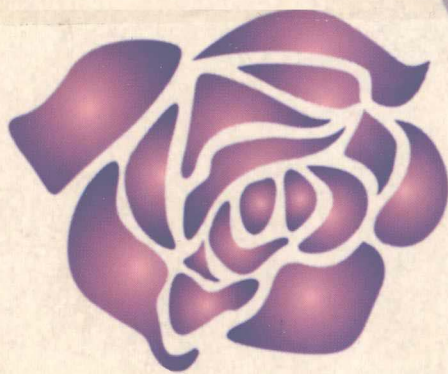


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桃之夭夭



最纯洁、最真挚的爱情
献给情人最美的礼物



Gift of Maggie

麦琪的礼物

【美】欧·亨利

O. Henry

贺爱军 徐国超 译



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序

两千五百多年前，遥远而神秘的东方土地上，一个美丽的姑娘收拾好自己的行装，准备出发。看着自己成长的地方，到处都留下点点滴滴成长的记忆。突然心里弥漫着一种说不出的怅惘，从此之后，这里再也不是属于她的地方了。而且她在这一瞬间明白了一个道理，那就是——这里从来就没有属于过她，因为今天她才真正要回归到属于自己的家园。前半生就是为了这一天的到来，这一天到来之际，自己的生活才真正开始。

那天，是她一生中最美好最灿烂最绚丽的一天，阳光明媚，爱抚的光芒洒遍每一个角落。放眼望去，满眼都是灼灼的桃花，开得那样的热情而又热烈，好像她的命运与这桃花有着某种默契。耳畔传来了悠扬的歌声：“桃之夭夭，灼灼其华。之子于归，宜其室家。”

她终于找到了自己的归宿，阳光下，一切都是那么美丽，充满了色彩的生机。所以，没有人愿意去想，桃花开到最艳丽的时候，等待着它们的将会是什么。没有人肯承认，桃花的艳丽是一个姿态优雅的谏语，阳光背后隐藏着它的忧郁。所以，古今中外美丽的神话传说最后总是用千篇一律的一句话收尾——从此，他们过上了幸福的生活。总之，花开花落，一时的繁华过后，等待着收获的人儿，期待着沉甸甸的果实，饱满而甜蜜。就像《诗经·桃夭》中的那个女孩子，春华秋实，回到了属于自己的家。从此，日复一日，年复一年，时光流逝，爱情的基调却就这样固着了一般，新翻的曲子永远在这个调子上婉转流动，始终无法摆脱它的纠缠。

然而，我们也许是习惯了在美丽虚幻中麻痹自己，不想去面对桃之夭夭过后还可能出现的其他情形，比如雨打桃花、落红满地，比如华而不实、有花无果，甚至有始无终、始乱终弃，那些悲悲凄凄的惨状，有谁愿意面对？何况还有更加令人痛心疾首惨不忍闻的故事。现实中受够了痛苦的人，怎么会愿意在别人故事里再去揭开刚刚复原的伤口。所以，无数人面桃花相映红的故事在流传着，鲜艳欲滴的花儿旁边播出的是满心欢喜的爱情剧，戏里戏外的人都在快乐地欢笑中忘掉了悲与愁。

可是，在遥远的西方却有着完全不同的爱情故事。在那里，故事里的花是断了根、剪了枝、打了包、带了修饰的，故事里的人却是真真实实的存在。人生无常，命运多蹇，该是什么就是什么，没有粉饰没有遮掩。本来，爱情就难得看到一个圆圆满满的收梢，何必非要让它粉墨登场呢？

于是，一幕幕的悲剧开始上演……

虽然真实与虚幻没有严格的界限，但爱情的果子一定不会只有一种，酸、甜、苦、辣，五味俱陈，而它之所以让人心驰神往，就在于着了魔的人正处于期待中。桃之夭夭给予人的是启示，表明爱情都有那浓艳耀眼的一刻；同时它也有暗示，群芳过后必然是狼藉残红，谁也无法遮住爱情的无奈和凄凉。

这次，我们选取国外多篇著名爱情小说，汇编成《罗密欧与朱丽叶·奥赛罗》《卡门·高龙巴》《红字》《曼依》《傲慢与偏见》《呼啸山庄》《麦琪的礼物》《了不起的盖茨比》《魔沼》《野姑娘黛茜·密勒》十种，并做成英汉对照版，以期使读者在阅读一篇篇震撼人心的爱情故事的同时，也能潜移默化地提高自己的英文水平。

欧·亨利（O·Henry，1862—1910）原名威廉·西德尼·波特（William Sydney Porter），美国最著名的短篇小说家，被评论界誉为“曼哈顿桂冠散文作家”和“美国现代短篇小说之父”。在其短短九年的创作生涯中，欧·亨利创作了三百多篇短篇小说，形成了独特的创作风格——“欧·亨利式的结尾”。

