WHERE LOYALTY ENDS

By J. B. M. CLARK

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THE news of Whitcombe's trouble exploded like a bomb in the office of the Display Advertising company and left Stebbins, the assistant and bookkeeper, and Miss Wilcox, the stenographer and filing clerk, pale and bewildered. It came in the form of a note from Whitcombe himself, written from a hotel in the neighboring town, and broke the unpleasant intelligence in the graceful manner in which Whitcombe usually expressed himself. "An unfortunate affair that happened some years ago," he wrote, "and which I had hoped had been buried in the dead past for good and all, has been revived by some malicious person, and the law is seeking to lay hands on me. The matter could be easily explained to reasonable people, but the law, to quote Mr. Bumble, is ever 'an ass and an idiot.' I have, therefore, decided to withdraw from the scene for a time. You and Miss Wilcox are hereby released from any obligation, moral or otherwise." That was all. Nothing about salaries for that month (then due), or what was to be done about the business, or anything.

"Mr. Whitcombe of all men!" said Kitty Wilcox from between pale lips. "I would have trusted him anywhere. Such a good business man he always seemed to me—so masterful." Kitty had fallen for the masterfulness of Mr. Whitcombe from the day he had engaged her.

"You see he never confided anything to me about the inside affairs of the company, and he kept the cash and the bank book himself," said Stebbins, a tall, abstracted, mild man whose disordered raiment had always been a source of irritation to Miss Wilcox. "I have no idea what's what, I'll go around and see the bank. But Whitcombe was always decent to me—paid me my salary regularly and all that. We might try and carry on his business for him. I suppose he'll turn up again—get a settlement or something—"

"I think that would only be doing the right thing," said Miss Wilcox, eyeing Stebbins gratefully. "I am sure the business will make out."

The financial situation, however, proved on investigation to be bad. What Whitcombe had done with the cash that came in could not be ascertained. Very little of it was in the bank. Stebbins and Miss Wilcox managed to struggle along for a couple of months in heroic fashion. But then the end came. It came in the shape of a sheriff's officer with a writ of seizure. There had, it appeared, been a silent partner, one Spencer, who had accepted Whitcombe's note. The news of the latter's hurried departure had evidently reached this gentleman and he wanted his pound of flesh. He seized what there was to seize—which was not a great deal. But it rendered the situation hopeless. Stebbins and Miss Wilcox took counsel once more.

"That eliminates Whitcombe once and for all—poor chap," said Stebbins. "And now that we are down to zero again financially I don't see anything for it but to wind up. And yet there are several good prospects—I believe the thing is going to go. But I would need to raise capital somewhere. I think we could swing it with a thousand dollars. But I don't know where to get it." He sagged dejectedly in his chair.

Miss Wilcox puckered her brow in deep thought. "Well, I'll tell you something, Mr. Stebbins," she said at length. "There is no doubt that Mr. Whitcombe by his energy and enterprise laid the foundation for success, although of course you have done wonders in following up. Let's be loyal to the absent one a little longer. Things may come right with him yet. Now I have a little money—partly saved and partly left me by an aunt. I'll put up the thousand dollars you need. We will make a business of it between us."

Stebbins could only grasp his admiring astonishment. "There are some good sports in the world yet," was his comment. "I don't mind sticking it awhile yet for old Whitcombe's sake. I'm a little doubtful now whether he really deserves it—but I will give him the benefit of the doubt since you wish it." Miss Wilcox blushed a little at this and made no reply. "At any rate," Stebbins continued, "it's your business now. And I am your very humble servant." He said this quite gallantly, such had been the effect of Miss Wilcox's coaching since they had worked together. Indeed it was on the tip of his tongue to add: "and admirer," but he thought it might look like taking an unfair advantage. Besides he saw clearly enough that she still admired Whitcombe, and he reflected (somewhat bitterly) that if Whitcombe did show up again and clear himself, he (Stebbins) would not have much chance. Deep in his heart he caught himself harboring the disloyal wish that Whitcombe might be gone for good.

It was hard, uphill work for a while after that, but ultimately they began to draw ahead. Miss Wilcox developed an unexpected capacity for advertising slogans, and made several pronounced hits. Stebbins, who had never dreamt he might make a solicitor, began to find that men would listen to him—that he could actually persuade them to do what he wanted. Miss Wilcox, of course, was his inspiration, and he told her so. But she said that all she knew she had learned by studying Mr. Whitcombe. The business grew apace; the staff was increased by the addition of a draftsman and a girl to relieve Miss Wilcox of the typing.

