

DARREL OF THE BLESSED ISLES

By IRVING BACHELLER.
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"Dri and I," Etc.

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Darrel puffed his pipe in silence a little time.

"Every one hates Brooke," said Trove.

"Well, I'd another chance to try the good law on him," said Darrel presently. "In July he fell sick of fever, and I delayed me trip to nurse him. At length, when he was nearly well and I had come to his home one evening, the Widow Glover met me at his door. 'If ye expect money for comin' here, ye better go on 'bout yer business,' Brooke shouted from the bedroom. 'I don't need ye any more, an' I'll send ye a bushel o' potatoes by 'n by. Good day!'"

"Not a word o' thanks!" the tinker exclaimed. "Wrath o' God! I fear him is but one thing would soften him."

"And what is that?"

"A club," said Darrel. "But God forgive me! I must put away anger. Soon it went about that Brooke was to marry the widow. All were delighted, for each party would be in the nature of a punishment. God's justice! They did deserve each other."

Darrel shook with happiness and re- lighted his pipe.

"Mayhap ye've seen the dear lady," Darrel went on. "She is large, bony, quarrelsome—a weaver of some fifty years—neither amiable nor fair to look



"Brooke, poor man, he got the worst of it."

upon. Every one knows her—a survivor of two husbands an' many a battle of high words.

"Is a case o' foreclosure, Brooke?" says I to him one day in the road.

"No, sir," he snaps out. "I had a little mortgage on her furniture, but I'm going to marry her for a helpmate. She is a great worker an' neat an' savin'."

"An' headstrong," says I. "Ye must have patience with her."

"I can manage her," said Brooke. "The first morning after we are married I always say to my wife: 'Here's the breeches. Now if ye want 'em, take 'em, an' I'll put on the dress.'"

"He looked wise, then, as if 'twere a great argument."

"Always?" says I. "God bless thee, 'tis an odd habit."

"Well, the boast o' Brooke went from one to another an' at last to the widow's ear. They say a look o' firmness an' resolution came into her face, an' late in August they were married of an evening at the home o' Brooke. Well, about then, I had been having trouble."

"Trouble?" said Trove.

"It was another's trouble—that of a client o' mine, a poor woman out in the country. Brooke had a mortgage on her cattle, an' she could not pay, an' I undertook to help her. I had some money due me, but was unable to put me hand on it. That day before the wedding I went to the old sinner."

"Brooke, I came to see about the Martha Vaughn mortgage," says I.

"Martha Vaughn?" said Trove, turning quickly.

"Yes, one o' God's people," said the tinker. "Ye may have seen her."

"I have seen her," said Trove.

"At 10 o'clock to-morrow I shall foreclose," says Brooke, waving his hat.

"Give her a little time—till the day after to-morrow. Man, it is not much to ask," says I.

"Not an hour," says he, an' I came away.

"But, God be praised," said Darrel, "Brooke was unable to foreclose that day, an' the next was Sunday, an' bright an' early on Monday morning I paid the debt."

"Mrs. Vaughn has a daughter," said Trove, blushing.

"Aye, an' she hath a pretty redness in her lip," said Darrel quickly, "an' a merry flash in her eye. Thou hast yet far to go, boy. Look not upon her now or she will trip thee. By an' by, boy, by an' by."

There was an odd trait in Darrel. In familiar talk he often made use of "ye"—a shortened "you"—in speaking to those of old acquaintance, but when there was man or tople to rouse him into higher dignity it was more often "thee" or "thou" with him. Trove made no answer and shortly went away.

Minard's Liniment for Sale Everywhere.

Keep your eye open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS eve had come and the year of 1850. For two weeks snow had rushed over the creaking gable of the forest above Martha Vaughn's long hill-side. A freezing blast had driven it to the roots of the scrubble and sown it deep and rolled it into ridges and whirled it into heaps and mounds or flung it far in long waves that seemed to plunge, as if part of a white sea, and break over fence and roof and chimney in their down rush. Candle and fire light filtered through frosty panes and glowed dimly under dark fathoms of the snow sheet now flying full of voices. Mrs. Vaughn opened her door a moment to peer out. A great horned owl flashed across the light beam with a snap and rustle of wings and a cry "Oo-oo-oo!" lonely, like that, as if it were the spirit of darkness and the cold wind. Mrs. Vaughn started, turning quickly and closing the door.