本书选取了欧·亨利的十四篇爱情小说，篇篇都是广大读者耳熟能详、脍炙人口的名篇佳作。《麦琪的礼物》讲述了纽约社会底层一对年轻夫妻互赠圣诞礼物的故事。圣诞即将来临，而德拉面临着只有一块八毛七分钱的窘境。显然这点少得可怜的钱根本无法为心上人买到爱的礼物。于是妻子卖掉自己举世无双的一头秀发而给丈夫买到一条他求之不得的白金表链，而丈夫卖掉自己祖传的金表而为妻子购得全套梦寐以求的名贵发梳，结果圣诞节的喜剧，变成互赠礼物的悲剧。

《艾基·舍恩斯坦的春药》讲述了一段三角恋爱。主人公艾基是蓝光药店的一个夜班职员兼药剂师，负责帮蓝光药店配制药品。他寄住在里德尔太太家，对她的女儿露茜情有独钟。然而，艾基性格内向，一直把对露茜的爱情深埋心底。昌克·麦高恩先生也十分喜爱露茜，但是他与艾基有所不同，他性格张扬，经常同拉丁人打架，是蓝光药店的常客。有一天，麦高恩到药店找艾基疗伤，顺便告诉艾基自己要与露茜私奔。但是，令麦高恩先生苦恼的是里德尔先生和夫人不喜欢他，而且露茜又经常变卦。因此他央求艾基帮他配一副让女人疯狂爱上男人的春药。这个消息对

于艾基来说犹如晴天霹雳，他怎么会允许自己心爱的女人和这个男人私奔呢？于是他表面上假装同意，实际却帮麦高恩先生配了安眠药，期待着这一计划流产。谁知那天晚上麦高恩先生突然良心发现，觉得自己不能用如此卑劣的手段骗得自己心爱的女人，他异想天开地把药放进了里德尔先生的咖啡，而不是露茜的饮料里，结果使得里德尔先生做了一个美梦，露茜也没有临时变卦，他们私奔成功。

在《财神和爱神》中，老洛克沃尔是个相信金钱万能，生活节俭的人，而小洛克沃尔却大手大脚、鄙视金钱。在爱情观上，他和父亲也不尽相同，他认为金钱不是万能的，金山银山也不能让你和心仪的姑娘待上一两个钟头，而他的父亲却告诉他，他查遍了百科全书，发现没有什么是金钱买不到的。小洛克沃尔在和姑娘见面时，遇到了前所未有的交通堵塞，他们被迫在马车上待了两个小时。就在这两个小时中，小洛克沃尔向姑娘表白，并获得了成功。看来爱神垂青小洛克沃尔了，不想作者却在故事结尾道出了真相——那场有关小洛克沃尔终生幸福的堵塞原来是老洛克沃尔花了高价请人缔造的。小洛克沃尔爱情的成功是财神与爱神相互牵手的结果。

欧·亨利以擅长营造结尾闻名遐迩，美国文学界称之为“欧·亨利式的结尾”。他善于戏剧性地设计情节，埋下伏笔，作好铺垫，勾勒矛盾，最后在结尾处突然让人物的心理情境发生出人意料的变化，或使主人公命运陡然转换，让读者感到豁然开朗，柳暗花明，既在意料之外，又在情理之中，不禁拍案称奇。这种风格被人称为是“含泪微笑”的独特艺术风格。欧·亨利把小说的灵魂全都凝聚在结尾部分，让读者在前面似乎是平淡无奇而又诙谐风趣的娓娓动听的描述中，不知不觉地进入作者精心设置的迷宫，直到最后，忽如电光一闪，才照亮了先前隐藏着的一切。他仿佛在和读者捉迷藏，或者在玩弄障眼法，要给读者最后一个惊喜。

贺爱军

2009年3月于宁波大学

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Gift of the Maggie

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheek burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$ 8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$ 30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$ 20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$ 1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$ 1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling - something just a little bit near to being



麦琪的礼物

一块八毛七，这就是德拉的全部积蓄，其中六毛还是由一个个分币凑成。这些分币是每次一分两分与杂货商、菜贩子和肉店老板死乞白赖硬扣下来的。买东西这样抠门，争得脸红脖子粗，别人嘴上不说，心里肯定会认为非吝啬鬼莫为。就这点钱，德拉数了三遍，一块八毛七分钱，而明天就是圣诞节了。

