



Beasley's Christmas Party

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

SYNOPSIS

PART I—Newcomer in a small town, a young newspaper man, who tells the story, is amazed by the unaccountable actions of a man who, from the window of a fine house, apparently has converse with invisible personages, particularly mentioning one "Simpledoria." The youth goes to his boarding house, the home of Mrs. Apperthwaite, next door to the scene of the strange proceedings, bewildered.

PART II—Next morning he discovers his strange neighbor is the Hon. David Beasley, prominent politician, and universally respected. Telling of his last night's experience, he is markedly interrupted by a fellow boarder, a Mr. George Dowden. Later, with Miss Apperthwaite, he is an unseen witness of a purely imaginary jumping contest between Beasley and "Bill Hammersley." Miss Apperthwaite appears deeply concerned, there apparently being no possible explanation of the strange proceedings.

PART III—The reporter learns that Beasley and Miss Apperthwaite had at one time been engaged, and that the young lady had broken the engagement because of Beasley's "lack of imagination."

PART IV—The "mystery" of "Simpledoria" and "Bill Hammersley" is explained by Mr. Dowden. Beasley is caring for a small boy, Hamilton Swift, Junior, a helpless invalid bodily though more than ordinarily bright mentally, the son of dear friends who are dead, and "Simpledoria" and "Bill Hammersley" are features of Beasley's and the small boy's imagination. Beasley humoring the little sufferer by the "play acting."

Miss Apperthwaite was at home the following Saturday. I found her in the library with "Les Miserables" on her knee when I came down from my room a little before lunch time; and she looked up and gave me a smile that made me feel sorry for any one she had ceased to smile upon.

"I wanted to tell you," I said, with a little awkwardness but plenty of truth, "I've found out that I'm an awful fool."

"But that's something," she returned encouragingly—"at least the beginning of wisdom."

"I mean about Mr. Beasley—the mystery I was absurd enough to find in 'Simpledoria.' I want to tell you—" "Oh, I know," she said; and although she laughed with an effect of carelessness, that look which I had thought "far away" returned to her eyes as she spoke. There was a certain inscrutability about Miss Apperthwaite sometimes, it should be added, as if she did not like to be too easily read. "I've heard all about it. Mr. Beasley's been appointed trustee or something for poor Hamilton Swift's son, a pitiful little invalid who invents all sorts of characters. The old darky from over there told our cook about Bill Hammersley and Simpledoria. So, you see, I understand."

"I'm glad you do," I said. A little hardness—one might even have thought it bitterness—became apparent in her expression. "And I'm glad there's somebody in that house, at last, with a little imagination!"

"From everything I have heard," I returned, summoning sufficient boldness, "it would be difficult to say which has more—Mr. Beasley or the child."

Her glance fell from mine at this, but not quickly enough to conceal a sudden, half-startled look of trouble (I can think of no other way to express it) that leaped into it; and she rose, for the lunch-bell was ringing.

"I'm just finishing the death of Jean Valjean, you know, in 'Les Miserables,'" she said, as we moved to the door. "I'm always afraid I'll cry over that. I try not to, because it makes my eyes red."

And, in truth, there was a vague rumor of tears about her eyes—not as if she had shed them, but more as if she were going to—though I had not noticed it when I came in.

That afternoon, when I reached the Despatch office, I was commissioned to obtain certain political information from the Honorable David Beasley, an assignment I accepted with eagerness, notwithstanding the commiseration it brought me from one or two of my fellows in the reporter's room. "You won't get anything out of him!" they said. And they were true prophets.

I found him looking over some documents in his office; a reflective, unlighted cigar in the corner of his mouth; his chair tilted back and his feet on a window-sill. He nodded, upon my statement of the affair that brought me, and without shifting his position, gave me a look of slow but wholly friendly scrutiny over his shoulder, and bade me sit down. I began at once to put the questions I was told to ask him—interrogations (he seemed to believe) satisfactorily answered by slowly and ruminatively stroking the left side of his chin with two long fingers of his right hand, the while he smiled in genial contemplation of a tarred roof beyond the win-

dow, now and then he would give me a mild and drawing word or two, not brilliantly illuminative. It may be remarked, "Well—about that—" he began once, and then came immediately to a full stop.

"Yes," I said, hopefully, my pencil poised. "About that—I guess—" "Yes, Mr. Beasley?" I encouraged him, for he seemed to have dried up permanently.