And then Mr. Whitcombe returned. He came in one evening when Miss Wilcox happened to have gone back to the office to clean up some arrears. He found her alone in the inner room. Whitcombe was slender, graceful, curled, immaculate, and undaunted in the most trying circumstances. He was undaunted now, as he shook hands with Miss Wilcox, while his keen eyes took in the air of prosperity and the signs of increased business. "I got my little affair straightened out," he said cheerily. "It was all very foolish—mostly misunderstanding. I have seen Spencer, too—about the note, you know. Too bad the mean devil cleaned the place out. But you're still going, I see. Who's the financial genius?" He glanced at Miss Wilcox appreciatively. She was worth glancing at too, with her pretty bare arms, brown eyes, and cheeks flushed with the joy of seeing her hero again. But she proceeded cautiously.

"Mr. Stebbins managed to raise a thousand dollars somewhere," she said demurely. "And so we are carrying on. We thought you might clear yourself and come back some day, and we tried to keep the business going for you. We are doing fairly well."

"Old Stebbins raised a thousand bucks!" said Whitcombe sitting down and laughing heartily. "What do you know about that! How did the poor simp do it?"

"I think he got it from a friend," said Miss Wilcox, losing color slightly. Then she appeared to enter into his mood, for her eyes met his understandingly. "But of course he is kinda simple—and slow," she said. "We have to push him along."

"You're a bright little kid," said Whitcombe admiringly. "That's why I chose you—and for your good looks. I don't suppose there's any cash about the place? I'm a little short." His eyes glistened avariciously.

"There's only a few dollars in the petty cash box," said Miss Wilcox, again meeting his eye understandingly. "But I can write a check—I keep the cash now. There's five hundred dollars in the bank."

"Would you write me a check for $500, Miss Pretty?" said Whitcombe advancing towards her and taking her hands in his. "Would you do that for me?"

"Would I!" she said drawing her hands swiftly from his grasp and rising to face him. Before the indignant anger that blazed in her eyes he seemed to shrink within his clothes. "And so the first thing you sought to do on your return was to miscall and rob your best friend—the man who has actually built up this business for you against your return. No, I wouldn't give you one cent—neither would Mr. Stebbins—"

"I'm not so sure about that, Kitty," said Stebbins' voice from somewhere outside. He had come quietly in, and now appeared in the doorway of the private office. "It's as well as I happened up—just saw the lights burning from the street." He crossed to Miss Wilcox's side and put his arm around her. "I believe I might give him some money, Kitty—if I had any to give. But I don't think there's time to go into money matters, Whitcombe. I saw one of the sheriff's men that was up here before, hanging around at the entrance to the building. I think you could get down the freight elevator if you went quickly." Whitcombe went. And Mr. and Mrs. Stebbins are running the business to this day.

Natural Bridge of Virginia

The Natural bridge of Virginia spans Cedar creek, at a height of 215 feet above the surface of that stream. The bridge, like the famous caverns in the same region, was formed by erosion and consists of horizontal strata of limestone, being the remains of the roof of a cave or underground tunnel through which the creek once flowed. The bridge is crossed by Lee highway.

Named for Indian Chief

Sodowsky was the name of the Indian chief from which Sandusky, Ohio, got its name.

Weasel Is Relative of the Sable and Ermine

The weasel family has a corner on the valuable fur market, though the commonly known animal of that name is only a vicious killer of other animals, undignified by furriers except as the little-valued "summer ermine."

His Russian cousins, on the other hand, make the ermine and sable coats which have no peer for fur value. The ermine takes his color from his surroundings, so the most valuable pure white pelts come from far north in Siberia. Sables are hunted in the deep forests where the sun scarcely penetrates, and the difficulties of the hunt (20 pelts is a lucky season for one hunter) and the fact that the hair turns equally in every direction, hence never looks worn, adds to its value.

Mink is another of this handsomely furred family, and the American variety of this species is superior to the Asiatic or Chinese type. Kolinsky, a name once applied to a good Asiatic breed of mink, is now used to refer to the Siberian fur which is long and silky, but has light yellow under fur so that it is almost always dyed to sable or marten tones. The kolinsky furs are always marketed without tails, which are converted into artists' brushes.

The marten, an American cousin of the Russian sable, states a writer in the Philadelphia Record, produces a fine, dense bluish-brown fur with overhairs almost as long as those of the fox. The European baum marten has lighter fur and throat markings, but when dyed so closely resembles Russian sable that only an expert can distinguish the difference.

