

# A Christmas Story

By Sarah Bernhardt.

Translated from the French, by Charles Houston Goudiss.

The Chateau de Ploeruef was the terror of the Bretons. On passing it the peasants made the sign of the cross and murmured under their breath: "The Chateau of the Accursed!" Brambles grew about its boundary walls, which no living soul dared pass. The valets moved about within like shadows, never raising their voices. No one ever spoke to the master.

Alone, the young Comte Robert found grace before the lord of the manor, the old Duc de Kerberoff, his uncle. At the moment when this recital commenced, Robert was at the feet of the old man, who, with livid face, glittering eyes, and marks of fear on all his features, sat in the great dual chair listening to what the spectre of terror said to him.

By his side, upon a porphyry column, burned a small golden lamp, ornamented with precious stones, into the flame of which a tall negro poured, minute by minute, a drop of oil. In the old man's room, however, and in the great hall, would have been paid with his life the least forgetfulness of his duties.

The Duke was paler than usual. His long white hair hung to his brow, and from his eyes great tears rolled down upon his silver beard.

"My dear lord, are you in greater pain?" asked Robert, tenderly.

The Duke shuddered—listening still. "Christmas! Christmas!" sang voices in the fields. "Christmas! Christmas!" sounded the church bells.

Then drawing himself up, spectre-like, he said: "Listen, Robert; listen!"

For 20 years the old man had not spoken. The sepulchral voice resounded in the great hall; the arms, struck by echo, gave out an iron plaint. The young Count felt frozen with fear.

"Twenty years ago, I had a son—a handsome, brave and generous. He loved a young, low-born girl, and wished to wed her; but I refused—I could not consent to such an outrage. My son implored me but I remained inflexible. My blazon would have been shattered by such a shame! I was wrong, child—I was wrong! Never be arrogantly proud, it is a mortal sin!"

Sobs stifled the old Duke's voice. But presently he went on:

"The girl was beautiful and virtuous. I offered her gold; she refused it. Then I had her abducted and shut up in a tower of the chateau. Months passed; my son remained faithful to his vows. I faithful to my pride. I therefore resolved to kill the girl. To that end I sent her secretly a message, advising her to escape. A silken ladder was conveyed to her, with minutely detailed instructions as to how she was to fasten it to her window. She prepared to fly, and then I invented an infamous trap!"

"Listen, Robert—listen! I caused the stones which supported the window to be loosened so that it should give way under her and she would be dashed upon the marble pavement of the courtyard below. It was Christmas, the night that evil deeds; and ever since I have slept in fear of God."

"That same night I was transported in dreams into an immense gallery of clouds. Vaults followed upon vaults in millions—extending, ever extending, in these vaults hung little golden lamps, swaying gently. It would have taken years to count them. Some of them burned brightly, others were extinguished suddenly. Some shone with a violent glare, others flickered and sputtered a long while before they went out."

"Some of these lamps were guarded by angels, white and beautiful as beauty itself. Other of the lamps had angels, black, ugly and malevolent, who seemed to wait impatiently for the moment when the flame should expire."

"What does all this mean?" I asked my conductor.

"All those lamps are human souls," he replied. "Those which burn so brightly are the souls of new-born infants; stainless angels guard them. Here are the souls of those who are at the age when, some think, the Spirit of Evil and the Spirit of Good contend for them; but, at the supreme moment, the last breath at most always returns to the Spirit of Good."

"I then asked to be shown my own lamp."

gro tending the precious lamp to cease feeding its flame.

"I have made confession," he added, "and can now die, but will God forgive me?"

At that moment the bells of the chateau pealed forth and the voices of the singers in the church were heard. The doors of the great hall opened. At the back of the chapel of the old manor, resplendent with lights, the infant Jesus lay upon his bed of straw, appeared radiant with celestial glory.

The old Duke fell on his knees before the infant Deity.

"Man," said the voice of the priest, "Jesus was born to suffer, and died for the redemption of sinners. You have sinned, you have suffered, you have repented—God forgives you. Your soul pass from you in peace."

