

The Letter She Sent

A Christmas Sketch
By Zoe Anderson Norris

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THIS was the Christmas letter she wrote him:

I think, my friend, that it would be best if you remain where you are. Of course you must know that it is not because I don't want to see you. I do. I do. But there are many reasons why I should not, why it would be best if we never met again. In the first place, after a succession of sleepless nights and heartaches, I have learned to do without you. I have learned to live quietly, composedly, rising in the morning and going about my work in a leaden sort of way. It is true, but calmly; without much hope of happiness—without any, in fact, but also without that feverish restlessness which invariably follows upon the pursuit of happiness.

Indeed, I have resolutely put the hope of happiness aside. It is not for me. You see, I have reasoned the whole thing out elaborately, carefully, laboriously. It is not as if I were a young girl, rushing blindly into a future apparently colored de rose, but in reality full of pitfalls, deep, dark and treacherous. I am a widow. I have been married once, I know. A burnt child dreads the fire. I am a little afraid of a second venture. My friend, your letter lies before me. The address is blurred where I have kept it warm against my heart. It is quite evident that at present you are blind. Love is always blind for a little while—for a very little while, alas! I am beautiful, I am charming, I am always in your thoughts. The fates have willed that we shall be happy. You are determined to see me again. You await the word to come. One is unconsciously charming. Many women absolutely devoid of beauty have charmed. So I may be that, but I am no longer beautiful. I was beautiful once—that night I trailed up the long, perfumed aisle of a beflowered cathedral, the white bride of the man who promised there to love, protect and cherish me.

Love, protect, cherish! I fear I have lost faith in the belief that marriages are made in heaven. Heaven had little enough to do with that marriage.

Yes; I was beautiful then and long after. People turned to look at me twice. Once two women passed me. One said, "Isn't she pretty?" And the other replied, "She is the prettiest woman in this town."

So you see I must have possessed some real beauty to be admired by my own sex. Mustn't I? But now! But now! Nobody ever looks at me twice. Nobody over turns deliberately around to look at me. Their glances rest idly upon me and pass—even those of the little boys who



WHAT WOULD BE YOUR FIRST THOUGHT? used to do me homage; even those of the little girls who used to say: "Look at her! She is mine. I'm going to be like her when I am grown." Does this seem peculiar to you? Does it seem childish?

It is tragedy. A woman should die of her first wrinkle, for with it goes homage, and with homage, love.

Youth of itself is beauty—the delicate contour of the cheek, the fresh firmness of the skin, the unfaded red of the lip, the bright of the eye, undimmed by tears. And I am no longer young. All my good, fresh youth was spent on that marriage of mine which was made in heaven! I have only the shadow of what I was left for you. Besides, I am older than you. Written, those seem ordinary words, just common, ordinary, everyday words, but weigh them, weigh them!

There are no weights sufficiently heavy to balance their sorrow. Hope might lighten it, but there is no hope.

What if I should listen to your pleadings—and it is like the tap of glad fingers at the door of my heart—toward, when the eyes of your love had been cured of their blindness, what would be your first thought? This: "She is older than I!"

I think you would not put the thought into words. You are too kind for that. But I should see it written in your face. I should behold my every defect mirrored in your eyes. That poor shadow of myself, which is all I have to offer you, would haunt me there.

Then desperately I should attempt to revive that evanescent charm you say I possess in the effort to win you back and fall. For doubtless the charm exists in your imagination, now you are blind. Seeing, it would cease to exist.

Finally I should stand by the side of some fair young girl and, reading the comparison in those eyes of yours, suffer untold tortures—only such tortures as are known to the hearts of supplanted women. Stay where you are. That agony is more than I could endure and live. I tremble; I suffer in anticipation; I suffer acutely; the tears falling on the paper blot the words—

But this was the Christmas letter she sent: Come! Start at once, the moment you receive this note. I shall count the days, the hours, the minutes, the seconds, the heart beats, till I see your face.

Blazing Oil.
To extinguish burning oil do not throw water on the flames, for it will only spread them by causing the oil to float. The right plan is to throw on flour, earth or sand. Any of these things will soak up the oil and quickly extinguish the fire.

The First Guidebook.
The earliest known predecessor of Baedeker was an Italian named Grataroli, who published a Latin guidebook in 1565 for all who wanted to "make a trip on horseback, on foot, by ship or wagon."

A CHRISTMAS IN MEMORIAM

(Original.)
In a princely mansion a child lay dying. Around the bed were physicians, nurses and servants. They had been trying to save a life, but now that it was plain their efforts were vain they were awaiting the end. The father and mother were kneeling by the couch watching till the spark of life had gone out.

Suddenly the child awoke from unconsciousness and felt itself rising. An angel was drawing it, magnet-like, from the body. Then when the little spirit was free both hovered over those grouped about the body that had been left behind as a locust leaves its shell.

"Angel," said the child, "why have I no voice to speak to my dear papa and mamma?"

"Because it is not in the nature of possibilities. The dead cannot speak to the living. They may only influence them. Come!"

They passed out of the house as light shined through a solid glass window or as radium pierces iron. Floating over the houses, they saw with their immortal vision countless people preparing for the morrow. Children were hanging stockings from mantels; parents were gathering toys, ready to fill them, while wagons were delivering gifts that had lately been purchased.

"This is where the wealthy people live—those of your own class," said the angel. "Before we ascend to heaven I will show you the homes of the poor."