Just Old Fossils

The age of the prehistoric fossil insects imprisoned in amber has been placed by Harvard scientists at 60,000,000 years, making them among the oldest survivals of life on the earth.

MRS. GREENE sighed as she rummaged through the old trunk for the Christmas decorations. Sighed, and also felt ashamed. For why should she be lonely, with two fine grown sons, successful enough to satisfy any mother?

But Mrs. Greene missed her tousled-headed lads, and as she fingered the battered drum, the outgrown mittens, the books and souvenirs, she felt a deep pang that no one needed her any longer.

She found the decorations and bustled down. Mary, the housekeeper the boys provided, had finished. There was really nothing left to be done. She thought of other tired Christmas eves, and could stand the oppression of memories no longer. "I'm going out," she said, and with no other explanation set out into the night.

It was crisp and starlit, and she walked far. The light and warmth of a cafe attracted her, and she stopped for tea. Over the rim of her teacup her eyes met those of a small boy just outside the window. He drew back shyly, leaving a moist spot where his nose had touched the pane. He looked very hungry, not just the healthy hunger which her sons had brought home from school, but as though he were really in need. Mrs. Greene smiled and beckoned. "Come in," she invited. The boy shook his head, started to go, but the temptation of warmth and food was too much.

"That's better," Mrs. Greene approved, when he was seated opposite her, with a great bowl of soup. "I just needed someone to talk to." And before long she had heard the boy's whole story. Having no folks, he lived with an uncle, but he wanted to get out on his own. There were so many little ones, and after all, he didn't really belong. He'd get by. He knew where he could get a paper route right now, if he only had a bicycle.

"I know where there's a bicycle standing useless in an attic corner," said Mrs. Greene. "It belonged to my sons. You shall have it."

His shining eyes made the whole night seem brighter. They left together.

And Before Long She Heard the Boy's Whole Story.

There was more than the bicycle. It seemed a shame, Mrs. Greene said, for mittens not to be used, and these books, now, and—well, why not? Mary would be scandalized, and her sons might not understand—but there was their room, never opened now—

"Listen, lad," she said. "I've been aching my heart out for a son. And you need a home. Couldn't we give ourselves to each other for a Christmas present? Won't you be my son?"

"Gee!" cried the boy, voicing a wonder of love and gratitude. "You can sure have me, and Merry Christmas! Merry, Merry Christmas, Mother!"

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The CHRISTMAS HARVEST

By ALSON SECOR

in Successful Farming

OLD SANTA CLAUS—
Some don't believe in him because
He makes them spend.
They like to borrow, but never lend
That Christmas cheer
Which permeates this time of year.

They are tight-fisted cynics, these.
They never know how presents please
The little kids, and others;
The sisters and the brothers;
The care-worn dads and weary mothers.

They never learned to live
Because they never learned to give.
You've got to plant before you reap.
If all you get you keep
Your soul gets barren, sterile, sour,
It takes the power
Of cheerful giving
To give a zest to living.

He Sure Was Here

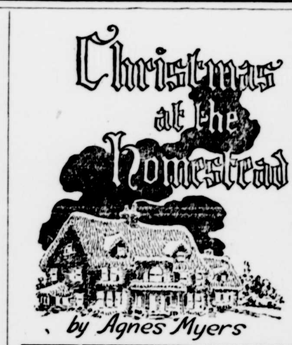
ENGLISH PLUM PUDDING

THERE are those to whom Christmas dinner would not be Christmas dinner without ending with plum pudding. Scald 2½ cups stale breadcrumbs with 1 cup cream. Cream ½ pound beef suet and add to it ½ cup brown sugar, ½ cup corn syrup, 5 well-beaten eggs, ½ pound chopped citron, ½ pound currants, 2 teaspoons baking powder and ½ cup brandy or rum. Turn into a buttered mold and steam for 24 hours, 12 hours one day and 12 hours the next. Turn into a tin and seal until ready for use, when it must be reheated for serving. Serve with a sauce of choice.

Christmas Blooms as an Offering to Holy Child

ON THE first Christmas night, when the shepherds were sent by the angels to kneel before the Child of Bethlehem, a little girl named Madelon, whose brother was a shepherd, followed them to the inn. But when she found that they had brought a pair of doves, some fruits, and honey as offerings to the Holy Child, she felt ashamed to enter empty-handed and turned sadly back toward the lonely hills. Now, as she wandered weeping in the early dawn, a light shone about her and a radiant figure appeared, the glorious Gabriel himself, to ask the reason for her tears. "Because I am so poor I have no offering for the Babe of Bethlehem," she said.

