

## Jim Brotherton's Requit

"And this is the end, Elsie," said the man, with a queer, strangled break in his voice.

The girl tossed her head impatiently, and the moonbeams played on the tangle of golden hair which nestled on her forehead, every tiny curl of which had wound itself round Jim Brotherton's heart.

"Isn't it foolish to talk about it?" she said petulantly. "You will never hold any better position than you do now."

"Perhaps not," Brotherton broke in; "but with you as my wife I would not be for want of trying. Besides, dear, you were quite satisfied to be a sergeant's wife before I went on leave."

"I have thought better of it since. I was foolish—we were both foolish—to think of getting married. What is there to look forward to?"

Jim Brotherton stared drearily over the moonlit waters of the Solent. His brown, clean-cut face was drawn with pain. A month previously, when he had gone on furlough, it was with the understanding that he and Elsie Chambers should be married as soon as possible after his return.

He had obtained the necessary permission to marry from his colonel, and his meagre savings had gone to the purchase of what would go to make the sparsely-furnished rooms of a marine soldier's quarters homelike and attractive for the woman of his choice.

And now, at their first meeting after his return, Elsie had told him that she wished to break off the engagement.

He turned to her suddenly as she sat digging the point of her parasol into the moist sand.

"Look here, Elsie," he said, looking keenly into her face, "there is something in this business that I don't understand."

"So?" she drawled indifferently. "And yet it should be clear enough. I simply made a mistake in fancying that I cared for you."

"Or," retorted Brotherton bitterly, "you have found someone else."

The girl rose to her feet, and turned as if she would leave him; but he seized her roughly by the shoulder, and forced her to face him.

"Is that the case?" he demanded fiercely.

Elsie Chambers broke into a harsh laugh.

"You seem to think a good deal of yourself," she replied mockingly. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, but there is someone else—"

"Someone who can give you more money to spend, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; a good deal more," she returned with a smile, "calous to the agony in the man's face."

Jim Brotherton's arm sank limply to his side, and his lips went white.

"I might have known," he said sadly, "but I thought that you loved me, Elsie. God help me, I thought that you loved me!"

"Love? Don't get maudlin, Jim! How long do you think love would last on two and ninepence a day?"

"Tell me, Elsie," said Jim hoarsely. "Who is the man who has taken my place?"

The girl gave a short, nervous laugh.

"Well, if you must know, I—I am to be married to Sergeant-Major Mansfield, of the Wessex, on Tuesday week!"

Jim Brotherton staggered back as if he had received a blow on the heart.

"On Tuesday week?" he ejaculated. "On—Tuesday week?"

"She had written to him regularly while he was on leave. He had even received a letter from her two days before his return, and yet not a single word had she said about this. Up to the last moment she had left him in a fool's paradise."

"I will see you home, Elsie," he said dully.

As they walked over the common toward the Golden Cross Hotel, where Elsie Chambers was employed as barmaid, she glanced into the man's face from time to time. In her shallow little heart she liked handsome Jim Brotherton, she even imagined that she loved him. If he had only had more money!

Jim's eyes were directed sternly in front of him. Neither spoke till they reached the hotel.

"Good-bye, Jim!" said the girl, holding out her hand. "Don't think too badly of me. Believe me, it is all for the best."

Jim laughed harshly.

"I wonder—"

"You will forgive me, and—wish me happiness, Jim?"

"Oh, you'll be happy enough! The feelings of others will never interfere with your pleasure. But I was wondering—"

"Yes," said the girl, suddenly breathless.

"How far the man that you are going to marry will share in the happiness. Good-bye!"

Ten days afterwards Sergeant James Brotherton was tried by court-martial for absence without leave. At the moment that the adjutant was reading out his sentence of redefection to the ranks, the woman responsible for his degradation was leaving the garrison church on the arm of her husband.

As Jim returned to his barrack-room, a letter was put into his hand. He opened the letter, and glanced over it. Then he sat down on his bed and laughed long and merrily till his comrades thought that he had gone mad.

The letter was from a lawyer intimating that his uncle had died and left him three hundred pounds a year.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jeremy Courtfield, C.B., commanding the West Devon Rangers, was short, stout, red-necked, and plethoric. Also, which may have been the cause of these conditions, he was fond of the pleasures of the table.

The sentry on the hospital mortuary of the South Barracks at Gibraltar, which stands a little back from the hilly road, presented arms as he passed, and thought maledictions.