"Well, sir—I guess—Hadn't you better see some one else about that?" This with the air of a man who would be but too fluent and copious upon any subject in the world except the one particular point.

I never met anybody else who looked so pleasantly communicative and managed to say so little. In fact, he didn't say anything at all; and I guessed that this faculty was not without its value in his political career, disastrous as it had proved to his private happiness. His habit of silence, moreover, was not cultivated; you could see that "the secret of it" was that he was born quiet.

My note-book remained noteless, and finally, at some odd evasion of his, accomplished by a monosyllable, I laughed outright—and he did, too! He joined exclamations with me heartily, and with a twinkling quizzicalness that somehow gave me the idea that he might be thinking (rather apologetically) to himself: "Yes, sir, that old Beasley man is certainly a mighty funny critter!"

When I went away, a few moments later, and left him still intermittently chuckling, the impression remained with me that he had some such deprecatory and surreptitious thought.

Two or three days after that, as I started down-town from Mrs. Apperthwaite's, Beasley came out of his gate, bound in the same direction. He gave me a look of gay recognition and offered his hand, saying, "Well! Up in this neighborhood!" as if that were a matter of considerable astonishment.

I mentioned that I was a neighbor, and we walked on together. I don't think he spoke again, except for a "Well, sir!" or two of genial surprise at something I said, and, now and then, "You don't tell me!" which he had a most eloquent way of exclaiming; but he listened visibly to my own talk, and laughed at everything that I meant for funny.

I never knew anybody who gave one a greater responsiveness; he seemed to be with you every instant; and how he made you feel it was the true mystery of Beasley, this silent man who never talked, except (as my cousin said) to children.

It happened that I thus met him, as we were both starting down town, and walked on with him, several days in succession; in a word, it became a habit. Then, one afternoon, as I turned to leave him at the Despatch office, he asked me if I would drop in at his house the next day for a cigar before I started. I did; and he asked me if I would come again the day after that. So this became a habit too.

A fortnight elapsed before I met Hamilton Swift, Junior; for he, poor little father of dream-children, could be no spectator of track events upon the lawn, but lay in his bed upstairs. However, he grew better at last, and my presentation took place.

We had just finished our cigars in Beasley's airy, old-fashioned "sitting room," and were rising to go, when there came the faint creaking of small wheels from the hall. Beasley turned to me with the apologetic and monosyllabic chuckle that was distinctly his alone.

"I've got a little chap here—" he said; then went to the door. "Bob!" The old darky appeared in the doorway pushing a little wagon like a reclining-chair on wheels, and in it sat Hamilton Swift, Junior.

My first impression of him was that he was all eyes; I couldn't look at anything else for a time, and was hardly conscious of the rest of that weakened, peaked little face and the under-sized wisp of a body with its pathetic adjuncts of metal and leather. I think they were the brightest eyes I ever saw—as keen and intelligent as a wicked old woman's, withal as trustful and cheery as the eyes of a setter pup.

"Hoo-ray!" Thus the Honorable Mr. Beasley, waving a handkerchief thrice around his head and thrice cheering.

And the child, in that cricket's voice of his, replied: "Br-r-ra-vo!" This was the form of salutation familiarly in use between them. Beasley followed it by inquiring, "Who's with us today?"

"I'm Mister Swift," chirped the little fellow. "Mister Swift, if you please, Cousin David Beasley."

Beasley executed a formal bow. "There is a gentleman here who'd like to meet you." And he presented me with some grave phrases commendatory of my general character, addressing the child as "Mister Swift"; whereupon Mister Swift gave me a ghostly little hand and professed himself glad to meet me.

"And besides me," he added, to Beasley, "there's Bill Hammersley and Mr. Corley Linbridge."

A faint perplexity manifested itself upon Beasley's face at this, a shadow which cleared at once when I asked if I might not be permitted to meet these personages, remarking that I had heard from Dowden of Bill Hammersley, though until now a stranger to the fame of Mr. Corley Linbridge.

Beasley performed the ceremony with intentional elegance, while the boy's great eyes swept glowingly from his cousin's face to mine and back again. I bowed and shook hands with the air, once to my left and once to my right.

"And Simpledoria!" cried Mister Swift. "You'll enjoy Simpledoria."

"Above all things," I said. "Can he shake hands? Some dogs can."

"Watch him!" buster Swift lifted a commanding finger. "Simpledoria, shake hands!" I knelt beside the wagon and shook an imaginary big paw. At this Mister Swift again shook hands with me and allowed me to perceive, in his luminous regard, a solemn commendation and approval.