Then the old man turned his eyes toward the lamp, above which an angel with white wings was hovering. That angel he recognized—it was the guardian of the brilliant lamp.

The angel smiled sweetly and took within his wings the expiring flame, with which he flew heavenward.

The Duc de Kerberoff was dead.

A LOVELY VEST.

Husband—Fine suit. Bought it ready made and it fits beautifully, doesn't it? Wife—Yes, all but the coat and pants.

Some Home-Made Christmas Gifts.

The housewife who wants to give Christmas presents to her friends and who has not money to spend on them will find some valuable suggestions for solving the problem in the Christmas Woman's Home Companion.

Orange Marmalade—Slice very thin, rind and all, three large seedless oranges and one lemon. Pour over the sliced fruit eleven tumbler of cold water, and set away for twenty-four hours. Then boil slowly for one hour. After boiling, add four pounds of granulated sugar, and set away for twenty-four hours longer, then boil for one hour and twenty minutes, or perhaps a little longer. Pour into jelly glasses. This amount will fill eight glasses. Cover with paraffine. The total cost of the marmalade is not more than seventy-five cents, glass included, and here are eight presents provided for that ridiculous small sum.

Fruit Cake—Cream together one and one-half cups of powdered sugar and one cup of butter. Add the well-beaten yolks of six eggs, and one and one-fourth cups of sifted flour, one-half cup of ground cloves, and one teaspoonful each of powdered cinnamon and nutmeg. Then add the stiffly beaten whites of the eggs and another cup of flour. Add one-half cup of raisins, seeded and chopped, one-half cup of currants, one-fourth of a pound of citron, one-half cup of chopped almonds and a little chopped orange peel. All these had been dredged with flour. As a last touch add a cup of mixed preserves—strawberries, cherries, peach and quince—all chopped and well-drained of their syrup. Divide the fruit cake into four small pans, steam for one hour, then bake for half an hour in a steady oven.

Coffee Fudge—Boil together two cups of granulated sugar and one cup of strong coffee. Add either one teaspoonful of butter or one tablespoonful of rich cream. Boil until a spoonful of the candy, stiff when beaten. Then take from the fire, beat hard with a big spoon until the candy begins to grow stiff, quickly beat in one cup of brown shellbark or pecan nut meats, and pour out into a buttered tin. This is an extremely toothsome candy and not well known.

A VALUABLE STORY.

"I heard of a man who laugh-a so hard at a story that he lost his voice."

for the teacher. After that she held first place in the hearts of all.

But in spite of the years, and the work and the affection, she could not forget. Her heart was still there, as she had sent away. That night the trustees would meet to re-engage her for another year. She told herself she was happy and it was best to stay. If she left where could she go? Thus battling with fate she sat until the shadows began to fall and with the shadows came the tears which relieved the pent-up feelings. Between her sobs she thought she heard a step, and looking up she saw a man coming quietly up the aisle. For a moment he stood with outstretched arms, and for a moment she hesitated—then with a glad cry—surrendered forever.

That night her resignation went in, and at the end of the month there was a wedding in the little manse beyond the school. —C. C. Wylie, Quebec Presbyterian.

A CHRISTMAS DREAM

(By Annie McRobie in New York Scottish American.)

John Galton, M. P., lit his pipe, and leaned back in his comfortable chair with a sigh of content.

He had just concluded what he regarded as a very satisfactory interview with a junior colleague, who had lately shown signs of restiveness.

The two men had been discussing the question of old age pensions. Young Metcalf's eager plea for the introduction of some practical scheme had been fully demolished by the cool, logical reasoning of the level-headed Galton.

The question, it deftly handled, was useful as a party bait, but the economic law declared it out of the zone of practical politics. Such was Galton's summing up. Now the younger man was gone and his senior gave himself up to pipe and a pleasant reverie.

