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Puts a Halo on Another Head

By Christopher G. Hazard

Artist Finds New Place for Circle Because of a Service to Mankind

DAVID SPENCER looked again at his watch with some anxiety. The hospitality of the old southern home had been lavish, the exhibition of his paintings had been successful beyond his hopes, there had been congratulations, and flowers, and commissions. Quite overwhelmed with courtesies and attentions, charmed by the quaintness and beauty and customs and scenes new to him, the artist longed to linger, and was loth to leave the old city.

But the train that he must take was almost due, the station was distant, and his hosts had seemingly forgotten all about it, until they suddenly appeared with apologies and delivered him to the black coachman and the family coach. Fortunately, the train, burdened with its load of Christmas cheer, was late, also, so that when it moved on Spencer was among its passengers.

The rather monotonous landscape threw him back upon reflection, and he found himself reviewing the sights and experiences of his visit with pleasant amusement. Again he witnessed the bargaining of the old market. "Is you got any aigs?" "I ain't set dat I ain't." "I ain't axed yer is yo' aint, I axed yer is yo' not."

There's a halo on His head, A halo, oh my Lawd, A crown oh glory w'en I'm dadd, A halo, oh my Lawd.

And I kin feel hit sproutin' now, A halo, oh my Lawd, A crown oh shinin' on my brow, Each time to Him I mek a bow, A halo, oh my Lawd.

As the train sped on the artist's reminiscences were interrupted by the voices of the conductor and one of the passengers. "But this train does not stop at Redfield," the conductor was saying, as he looked at the old man's ticket. "It must stop this time," answered the passenger. "I just got to see Jim once more before he goes. I only got the message this morning. I want to wish him a merry Christmas and a happy New Year where he's goin'."

The conductor hesitated, then seemed to yield as he passed on, and the old man sat back in his seat, unaware of the atmosphere of sympathy around him. Shortly after the bell rope was pulled, the train dove to a halt, and kindly looks followed him down the aisle and on to the platform of the little station.

The incident was barely finished and the train had attained but little headway when there was a sudden and terrible jolt, followed by a crash and the bumping of the cars over the ties, then a stop and an affrighted silence, broken by the voice of the Pullman porter, crying out, "We're run through an open switch and we're wrecked, but ne' min', de train am standin' on de ground!"

In the artist's studio today there is a picture of the Christmas Christ, with the halo that believing love has placed upon His head. And just below it another halo rests upon the head of an old man, pictured there because of his unconscious but real service of mankind.

Ring out! Ring out! ye happy bells, and make a joyous lay, For Christ the child has come to us and we would have him stay; Make every hill and valley ring, all earth and sky with cheer, For we who have received the Christ would show him welcome here.

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That Gobbler for Christmas

By CLARA DELAFIELD

They Just Could Not Kill the Bird They Had Watched Grow Up From Babyhood

AL, m a r m, I might let you have the gobbler for Christmas," said Silas Hicks. "He'll be a fine bird by then. But I dunno. He's the only one I've reared out of that brood, and I'm kinder attached to him."

However, he promised Mrs. James finally to let her have the gobbler. Silas Hicks was not a sentimental man. He was a farmer, and in business for the money it brought him. He had a brother John, who had gone to the city and made money hand over fist. John was a crusty old bachelor and largely devoid of the sense of family obligations.

There had been a time, five years before, when things went badly with Silas. There was a heavy mortgage to meet, the crops had been a failure, and he had been in danger of dispossession. Besides, his wife was on her sickbed, from which she was never to arise.

Silas had gone in his despair to the brother whom he had not seen for years. John had turned him down flat. "Father left you the farm because you played up to him, and kicked me out into the world," he said. "Now I've made my pile, you have the nerve to come to me for help. I don't see it, Silas."

"My wife's sick," pleaded Silas, "and you've got more money than you know what to do with." "Oh, I can find a use for it," John rejoined caustically. "Maybe if you'd

shown a little sympathy for me when I was hooding it on the sidewalks I'd have a little more for you, Silas." Silas went home. Somehow he managed to survive the crisis. But his wife died, and he grew lonelier and lonelier. If he had had a few thousand dollars he would have sold out and gone south to live, somewhere away from this bleak New England coast. But he could just manage to make both ends meet. Daily he cursed his brother in his heart.

He started raising turkeys, and that was a failure. Only the gobbler lived. He used to watch the bird with interest. The gobbler would come clucking after him for crumbs. And it was odd how it looked like John.

He began to call it John. It had a queer way of putting its head upon one side and calling, as John used to do when he was a boy. Gradually, to old Silas' fancy, the gobbler became an ally of John. He hated it. He hated it, and he was attached, too. He made a sort of pet of the gobbler. He wanted it to love him, so far as a turkey gobbler is capable of love. Then, when Christmas came, he was going to cut its throat very slowly, bending its head back to see the terror in its eyes. He would thus have his revenge upon his brother.

"Yes, marm, John's thriving nicely and putting on flesh," he told Mrs. James. "Here he comes, John! John!" Up came the big gobbler, put its



head on one side and surveyed Silas to see if he had any bread crumbs. "Isn't he the cutest thing!" said Mrs. James. "I don't wonder you can't bear to let me have it, Mr. Hicks!"

"Oh, that'll be all right, marm," responded Silas cheerily. An elemental hatred for the gobbler had come to fill his heart. Christmas was at hand. He pictured how, on the morrow, he would grab the bird, he would insult it with all the turkey abuse that he had picked up from John. It should die slowly, as he would like John to die.

On Christmas morning he received a letter from an unknown correspondent in the city. Opening it, he read his brother John was dead.

John had left forty thousand dollars, half of which was to go to Silas, in memory of our boyhood times together, and in the hope that any ill feeling, if it existed, has long ago been canceled."

Silas stared at the letter. His eyes grew misty. He saw John again as a little boy upon the farm; his heart went out to him across the years. Gobbler! Gobbler! The big turkey was standing in front of him, its head on one side, one claw raised, begging for crumbs.

"You great big faker, you!" bellowed Silas. The gobbler, looking a little alarmed, retreated a step or two.

"Oh, Mr. Hicks, I'm willing to pay for that turkey, but somehow I—I feel I just can't eat him after seeing him grow up from babyhood." "Well, Mrs. James, I was kinder feeling that way myself," said Silas Hicks, scratching his head. "You see, I'm selling out and going south, and I was figuring on taking him along and raising turkeys."