

But all she had now was only \$ 1.87. Suddenly she stood before the mirror. She pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Della looked at her beautiful hair in the mirror. Her hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knees and covered her like a garment. She did her hair up again. Gradually a tear or two fell on the worn out carpet. Then quickly she put on her old brown jacket and hat and ran out to the street. She went direct to the shop of Mrs. Sofronie, a dealer in hair goods. Della went to Mrs. Sofronie, and asked her if she would buy her hair. Mrs. Sofronie had a look at Della's hair and was ready to pay twenty dollars for the hair. So, Della sold it. The next two hours Della passed her time searching for a precious gift for Jim. Her heart was full of excitement. At last Della found her gift. It was a platinum watch chain. She thought it was made for Jim's watch. They took twenty one dollars for it. But it would be the right gift to Jim, it would replace the old and ugly leather strap.

Back at home Della felt a little nervous. With the help of the curling irons she curled her shortened hair. But she was sure, Jim would say that she looked like a Coney Island Chorus girl. But she consoled herself that she could not have done anything with only a dollar and eighty-seven cents.

At 7 o'clock Della made the coffee and cooked the chops. It was time for Jim to return. Jim was never late. She doubled the fob chain in her hand and waited sitting on the corner of the table near the door. Then she heard the footsteps. She grew a little frightened. She prayed to god, "Please God, make him think I am still pretty." She was afraid Jim's love for her might diminish. Then the door opened and Jim stepped in. He was a thin and serious looking fellow. He looked poorly. He was only twenty-two.

Jim's eye fell on her hair. He remained transfixed with a strange kind of expression. He kept staring at her fixedly. Della went to him and said not to look at her that way. She added that she had no money to buy a Christmas present for him and so she had sold her hair. She told him that her hair grows fast. She pleaded with him to say 'Marry-Christmas' to her and see the gift. She had bought for him. Jim seemed to be in a trance. He simply asked, "you've cut off your hair?" Then he looked around the room as if he could not understand what Della was telling him. Della again told him that she had sold her hair to buy a gift for him and that she should not look around for it. She said she sold her hair because she loved him so much. Her hairs might be counted but her love for him could not be counted, she said. Then, Jim suddenly seemed to come out of his trance. He embraced Della. Jim Drew a package from his

overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table. He said his love for his Della would never grow less merely for a 'haircut or for anything.' He said she would understand the reason of his initial behaviour if she opened the package he had brought.

Della quickly opened the package. She made an ecstatic scream of joy, but immediately began to cry and wail. Jim comforted her. It was so because Jim had brought for her the set of tortoise shell combs, side and back that Della so much used to admire in a Broadway shop window. She never hoped she would ever possess them. They were now hers. But she had no hair. Still she hugged them at her bosom and said. My hair grows fast, Jim. But instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head. Then he lovingly said that they should put their Christmas presents away for the time being. They were too nice to use just at the present. He then said he had sold his watch to buy the comb.

The writer concludes the gift such as these are the wisest of the gifts.

WORD NOTES:

1. Magi - the three wise men from the East who brought offerings to the infant Jesus.
2. Parsimony - carefulness in the use of money.
3. Instigate - compels us to conclude.
4. Predominates – greater in quantity.
5. Subsiding - passing from a superior stage to an inferior stage.
6. Coax - persuade.
7. Appertaining - fixed.
8. Modest - simple looking.
9. Agile - quick moving
10. Slender - lean and thin.
11. Queen of Sheba – the famous queen of a South Arabian Kingdom who visited Solomon, gave him many gifts and became his mistress. She is known for her beauty and also of the jewels she possessed.
12. Depreciate – belittle, reduce the value of
13. King Solomon – the famous king of the Hebrews who succeeded David. He is famous for his great wealth and wisdom
14. Cascade – waterfall

15. Practised hand – a hand which has done this thing very often, expert hand
16. Ransacking – search thoroughly throwing things here and there
17. chaste – pure, not of very complicated design
18. Intoxication – feeling of uncontrollable joy
19. Prudence – discretion, caution
20. Truant – a student who keeps away from school without permission
21. Wriggled off – moved off by making a twisting movement
22. Enfolded – embraced
23. Discreet – careful
24. Illuminated – clarified, explained
25. Ecstatic – great feeling of joy
26. Hysterical – uncontrollable
27. Tresses – hair (poetic)
28. Singed – burnt
29. Dandy – beautiful
30. Babe in the manger – refers to infant Jesus