Suddenly a man entered the room unannounced, and persuasively requested Galton to accompany him for a stroll. The newcomer was an utter stranger to Galton, but in a spirit of adventure he readily agreed, and together they sallied forth.

Christmas being near, the streets were gay and crowded. From the theatres the players were thronging out, and the ladies' beautiful dresses, the flashing jewels, the luxurious carriages and superb motor cars presented a scene of almost dazzling splendor.

"Some evidence of wealth in the old country yet," laughingly remarked Galton.

"Yes, this is one of the many evidences, but let us go to a different scene."

Presently they entered a quiet street, evidently inhabited by the respectable artisan class.

Into one of the houses the two men noiselessly entered, and stood unobserved.

An old man and his wife, with thin, care-lined faces, sat talking.

"It's almost good to see you, Mary," said the man, tremulously.

Helena Trent turned her cheek for her husband's conventional kiss, and sat watching his broad shoulders as he swung down the aisle of the over-heated car, where he had bestowed her with every care. She had a dull wonder that she should be so utterly indifferent at his leaving her. She remembered the time when her heart had sunk at his going from her for his few hours at the office. Now it was but two days, Christmas, but she was no Yuletide glow in the heart of the young man, nor in her proud, beautiful face.

She unfastened her rich furs and moved her alligator traveling bag for a more fastidiously careful angle from her feet. She was very tired, physically as well as mentally, though she never pretended to exert herself in either way.

And she was bored—bored to death, she said to herself—and unhappy. She did not think of looking within herself for the reason, rather she blamed Will, her husband, and even more bitterly she blamed the very institution of marriage.

From the car window she looked into the chill dusk of the tawdry city, with its smoke and slush and bustle, and was conscious of relief at leaving it for a while. Then she thought bitterly that five years of her companionship had made Will cheerfully willing to part with his liking then the refinements of his luxurious, perfectly kept, childless home.

The year-old pang of loss grew sharper. It hurt—Christmas without the small dark head at her knee, without the little Christine that had been the sweetest bond between her and her husband. Then he would not let her forget him for a day! And had he forgotten the child? She nursed her resentment at his silence, she was angry that he could even seem happy, for she herself, in the ancient woman-way, nourished her grief and fed her thoughts with daily handling of the small clothes and playthings; the first few months after their loss Will had joined her in this, then suddenly he ceased to want to put mourning from him. She failed to remember that it is not a man-nature to encourage great familiarity with deep emotions, or to yield to morbid grieving.

So a silence had grown up between them. And in the train Mrs. Trent's face settled into its now usual lines of discontent and disdain. Not for worlds would she have told her husband that she suffered, that she cared more than he. She could not speak of the child, she could not, unasked, show him the old love; the first word would have to come from him.

Her anger that he was letting her leave him for a few holidays was not lessened by the fact that she herself had suggested it. It had happened just a week before as they had finished dinner. He had held the door open for her and replied: "Certainly, my dear, if you wish it. Your mother will be glad to have you a few weeks. Shall I stay on here, or shall I take you up?"

The same devil of pride that had prompted her to suggest the visit had prompted her to answer carelessly. "Oh, please yourself. But you would probably find it very dull in the country just now. You can probably amuse yourself better here. Parker will see to your comfort." So he had not come with her. Now, she thought, things were as he had wished them before, only she had stupidly failed to see that he was tired of her pride and grief stung her. She resolved to stay with her mother—she would never go back to him—never!

From her bitter reverie she awoke to notice that the train had stopped at a considerable suburb, and that the car, already full, was being crowded.

Met stood in the corners and along the aisles and women crowded good-naturedly together in the seats. Beside her stood timidly a pathetic, childish figure in a long, gray old cape. A pair of shiny blue eyes looked up at her from a pinched white face that might have belonged to a child of 15—or a woman of 40. The queer small person unbound a blue scarf from a mass of curling fair hair.