"Ugh, what a sound!" said Polly. "It reminds me of a ghost story."

"Well," said the widow, "that thing belongs to the only family o' real ghosts in the world."

"What was it?" said a small boy. There were Polly and three children about the fireplace.

"An air cat," said she, shivering, her back to the fire. "They go round at night in a great sheet o' feathers an' rustle it, an' I declare they do cry 'Jesome. Got terrible claws too!'"

"Ever hurt folks?" one of the boys inquired.

"No; but they're just like some kinds o' people—ye want to let 'em alone. Any one that'll shake hands with an owl would be fool enough to eat fish-hooks. They're not made for friendship, those owls."

Presently she sat down by a table, where there were candles, and began reading aloud from a county paper. She read anecdotes of men remarkable for their success and piety, and an account of Indian fighting, interrupted, as a red man lifted his tomahawk to slay, by the rattle of an arrow on the buttery door.

It was off the cross gun of young Paul. He had seen everything in the story and had taken aim at the said Indian just in the pick of time.

She read also the old sweet story of the coming of the Christ Child.

"Some say it was a night like this," said she as the story ended.

Paul had listened, his thin, sober face glowing.

"I'll bet Santa Claus was good to him," said he. "Brought him sleds an' candy an' nuts an' raisins an' new boots an' everything."

"Why do you think so?" asked his mother, who was now reading intently.

"'Cos he was a good boy. He wouldn't cry if he had to fill the wood box, would he, mother?"

That query held a hidden rebuke for his brother Tom.

"I do not know, but I do not think he was ever saucy or spoke a bad word."

"Huh!" said Tom reflectively. "Then I guess he never had no mustard plaster put on him."

The widow bade him hush.

"Er never had nuthin' done to him, neither," the boy continued, rocking vigorously in his little chair.

"Mustn't speak so of Christ," the mother added.

"Waal," said Paul, rising, "I guess I'll hang up my stockings."

"One'll do, Paul," said his sister Polly, with a knowing air.

"No, 'twon't," the boy insisted. "They ain't half as big as yours. I'm goin' to try it, anyway, an' see what he'll do to 'em."

He drew off his stockings and pinned them carefully to the braces on the back of a chair.

"Well, my son," said Mrs. Vaughn, looking over the top of her paper, "it's bad weather. Santa Claus may not be able to get here."

"Oh, yes, he can," said the boy confidently, but with a little quiver of alarm in his voice. "I'm sure he'll come. He has a team of reindeer. An' the deeper the snow the faster they go."

Soon the others bared their feet and hung their stockings on four chairs in a row beside the first.

Then they all got on the bed in the corner and pulled a quilt over them to wait for Santa Claus. The mother went on with her reading as they chattered.

Sleep hushed them presently. But for the crackling of the fire and the push and whistle of the wind, that room had become as a peaceful, silent cave under the storm.

The widow rose stealthily and opened a bureau drawer. The row of limp stockings began to look cheerful and animated. Little packages fell to their toes, and the shortest began to reach for the floor, but while they were fast in the foot they were still very lean in the leg.

Her apron empty, Mrs. Vaughn took her knitting to the fire and before she began to ply the needles looked thoughtfully at her hands. They had been soft and shapely before the days of toil. A frail but comely woman she was, with pale face and dark eyes and hair prematurely gray.

She had come west, a girl of nineteen, with her young husband, full of high hopes. That was twenty-one years ago, and the new land had poorly kept its promise.

And the children—"How many have you?" said she, "hear 'em, an' you'd say there were fifteen, but count 'em, an' they're only four."

The low, weathered house and sixty acres were mortgaged. Even the wilderness had not wholly signed off its claim. Every year it exacted tribute, the foxes taking a share of her poultry and the wild deer feeding on her grain.

Presently there came a heavy step and a quick pull at the latchstring. An odd figure entered in a swirl of snow—a real Santa Claus, the mystery and blessing of Cedar hill. For five years every Christmas eve in good or bad weather he had come to four little houses on the hill, where, indeed, his coming had been as a godsend. Whence he came and who he might be none had been able to guess. He never spoke in his official capacity, and no citizen of Faraway had such a beard or figure as this man. Now his fur coat, his beard and eyebrows were hoary with snow and frost. Icicles hung from his mustache around the short clay pipe of tradition. He lowered a great sack and brushed the snow off it. He had borne it high on his back, with a strap at each shoulder.

