The Ensign And the Poodle Dog

By SEATON LORD

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ENSIGN MARK ATHERTON'S ship arrived at the United States navy yard on Dec. 21. There he learned that the gunboat Concas, on which was his Naval academy chum, Tom Dresser, was expected to arrive the next day. Atherton procured leave to visit his home, but left a note for Dresser asking him to follow and spend Christmas with him. The day after Atherton reached home he went over to Q. to see his aunt, who, next to his mother, was the nearest person to him on earth. While at Q. he received a forwarded telegram from Dresser that he had arrived, was very ill and asked that his friend would come to him at once.

Atherton examined the time tables to find that if he went back home he would lose twenty-four hours. By going over to N., five miles distant, he could get a train to the city in a couple of hours. Since he had ample time he decided to walk. When he reached N. he went into the station ticket office and, looking in his pockets for funds, found that he had left his pocketbook at home. In his vest pocket was 26 cents.

Here was "a pickle"—no funds, friend possibly dying, train to leave in ten minutes.

"What's the time of the next train?" he asked the ticket agent.

"In an hour and twenty minutes."

Atherton went out on the platform to think it over. A card tacked to the wall stared him in the face. It was an advertisement for a lost poodle, with a promised reward of $10 if returned to the owner at 12 Adams avenue. There was a small park near the station, bleak looking at that season, but Atherton thought he would go over and sit down on a bench to concoct some scheme to raise railroad fare. While ruminating he felt something rub his leg and, looking down, saw a poodle. Unfortunately there was no mark on the collar by which he could identify it, but it struck him at once that the dog was too valuable to be running loose and he believed it was the one advertised.

Looking down, he saw a poodle.

Then and there Ensign Atherton conceived a great plan. He would return the poodle, get the reward and be off on the next train. Picking up the dog, he inquired the way to 12 Adams avenue, found the house, rang the bell and asked if the dog belonged there. The servant recognized it at once and showed the young man into the drawing room.

Atherton was in citizen's dress and had not had time since reaching port to get a new outfit he had ordered. Consequently his clothes were somewhat worn and out of style. He decided to play the commoner, thus making it easier for him to accept the reward. When a girl of nineteen of distinguished appearance came into the room he shuddered and hoped sincerely that he would be able to carry out his role. The moment she saw the poodle she took it up and embraced it eagerly.

"Where did you find it?"

"In the park near the railroad station."

"I'm very much obliged."

She looked Atherton over from head to foot, evidently not knowing whether to offer to pay him a reward. Atherton was up to the occasion.

"It's lucky for me, miss," he stammered. "I'm a sailor lad and goin' back to me ship. I've been robbed by land sharks and haven't money enough to buy me ticket."

"Oh!" said the girl, astonished at his humble position. "Wait a minute. I'll go for the money."

She left the room to return with a ten dollar bill, which she handed him.

"I hope you'll reach your ship safely," she said as he went out, "and have a pleasant voyage. I have a [illegible]lor. He's in the navy."

"[illegible]s. Goodby," replied the [illegible]nd he hurried away fear[illegible]e naval officer might run [illegible]ory and ruin him in the [illegible]

[illegible]nd Dresser much better [illegible]ted. Dresser had en[illegible] Christmas with an un[illegible] hours' ride from the [illegible] chums were anxious to [illegible]s together they played [illegible]are to decide whether [illegible] go with Atherton or [illegible]Dresser. Dresser won, which was well, for he was scarcely in a condition to visit strangers. Atherton informed his mother by mail of the change and received her consent.

Soon after the meeting of the chums Atherton told Dresser of his adventure, and upon consultation it was decided that Atherton should return the reward as an anonymous Christmas present. Atherton spent $20 for a gold bracelet and shipped it to the owner of the poodle. He did not know her name, so he addressed it to Miss ——, 12 Adams avenue, N., N. Y. As soon as this was attended to he took the invalid to the station.

"For what place shall I buy the tickets?" asked Atherton.

"N. Didn't I tell you my uncle lived at N.?"

"N.? No. You said he lived at B."

"So he does. B. is the next station above. We always get off at N."

"Why, I returned the poodle at N."

"That's singular."

"I should think so."

Atherton bought the tickets and they were soon bowling over the road. On reaching the station they took a carriage.

"Where do we drive to?" asked Atherton.

"Twelve Adams avenue."

"By the great horn spoon!" fairly shrieked Atherton. "I drive to no such place."

"Why not?"

"It's the house where I received the reward."

"You don't mean it!" Dresser fell back on the cushion. "By thunder, you've received $10 reward money from my Cousin Adele Floyd, and I'm going to take you there as a guest."