In this wise was my initiation into the beautiful old house and the cordiality of its inmates completed; and I became a familiar of David Beasley and his ward, with the privilege to go and come as I pleased; there was always gay and friendly welcome. I always came for the cigar after lunch, sometimes for lunch itself; sometimes I dined there instead of down town; and now and then when it happened that an errand or assignment took me that way in the afternoon, I would run in and "visit" awhile with Hamilton Swift, Junior, and his circle of friends.

There were days, of course, when his attacks were upon him, and only Beasley and the doctor and old Bob saw him; I do not know what the boy's mental condition was at such times; but when he was better, and could be wheeled about the house and again receive callers, he displayed an almost dismaying activity of mind—it was active enough, certainly, to keep far ahead of my own. And he was masterful; still, Beasley and Dowden and I were never directly chidden for insubordination, though made to wince painfully by the look of troubled surprise that met us when we were not quick enough to catch his meaning.

The order of the day with him always began with the "Hoo-ray" and "Br-r-ra-vo" of greeting; after which we were to inquire, "Who's with us today?" Whereupon he would make known the character in which he elected to be received for the occasion. If he announced himself as "Mister Swift," everything was to be very grown-up and decorous indeed. Formalities and distances were observed; and Mr. Corley Linbridge (an elderly personage of great dignity and distinction as a mountain-climber) was much oftener included in the conversation than Bill Hammersley. If, however, he declared himself to be "Hamilton Swift, Junior," which was his happiest mood, Bill Hammersley and Simpledoria were in the ascendant, and there were games and contests. (Dowden, Beasley and I all slid down the banisters on one of the Hamilton Swift, Junior, days, at which really picturesque spectacle the boy almost cried with laughter—and old Bob and his wife, who came running from the kitchen, did cry.) He had a third appellation for himself—"Just little Hamilton!" but this was only when the creaky voice could hardly chirp at all and the weakened face was drawn to one side with suffering. When he told us he was "Just little Hamilton" we were very quiet.

Once, for ten days, his Invisibles all went away on a visit: Hamilton Swift, Junior, had become interested in bears. While this lasted, all of Beasley's trousers were, as Dowden said, "a sight." For that matter, Dowden himself was quite hoarse in court from growling so much. The bears were dismissed abruptly; Bill Ham-



Dowden, Beasley and I All Slid Down the Banisters on One of the Hamilton Swift, Junior, Days.

mersley and Mr. Corley Linbridge and Simpledoria came trooping back, and with them they brought that wonderful family, the Hunchbergs.

Beasley had just opened the front door, returning at noon from his office, when Hamilton Swift, Junior's, voice came piping from the library, where he was reclining in his wagon by the window.

"Cousin David Beasley! Cousin David, come a-running!" he cried. "Come a-running! The Hunchbergs are here!"

Of course Cousin David Beasley came a-running, and was immediately introduced to the whole Hunchberg family, a ceremony which old Bob, who was with the boy, had previously undergone with courtly grace.

"They like Bob," explained Hamilton. "Don't you, Mr. Hunchberg? Yes, he says they do extremely!" (He used such words as "extremely" often; indeed, as Dowden said, he talked "like a child in a book," which was due, I dare say, to his English mother.) "And I'm sure," the boy went on, "that all the family will adore Cousin David. Yes, Mr. Hunchberg says, he thinks they will."

And then (as Bob told me) he went almost out of his head with joy when Beasley offered Mr. Hunchberg a cigar and struck a match for him to light it. "But whar," exclaimed the old darky, "whar in de name o' de good Gawd do de chile get dem names? Hit lak to skeer me!"

That was a subject often debated between Dowden and me: there was nothing in Wainwright that could have suggested them, and it did not seem probable he could have remembered them from over the water. In my opinion they were the inventions of that busy and lonely little brain.

I met the Hunchberg family, myself, the day after their arrival, and Beasley, by that time, had become so well acquainted with them that he could remember all their names, and helped in the introduction. There was Mr. Hunchberg—evidently the child's favorite, for he was described as the possessor of every engaging virtue—and there was that lively matron, Mrs. Hunchberg; there were the Hunchberg young gentlemen, Tom, Noble and Grandee; and the young ladies, Miss Queen, Miss Marble and Miss Molanga—all exceedingly gay and pretty. There was also Colonel Hunchberg, an uncle; finally there was Aunt Cooley Hunchberg, a somewhat decrepit but very amiable old lady. Mr. Corley Linbridge happened to be calling at the same time; and, as it appeared to be Beasley's duty to keep the conversation going and constantly to include all of the party in its general flow, it struck me that he had truly (as Dowden said) "enough to keep him busy."