The sack was now about half full of things. He took out three big bundles and laid them on the table. They were evidently for the widow herself, who quickly stepped to the bedside.

"Come children," she whispered, rousing them, "here is Santa Claus."

They scrambled down, rubbing their eyes. Polly took the hands of the two small boys and led them near him. Paul drew his hand away and stood spellbound, eyes and mouth open. He watched every motion of the good saint, who had come to that chair that held the little stockings. Santa Claus put a pair of boots on it. They were copper toes, with gorgeous front pieces of red morocco at the top of the leg. Then, as if he had some relish of a joke, he took them up, looked them over thoughtfully and put them back in the sack again, whereupon the boy Paul burst into tears. Old Santa Claus, shaking with silent laughter, replaced them in the chair quickly.

As if to lighten the boy's heart he opened a box and took out a mouth organ. He held it so the light sparkled on its shiny side. Then he put his pipe in his pocket and began to dance and play lively music. Step and tune quickened. The bulky figure was flying up and down above a great clatter of big boots, his head wagging to keep time. The oldest children were laughing, and the boy Paul began to smile in the midst of a great sob that shook him to the toes. The player stopped suddenly, stuffed the instrument in a stocking and went on with his work. Presently he uncovered a stick of candy long as a man's arm. There were spiral stripes of red from end to end of it. He used it for a fiddle bow, whistling with terrific energy and sawing the air. Then he put shawls and tippets and boots and various little packages on the other chairs.

At last he drew out of the sack a sheet of pasteboard, with string attached, and hung it on the wall. It bore the simple message, rudely lettered in black, as follows:

Merry Christmas. And Children I have the honor to remain, Yours Respectfully, B. D. CLAUD.

His work done, he swung his pack to his shoulders and made off as they broke the silence with a hearty "Thank you, Santa Claus!"

They listened a moment as he went away with a loud and merry laugh sounding above the roar of the wind. It was the voice of a big and gentle heart, but gave no other clue. In a moment cries of delight and a rustle of wrappings filled the room. As on wings of the bitter wind, joy and good fortune had come to them and in that little house had drifted deep as the snow without.

The children went to their beds with slow feet and quick pulses. Paul begged for the sacred privilege of wearing his new boots to bed, but compromised on having them beside his pillow. The boys went to sleep at last, with all their treasures heaped about them. Tom shortly rolled upon the little jumping jack, that broke away and butted him in the face with a loud squawk.

It roused the boy, who promptly set up a defense in which the stuffed hen lost her tail feathers and the jumping jack was violently put out of bed. When the mother came to see what had happened order had been restored—the boys were both sleeping.

It was an odd little room under bare shingles above stairs. Great chests filled with relics of another time and country sat against the walls. Here and there a bunch of herbs or a few ears of corn, their husks braided, hung on the bare rafters. The aroma of the summer fields of peppermint, catnip and lobelia—haunted it. Chimney and stovepipe tempered the cold. A crack in the gable end let in a silt of snow that had been heaping up a lonely little drift on the bare floor. The widow covered the boys tenderly and took their treasures off the bed, all save the little wooden monkey, which, as if



The bulky figure was flying up and down.

frightened by the melee, had hidden far under the clothes. She went below stairs to the fire, which every cold day was well fed until after midnight, and began to enjoy the sight of her own

gifts. They were a haunch of venison, a sack of flour, a shawl and mittens. A small package had fallen to the floor. It was neatly bound with wrappings of blue paper. Under the last layer was a little box, the words "For Polly" on its cover. It held a locket of wrought gold that outshone the light of the candles. She touched a spring, and the case opened. Inside was a lock of hair white as her own. There were three lines cut in the glowing metal, and she read them over and over again:

Here are silver and gold,
The one for a day of remembrance be-
tween thee and dishonor,
The other for a day of plenty between
thee and want.

She went to her bed presently, where the girl lay sleeping, and lifting dark masses of her hair, kissed a ruddy cheek. Then the widow stood a moment, wiping her eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

LONG before daylight one could hear the slowing of the wind.

