



# THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

THE LATHAM  
FOUNDATION  
STORY SERVICE  
FOR THE PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS



No. 71

## JEAN'S BEST GIFT

A LITTLE GIRL'S CHRISTMAS IN OAKLAND OF THE 80'S

By DOLORES WILKINS KENT

CHRISTMAS meant so many wonderful things to Jean—the scent of fir and pine branches decorating the house; mysterious packages, whisked in under her inquisitive little nose and concealed in deep drawers too hard for tiny hands to open, or on top of closet shelves too high for her to climb to; secret whisperings that she must not hear.

For days delicious smells drifted upward from the kitchen, but she was not encouraged to follow mother into that part of the house. "I am too busy to be bothered, dear," mother said. "You play with your toys, and on Christmas you will enjoy all the goodies," she added to console the small maid, but it didn't. Christmas seemed as far away as the moon to a five-year-old child, and the intervening days an eternity.

Jean's father brought home such beautiful magazines filled with colored pictures. To this day she has only to close her eyes and see the *Illustrated London News*, and other foreign Christmas numbers. She can remember the queer smell of their printed pages. The reading matter meant nothing to her at the time, but how she loved the richly colored illustrations! Her mother's *Harper's* always had pictures in the December issue, and her own *St. Nicholas*—its coming was an event. Jean would sit as quietly as a small mouse while father or mother read the stories to her. And the Christmas stories were more wonderful than all the others.

Jean lived on a lovely old street, lined with trees on both sides. The gardens, behind ornamental fences, were masses of flowers between stretches of green lawns, lawns that were starred with daisies in the summertime, and where Jean and her little playmates made daisy chains.

Two days before Christmas the preparations down stairs became hectic. Peeking through the stair banisters, Jean saw a big, big tree being carried into the



"JEAN"

library and later heard mother's light laughter as she and father decorated it.

Jean longed for just one look! But she knew it wouldn't be fair to take even a peek before Christmas; it would hurt the feelings of her parents very much, and perhaps Santa Claus wouldn't come at all!

"What do you want most of all?" father asked, as he kissed the tiny girl good-night on Christmas eve.

"A tricycle—a doll bureau, a playhouse, and—and a real, live dog!" Jean answered breathlessly. "Oh, daddy, please, most of all, a real dog."

Daddy's face clouded and he glanced at mother whose eyes had quickly filled with tears. He answered gravely, "Not for a while, baby; we all miss dear old Dukie too much to have an-

other dog right now—perhaps some day."

Mother had had a beautiful dog named Dukie, who had died about two years before, and she loved him so much that she couldn't bear the thought of another dog in his place. But how could a five-year-old child appreciate her loyalty to her pet? Jean loved animals and wanted a dog of her own.

"But this would be my dog, daddy," she explained timidly.

"Some day, dear," he repeated, "a dog will come to us, perhaps just the way Dukie did." Mother had left the room, so he took his little daughter's hand in his and tried to explain how mother felt.

"But," Jean persisted finally, "if a dog should come to us as Dukie did, could I keep it?" Feeling safe in the thought that things never happen twice in the same way, daddy nodded, and tucked Jean snugly into the covers. Then, turning out the gas, he waved good-night again and left the room.

Jean glanced about her cosy little nursery, dimly illuminated by the night-light burning like a tiny wax

flower in its glass of oil beside the bed. It was such a pretty pink and white room, but to make it perfect a nice, big dog should be lying on the thick rug beside her bed.

"Well, if a dog came it would be hers. Daddy had said so and she felt sure it would happen. Dukie had come. She had never tired of hearing how mother had gone out in the garden, many years before Jean was born, and found a little, poor, half-starved, forlorn puppy timidly looking through the fence. She had coaxed him in and carried him in her arms to the house, where food, warmth and loving care soon restored him to the jolly, rollicking, happy dog he was meant to be. He had become mother's special pet, her friend and companion for sixteen long years. Even when baby Jean arrived mother never let it make the least difference in her affection for Dukie, as they had named him, so he adopted the baby as his particular charge and watched over her as no other guardian could ever have done.