The Hunchbergs had lately moved to Wainwright from Constantinople, I learned; they had decided not to live in town, however, having purchased a fine farm out in the country, and, on

account of the distance, were able to call at Beasley's only about eight times a day, and seldom more than twice in the evening. Whenever a mystic telephone announced that they were on the way, the child would have himself wheeled to a window; and when they came in sight he would cry out in wild delight, while Beasley hastened to open the front door and admit them.

They were so real to the child, and Beasley treated them with such constant seriousness, that between the two of them I sometimes began to feel that there actually were such people, and to have moments of half-surprise that I couldn't see them; particularly as each of the Hunchbergs developed a character entirely his own to the last peculiarity, such as the aged Aunt Cooley Hunchberg's deafness, on which account Beasley never forgot to raise his voice when he addressed her. Indeed, the details of actuality in all this appeared to bring as great a delight to the man as to the child. Certainly he built them up with infinite care. On one occasion when Mr. Hunchberg and I happened to be calling, Hamilton remarked with surprise that Simpledoria had come into the room without licking his hand as he usually did, and had crept under the table. Mr. Hunchberg volunteered the information (through Beasley) that upon his approach to the house he had seen Simpledoria chasing an cat. It was then debated whether chastisement was in order, but finally decided that Simpledoria's surreptitious manner of entrance and his hiding under the table were sufficient indication that he well understood his baseness, and would never let it happen again. And so, Beasley having coaxed him out from under the table, the offender "sat up," begged, and was forgiven. I could almost feel the splendid shaggy head under my hand when, in turn, I patted Simpledoria to show that the reconciliation was unanimous.

(Continued Next Week)

DEMOCRATS TALK OF LEADERS

(Continued from Page Two)

sons for the happenings. It is known that because of the belief in high conservative places that the campaign was one to some extent of misunderstanding, they are going to try, if they can, to conduct an educational campaign which they hope will result in changing the views of some of the voters to coincide with the viewpoint of conservative Republicanism.

It is certain from the signs of the times that both conservative Republicans, and such of their liberal brethren as are giving no thought to a third party, believe that if the party is to be assured of success in 1924 there must be a getting together of the factions.

Varying Cures for Economic Ills

In the next congress economic relief certainly will be sought for various elements in American industrial life. Conservative Republicans say that economic distress here, there and elsewhere can be relieved by medicine which is not so drastic as that prescribed or likely to be prescribed by the doctors of what they call the new school of therapeutics. The Republican leaders of the newer economic school of thought, however, say that their suggested remedies are specifics and that therefore they should be applied. The result will be, probably, that the representatives of the two schools of medicine will confer together and reach some kind of an agreement which both of them may think is necessary to keep the school of Republicanism in continued session.

Now while these differences and difficulties, too patent to be ignored, are besetting Republicans, the Democratic doctors are preparing to prescribe their own course of treatment, knowing well enough that the Republican leaders will urge that it is in no way curative. The opposition doctors will suggest their proper treatment cures to the country as a patient in the hope that in 1924 their diagnosis of diseases will be sanctioned and that they will be put in charge of the Government Sanitariums, if Uncle Sam will forgive one for so calling his big governmental institutions.

Precedence Rules in Washington. Congress is here again, struggling with legislative projects, some of which the members like and some of which they do not like a little bit. There are some things just now in Washington, however, to hold part of the attention. Once in a while it is, or may be, a good thing to get away from politics and legislation. It is a bit restful.

Washington is a social place. It has to be. The entente cordiale, as we think the diplomats call it, could not be maintained at high pitch and yet in full tune if official activities were allowed to lag. Congress dances, diplomacy dances, the judiciary dances, and the rest of the Washington community dances.

It is true that this fall new members of congress are not much in evidence, for they will not appear until the beginning of an extra session next spring. If there be one, or until the beginning of the regular session next December. Nevertheless some few of them are here house-hunting. When they do come, the good women of their households will find that they have certain duties to perform after a manner new to them.

Washington is a regular India for castes. Society in a way is the text of the theme, so let some of the difficulties which beset incoming congressmen's wives be made known. Things the Wives Must Know. The capital is a great stickler for precedence, and yet this is a democracy.