Its caravan, now reaching eastward to midocean, was nearly passed. Scattered gusts hurried on, like weary and belated followers. Then suddenly came a silence in which one might have heard the dust of their feet falling, their shouts receding in the far woodland. The sun rose in a clear sky above the patched and ragged canopy of the woods—a weary multitude now resting in the still air.

The children were up looking for tracks of reindeer and breaking paths in the snow. Sunlight glimmered in far fung jewels of the frost king. They lay deep, clinking as the foot sank in them. At the Vaughn home it was an eventful day. Santa Claus—well, he is the great captain that leads us to the farther gate of childhood and surrenders the golden key. Many ways are beyond the gate, some steep and thorny, and some who pass it turn back, with bleeding feet and wet eyes, but the gate opens not again for any but those who have passed. Tom had got the key and begun to try it. Santa Claus had winked at him, with a snarling eye, like that of his aunt when she had sugar in her pocket, and Tom thought it very foolish. The boy had even felt at his greatest and got a good look at his boots and trousers. Moreover, when he put his pipe away, Tom saw him take a chew of tobacco—an abhorrent thing if he were to believe his mother.

"Mother," said he, "I never knew. Santa Claus chewed tobacco?"

"Well, maybe he was Santa Claus' hired man," said she.

"Might 'a' had the toothache," Paul suggested, for Lew Allen, who worked for them in the summer time, had a habitual toothache, relieved many times a day by chewing tobacco.

Tom sat looking into the fire a moment.

Then he spoke of a matter Paul and he had discussed secretly.

"Joe Bellus he tol' me Santa Claus was only somebody rigged up t' fool folks an' hadn't no reindeer at all."

The mother turned away, her wits groping for an answer.

"Hain't ought to 'a' tol'd mother. Tom," said Paul, with a little quiver of reproach and pity. "Tain't so, anyway—we know 'tain't so."

He was looking into his mother's face.

"Tain't so," Paul repeated with unshaken confidence.

"Musn't believe all ye hear," said the widow, who now turned to the doubting Thomas.

And that very moment Tom was come to the last gate of childhood, whereon are the black and necessary words, "Musn't believe all ye hear."

The boys in their new boots were on the track of a panther. They tread him presently at the foot of the stairs.

"How'll we kill him?" one of them inquired.

"Just walk around the tree once," said the mother, "an' you'll scare him to death. Why don't ye grease your boots?"

"Fraid I'll take the squeak out of 'em," said Paul, looking down thoughtfully at his own pair.

"Well," said she, "you'll have me tread if you keep on. No hunter would have boots like that. A loud foot makes a still gun."

That was her unflinching method of control, the appeal to intelligence. Polly sat singing thoughtfully, the locket in her hand. She had kissed the sacred neck and hung it by a ribbon to her neck and bathed her eyes in the golden light of it and begun to feel the subtle pathos in its odd message. She was thinking of the handsome boy who came along that far May day with the dove and who lately had returned to be her teacher at Linley school. Now he had so much dignity and learning she liked him not half so well and felt he had no longer any care for her. She blushed to think how she had wept over his letter and kissed it every day for weeks. Her dream was interrupted presently by the call of her brother Tom. Having cut the frost on a window pane, he stood peering out. A man was approaching in the near field. His figure showed to the boot top mounting hills of snow and sank out of sight in the deep hollows. It looked as if he were walking on a rough sea. In a moment he came striding over the dooryard fence on a pair of snowshoes.

"It's Mr. Trove, the teacher," said Polly, who quickly began to shake her curls.

As the door swung open all greeted the young man. Loosening his snowshoes, he hung them on the step and came in, a fox tail dangling from his fur cap.

He shook hands with Polly and her mother and lifted Paul to the ceiling.

"Hello, young man!" said he. "If one is four, how many are two?"

"If you're speaking of new boots," said the widow, "one is at least five."

To Be Continued.

LET OF AN ASSASSIN

Major General Von Der Launitz Dies In Two Minutes After Being Shot

WAS A PETTY DICTATOR

St. Petersburg, Jan. 4.—Major-General Von Der Launitz, prefect of police of St. Petersburg, was shot and killed by a young man at the Institute of Experimental Medicine yesterday afternoon.