"Can I sit here. Will you be bothered?" The voice was a woman's; no mere girl could already have been happy and sad enough to learn that soft, thrilling quality of tone—it was cheerful and uneducated—the refinement of emotion, not intellect. Helena, almost ashamed of her quick interest, moved hastily aside. She had always been proud of knowing nothing of the "lower classes," and she had a physical fastidiousness about brushing against strangers.

"If I shall not be troubled in the least, certainly you may sit here," she heard herself say with surprising lack of condescension. The train rushed blindly on. It was now quite dark and the lights were being kindled. She felt the spirit of Christmas abroad in the air, peace and good-will rang in the talk and the laughter. She recognized, without resentment that every one seemed happy, and caught snatches of conversation.

This girl was going home, that man was to visit a dear one long unseen. Whether of joy or sorrow, breaks the barriers of cold customs. Helena at length became aware of a little thin hand on her arm and looked down at her companion whom she had forgotten.

"Don't you love it?" Helena asked in her voice. "And I haven't even seen him for five months! Not that he isn't been well to see me," she explained, "but I've been in the hospital with my back, and Jim has to keep steady in the machine shops to keep me there, poor fellow. I'm going to be well again now."

He don't know it yet—they only told me yesterday, an' I'm going home to tell him. I got money for my fare by saving up all he sent me for fruit and such—I was keeping it to give him for Christmas." She paused, looking up with fearless delight into the beautiful face above her. Then she continued: "You see he has to work all day, but nights it's dreadful lonesome for him, for he ain't got anyone but me now—our little boy—died," she whispered. Helena had a moment's stern impulse to bid this child-woman be silent with her simplicity of joy and sorrow. What could she know? Then she found her white, strong hand closing over the thin, fragile one with the work-marred fingers. She had a poignant thought of her dead Christine and of Will—who also had no one but his wife. Her mind worked rapidly as she listened to the happy flow of words.

"So now I'm glad to get back and be both wife and baby to him. Men are so queer, you know," she confided. "They just can't talk about things—it isn't in them. Jim can't even mention little Johnny, but he'd feel awful if I didn't do it for him, poor fellow. Of course I tell him how cute and sweet he was—I don't ever make him feel bad, and I never look at the little—the little things while he's round." A half-sob came in her breath and she held fast to Helena's hand. Then she smiled bravely.

"And then I ought to be home looking after him, so he won't get in with the crowd that's bad for him, drinking and all that, you know. We have two little rooms over a store right where I can see everything that's going on in the street, so I don't get dull while he's gone and I'm sick. We get part of our meals from the restaurant down stairs, and evenings he plays cards with me and we have lots of fun; I pretend he's my little boy and order him around. I guess he misses me. I s'pose you think I'm a queer sort of a Christmas present, but it's the very best one I could give him—he says a man needs his wife more than anything in the world—to keep him good! And I made him some handkerchiefs, so he'll know I thought of him, and you know, after all, that's what presents are for."

Helena Trent could not put from before her eyes the mental vision of Will, silent and proud, drowning his loneliness with the fast set at the club of the big house, which she had deliberately kept in the attitude of mourning, of her remembrance of the dead while she forgot the vital needs of the dear and living! The growing coldness between them—was it her fault? She absent-mindedly murmured something that made the little woman go on.

"Haven't I talked a lot? I'm so happy I can't help it! To be able to walk again and go back to my man!" For the first time Helena looked at the primitive possession in the forbidden term—"my man!" The woman again wound the blue scarf around the fair hair and buttoned her shabby coat.

"The next station is mine, and we're almost there. I see by your ring you're married, too. Are you going home?" The train slowed for the station. Then the patrician Mrs. Trent did a strange thing—she stooped and kissed the cheek of the pale, talkative little woman beside her.

"Yes, yes! I am going home!" Her voice was glad and intense. "And I can never thank you—never, for what you have made me see. You will never know what a gift you have given me, how you have helped me! It is you who are rich, for you have love and faith, and I who was poor, for I had only pride and—money! Good-bye!"

