmas.

Your Credit Is Good

Make your selections now. Castelberg's Credit Plan buys Diamonds and Jewelry almost as easily as finding them in your stocking on Christmas morn. Pay us after Christmas.

A DOLLAR OR SO A WEEK.

<p>LADIES' RING</p> <p>A pure white diamond surrounded by rubies, sapphires, or emeralds on sides.</p> <p>\$35 \$1.00 a Week.</p>	<p>Double Tiffany</p> <p>Two beautiful pure white diamonds in this 14 karat solid gold setting. The setting cannot be duplicated.</p> <p>\$90 \$2.00 a Week</p>	<p>Diamond Lockets</p> <p>Hundreds of designs. Handsomely engraved.</p> <p>\$10 to \$20 \$1.00 a Week</p>	<p>Solid Gold Signet Rings</p> <p>Beautiful designs</p> <p>\$7.50 up but a Week</p>
<p>Opals and Diamonds</p> <p>The largest display of Solid Gold Watches.</p> <p>\$1.50 a Week.</p>	<p>SOLID GOLD LOCKETS</p> <p>Three genuine opals surrounded by a cluster of beautiful diamonds.</p> <p>\$75 \$1.50 Weekly</p>	<p>DIAMOND BROOCH</p> <p>Hundreds of designs. Handsomely engraved.</p> <p>\$5 up \$1.00 a Week</p>	<p>3-Stone Ring</p> <p>Three absolutely white diamonds of unusual size and weight. Cannot be duplicated.</p> <p>\$100 \$2.00 A WEEK</p>
<p>Lady's Solid Gold Watches</p> <p>25 per cent. under other stores.</p> <p>\$25 \$1.00 A WEEK</p>	<p>Gold Watch</p> <p>The best American movements. A great value; one that has made Castelberg's The Watch Store.</p> <p>\$18 \$1.00 Weekly</p>	<p>Five Diamonds</p> <p>Lady's freedom diamond ring. Five absolutely white and brilliant diamonds of unusual weight and quality.</p> <p>\$100 A Week</p>	<p>DIAMOND \$50</p> <p>Pure White Stone in your choice of setting. This stone commands 25 per cent. more at cash jewelers.</p> <p>\$1.00 Weekly</p>
<p>DIAMOND \$35</p> <p>Two rare diamonds with Ruby, Sapphire or Emerald, gems of the old mine type, white, perfect. A price that only our large importation permits.</p> <p>\$1.00 Weekly</p>	<p>BRACELETS</p> <p>50 cents a week</p> <p>Solid Gold Ladies Bracelets. Numerous Designs.</p> <p>\$30 Gold Watches \$1.00 a Week.</p>	<p>CUFF LINKS</p> <p>Gentle-rolling Solid Gold Cuff Links in handsomely engraved designs.</p> <p>\$5 50c A WEEK</p>	<p>DIAMOND BROOCH</p> <p>Three Blood Red Rubies, surrounded by a mass of Pure White Diamonds. A beautiful ring.</p> <p>\$150 \$3.00 a Week.</p>

Largest Credit Jewelers in the World

CASTELBERG'S

OPEN EVERY EVENING
935 Penna. Avenue,
Washington's Principal Jewelers and Opticians.