Von Der Launitz, at the invitation of Prince Peter Alexandrovich, Duke of Oldenburg, husband of the Grand Duchess Olga, youngest sister of Emperor Nicholas, was attending the consecration of the institute chapel. During the services there and while standing near several high officials the prefect was approached from the rear by a young man who drew a revolver and shot him in the base of the brain.

Assassin Cut Down. As the assassin turned to flee, one of the officers present drew his sabre and cut the man down and killed him. The identity of the assassin has not been established.

After dissolution of the Russian Parliament, powers little short of those of a petty dictator were conferred upon Von Der Launitz. He issued a long proclamation, explaining the Government's reasons for dispersing the legislators. Last September Von Der Launitz refused to legalize the Constitutional Democratic party on the ground that its program did not clearly show its political views and refused to legalize the Octoberist party because of the omission in its petition of the address of its headquarters.

Made 588 Arrests in Three Days. Some idea of his activity may be gathered from figures which he caused to be published Dec. 28 last. It was then announced that the "flying section of the secret police" had made 588 arrests in St. Petersburg during the three days preceding Dec. 29. The prisoners, who, including thirty-three women, were charged with revolutionary activity and illegal election agitation. It was added that further arrests and searches were proceeding vigorously.

On Nov. 23 last, Von Der Launitz, acting, it was said, under a hint from a higher authority, dispersed a meeting of Constitutional Democrats in St. Petersburg, which he himself had previously sanctioned. The police authorities complained that the speakers would not confine their remarks to answers to their political opponents.

Suppressed the Russ. On Nov. 14 last Von Der Launitz suppressed the Russ of St. Petersburg because of the publication of an article of M. Karavoff, a well-known jurist, who declared what he termed "the debasement of all moral consciousness in Russia."

Vladimir Von Der Launitz came of an old family of the German nobility, in the Baltic provinces. He served with distinction during the Turkish War of 1877-78, was decorated for bravery, and, in addition to holding the rank of major-general, he was one of the equerries of the court. Von Der Launitz was Governor of Tambou for three years. He stood high in the favor of the Emperor.

Dr. Dubrovnik, president of the reactionary League of the Russian Police, was attacked by a revolutionist on the street Wednesday night, several shots being fired at him without effect.

FOR POLAND'S FREEDOM.

National League's Objects Are Militant to Threatening Degree.

Breslau, Silesia, Prussia, Jan. 4.—The articles of association of the Polish National League describe the aim of the league as being "to unite all the national resources for the restoration of the independence of Poland."

The central committee of the league is bound to support any revolutionary action tending to change or destroy the Government.

Article 10 reads: "In case of war between the powers that took part in the dismemberment of Poland, the league's principal care must be to secure for Poland at the critical moment an important position and therefrom an important committee must prepare plans for military and an administrative organization. The committee must collect accurate information concerning the amount of money in the country available in the event of war, and also must arrange a military intelligence system, to obtain information regarding the number, equipment, mobilization, quarters and transportation of troops, the plans of fortresses and magazines, and all technical secrets."

Pressing to Death.

Odessa, Jan. 4.—Snowstorms and blizzards of exceptional severity are prevailing throughout southern and southwestern Russia.

Traffic on the railroads is interrupted and great loss of life is reported.

According to accurate reports succumbed to the cold in the southwestern provinces alone.

Made Soldiers to End Strike.

Sofia, Bulgaria, Jan. 4.—The train service in Bulgaria is greatly disorganized, owing to a strike of the employees of the railroads. The authorities will summon all the striking railroad men to join the colors, all of them belonging to the army reserve and they will then be drafted into the engineer corps and detailed for duty on the railroads.

Strathcona's Retirement.

London, Jan. 4.—(C. A. P.)—The Yorkshire Post's London correspondent says the view that Lord Strathcona has gone to Ottawa to plead that the Government allow him to resign is discredited, it being contrary to all that is known by his friends. There is the best authority for believing that matters are the other way about.

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Our Mr. R. V. Carter will visit Chatham frequently in our interest and will be pleased to furnish you with any information you may desire. Correspondence addressed to him in care of the Garner House will receive careful attention.

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