However, when Jean was big enough to play with him, Dukie had become a stately, dignified old dog, whose one joy was to slowly follow mother about, and lie at her side when she sat down. His passing had been a sorrow to them all, and the little girl had cried bitterly for days. But children forget easily, and Dukie was only a cherished memory to Jean now, while to mother his loss was a pain that would never be quite cured.

Jean had been taught, for both her parents were real animal lovers, that there is nothing so pitiful as a stray dog or cat. Frightened, starved, driven from door to door by cruel or indifferent people, longing for a kind word, a friendly voice that may lead them home.

Jean resolved that she would watch every day in case a stray dog might pass their home. Daddy had promised—and daddy never failed to keep his promises.

It was a custom in Jean's family to have the Christmas tree lighted just after breakfast on Christmas morning, then all Jean's little playmates were invited in, and the presents distributed.

Jean awakened in the gray dawn of Christmas keenly alive to her very finger-tips. It seemed that something must have happened—some noise that wasn't customary, she was so very, very wide awake. She sat up in bed—the night-light was still burning, but through the half-drawn curtains a dim daylight was filtering through. Not a sound came from the open door of her parents' room. Cautiously she put one foot out of the covers—she couldn't stay in bed—it wouldn't hurt to go to the window for a minute and see how soon it would really be day.

Just then she heard a queer sort of cry; it seemed to come from the garden. Jean crept to the window and looked out. There, in the gray light, she saw a big dog—as she gazed he lifted his head and howled mournfully.

A dog! He had come to them! Quick as a flash she drew on her slippers and bathrobe lying on a chair beside her bed, and pattered swiftly into the hall and down its deserted length to the stairs; not a soul was about and she ran down as fast as she could. She struggled a bit with the handle of the front door—it gave—she simply flew out and around to the side lawn where the dog had been—he was still there!

Jean drew a deep breath of relief—but oh, he looked so cold! So forlorn, wet and shivering with the dew

and frost of the winter morning. He brought out all the love and compassion in the child's heart.

"Come, doggie, doggie," she called softly. He came to her, hesitatingly at first, but gaining confidence at the sound of her sympathetic baby voice. Then as she patted him fearlessly, he gently licked her hand. Little by little Jean coaxed him into the house. The front door still stood invitingly open, and quietly Jean and her dog trotted in.

Now what to do with him? She dared not take him up to the nursery, there were definite ideas of cleanliness, and her new friend was decidedly in need of a bath; ah, she knew! A big roomy closet for wraps was just behind the stairs, its window was always open so there would be plenty of air. Jean opened the door and enticed the dog inside. There were coats and shawls hanging on the hooks and, best of all, a big, woolly carriage robe. This Jean dragged down and pulled into a sort of bed. The dog, weary and spent, was only too glad to lie down and Jean tucked the robe over and around him as he relaxed with a deep sigh of content.

"Now, good night," she said, "You go to sleep, I'll come and get you by-and-by." He licked her hand happily and shut his eyes. Jean slipped out and, closing the door firmly, climbed upstairs to bed.

She was quite content to wait for the tree now—no matter what other presents she received, no matter if Santa Claus forgot to come, her best present had brought himself! She snuggled into the covers, and yawned sleepily—a real dog—and daddy had promised—she drifted off into slumber.

Jean awakened to find mother and daddy kissing her and wishing her "A Merry Christmas." She didn't say a word about her dog as, young as she was, she had learned that there is a right and a wrong time to advance a new idea, and she decided to wait until the presents were being given out, then she would bring in her own big gift.

Jean was very quiet as her mother dressed her in a dainty white dotted Swiss, whose many tiny ruffles were edged with lace.

A wide, blue silk sash encircled her waist, while a narrow matching ribbon held back her golden curls from her face, ending in a pretty little bow above her left temple. A glorious pair of new bronze shoes were placed upon her feet without comment. This was too much—mother said, in astonishment, "Why, darling, what is the matter? Don't you see the pretty new shoes?"