Without change or motion they were in the poor district. Here the Christmas preparations were meager. Toys were few; good things to eat were scant. Many who had been hoping for gifts of clothing and food from charitable societies or individuals had been disappointed, for there were not enough to go round.

The angel led the newborn spirit to the home of a sick child. No doctors, no nurses, no servants stood about the bed, only a woman with pinched features, clad in rags. A good doctor had left a prescription, but there was no money to pay for it.

"Mamma," said the sick child, "I want an orange."

The mother bent her cheek down against that of her little one, but did not reply.

"Why doesn't she give her child an orange?" asked the spirit child of the angel.

"Because she has not even common food, and oranges are luxuries."

"But why don't those who have all these things divide with those who do not have them?"

"Did you, when alive, give your good things to poor children?"

"I didn't know that there were any poor children."

"You were too young to learn these things for yourself, and you were not taught them. Know, child, that among the millions of people on the earth the good things are distributed by natural laws. Those with the means and advantages must inevitably possess the most comforts and luxuries. This is a law of selfishness. Eighteen centuries ago a child was born upon the earth who established that whereby the natural law might be softened, not by counteracting law, but by something far nobler—self sacrifice."

"I have learned of the Christ child," replied the newborn spirit, "in my Sunday school, but I never realized that he wished me to give my comforts and luxuries to poor children."

"Then you have never known the true meaning, the highest enjoyment, of Christmas."

While they were talking they were watching the mortal child beneath them and its agonized mother. The spirit child shuddered at the contrast between the inability of the poor woman to do what was necessary to save her child and all that had been lavished in its own case. As they gazed a young girl entered the sickroom and taking from a bag a number of good things laid them on the table. Among them was an orange.

"From the 'Helping Hand,'" said the girl and went away.

The mother seized the orange and gave it to her child, who ate it all, then fell into a slumber.

"That gift has saved it," said the angel. "It will recover. Now we will go on our journey."

"Angel," said the child, "take me back to mamma and papa. I want to influence them."

In a twinkling they were in the chamber they had left. The parents were still lingering over the body of their child. Then that child spoke to them not by sound, but by spirit influence.

"I feel," said the weeping mother, "that there is something we have not done to our dear baby that we should have done. We did not teach her sympathy, and I realize that we have been selfish. We have thought only of ourselves. We have not remembered the poor."

"Some such thought has just flitted through my own brain," said the father. "Let us send out tomorrow in the name of our dear child a gift to those who are in need."

Then the angel said, "Come," and, with the spirit child, mounted to heaven.

The devoted father and mother had no heart to go out and distribute comforts to the needy, but in the morning on the desk of the manager of the Helping Hand society lay a letter which when opened was found to contain a check for a large amount. The letter read:

"Spend this today for the poor in memory of our darling child."
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C & N W R R Time Table

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No. 8	2:45 p. m.
No. 6	5:30 p. m.
No. 4	8:15 p. m.
No. 10	11:00 p. m.
No. 12	1:00 a. m.
No. 14	3:45 a. m.

West Bound.

No. 21	7:00 a. m.
No. 19	9:45 a. m.
No. 17	12:30 p. m.
No. 15	3:15 p. m.
No. 13	6:00 p. m.
No. 11	8:45 p. m.
No. 9	11:30 p. m.
No. 7	1:15 a. m.
No. 5	4:00 a. m.
No. 3	6:45 a. m.
No. 1	9:30 a. m.

Boyer Valley

No. 46	6:05 a. m.
No. 42	8:50 a. m.
No. 38	11:35 a. m.
No. 34	2:20 p. m.
No. 30	5:05 p. m.
No. 26	7:50 p. m.
No. 22	10:35 p. m.
No. 18	1:20 a. m.
No. 14	4:05 a. m.
No. 10	6:50 a. m.
No. 6	9:35 a. m.
No. 2	12:20 p. m.

Illinois Central R. R. Time Table

East Bound.

No. 4	Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Chicago Express, (Daily) 9:17 A. M.
No. 92	Co. Bluffs & Ft. Dodge Way Freight, (Daily except Sunday) 10:55 A. M.
No. 32	Co. Bluffs & Ft. Dodge Local, (Daily except Sunday) 12:15 P. M.
No. 2	Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Chicago Limited, (Daily) 9:38 P. M.

West Bound.

No. 1	Chicago, St. Paul & Minneapolis Limited, (Daily) 6:18 A. M.
No. 31	Ft. Dodge & Co. Bluffs Local, (Daily except Sunday) 8:32 A. M.
No. 91	Local Way Freight, (Daily except Sunday) 1:00 P. M.
No. 3	Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul & Omaha Express, (Daily) 8:33 P. M.
No. 1	and 2 stop only at Rockwell City, Wall Lake, Denison and Logan.
No. 3	stops at Arion, Dow City, Dualap, Woodbine and Logan.
No. 1	stops only at Wall Lake and Rockwell City.
Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4	are daily; Nos. 31, 32, 9 and 92 daily except Sunday.

C. M. & St. Paul R. R. At Arion.

West Bound

No. 1	Passenger, 6:22 A. M.
No. 3	Passenger, 1:52 P. M.
No. 91	Freight, 8:15 A. M.

East Bound

No. 4	Passenger, 9:11 A. M.
No. 6	Passenger, 7:25 P. M.
No. 94	Freight, 4:07 P. M.
No. 1	going west and no 6 going east are dailies.
Nos. 3 and 91	going west and nos. 4 and 94 going east daily except Sunday.

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