On the right of the hospital mortuary was a piece of waste Government ground which Colonel Courtfield had taken the liberty of annexing as a poultry run. The colonel stopped and regarded the contents of the run complacently.

A stout, red-faced officer came down the hill, puffing as much as Colonel Courtfield did in going up. He stopped and contemplated the contents of the poultry run.

"Morning, Brookes!" said Courtfield, in a voice which might have proceeded from the folds of many blankets.

"Morning, Courtfield!" croaked Colonel Brookes, of the Wessex Regiment. "See you've got a dashed fine pair of turkeys there."

"Yes, and I hope you and Mrs. Brookes will come and eat your Christmas dinner with us to-morrow night. I have been looking forward to this for no end of a time. The last time you and I ate our Christmas dinner together was at Ramnagar—it must be five-and-twenty years ago."

The eyes of the two old fellows moistened in reminiscence. Simultaneously they put out their hands. "Right, then. To-morrow. Eight o'clock," said Colonel Courtfield.

And Private Timothy O'Hara, the sentry on the hospital mortuary, listened, and wished that he were a colonel and could have roast turkey for dinner on Christmas day. Also he expressed a hope that the good things which disagree with Colonel Courtfield, under whose stern sense of justice he had been off-times made to suffer.

Late that night Private Jim Brotherton sat outside the hospital guard-room, and gazed over the beautiful moonlit waters of the bay. Three years had passed since the event which had broken his life. He had made no efforts to regain his lost position. The money left him by his uncle had proved a curse rather than a blessing. Fortunately for him, he could not draw upon his capital, but the interest was more than sufficient to carry him on the road to ruin.

He had not seen Elsie Chambers since the night he left her at the door of the Golden Cross Hotel. But since the Wessex Regiment had arrived on the Rock a fortnight before, he had heard of her, and what he had heard had not been to her credit.

The non-commissioned officers attached to the hospital were giving a dance, and from where he sat Jim could hear the music of the band.

Presently a carriage drove into the gate, and Brotherton looked up indifferently as it passed him. Then his heart gave a great leap. Seated alone in the carriage was a young woman dressed in white.

"Elsie!" ejaculated Jim. His pulse hammered, and he felt as if he were choking. Then he laughed bitterly at his own foolishness.

The field officer clattered up to inspect the guard, at which Jim resumed his seat, thinking bitterly of the past.

"She is worthless," he muttered to himself, "and yet—and yet—" Notwithstanding what he knew of her, his heart still clung to the woman.

When Jim came off sentry at midnight, the sergeant of the guard was asleep on the bench, and snoring loudly. Jim sat down before the fire, and lit his pipe.

Tim O'Hara sidled up to him with a gleam of mischief in his eye.

"Jim," he whispered, "are yez game for a bit of fun?"

"What is it?" If you mean hanging round where the sergeants are dancing, I don't see much fun in it."

O'Hara snorted his disgust.

"Be hanged to the sergeants and their dancing!" he said contemptuously. "What d'ye say to a mighty fine Christmas dinner?"

"It isn't Christmas till to-morrow."

"Ah, go on! Who does that matter? I've got a bottle of whisky."

"Well?"

"An' I know where there are two mighty fine turkeys."

"I see a court-martial staring you in the face, Tim," said Brotherton.

"Never mind that," rejoined the Irishman. "Ould Pat Slides has been feeding him up for Christmas. Him an' ould Porky of the Wessex are going to have them for dinner to-morrow night. I heard the two of them gloating over it when I was on sentry. I think, Jim, it 'ud be a Christian act to save them two ould gentlemen from havin' indigestion. Bob Thompson is game. An' I owe one to ould Pat Slides!"

Jim Brotherton laughed. He also owed the colonel a grudge.

"Right!" he said. "I'm with you!"

The three conspirators stole out, and, taking a circuitous route, passed the sentry on the hospital mortuary unobserved.

"There is a fire in the hospital kitchen," said O'Hara. "We can cook the bastes there, an' nobody else will be the wiser."

The two turkeys were promptly put beyond the troubles of life, and in a few minutes were sizzling in the oven of the kitchen.

But with the capture of the turkeys the excitement had left Jim Brotherton. The practical joke on his colonel was well enough, but, after all, it was a childish escapade, he thought. He had no appetite for the delicacies. Leaving his comrades, he started to make his way back to the guard-room. His mind was still dwelling on the woman who had flitted from him three years before. Suddenly he found himself close to the sentry. It was now two o'clock in the morning. Under the brilliant light of the moon the place looked dreary and awe-inspiring.