显而易见，毫无办法，只能扑到那张又破又小的沙发上大哭一场。德拉只好如此。这一哭使她顿生感慨：生活无非就是哭哭笑笑，以哭为主。

女主人慢慢平静下来，我们来看看她的家吧：这是一间提供家具的公寓，房租每周八块。虽然不能说与乞丐窝毫无二致，但是看起来与乞丐窝也相差不远。

楼下门廊里有一个信箱，但从没有信件投入其中；安装着门铃按钮，但压根没有人碰过。墙上贴着一张名片，上面印有“詹姆斯·迪林厄姆·杨先生”的字样。

先前，租房人每周挣30块钱，家境良好的时候，是没有人去注意“迪林厄姆”这几个字的。现在，租房人的收入缩减到了周薪20块，“迪林厄姆”这几个字也看起来模糊不清，仿佛它们也在严肃地考虑缩减成一个谦逊的“迪”字。但是，不论何时，只要詹姆斯·迪林厄姆·杨先生回家，走入楼上的公寓时，杨太太，也就是刚才交代过的德拉，就称他为“吉姆”，并热情地拥抱他。他们的感情相当不错。

德拉止住了哭声，往面颊上搽了些粉，站在窗户边，呆呆地看着一只灰猫行走在灰色后院边的灰色栅栏上。明天就是圣诞节了，而她只有一块八毛七分钱来给吉姆买礼物。数月以来，她每一分、每一厘地积攒着，但只落得这个结果。一周二十元，很不经用。支出大于预算，向来如此。只有一块八毛七来给她的吉姆买件礼物。多少次，她沉浸在幸福之中，盘算着给他买件美好的礼物，一件精美而稀罕、质量



worthy of the honour of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$ 8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Delia's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba^① lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Delia's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie." ^②

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take her hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

① 示巴女王: Queen of Sheba,《圣经》中朝觐所罗门王以测其智慧之人。

② 索佛朗妮:意大利诗人塔索(1544—1595)史诗《被解放的耶路撒冷》中的人物,她为了拯救耶路撒冷的基督教徒,承认了自己并未犯过的罪行,是舍己救人的典型形象。

不错、近乎值得吉姆拥有的礼物。

房间窗户之间放置着一面窗间镜。或许在租金八块钱的公寓里，你看到过这种窗间镜。身材瘦小、动作灵敏的人可以通过观察镜中急速掠过的长条映像，对自己的容貌获得还算精确的概念。身材苗条的德拉精通此术。

忽然，她从窗户前转过身来，站在镜子面前，眼睛闪着亮光，然而不到二十秒钟，她的面容便失去了光彩。德拉很快地拉散头发，头发完全展开了。

詹姆斯·迪林厄姆·杨夫妇拥有两件他们引以为荣的东西，一件是吉姆的祖父和父亲传下来的金表，另一件就是德拉的头发。如果示巴女王住在对面通风口那边的公寓里，德拉准会把她的头发披下，晒在窗外，让女王陛下的珠宝和礼品黯然失色。如果所罗门国王作了门卫，把他所有的财宝都堆积在地上，但只要吉姆路过时，拿出他的金表，所罗门也会心生嫉妒，气得吹胡子瞪眼。

此刻，德拉漂亮的长发披落周身，涟漪般闪闪发光，恰似一挂棕色瀑布。长发一直拖到膝盖以下，几乎成了她的外衣。接着，她迅速而紧张地收起头发，踌躇片刻，伫立不动，直到几滴眼泪溅落在破旧的红地毯上。

她穿上棕色的破旧外衣，戴上棕色的破帽子，眼睛里依然含着泪花，甩开裙子，急急忙忙地跨出家门，下了楼梯，朝街道上走去。

德拉在写有“索弗朗妮夫人，收购各类头发”的牌子面前停了下来。她飞跑一般上了楼，定下神来，气喘吁吁。索弗朗妮夫人身体粗壮、脸色苍白、神情冷漠，与索弗朗妮的美名大不相称。

“你愿意买我的头发吗？”德拉问道。

“我收购头发。”夫人说道，“把你的帽子脱下来，让我看看你的头发。”

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation – as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value – the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends – a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do – oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove, hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor



棕色的瀑布于是飘然落下。

“二十块。”这位女士一边说，一边用她那老练的手托起德拉的头发。

“快付钱吧！”德拉说。

啊，接下来的两个小时就像长上了玫瑰色的翅膀，飞速而过。别在乎这些七拼八凑的比喻，反正德拉现在正在挨门逐户地搜索每个商店，为吉姆物色合适的礼物。

她最终还是找到了合适的礼物。这个礼物肯定是专门为吉姆而做，对其他任何人都合适。其他商店里面都没有这种礼物，她里里外外都找过了。这是一条白金表链，造型简洁、样式简单。就像所有其他的好东西一样，这条表链质地优良、装饰简朴，物有所值。它甚至配得上吉姆的金表，她一看就明白这条表链非吉姆莫属。表链和吉姆其人一样，朴实无华，金玉其内，用这种词语描述两者，都很适合。表链花了二十一块钱，她揣着剩余的八毛七急急匆匆地赶回家。金表配上这条表链，这样，吉姆无论和谁在一起，都可以毫无顾虑地看时间了。金表固然珍贵，然而过去吉姆却要偷偷摸摸地看时间，因为他用的不是金属表链，而是旧皮带。