Mrs. Trent left the train at the next station and went to a hotel. She sent a telegram to her mother that she was not coming and would write later. Then she went to bed, leaving orders to be called in time for the morning train to the city.

MAKING STALE BREAD FRESH.

Fannie Merritt Farmer, the distinguished writer on cooking, gives some unique ways of utilizing stale bread in the Christmas Women's Home Companion.

For instance, she says from which crusts have not been removed, together with crusts of bread, may be dried in the oven, rolled, sifted, and stored in a glass jar for subsequent use. These so-called bread crumbs are needed for crumbling croquettes, cutlets, fish, meat, etc.

"Crostons, sometimes called Duchess Crusts, are in good form with cream soups, and afford an excellent way for using stale bread. Cut stale bread in one-third inch slices and remove the crusts. Spread thinly with butter. Cut slices in one-third inch cubes, put in a shallow pan, and bake until delicately brown, stirring occasionally and watching, that the crusts may brown evenly."

"If you are tired of cube-shaped pieces, cut the buttered one-third inch slices into strips, which when browned in the oven are called Imperial Sticks."

"Hyde Park brown bread is not only delicious, but furnishes an excellent means of using bits of bread. Break stale bread into small pieces. There should be one and one-half cups. Add two cups of cold water, cover, and let stand over night. In the morning rub through a colander, and add three-fourths of a cup of molasses and one cup of cold water. Add one-half cup of soda, and one and one-half cups of salt; then add one and one-half cups of cold water. Stir until well mixed, and fill one-pound baking powder tins (of course first be sure that they do not leak) two-thirds full of the mixture, cover, and let steam two hours. Isn't this a recipe for the economist? Besides making use of stale bread, it calls for no milk, cold water being used as a substitute."

"A chocolate bread pudding is made in this way: Soak two cups of stale bread crumbs in four cups of scalded milk thirty minutes. Melt two squares of Baker's unsweetened chocolate in a small saucepan over boiling water. Add one-third of a cup of sugar, and stir until well blended, then add enough milk taken from the bread and milk to make of the right consistency to pour then add to the bread and milk. Add one-third of a cup of sugar, one-fourth of a teaspoonful of salt, and two eggs slightly beaten. Turn into a buttered pudding dish, and bake one hour in a moderate oven. Serve hot with cream sauce. Mix three-fourths of a cup of milk, and beat until stiff, using a Dover egg beater. Add one-third of a cup of powdered sugar, one-half teaspoonful of vanilla and a few grains of salt. If one has not cream at her command, a vanilla sauce is acceptable as a chocolate bread pudding."

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Ice Storm for the Christmas Dinner Table  
By wires suspend a round wire netting from the chandelier to hang just below it. This should be wound with Southern moss. From every section of the wire hangs the graceful "Christmas silver rain," which may be bought for fifteen cents a box. Every now and then a glass icicle gives body to the "ice scene."

From the central part of the wire hangs a bunch of mistletoe tied with a silver ribbon, a round mirror as the centerpiece reflecting its berries. The mirror should be edged with the moss, also. Green and white china should be used, but no candlesticks, as the light must be from above. White roses at the men's places are drawn through one corner of dainty Christmas cards, which bear each guest's name. Sprays of mistletoe tied with a knot of silver ribbon, through which is twisted a bone hair pin, will be souvenirs for the girls that will cause some merriment.—The Christmas Woman's Home Companion.

THE CHRISTMAS TOAST.  
Awake, awake, the hours draw nigh,  
Nor heedless pass the moments by;  
Still thro' the ages ring each gladning word,  
Spoken once by angels and by shepherds  
"Peace on Earth, Goodwill to men."

Arise, for all the Glory of the dawn  
Breaks o'er the East where He the Christ was born.  
These wishes bring we from three hearts sincere—  
Good Luck, Good Faith, Good Fortune, and Good Cheer.

Kerosene Dust Cloth.  
Dip a piece of cheesecloth in kerosene and let evaporate. Then use the cloth as a duster. It will take up dust without scattering it and polish at the same time.