Then, with his shining wings, the angel brushed the ground around them and everywhere sprang up the loveliest white flowers. Eagerly she gathered bunches of the blooms and took them to the Holy Child.



"THE doorbell, Amanda! It may be the man with the hobby-horse," cried Natalie Parker, as she gathered up a confused heap of Christmas ribbons and gay colored wrappings strewn about the sitting room.

There was a sound of quick stamping and crunching of boots on the scraper. The old servant opened the front door and a man set an enormous package in the hall, said something about the blustering snowstorm and was gone.

As the woman carried the package in to Natalie, a chirpy sound of funny little tinkling music issued from the bulky bundle. Her black eyes snapped with delight as she cut the heavy cords.

Out tumbled a hobbyhorse, a handsome fellow with a leather bridle; a white, woolly lamb with button eyes and a bell on his neck; a long-eared rabbit with a perky tail; and a queer little whimsical top that seemed to laugh with merry music every time it was moved. There was a wispy angora cap, just big enough for a baby, and a tiny white muff, oh, so little, of real fur with a tippet to match.

Amanda gasped! "All 'em Chrismas gifts! No one cep'in you, Mis Natly, would ever think of sech things! I jes hopes 'em Harlow chillun 'preciates the—the—" but her voice wavered. The sleeve of her alpaca frock brushed across tear dimmed eyes as she picked up the crumpled brown wrappings and fled from the room.

Early next morning Natalie settled back in a train for a five-hour ride, her heart brimming with happiness.

Many changes had come over the young girl's life. Edith, her older sister, married Arnold Harlow and lived in Hillsboro. Her house adjoined the lovely old rambling stone homestead where Benjamin Parker, a widower, lived with his daughter Natalie and the faithful Amanda. When Mr. Parker passed away Natalie closed the house and went to teach kindergarten in Boston. Amanda went with her.

"Why, Natalie Parker!" Exclaimed the Dumfounded Youth.

The train dashed along through a whirling snowstorm. Deep in the tender mood of reminiscent reverie, Natalie fell asleep.

"Hillsboro!—Hillsboro!"

She awakened with a bound. Clutching her grip, a box of barley candy, and almost dragging the cumbersome and unwieldy pack, Natalie, still half asleep, stepped out at the very end of a long frosty platform.

A tall young man in a big fur coat was waving good-by to someone on the train as it pulled out. In his excitement he took a long, free stride backwards on the platform and crashed into Natalie.

The two went down in the drifted snow in a heap. The cord broke on the big bundle. Helter-skelter the multitude of Christmas gifts scattered in every direction.

They looked at each other in blank astonishment—then amazed recognition.

"Why, Natalie Parker!" gasped the dumbfounded youth.

"Bruce Draper!"—exclaimed the bewildered girl, actually spellbound.

From somewhere in the snow came the sound of queer little rippling music. They looked at each other again with wide open eyes, then burst into rollicking laughter.

They gathered up the wayward toys and Bruce loaded them into his car. With the girl beside him, a triumphant smile played over his face, and they talked excitedly as the motor raced over the hills.

"Mother and Aunt Em just left for grandfather's farm and I'm going up tomorrow, but now tell me about yourself, Natalie."

"Bruce, surprises are so much fun. Edith doesn't know I'm coming."

Natalie got a real surprise, however, in a few moments, for no one was home at her sister's house. After repeated ringing and pounding, she looked at Bruce in dismay.

Her eyes wandered toward the Parker home.

"Oh, Bruce! I have the keys of the stone house! Let's go over and build a fire; we can at least keep warm until they come."

With logs from Harlow's woodpile Bruce soon had a roaring fire romping on the hearth. They stood before the flames, the girl's blond hair like an aureole of gold framing her face; the man, tall and bronzed, alert and capable.

Bruce Soon Had a Roaring Fire Romping on the Hearth.

"Let's look through the house," suggested Natalie, leading the way.

At the turn on the stairs there was a wonderful beehive window on the landing, and a friendly window-seat. They lifted the lid. Many things were stored in the seat.

"What's this box? Candles!—Christmas candles!" called out Bruce. "Let's light up the windows!"

Back down stairs they dashed and soon the rambling stone house was a glitter of lights. Bruce went over to Harlow's to get some more logs, and returned with the wood and a package.

"Natalie, somebody delivered these holly wreaths at Edith's; I found them at the back door. We'll put them in the windows. Ho, ho!—What's this? Mistletoe, too!"

"Here's a footstool, Bruce; tack it on the hall arch."