德拉回到家中，她从陶醉之中醒了过来，重又恢复审慎和理智。她取出烫发钳，点燃煤气，开始修补由于慷慨和爱情所造成的乱糟糟的头发。这是一项大工程，亲爱的朋友，确切地说，是一项浩大的工程。

四十分钟过后，她满头都是细密的小发卷，看起来活脱脱像一个逃学的小男孩。她看着镜子中自己的映象，迟疑不决、细致认真、面带挑剔。

“吉姆见了，不至于要了我的命吧！”她自言自语，“接着他会说我看起来像来自海岛演唱队的小姑娘。话说回来，我该怎么办呢？唉，一块八毛七分钱能买什么呢？”

七点钟，咖啡煮好了，炉子上的煎锅也热了，可以煎排骨了。

吉姆从不晚归，德拉把表链折好，拿在手上，坐在靠近门口的桌子一角。吉姆总是从这扇门进屋。接着她听到吉姆上第一层楼的脚步声，顿时，她脸色苍白。德拉习惯于为一些日常小事而默默祈祷，此刻她自言自语低声祈祷道：“上帝啊！保佑我在他眼里依然漂亮！”

门开了，吉姆走了进来，关上门。他看起来有些瘦弱，面容严肃。可怜的人儿，

fellow, he was only twenty-two – and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

“Jim, darling,” she cried, “don’t look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn’t have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It’ll grow out again – you won’t mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say “Merry Christmas!” Jim, and let’s be happy. You don’t know what a nice – what a beautiful, nice gift I’ve got for you.”

“You’ve cut off your hair?” asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labour.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don’t you like me just as well, anyhow? I’m me without my hair, ain’t I?”

Jim looked about the room curiously.

“You say your hair is gone?” he said with an air almost of idiocy.

“You needn’t look for it,” said Della. “It’s sold, I tell you – sold and gone, too. It’s Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,” she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, “but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?”

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year – what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi^① brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them.

① 东方三贤人典出《马太福音》第二章，指基督出生时送来礼物的三位贤人；梅尔基送来黄金表示尊敬；加斯帕送来乳香象征神圣；巴尔撒泽赠送没药预示基督遭受迫害。英语中三位贤人统称为 The Magi，而 Magi 恰是故事中女主人公的名字。



年仅22岁，就得肩负家庭重担。他需要买一件大衣了，连手套也没有。

吉姆走进屋，停住脚步，一动不动，好像猎狗闻到鹌鹑的气味。他目不转睛地盯着德拉，眼神里流露出来的神情，德拉看不明白，只觉得害怕。这种神情既非愤怒失望，也非惊讶恐惧，这令她始料不及。他带着这种古怪的神情，呆呆地盯着德拉。

德拉一扭腰，从桌子上跳下来，向他走去。

“吉姆，亲爱的，”她喊道，“别那样盯着我。我剪掉头发卖了钱，因为不给你买件礼物，这个圣诞节我没法过。头发会重新长长的，别介意，好吗？我也别无他法，我的头发长得疯快呢。吉姆，说一声‘圣诞快乐’吧！我们高高兴兴过个节吧！你不知道我给你买了一件多好、多漂亮的礼物哩！”

“你把头发剪掉了？”吉姆吃力地问道，好像他绞尽了脑汁还没有弄明白这个显而易见的事实。

“剪下来卖了。”德拉回答道，“不管怎么说，你还是依然爱我，对吗？头发没了，但我还是我，对吗？”

吉姆好奇地四下张望着。

“你说你的头发没有了？”他神态痴痴呆呆地问。

“你不用再找了，”德拉说，“我告诉你，卖了，已经没有了。今晚是圣诞前夜，亲爱的。对我好一些，因为卖掉头发是为了你。我的头发或许是数得清的，”她突然温柔但一脸严肃地接着说，“但我对你的爱没有人能够数得清。我该放牛排了吧，吉姆？”

吉姆似乎突然从恍恍惚惚的状态中清醒过来。他把德拉抱在怀里。就在此刻，我们花十秒钟的时间，清醒地思考一下问题的另外一面吧！每周八块钱与每年一万元，那有什么区别呢？数学家和精明强算之人可能不会给出正确答案。东方三贤人曾经送过珍贵的礼物，但是礼物中找不到这个问题的答案。这个说法含糊不清，下文将有所说明。



This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

“Don’t make any mistake, Dell,” he said, “about me. I don’t think there’s anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you’ll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going awhile at first.” White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jewelled rims – just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

“Isn’t it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.”

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

“Dell,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ’em awhile. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.”

The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in