

sumption on Winny Dunbar's part. And all the while she knew that never in her life had she enjoyed a shopping expedition so much. People were certainly very friendly; one anxious-eyed mother at the book counter actually asked her advice.

'How old is your daughter?' Miss Amanda questioned.

'Fifteen,' the other answered.

Miss Amanda held out 'Little Women' and 'Under the Lilacs.' 'I am choosing these for my—adopted—niece.' The words sent a pleasant thrill through her.

Later, sipping her tea in one corner of the crowded restaurant, Miss Amanda suddenly decided to postpone the rest of her shopping until the next day, bringing Hetty Ann in town with her. Hetty Ann had never been in town at Christmas time.

Hetty Ann was at the station to meet her, with old Bob and the cutter. She tried dutifully not to see Miss Amanda's bundles—rather a difficult task, considering how bundle-laden Miss Amanda was. There was no shadow on the little brown face; and one glance at it convinced Miss Amanda that, whoever had put that paper in her bag, it had not been Hetty Ann.

'Hetty Ann,' she asked abruptly as old Bob picked his slow way up the hill toward home, 'would you like to go in town with me to-morrow?'

Hetty Ann's brown eyes shone. 'Oh, Miss Amanda!'

'I've got some more shopping to do. It's past belief how crowded the stores are; it takes a sight of time to get anything done. We'll take that early train.'

'Yes'm,' Hetty Ann answered; and lost herself in dreams of the coming treat. She was glad Winny had let her off from that promise—she could do her shopping in town now, instead of down at the village store.

When she came to say good-night that evening Miss Amanda slipped a crisp new bill into her hand: 'I reckon you'll want to do some buying on your own account to-morrow,' she said.

Hetty Ann flushed with pleasure. 'But Miss Amanda, I've got something saved up—most three dollars. You—you—wouldn't want me to spend nearly eight dollars, would you?'

Her day's experiences had swept Miss Amanda far out from her quiet, accustomed channel. 'Well,' she said slowly, 'I shouldn't like you to spend it foolishly, Hetty Ann; but—well, I reckon there ain't much use laying down hard and fast rules at Christmas time. After all, Christmas only comes once a year.'

Hetty Ann came home from that shopping expedition in much the same state of mental bewilderment, as to her personal identity, as had perplexed the old woman who 'went to market all on a market day.'

Never in all her fourteen and a half years had Hetty Ann known such a day of varying and bewildering delights. The busy streets, the shop windows with their glimpses into wonderlands Hetty Ann had never dreamed of as existing, the crowded stores, the shopping itself, with its sense of mystery, when at times she and Miss Amanda went their separate ways. And through it all, intensifying the pleasure, the recognition of something different, hardly to be defined, in Miss Amanda's manner.

'As if,' Hetty Ann snuggled down still further under the warm bedclothes, 'as if we really and truly did belong to each other.'

Christmas was a beautiful time, Hetty Ann thought; if only Winny hadn't told her what her presents were to be—still, they were Christmas presents from Miss Amanda, and she should love them—every one; after all, it was not so much what they were, as that Miss Amanda was giving them to her, that counted. And if Miss Amanda liked, Hetty Ann decided sleepily, why, she would wear brown all her life.

When Hetty Ann came downstairs on Christmas morning, she found the sitting-room wearing a most unmistakable air of Christmas festivity. There were wreaths of evergreen at the windows; and here and there about the room Miss Amanda had fastened

sprays of holly. And at Hetty Ann's place on the breakfast table was an array of parcels, large and small.

Hetty Ann caught her breath; she couldn't know what was in them all!

She had brought down a little pile of packages for Miss Amanda's end of the table. Hetty Ann had spent all her money for Miss Amanda and Winny, and the neighbors' children and Jake, the hired man—she hoped Miss Amanda wouldn't think she had spent it foolishly.

Evidently, Miss Amanda did not. She looked with pleased, approving eyes at the fur-lined slippers, the pretty neckwear, and all her other new possessions. 'I must say, Hetty Ann,' she said heartily, 'you spent your money real sensibly.'

Hetty Ann's presents were unwrapped by now; in her brown cheeks was a glow just the color of the crimson holly berries. Miss Amanda had bought everything on that list of Winny's, not forgetting the candy; and she had even added one or two articles of her own choosing.

'Oh!' Hetty Ann cried, 'how did you know just what I wanted?' She stroked the folds of her red serge lovingly.

'I found out—quite by—accident,' Miss Amanda answered. 'Hetty Ann, I reckon if you help real good, we ought to get that dress done for you to wear to the Christmas tree on Wednesday night. You might run over after breakfast and ask Mrs. Dunbar to let me take the pattern of Winny's dress. We might as well make this up a bit tasty, I suppose.'

'Oh!' Hetty Ann cried again. 'I just can't thank you, Miss Amanda.'

Miss Amanda flushed. 'It seems to me, Hetty Ann, that you might make it, Aunt Amanda; it wouldn't sound so sort of—formal.'

And Hetty Ann's Christmas cup of joy was full.

THE SHIP'S BELL

Within two days of her destination, the steamship Northgate, of the Jellicoe Line—Captain Pritchard—Liverpool to Halifax, ran into difficult weather. The wind went dead east, blowing hard and attended by the thick fog and sleet which invariably accompany easterly gales in that chilly latitude. The ship crept along at half-speed, feeling her troubled way with consummate care and with frequently repeated mournful echoes from her siren. But the fog hung before her like a curtain, stifling the warning screams and muffling every sound aboard.

The captain and the second officer were on the bridge, chilly in their oilskins, and silent. There was nothing more to be said about the weather, and there was no cheerful influence to encourage conversation. Suddenly, however, an invisible sailor below struck an invisible ship's bell, whose notes broke the silence sullenly and briefly.

A moment later Captain Pritchard turned towards his subordinate. Tired of the weather before, he was now weary of the silence, and the voice of the bell had suggested a theme.

'I never hear a bell,' he said abruptly, 'without remembering something that happened when I was a child. Were you always normal, Gibbs?'

'Normal, sir?' asked Gibbs, an unimaginative young man from Newcastle.

'Yes, normal—ordinary, and not extraordinary.'

The captain did not express himself happily. Apparently becoming conscious of this, he passed on.

'For my own part,' he said, 'I believe I was not. I must have been curiously fanciful. I remember some of these fancies even now. That affair of the bell, however, was not exactly a fancy; it might rather be called a curious experience. It did not trouble my parents much, so they must have explained it in some satisfactory way. I was too young then to be given the scientific explanation, and I have never troubled to get one since. Probably any doctor could give me one at five minutes' notice.'

Ken. Mayo

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