All at once the sentry emitted a low cry of fear, and for a moment Jim's heart ceased to beat. Coming down the hill was a figure clad in white—a small figure whose steps wavered uncertainly and from whom rose a low whining cry.

"Scott!" quavered the sentry. Then, a sense of his duty returning to him, he challenged. "Halt! Who comes there?"

There was no reply, but the low, whining moan persisted, and the figure continued to come towards him.

"Who—who are you?" he tried to shout, but the words died in his throat. Fear would have induced him to run, but dread of the punishment that would inevitably follow chained him to his duty.

"Stop," he gasped, "or I'll fire!"

But still the figure came towards him, moaning and sobbing. He raised his rifle to his shoulder, but at that moment Jim Brotherton sprang over the low wall.



chen," said O'Hara. "We can cook the bastes there, an' nobody else will be the wiser."

The two turkeys were promptly put beyond the troubles of life, and in a few minutes were sizzling in the oven of the kitchen.

But with the capture of the turkeys the excitement had left Jim Brotherton. The practical joke on his colonel was well enough, but, after all, it was a childish escapade, he thought. He had no appetite for the delicacies. Leaving his comrades, he started to make his way back to the guard-room. His mind was still dwelling on the woman who had flitted from him three years before. Suddenly he found himself close to the sentry. It was now two o'clock in the morning. Under the brilliant light of the moon the place looked dreary and awe-inspiring.

All at once the sentry emitted a low cry of fear, and for a moment Jim's heart ceased to beat. Coming down the hill was a figure clad in white—a small figure whose steps wavered uncertainly and from whom rose a low whining cry.

"Scott!" quavered the sentry. Then, a sense of his duty returning to him, he challenged. "Halt! Who comes there?"

There was no reply, but the low, whining moan persisted, and the figure continued to come towards him.

"Who—who are you?" he tried to shout, but the words died in his throat. Fear would have induced him to run, but dread of the punishment that would inevitably follow chained him to his duty.

"Stop," he gasped, "or I'll fire!"

But still the figure came towards him, moaning and sobbing. He raised his rifle to his shoulder, but at that moment Jim Brotherton sprang over the low wall.

"It is a life, you fool!" he called out, as he threw himself in front of the terror-stricken sentry.

He was too late. The man pulled the trigger and Jim received the bullet in his thigh. He sank on the ground, but faint from loss of blood, as a little child, clad only in his nightgown, ran forward and looked up innocently in the sentry's face.

"I want my mummy! Where is my mummy?" he wailed.

Alarmed by the report of the rifle, the sergeant and two men doubled to the spot.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the former.

Before the sentry could reply, a young woman dashed down the hill, and rushing to the child, clutched him to her bosom.

"Oh, Jimmy," she cried, "why did you leave your bed?"

"I want my mummy!" wailed the child dismally.

The sergeant was kneeling beside the wounded man.

"How did this happen?" he demanded sternly of the sentry. The paroxysm of terror had left the young soldier, and he entered into a lame explanation. The girl ceased hugging the child to listen. She looked into the face of the man on the ground, and gave vent to a stifled shriek.

"Oh, heavens, Jim!"

Brotherton looked up at her, and a feeling of wonder came over him, for the face looking down into his with streaming eyes was the face of Elsie Chambers, as he had known her years before.

"Elsie!" he said weakly. "Elsie, I—I saved your boy!"

A look of dark anger flashed over the girl's face.

"Elsie!" she echoed. "Much Elsie carest?"

Jim Brotherton was carried into hospital. The girl, the child in her arms, went meekly behind. The sound of music came from where the festivities were still being kept up. The girl's face became stern in its determination. She followed the sound till she came to a large room whence came the noise of dancing and loud laughter. For a moment she stood undecided outside the door, then she walked boldly in. Elsie Mansfield stood in the middle of the room, her partner's arm round her waist. When her eyes fell on the other woman she flushed angrily.

"Maggie," she cried, "what are you doing here, and why have you brought the child?"

The girl gave her a look of contempt.

"Go home, Elsie," she said, "and take the child. Thank Providence that he is alive. Through your conduct to-night a man may lose his life!"

"What do you mean?" gasped the other woman.

"Simply this. The child got out of his bed in search of you, and it was only through a man of the West Devon Regiment taking the bullet in his own body that the baby is not dead at this moment."

Elsie looked at her sister stupidly.

