



The Domestic Adventures

By Joshua Daskam Bacon
(Continued from last week)

"Well, that's the first time I ever heard any complaints of a young one for being too well behaved!" she said good-naturedly. "But it's always so with single ladies; they're forever workin' themselves up over the young one more than those that have 'em! Haven't you noticed it?"

I have never been able to decide whether May was as ingenious as she looked or whether these remarks were part of a deep-laid plan to keep me out of her way. In the latter case she certainly succeeded; how I used to long to be married—or to have been married—so that I could have had some basis on which to meet her statements!

Take the matter of Solly, for instance. It could not have been wise to allow a child of his age to eat crackers and fruit continually; as Mr. Van Ness put it—very satisfactorily, I thought—the most elementary knowledge of the construction and capacity of the human stomach refutes all the pretensions of matrimony as such, no matter how thoroughly or frequently experienced.

It was the effort of my life, at that time, to keep Solly and Mr. Van Ness apart, and so, somewhat naturally, I suppose, I got to connect them hopelessly in my mind—I do to this day, though I suppose no two persons on the face of the earth were ever more unlike.

Mr. Van Ness has been taking Chloe out in the country on long drives a great deal of late, and we are beginning to feel that he may be the one, after all. I remember now that we often spoke of it, Sabina and I, when he met Chloe a year ago. He had come to see Sabina with his sister, a society woman, who wanted to have some articles written about a pet charity of hers; it was a boarding house for neglected birds, or something like that, and she hoped the magazine would take the matter up.

He looked like some illustration for a modern story; I had no idea any one's clothes could fit so well outside the tailor's pictures. His hair is very striking and he is just a little portly, as a successful broker ought to be; Sabina says; Chloe was much impressed by him. We decided that the impression was mutual, when, after hearing that Chloe was almost always with us on Friday evenings, he appeared on the very next Friday with an invitation for Sabina to come to luncheon at his sister's and meet some influential remoter about the neglected birds' boarding house. Sabina is not given to match-making for Chloe, but she admitted that everything considered, especially the United States mail facilities, it was rather marked.

He even turned up at his sister's after the luncheon, which was very mixed and expensive and amusing, and asked Sabina if her vivacious young friend was well; and after Sabina had assured him of the state of Chloe's health, which is always perfect, she decided that the least she could do was to ask him to call—

Miss Mason's is no place to invite any one to visit, except on business. So he has been coming off and on

since then, and Chloe has always been very charming, but nothing seems to have come of it. Of course, he is too old for her, for he must be fifty, and that is nearly twice her age, but in Chloe's case there is a great deal to be considered. She has been so much with very wealthy people that her tastes and habits have grown frightfully expensive; and then she has always been petted so much that even young people indulge her and treat her just as Mr. Van Ness does, so I really doubt if she sees much difference between his age and Mr. Ogden's.

He was very much entertained by my efforts to drive Solly outdoors to play—I simply could not go about my business, feeling that somewhere above my head that soiled and silent little boy was sitting eating, eating steadily, in one fixed place—and at the same time keep him from the sight of chance callers in the afternoon. And though he concealed it perfectly, in what Chloe calls his graven-image manner, I am sure he

event of the luncheon to which he was invited, together with the Stuyvesants. Chloe thought we had better entertain them at one time, and though I did not think so, Sabina pointed out that she probably wanted to show him to Anna and Satterlee; and when I remembered that it would only be a question of a few more mushrooms, and a few more strawberries to make the most delicious fruit ice cream imaginable—and then they would both be off our minds, I agreed. He had Mamie's aunt to be; and though May was terribly procrastinating and used to leave everything till the very last minute, and then do the things in the untideliest fashion possible, advising me not to worry, because a married woman with experience was not likely to be rattled, as she put it, by having to hurry a little, she really knew how to cook and used to bring good results out of all her heart-breaking disorder. So I wasn't too bothered over the dinner, particularly as it was the expense of things that May did best; she never took much interest in what Chloe describes as our quiet and retrenching dishes.

"Since you're all alone for luncheon I'll scramble you a couple of eggs," she used to say to me. "A lady, as you're placed, don't care for much at noon when she's alone, us'ally."

Now, I happen to have a reasonably good appetite, and I suppose I might have been allowed to gratify it if I had been married; as it was, I used to tempt the eggs and practise scathing remarks to myself.

But May was far too hospitable and too frankly interested in Mr. Van Ness to wish to avoid any painstaking on his account, and I am convinced that it was so only in order to keep herself on some soft-shelled crabs for him that she asked me to attend to the marketing for her, and snuggled Solly upstairs, where was his day for the nursery, and Sabina was in the house, a combination of circumstances which I had vowed should never find him on the premises. As a matter of fact, the annoyances I had foreseen had never occurred, so far as Solly was concerned, and beyond advising me to let him alone, Sabina had never mentioned him.

Now, by failing to take him with her when she went to the village, May lost her opportunity to carry Solly to the nursery, and I forgive him completely. Anybody would have Sabina maintain that no one who encountered him as she did could ever forget him, no matter how preoccupied she might afterward become; but then, few people would be likely to encounter Solly as she did. For Sabina, sitting into her own porch—our dining chairs are enormous; Mrs. Stuyvesant got them for her country house and didn't like them—at down with great dignity upon Solly, who for some inappreciable reason had fallen asleep there.

I have never known Sabina to be so unstrung but once, when the ceiling of the bath room above us fell down and the water poured over her. But terrible and unexpected as that catastrophe was, she says it was on the whole less distressing to her nervous tissue than the one I have just mentioned. She shrieked and turned perfectly white, and her claims fell into her lap. Everybody rushed to her, and she started up, positively trembling with horror.

"What—what—oh, tell me!" she gasped, pointing behind her. Sabina might more than be said to have just to state here, though it is really very becoming to her.

"It's Solly!" I whispered, and Chloe says that only then and only for a moment Mr. Van Ness's nose was red. All through the luncheon, though Anna Stuyvesant was positively incoherent and Satterlee exploded from time to time without the least apology, Mr. Van Ness was as dignified and imperturbable as though he had been

THE PARABLE OF THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING

By Rev. William E. Barton, D.D.



LIFE IS A CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

It is long and deep. We cannot see to the bottom of it, nor reach our presents at a single snatch; we must take them out one by one.



THANK GOD for the length of the stocking, and for the variety of its contents! Thank Him for the gifts that bulge out at the top—the big red apple and the candy bag—the commonplace blessings we learned to expect. Thank Him for the gifts that are new every morning and fresh every evening, and that come with Christmas every year. Thank Him for the providence that holds undiscovered presents underneath, and keeps them for the sweet surprise. And thank Him yet again that we do not find all the presents we have marked on the Christmas list of our desires, but that we have something left for which to hang up our stockings when Christmas comes again!



LIFE IS A CHRISTMAS STOCKING. It is long and deep. Take your blessings from the top one at a time, gratefully, but not too fast or eagerly; enjoy them and be generous with them, and reach down again! For some of the dearest gifts of the love of God are hidden so deep that we find them only when we have come to believe that life is empty and sad, just when most we need to find the choicest and best of all the secrets of His never-failing goodness towards His children. And when you have reached the very bottom, hang up the stocking of your hope again; for God has other Christmas gifts for you in the world from which Christmas comes.