If such a problem had baffled the assurances of two ensigns in the United States navy they would not have been worthy to serve their country. They decided to meet the enemy at once and pushed on to 12 Adams avenue. There they found Miss Floyd puzzled over a gold bracelet she had just received by express. On seeing her cousin she forgot everything else than him till she caught sight of his chum; then she stood stock still and stared. He was handsomely dressed, but not sufficiently changed to prevent recognition.

"It seems that we have met before," she said, changing her manner.

"Indeed?" said Atherton, with feigned surprise. "Oh, yes! You are the girl I danced with at the ship's ball when we were at Nice."

They played a game of euchre.

"Not at all. You were here a few days ago. You returned my dog and received the reward."

"You must be mistaken, Del," put in Dresser. "An ensign in the United States navy could not receive a reward for such a service."

There was an interval in which Miss Floyd stared from one to the other. Both saw that she was not quite certain of Atherton's identity and brazened out their position.

"Come," continued Dresser, "you're not complimenting an officer in the navy by taking him for some impostor who probably stole your dog and brought him back for the reward. Give it up or you'll spoil Christmas for all of us."

"Well," said the girl, "I suppose I'm mistaken, though you look enough alike to be twins. But who sent this bracelet?"

"Oh, conscience did that!" said Dresser. "The fellow probably thought what a muffin he'd made of himself and spent the money in a bangle."

At the Christmas dinner which followed Miss Floyd put the chums on tenterhooks by a recital of the episode of her lost poodle, though her innate delicacy prevented her making any mention of the fact that she had mistaken Atherton for the man who had received the reward. This is the way she summed it up:

"I suppose I'm mistaken."

"I am convinced that the fellow stole the dog to get the reward. Then his conscience troubled him, and he bought a cheap, plated bracelet, probably costing a few dollars, and sent it to me on Christmas day."

During these remarks the actors in the episode sat with rigid faces, very like the figurehead to a ship, neither daring to glance at the other for fear of giving away the truth by an explosion.

It was not till Miss Floyd entered the navy herself some years later as the wife of Mark Atherton—then Lieutenant Atherton—that she learned she had paid her future husband a reward for returning her poodle and then charged him with sending her a cheap, plated bracelet in lieu of conscience money.

The man who takes all his money to the grave with him gets real mad when he finds it won't buy him a reserved seat in heaven.—Boston Republic.

Christmas at One Hundred In the Shade

DALLIANCE had importuned the editor of Everybody's Palladium for a month to commission him to write a story. One day, after he had quite ignored the bohemian on his last dozen calls, the editor said:

"Yes, you can try your hand at a Christmas tale for our December number. I'm going to the mountains to keep cool during dog days. Mail it to me there at the end of this week, and I'll read it immediately."

Now, Dalliance had several Christmas sketches all ready to spin out into stories, but instead of buckling to in good faith and finishing one of them he began to speculate on the idiosyncrasies of the chief of the Palladium.

"What in thunder does he want with a Christmas story in August, with December over three months away? If he'd said Thanksgiving it would be more like it, and then I could work a Christmas story on him later.

"Humph! He's 'going to the mountains to cool off!' Much pleasanter place to pursue the paths of magazine editing than the dingy, dinky quarters of the Palladium. But I'll fix him. Of course he wants a story from my pen, only he's too stingy of courtesy to say so.

"I'm going to keep cool."

"To the mountains to keep cool and wants to read about Christmas sleigh rides and snowdrifts, iceboats and chill wintry blasts blowing through old Santa's whiskers. This is fighting dog days with the mind cure. But his [illegible] not get a mental ice [illegible] from me this trip. [illegible] him into a [illegible] stead and [illegible] tain cool[illegible]

So Dalliance [illegible] spirit of [illegible] pushed his pen [illegible] pushed it for the prospective publisher's check. [illegible] laid the scene of his story in a farmer's kitchen in the middle west. All the family, three generations wide, rallied in the little farmhouse to gorge on grandma's Christmas goodies. The weather clerk lost his reckoning, and it was a green, sticky Christmas. Moreover, the author piled on the agony with a roaring hickory fire, baking, roasting, stewing half a dozen women and girls packed in the fiery kitchen, lost to all discomfort so the feast was done on time and eaten piping hot. Grandpa said, "'Twun't be no C'ris'mus 'thout the ole fireplace a-humpin'!" And so there was a roaring furnace in the dining room, where the overgrown crowd was packed in to dispose of hot bean soup, hot turkey, hot baked potatoes, hot turnips, hot apple sauce, hot plum pudding, hot mince pie and hot coffee.

It was 100 in the shade in Dalliance's city den while he wrote, as well as in the picture he drew, and he was exhausted from the effect of his own medicine when the sketch was finished. But this was a trifle so long as he could parboil the editor of the Palladium. For a week he lived over the details of his joke, sweltering as one can in dog days with flames, heat waves and sissing things before the mind's eye.