"A man of the West Devon Regiment!" she said, with a queer tremor in her voice.

"Yes," replied Maggie scathingly. "The man whose life you ruined."

A fortnight after Christmas Maggie Chambers sat by Jim Brotherton's bedside. Every afternoon since the accident occurred she had sat there, her heart full of sympathy for the man who had risked his life for the child of the woman who had treated him so badly. The wound was rapidly healing, but he was still weak.

From time to time he looked into the girl's face wonderingly. The features were those of Elsie Chambers. There were the same deep blue eyes, the same golden curls, but the expression on the features was tender and womanly.



that he is alive. Through your conduct to-night a man may lose his life!"

"What do you mean?" gasped the other woman.

"Simply this. The child got out of his bed in search of you, and it was only through a man of the West Devon Regiment taking the bullet in his own body that the baby is not dead at this moment."

Elsie looked at her sister stupidly.

"A man of the West Devon Regiment!" she said, with a queer tremor in her voice.

"Yes," replied Maggie scathingly. "The man whose life you ruined."

A fortnight after Christmas Maggie Chambers sat by Jim Brotherton's bedside. Every afternoon since the accident occurred she had sat there, her heart full of sympathy for the man who had risked his life for the child of the woman who had treated him so badly. The wound was rapidly healing, but he was still weak.

From time to time he looked into the girl's face wonderingly. The features were those of Elsie Chambers. There were the same deep blue eyes, the same golden curls, but the expression on the features was tender and womanly.

She bent forward, and placed her cool hand on his forehead.

"Are you feeling better?" she asked gently.

Jim Brotherton smiled up at her.

"I cannot believe that you are not Elsie," he murmured. "And yet—"

"And yet what?" asked Maggie dolefully.

"You—you are different."

"Yes, we are different," said the girl, flushing a little. "We are twin sisters, but we are different."

"Twin sisters? But I never saw you when—I knew Elsie."

"I know you didn't," the girl returned quickly, "but I often saw you, and was sorry for you."

"Because I knew that Elsie was fooling you."

"How did you know?"

For an instant the girl looked into Jim's face, then she bent forward with her head on her hands and burst into a flood of tears.

"Maggie," he said, "when I get better I am going to leave the Service."

"Yes," said the girl.

"I am going to turn over a new leaf. I have enough to live on and to share with another. Will you be the one to share it with me?"

"I mean will you be my wife?"

A joyous light leapt to the girl's eyes.—London Answers.

Mourning at Yuletide.

Through in most civilized countries and towns Christmas is a time of gladness. There are some places where the festive time is mourned over. This is so with Santiago, the capital of Chili; for during Christmastide, just eight-and-thirty years ago, she was plunged into the depths of despair by a catastrophe such as has never in modern times befallen the metropolis of a civilized State. The scene of the terrible occurrence was the cathedral-church of La Campana. A grand religious festival was taking place, and the magnificent building was thronged with more than 3,000 worshippers, the elite of the gay Spanish-American city. Twelve thousand silver lamps shed a brilliant radiance over the mass of muslin and drapery below, and the acolytes were busy lighting the 1,600 tapers on the grand altar, when there arose a sudden cry of "Fire!" A candle had been overturned, and in an instant almost the interior of the cathedral was in flames. Many of those imprisoned within were rescued through the windows, for the one door was quickly blocked; but, when all was over, it was found that more than 2,000 of Santiago's bravest and best had perished.

A Curious Custom.

The King of Spain always enjoys himself at Christmas, and he does not fail to play the chief part in the wonderful ceremony performed for centuries on Christmas Eve at the Spanish Court, when a crib is set up, and the Sovereign, tambourine in hand, followed by his Ministers, dances round the cradle of the babe. To us it may seem a curious custom. To him, as King of Spain, it seems the most natural thing in the world, and he dances with a will.

## Holiday Goodies

A Combination Cooky Recipe.—Mix together 1 cup each lard, sugar, molasses (N.O. or "black stripe"), 1 cup sour milk in which dissolve 1 teaspoonful soda, 1 tablespoon ginger, and flour enough for roll stiff. The same stirred up stiff and baked in a shallow dripping pan makes fine, soft gingerbread, which is nice frosted with a white icing. For fruit cake, use same recipe, leaving out ginger and using instead 1 tablespoon cinnamon and ½ teaspoonful each cloves and nutmegs, 1 lb. seeded raisins, and flour enough to make as stiff as can be stirred. Add more fruit if liked. Bake in good-sized dripping pan. If this cake should get stale it can be used for a pudding. Cut off the number of slices required and steam 10 minutes. Serve warm on individual plates, with a warm sauce made by boiling together 1 cup sugar, ½ cup butter, juice of ½ lemon, 1 heaping tablespoon flour and 1½ cups hot water.