Jean loved bronze shoes, the higher the better, and the longer the tassels the finer the effect, but Jean had been too absorbed in her thoughts to even notice the usually beloved shoes.

"Are you sick, Jean?" inquired her mother anxiously.

"No, mummy," answered the child, with a funny little imitation of her mother when she didn't want to be bothered, and which made that parent smile. "They are lovely; I was only thinking."

"Well," said her mother, laughingly, as she fastened the last button and gave the prettily shod foot a pat, "stop thinking and run down to breakfast. I'll be with you in a minute."

Jean ran down the stairs and hesitated a minute at the dining-room door. Should she take a peek at her treasure? No, she had better let him sleep until the right time.

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## A LESSON IN KINDNESS



**M**ISS LUCIA FESSENDEN GILBERT, represented in the picture above, is a noted teacher of Humane Education in the East. She represents the American Humane Education Society, located in Boston, Massachusetts, the oldest society of its kind in the United States, which has built up in the forty-five years since it was started a nation-wide influence.

Its main purpose is to make better youth and Miss Gilbert is its able representative in a wide area of the Eastern states.

In the picture above she has on her lap little Reita Rodway, four years old, who is looking fondly at Miss Gilbert's beloved cat, Charles, aged fourteen years, the faithful comrade in all her travels.

Reita is thoroughly impressed that kindness is the greatest thing in all the wide world and she wants other people to think so, too, for every night she begs God to make everybody so kind that every kitty and every Fido in the world will be as happy as Charles is. She is getting the same kind of practical education in being kind that Miss Gilbert had when she was a little child. "When I was about three years old," writes Miss Gilbert, "and on until I was nine or ten, my mother used to tell me stories about animals and birds. Through her all live creatures became *people* to me instead of things, always to be helped and never abused."

When she grew up she attended and graduated from Smith College and Columbia University and she made a part of herself the great education that these places of learning provide. But she never forgot those first lessons she received at her mother's knee which determined the kind of girl she was to be and what she was to do in life. Wasn't she a fortunate girl to have that kind of a mother?

That is why thousands of boys and girls today under Miss Gilbert are receiving the same kind of training which has made her life the fruitful one it is. With her mother's tender blessing before she died she joined the staff of the great Society which she is devotedly serving now, working successively in Boston, Washington, D. C., Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and in her home state, New York. Everywhere she goes her faithful cat, Charles, goes, too. She writes, "His manners are perfect. Of course. I never take him to school, but on trains his gentle presence seems to touch all hearts, and his animated face as he sits on the seat or in my lap and looks out the window, calls a smile to many a weary countenance. At the end of each strenuous school

day I come back to a joyful welcome and to real, true love and companionship. He is all the family I have left on earth now."

Miss Gilbert says, "The animals are like babies—they cannot complain of their abuse. Let us speak for those who cannot speak for themselves." And all the year through she is heeding the Bible command, "Open thy mouth for the dumb," and she is giving all her pupils a better and happier start in life by making them mindful of the happiness and welfare of others.

"WHAT IS THE USE OF HUMANE EDUCATION?" asks Miss Gilbert. Addressing mothers and fathers and teachers, she answers that question herself in a radio broadcast recently given over a national hook-up, which we reproduce in part: We present

### LUCIA FESSENDEN GILBERT

IN A RADIO APPEAL TO MOTHERS, FATHERS AND TEACHERS.

A muddy road, a loaded wagon stuck fast, a teamster beating his horse.

"Stop whipping! The horse is doing all he can. Get behind the wheel and push."

And so saying, George Washington got behind the other wheel and helped push the load out.

Abraham Lincoln, down at the front with the army in one of the most anxious days of the war, took time to tenderly rescue some little, blind, motherless kittens. Daniel Webster, as a little boy plead most eloquently for the life of a trembling woodchuck imprisoned in a box-trap, and won his first case. As a man he always loved his cows and when he was dying asked to have them driven by his open window so that he might once more speak to each one by name. Florence Nightingale learned to care for wounded soldiers by caring for wounded dogs when she was a girl.