With a flutter of ecstacy Natalie looked up smiling, but the firm face of Bruce Draper wore an expression of grave appeal. With a combination of strength and tenderness he took her in his arms.

"Dear Natalie, this mistletoe is a symbol of the plighting of love's troth." His voice trembled.

There was a moment of silence, a moment of mutual confidence and understanding which had been almost instantaneous. Her blond head rested in the hollow of his shoulder. Through the half-closed eyes warm tears gathered—his words clung to her senses like a benediction.

• • •

The heavy front door swung open suddenly. There stood Edith, Arnold, little Phillip and Peter—and tiny Marjorie, looking in wonder, as Natalie and Bruce awkwardly stammered and blushed in confusion.

"Well, well," chuckled Arnold, "we saw the lights—we—we thought—er—," and crossing the hall he gripped Bruce firmly with a friendly hand, while Edith kissed her happy-hearted sister.

"Look here, Bruce," said Arnold, "let's make this the reopening of the old homestead and send for Amanda."

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How December 25th Was Named Christ's Birthday

CHRISTMAS, which seems to have been first officially instituted a church feast day by a decree of Pope Telesphorus, between 142 A. D. and 154 A. D., was a movable feast. Indeed, according to a writer in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, it was the most movable of all the Christian festivals.

In A. D. 337 St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, obtained from Pope Julius I authority to appoint a commission to determine, if possible, the precise day of Christ's nativity. From the chronological archives of the Roman censors, establishing the times of occurrence of certain events of the same period of the Roman government of Palestine, the theologians of the Eastern and Western divisions of the Christian church agreed upon December 25 as the date of the birth of Jesus, and thereupon this became the generally accepted Christmas day.

Initials on Linens Stamp You as Chic

It's smart to "be personal" when marking linens, for towels, pillow slips, sheets and even personal "dainties" make known your ownership when embroidered with your very own initials. These are quickly worked in single stitch

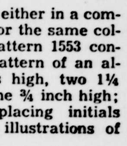
Pattern 1553.

and French knots, either in a combination of colors or the same color throughout. Pattern 1553 contains a transfer pattern of an alphabet 2⅝ inches high, two 1¼ inches high and one ¾ inch high; information for placing initials and monograms; illustrations of all stitches used.

Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle, Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

Uncle Phil Says:



Respect Due Precedent

Respect for precedent has a solid basis. Don't be contemptuous of precedent, but study claims to authority.

If you want to enjoy retrospection, recall your happiness, not your sorrows.

Gossip thrives less among men particularly because it means a black eye if not worse.

But Is He?

By his reason a man endeavors to prove that he is rid of some of his primitive instincts.

It is nonsense to say that no one is interested in the troubles of others. We're not all inhuman.

It is hard to conceal contempt. Something besides words gives you away.

Men have had but one burst of extravagance in clothing in the last 30 years. It was when they paid $8 for a silk shirt.

Or Lacks So in Curiosity?

A phone won't bother you if you calmly go on writing and let it ring; but who has a seraphic temper like that?

Human conscience began to function thousands of years ago. There is a lot of it in the Bible.

There is always a welcome place in the world for the young woman who is determined to be a lady.

Why is it easier to start a forest fire with the mere stub of a cigarette than to set a furnace going with two pounds of kindling wood?

666 checks COLDS and FEVER first day
LIQUID, TABLETS SALVE, NOSE DROPS Headache, 30 minutes.
Try "Rub-My-Tism"—World's Best Liniment
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GET RID OF BIG UGLY PORES

PLENTY OF DATES NOW...DENTON'S FACIAL MAGNESIA MADE HER SKIN FRESH, YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL

Romance hasn't a chance when big ugly pores spoil skin-texture. Men love the soft smoothness of a fresh young complexion. Denton's Facial Magnesia does miracles for unsightly skin. Ugly pores disappear, skin becomes firm and smooth.

Watch your complexion take on new beauty
Even the first few treatments with Denton's Facial Magnesia make a remarkable difference. With the Denton Magic Mirror you can actually see the texture of your skin become smoother day by day. Imperfections are washed clean. Wrinkles gradually disappear. Before you know it Denton's has brought you entirely new skin loveliness.

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You can try Denton's Facial Magnesia on the most liberal offer we have ever made—good for a few weeks only. We will send you a full 12 oz. bottle (retail price $1) *plus* a regular sized box of famous Milnesia Wafers (known throughout the country as the *original* Milk of Magnesia tablets), *plus* the Denton Magic Mirror (shows you what your skin specialist sees) . . . all for only $1! Don't miss out on this remarkable offer. Write today

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