Current Cookies.—To 1 quart flour add 2 teaspoonfuls baking powder and 1 scant teaspoonful salt. Sift well together, then add 1 cup sugar and 1 cup lard. Cut the lard well into the flour, then stir in 1½ cups water. Take ½ lb. cleaned currants, sift over them ½ cup flour, mix well, then add to the batter and work all together until of the consistency of biscuit dough. Turn on to a well-floured board, roll ¼-inch thick, and cut with the biscuit cutter. Lay out on a well-greased and flour-dredged baking pan, and bake in a hot oven. As soon as the bottom of the cakes are brown, transfer the pan to the upper oven shelf for the tops to brown. This recipe will make about 40 cookies.

Molasses Coffee Cookies.—Cream scant ½ cup butter and ¼ cup lard with 1 cup sugar. Add 1 egg, 1 cup molasses, 1 teaspoonful soda dissolved in ½ cup strong black coffee, and 2 teaspoonfuls ginger sifted with flour enough to make a dough that can be easily handled. Roll, cut and bake in hot oven.

Caraway Cookies (No Eggs).—To 1 cup sugar add ½ cup each lard, sour cream, and sour milk, ½ teaspoonful soda, ½ teaspoonful caraway seed, and flour enough to make a stiff dough.

Ginger Snaps.—Cream 1 cup shortening with 1 cup sugar and add 1 beaten egg. Let 1 cup molasses come to a boil, then add 1 tablespoonful soda, pour in over the first ingredients, then stir into the mixture 1 tablespoonful each of ginger and salt, 4 tablespoonfuls vinegar, and flour to roll.

Oatmeal Crisps.—To 1 cup sugar add 1 tablespoonful butter, 2 beaten eggs, 2½ cups rolled oats, ½ cup flour sifted with 2 teaspoonfuls baking powder and a pinch of salt, and 1 teaspoonful vanilla. Drop by spoonfuls on well-greased tins and bake quickly.

A Christmas Carol.

"What means this glory round our feet," The magi mused, "more bright than morn?"

And voices chanted, clear and sweet, "To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

"What means that star," the shepherds said, "That brightens through the rocky glen?"

And angels answering overhead, Sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men!"

Tis eighteen hundred years and more since those sweet oracles were dumb;

We wait for him like those of yore; Alas! He seems so slow to come.

But it was said in words of gold, No time or sorrow e'er shall dim, That little children might be bold In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine A light like that the wise men saw, If we our loving wills incline To that sweet life which is the law.

So shall we learn to understand The simple faith of shepherds then, And, clasping kindly hand in hand, Sing, "Peace on earth, good will to men!"

And they who do their souls no wrong But keep at eve the faith of morn, Shall daily hear the angel-song, "To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"

—James Russell Lowell.

Peace on Earth.

The air is white with snowflakes That fall in a glistening shower, And the earth is wrapt in silence, Save the chiming that ring the hour.

O'er all the earth is fleeting, And glows in every breast, The spirit of cheer and loving That makes the Christmas feast.

And from the old bell tower, In tones most low and sweet, The bells chime forth the hour— The Christmas dawn to greet.

They usher in the morning, Proclaim to all the land The tidings of the season— That Christmas is at hand.

And Jimpsy and Joe, when they marched in, you know, There at home, with new suits, both their parents says "Oh! What de-fishanous rare little children you air, W'y you got the best Uncle tha' is anywhere!"

But their Uncle just pats the boys' heads and says, "Rats!" In a whisper to them—"Parents purr same as cats."

Then he kissed 'em and rose and fished round in his clothes. And lit his old pipe with the end of his nose.

Red and green snow has been seen in Greenland.

"My dear," said Mrs. Stronge, "I'm sure that our George is thinking seriously of matrimony."

"Well, I only hope so," returned her husband, with unusual spirit. "I wouldn't like any boy of mine to regard it as a joke."

And Jimpsy and Joe, when they marched in, you know, There at home, with new suits, both their parents says "Oh! What de-fishanous rare little children you air, W'y you got the best Uncle tha' is anywhere!"

But their Uncle just pats the boys' heads and says, "Rats!" In a whisper to them—"Parents purr same as cats."