When we are out in the woods don't we feel, as St. Francis of Assisi did, that the wild creatures are "our brothers of the woods," and the birds "our little sisters of the air?"

Dr. Cadman eloquently fights the battles of abused animals, by speech, pen and radio. Many great actors have been lovers and defenders of animals. Henry Irving took in stray cats. George Arliss takes a strong stand against the horrors of vivisection. Minnie Maddern Fiske was an untiring, forward crusader against the steel trap. Irene McLaughlin runs a large shelter for stray animals, which she calls "ORPHANS OF THE STORM."

Abraham Lincoln began his life of mercy, "of malice toward none and charity for all," by always being, as a child, remarkably kind to all animals, wild and tame. On the other hand, in a great State's prison ninety per cent of the criminals gave this account of themselves, "I began by being cruel to animals."

MOTHERS, the business of Humane Education begins with you. Does your child see you gentle and considerate toward dumb creatures, looking at things from their point of view, not merely from that of your own convenience? Is there always a welcome in your home for needy four-footed wanderers, homeless and speechless?

Does your child see that you love to have him kind and faithful in the care of his pets? Do you lead him from earliest years to feed the birds instead of shooting them with slingshots? Do you express sympathetic interest in all he can tell you about squirrel neighbors and all the little wild creatures? As he grows older do you give him such books as "Black Beauty," "Beautiful Joe," "Bambi," and all the Thornton Burgess stories, and—if he wants it—a kodak, but never a gun or a trap? If so, oh mother, I congratulate your child with all my heart!

FATHERS, General Pershing sent out the following statement from the Headquarters of the A. E. F.: "If every American child were brought up with a love for animals, and taught that it is only by kindness that we can really get to know and claim animals as friends, I think that the next generation would be far better citizens than we can claim to be."

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## JEAN'S BEST GIFT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

Breakfast was a slow procedure for one small girl who had no interest in food at that time, but at last, just as they were through the door bell rang.

Daddy jumped up hurriedly. "You and Jean receive them," he said. "I'll get things ready."

Jean and her mother welcomed the children, big and little, and some of the parents who had come with them. Excitement ran high and waiting now was an ordeal to everyone.

At last daddy flung the drawing doors to the library wide open, and there, reaching to the ceiling in all the splendor of its sparkling, shimmering, tinsel beauty—stood the tree!

From the shining star on its topmost branch, to the wide-spread lower boughs it was ablaze with tiny candles (there were no electric lights in those days) colored ornaments reflecting each flame.

Cotton snow outlined the branches, popcorn and cranberry strings, gay cornucopias filled with candy, candy canes and gingerbread men mingled with the brilliant decorations. At the base were piled ribboned packages of every size and kind.

Daddy welcomed each child and presented their gifts, but Jean didn't need to be told which were hers—all she had asked for was there. The lovely, shining tricycle, beautiful dolls and—oh, she gasped in wonder at the gorgeous big playhouse—big enough to hold two little girls at once, with real furniture, a bureau, sofa, chairs and best of all a little piano! The children gathered around it with exclamations of rapture.

When, suddenly, a voice said, "Oh, look at the dog!"

In the excitement Jean had forgotten for a moment her best gift, but memory returned in a rush, and she wheeled around to see her dog standing in the doorway. He was dazed with the lights and noise—not knowing what to do. Jean gave a quick glance for daddy—he must have gone out of the room for a moment. As she started toward her dog to claim him, she must have brushed against a candle on the tree. Instantly the flame caught a ruffle of her little skirt—a second later it was ablaze!

Jean screamed in fear—her mother with a cry sprang forward—but quicker than anyone else, the dog saw and sensed the danger—with one bound he had crossed the room, flinging himself upon the child. He threw her to the floor and, tearing the blazing dress from her body with teeth and claws, he had extinguished the flames before half of those present had time to realize what was happening.