Certain of the success of his scheme and the usual gilt edged check, for the Palladium was a liberal paymaster, he decided to blow himself in advance by way of cooling his overheated blood. He haunted the beach and the roof gardens, and, having gorged his stomach with ice water while concocting the red-hot story, he found it necessary to introduce more palatable liquids, and these cost good money. Every night, or, rather, early morning, he happened around to see if the mail had landed his check and, not finding it, lived the story over again, as he thought the editor would find it in his mountain haven. It even delighted him to believe that his victim was having a good long roast. These frequent rehearsals produced the inevitable result of more thirst, more ice water, more staleness of the palate and a desire for liquid that would take hold. Then at length he got his manuscript back with a curt note saying:

It was 100 in the shade.

My Dear Sir—In the same mail with your manuscript came a note from my assistant to the effect that a Christmas story bought last year and somehow mislaid in the Palladium office has turned up. Of course we must use that, so I am compelled to deny myself the personal pleasure it would afford me to read your manuscript in order to return it in time for you to seek a purchaser elsewhere. Thank you just the same for submitting it. THE EDITOR.

Poor Dalliance hadn't even the usual satisfaction of cursing the numskull autocrat for not knowing a good thing when he saw it.

Silver Creek Versus Golden Gulch

By A. B. LEWIS

HOW Silver Creek and Golden Gulch became one was brought about in this manner: For many years keen rivalry had existed between the two towns, which were only a stone's throw from each other. Both claimed to be head and shoulders above the other in enterprise and progressiveness, and one never made a move in public improvement that the other did not go it one better.

When Golden Gulch built a town hall two stories high, Silver Creek built one of three stories. When Silver Creek erected a new jail, its citizens had hardly begun to crow over the matter when Golden Gulch was working overtime to build a better one.

"Who'll be fust?"

And in all other matters there was rivalry. Even when four dwellings burned in Silver Creek one night Golden Gulch sacrificed five of its buildings, just to keep ahead in such matters.

It had been about an even thing between the two towns when one day Bill Stevens caused consternation in Golden Gulch by bringing in the news that Silver Creek "was preparin' fur the whoppinest C'ris'mus celebrashun ever known in the state." When asked for further particulars he said:

"Boys, I've just come from thet dawggoned town, and, though they're keepin' it mighty quiet, I got on to their little surprise party. Them coyotes are goin' to flop us if they kin by hevin' a lynchin' on C'ris'mus!"

"Got a hoss thief, eh?" asked one of the crowd.

"Thet's what they've got, boys," continued Bill, "and they're savin' him fur the occashun. He's to be lynched in the public squar' on C'ris'mus afternoon, and when it becomes known thet Silver Creek kin celebrate her holidays in sich a belittin' manner it 'll boom her like thunder and 'll be all over with us.

"Boys, we've gotter hev two lynchin's or admit we're back numbers. While we ain't got no hoss thieves, thar's plenty of loyal citizens in Silver Creek, and I'm bettin' terbacker ag'in gold dust thet two of 'em will step forward and let us lynch 'em on C'ris'mus and save the town's reputashun. I'll promise 'em thet it will be done in a genteel manner and thet a ten foot monument will be put over their graves to boot. Now, boys, who'll be fust in this matter?"

Bill was alone.

A deep silence followed Bill's query. Two minutes after he had asked the question ten men had left the crowd. Three minutes later a dozen more had disappeared, and five minutes later Bill was quite alone.

As he watched the last of the crowd dodging around a corner there were tears in his eyes as he exclaimed to himself:

"And most of 'em hev sich bewtiful necks fur hangin' too! Waal, we're a licked crowd, but I allus did sorter o reckon thet Silver Creek was a heap sight better town to live in than Golden Gulch, and I'm goin' to make my home thar hereafter."

And there were so many others in the town who suddenly came to this conclusion, especially after the lynching on Christmas, that there was an exodus from Golden Gulch to Silver Creek, and the two towns merged and became one and indivisible.

The Only One In Captivity.

Museum Patron—Well, what new freak have you for the holidays?

Manager—The rarest thing on earth—the man who doesn't buy more Christmas presents than he can afford.

Almost a Love Match.

Ethel—What dowry did the Prince de Rataplan receive from Gwendolyn's father?

Jean—Not more than $1,000,000. You see, it was almost a love match.—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

"He would have run through his fortune in a year if it hadn't been for his wife."

"How did she prevent it?"

"She spent it herself."

The Scientific Rebuff.

Isabel—Are you ever rude?

Dorothy—Oh, yes. One has to be rude now and then to teach other people manners.—Detroit Free Press.

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