When Mrs. Representative arrives here it is her first social duty to call on Mrs. Senator. If she does not do it she never will meet Mrs. Senator except by accident. Mrs. Senator will return the call after it is made.

It is the duty of the incoming Mrs. Senator to call on Mrs. Associate Justice of the Supreme court. If she does not do it she never will see Mrs. Associate Justice of the Supreme court except by accident. In other words, the lowly must call first on the mighty, and this condition of things must prevail until, through the whirlwind of politics or presidential appointment, the lowly become the mighty, and then the thing is reversed and the former Mrs. Mighty has to call first on the former Mrs. Lowly.

There is a lot of humor in this thing, but the procedure is as fixed, if one can use a bromide, as were the laws of the Medes and Persians. This precedence thing has bothered certain of the authorities in Washington since the beginning of the republic, and the heart-burnings of some of the women, and some of the men also, have been a lasting affliction.

Gideon Welles, secretary of the navy in the Lincoln administration, kept a diary. Years after his death it was published, and it makes mighty interesting reading. "Precedence" was a thorn in Lincoln's day and Welles tells a somewhat delightful story.

He says that Scuyler Colfax, then speaker of the house of representatives, came to him one day and said that Mrs. Welles ought to call on Mrs. Colfax, who was not the wife of the speaker, but his mother. Welles intimated that he thought it ought to be the other way. William H. Seward, who then was secretary of state, was supposedly a diplomat of rare ability. It seems that Colfax went to the secretary of state with this high matter of precedence, and then he went to Welles and said, "Seward declares Mrs. Welles ought to call on Mrs. Colfax first."

Then Welles says, in effect, in his diary, "Seward never did know much, anyway." Perhaps it might be said here that Welles was no great admirer of Lincoln's secretary of state.

One Unsettled Question

It never has been quite settled which takes precedence in society, the cabinet of the President or the Supreme court of the United States. Generally, however, it is admitted that the cabinet ranks the court. Sometimes, however, the wife of a Supreme court justice holds out on the question of her supposed privileges and wants the wife of the cabinet officer to call first. There seems to have been a way of fixing up these things, however, and nothing untoward ever has happened.

The women of the cabinet have receiving days and all who want to come may. It is one of the first duties of the wife of a newly-elected senator or representative to leave a card at the White House, and then cards at the residences of the wives of the cabinet members, if they happen to have wives. This establishes things, and while cabinet women do not do much calling, because, if they started out to do it, they would have to do too much of it, they accept invitations to general affairs given by the wives of senators and representatives.

Motor Driven by Starlight

A motor driven by starlight has been invented by an American scientist, Dr. W. W. Coblentz of Washington, says the Mentor Magazine. So sensitive is the instrument, which measures heat radiation from the stars, that it will detect an electric current of one-billionth of an ampere. Or, to put it more graphically, it is possible to measure the heat given off by the most distant star by means of electricity generated by its heat. If the heat from a certain nebula composed of 105 stars, hundreds of millions of miles from the earth, were concentrated on 60 drops of water, for 100 years, the temperature of the water would be raised one degree only, Doctor Coblentz says.

Change of Diet

Appropos the recent "lean" years in the Northwest when the farmers and homesteaders had such a hard time to "get by":

Homesteader (to storekeeper)—Gimme a slab of bacon!
Storekeeper—Big or little slab?
"Biggest slab you've got. I've eaten so darn many cotton-tails and Jack rabbits that every time I hear a dog bark I run under the porch."—Judge.

Vicarious Exertion

"Are you still taking exercise to music?"
"No," said Dubwaite, "I'm taking it by proxy."
"How's that?"
"I sit in a cabaret and watch the leader of a jazz orchestra call on the saxophone players."

OLD FOLKS NEED NOT BE FEEBLE

If you are "getting along in years" you don't need to sit in a chimney corner and dream of the days when you were full of life and vitality. Keep your blood rich and pure and your system built up with Gude's Pepto-Mangan, and you will feel stronger, younger and livelier than you have for years. Get it today and watch the result. Your druggist has Gude's—liquid or tablets, as you prefer.

Gude's Pepto-Mangan
Tonic and Blood Enricher



The Surety of Purity

There are no miracles in cooking. What goes into the food must inevitably come out.

Even the baking perfection that results from the use of Royal Baking Powder is no miracle.

It is simply the result of absolute purity entering the food—and emerging again.

Royal is made from Cream of Tartar derived from grapes.

It Contains No Alum Leaves No Bitter Taste