Jean had been slightly stunned by the fall and came to her senses a few minutes later to find herself lying on the sofa, her mother kneeling beside her and her father, on the other side, chafing her hands—a circle of anxious friends hovered at a little distance.

"Darling, darling, are you all right?" sobbed her mother.

"Yes, mummy," said Jean weakly, then seeing her father she raised herself on one elbow, "Where's my dog, oh, daddy, he didn't go away again?" she cried in fear.

"No, no, dear," answered daddy quickly, "Here he is, right beside you." And there he was, a big head thrust itself into view and two loving brown eyes looked into hers with a devotion that would only intensify with the coming years.

"He saved your life, darling," cried her mother, as she tried to gather child and dog into her arms at once. "He saved your life."

"He came to me this morning. I found him in the garden and put him in the closet to get warm. I was going to tell you when we had our presents," explained Jean. "May I have him, daddy? You said if a dog came—" the child's voice faltered, she was still a bit shaken—she looked inquiringly into daddy's eyes. He nodded gravely, "Yes, he is your dog, Jean. He came to save you for us. We all love him, but he is your dog."

Jean closed her eyes blissfully. Then they flew open, "I shall call him Hero," she said firmly.

"Hero—good!" said daddy, and mother clapped her hands approvingly. "Just the name, darling," she cried, while all their friends shouted—

"Three cheers for Hero!"

Hero didn't quite understand what all the noise was about, he had only done what any sensible dog would do, but he did know that happiness and love had entered his life again. He recognized in the tender eyes of the child whose little hand rested gently upon his head, and in the kindly voices of her father and mother the true friends that a dog needs.

He wagged his tail and barked a heartfelt "Thank you."

THE END.



## A LESSON IN KINDNESS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

I hear many stories in school of "What my daddy does!" What do you think your child is telling about you?

TEACHERS, whom I have so much enjoyed meeting, you know about that "Quality of mercy which is twice blest, blessing him that gives and him that takes." Your pupils want to learn it as you have learned it, by practice. And the only creatures weaker than themselves on whom to practice it are the animals and the birds. Please start a Band of Mercy in your room, if you have not done so already, and find out what your boys and girls have been actually doing for dumb creatures, wild and tame. The children, whether rough or gentle, will be deeply interested. It won't be another burden for you, but wings to help you carry the burden you already have. Put the Band of Mercy in a period usually devoted to Oral or Written English and the spontaneous bursts of eloquence that you will get will do your heart good! And discipline will be easier, too. Many a school where discipline was hard has been changed into a fine little Social Center of Kind Acts by this simple means—no expense, no red tape. Great results!

If your child, oh parent—if your pupil, oh teacher—leaves your hands strengthened and trained in BODY and in MIND but not in HEART, you have but made him more efficient for evil doing. Temptation is waiting outside your home door—your school house door—equipped with a large and varied outfit of attractions, to invite your strong, intelligent child

into such service. That precious child must be found already thoroughly and actively enlisted through *your* efforts, on the side of Justice and Mercy. Our hearts, more than our heads, impel us to action, for "OUT OF THE HEART ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE." The truth of these words has stood the test of two thousand years, and a glance into our own hearts will confirm it anew.

Sir Wilfred Grenfell, Oxford scholar, eminent surgeon, hero of the Labrador coast, knighted by the King of England "for conspicuous services to mankind," says this: "Ingrained, very definite teaching of kindness to animals is simply invaluable in the formation of character. It makes better youth, the world over. It leads to all the virtues, EVEN THE INTERNATIONAL ONES. It fosters the power to sympathize. It makes more sympathetic and understanding husbands. It is a real factor in preventing the terrible tale of divorces. Kindness to all God's creatures is an absolutely essential, rock-bottom necessity in any world where peace and righteousness are to prevail. As to the campaign for Humane Education now being carried on, May God give it infinite success!"

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Miss Gilbert is the author of a book titled "An Early Start to Kindness" which should be in all elementary schools. We shall have occasion to quote from it, so we ask our boys and girls to remember who Lucia Fessenden Gilbert is.