

CHRISTMAS morning broke bright and clear sending rays of glistening sunshine over a thick blanket of new-fallen snow with its ever wonderful message of joy and love.

Nowhere in all the world, perhaps was there a keener appreciation of Christmas cheer than in the heart of winsome Ina Walton, the affectionate and resourceful younger sister of Edith, just now recovering from a long and desperate illness.

Seventeen-year-old Ina, the only living relative of the sick girl, had gone down into the valley of death with her, suffering in mind and spirit as severely almost as did Edith physically. But now, Edith was so greatly improved as to be able to sit up in bed for her breakfast. Near her stood a small table on which was a vase of red-and-white roses and dishes of very tempting food. She took up the saucer containing a half-orange and looked in bewilderment at the well-buttered toast, eggs and coffee.

"I don't understand," she announced. "I simply can't see how you manage to do all this, Ina," with a significant gesture toward the table.

The sister smiled sweetly. "Don't you know it is Christmas?" she naively asked by way of reply.

"Oh, yes, of course. I know it is Christmas, Ina dear, but the season does not put anything into our pockets, you know. We can't afford it."

"But I am quite sure we can. So don't you worry."

Edith did not seem satisfied. Her expression of perplexity called for further explanation and Ina continued: "I've been a darling creature while you were ill. I'm quite sure you'll not approve, even though I did it for your sake; but it really doesn't matter, now that you are getting well. Nothing matters but just that. Oh, Edith! You are my precious Christmas gift."

"You've been so good to me, dear," quickly responded Edith, ignoring her sister's claim of daring, "but you have not satisfied my curiosity. How do you manage to spread such sumptuous meals?"

"By my boldness," Ina tossed her head coquettishly and strode defiantly across the room, as if to characterize her words. Then she paused and leaned on the footboard of the bed smiling teasingly. "I know you would think it very dreadful. It is true, nevertheless. I had to do it."

"Nonsense, Ina. You couldn't be bold, even if you tried. You don't know how."

"I was though, very bold, I guess. Listen. When I went to pay the gas bill last week, I just told the clerk at the window all about it—your illness, my giving up my position to be with you, our lack of funds and our very great need, and just as good as asked him for help."

"Ina!" Edith paused with the spoon half-way to her mouth.

"Yes, I did just that before I realized what I was saying. I was desperate that day. I was quite ready to ask aid of anyone to save your life, and the clerk at the gas office was the one I happened to strike at the psychological moment."

Edith uttered a little moan of vexation as she dropped the spoon into the saucer.

"You were in a critical state," she went on, "and something had to be done at once. The new drug-

Christmas Greens

THE custom of hanging evergreens in the house during the Yuletide originally had a purpose beyond that of decoration. In olden days each kind of evergreen was believed to confer special blessings on those who passed beneath its boughs. To pass under holly insured good fortune throughout the year, bay laurel, while laurel was supposed to impart a spritz of beauty and poetry—Missouri Farmer.

She who recently bought out our old friend does no credit business. He refused to let me have medicine without the money; you had to have medicine."

"But, Ina, think of a Walton begging! What you did was actual begging," and the proud girl's face registered her humiliation.

"But the flowers?" Edith questioned. "Why the flowers? You surely do not consider them a grave necessity."

For reply Ina walked around to the table on which the tall vase stood and buried her face in the roses. "But they are so lovely," she said, "and I just adore flowers!"

"So do I, dearie, but you should be more prudent with our scant means. Did they cost much?"

"Much?" Ina hesitated. "Yes, they really were very expensive."

Edith was growing extremely annoyed. "You extravagant little imp! How much?"

"No," blandly acquiesced Ina. Edith looked rather troubled. "Ina, you are too provoking for anything this morning. I never knew you to behave quite so foolishly."

Ina made a grimace at her and drawled, "Oh—about three dollars."

"Three dollars!" echoed Edith with a frown. "Why, we didn't have more than three times three dollars the last time I saw you count the money."

"Foolish, am I?" crooned Ina, diving for her sister, and kissing her on both cheeks. "Am I foolish for loving you? Suppose I had held on to my Walton pride and refused all help. You could not have had what your condition required, and I should not have—" Ina stopped abruptly, clapping both hands over her mouth while her neck and face went scarlet.

"What?" Edith waited, but her sister only burst into a confused laugh. Then, "Sh-sh-sh—" she whispered, laying a finger on her lips. "Some one is at the door."

Tripping across the room, Ina opened with an expectant air and took from a messenger boy a large well-filled basket, which she carried straight to the bed and set down by Edith. "There," she said, "it is all for you."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the wondering girl, shaking her head. "You puzzle me sorely. Flowers again?"

"It is not all flowers, I'm sure," answered radiant Ina with a provoking little toss of her head. "Let me see." With this she lifted the covering of carnations, laid them lovingly in Edith's lap, and delved into the basket's remaining contents. "Look! Here is a young chicken, a pound of butter, rolls, eggs, a bottle of milk, and more oranges. Oh, Edith, it is all so lovely!"

"But where do all these lovely things come from? We haven't so interested a friend that I can recall. Edith was both pleased and curious."

"Now, that's where you are mistaken," corrected Ina, shaking a wise finger in her sister's face. "We have got a friend who is just that interested—one of whom you have not met and who has done even more than all this. This new friend has procured me a position, and I shall go to work next week if you are well enough for me to leave you."

Edith surveyed her sister critically. "Who is it, pray?"

Ina ripped another merry laugh, then tried to look very serious as she leaned heavily on the footboard of the bed and answered deliberately. "The gas-man."

The two stared at each other for a moment in silence, the younger

smiling roguishly at the elder's dignified disapproval. "I knew you would think me dreadful, said Ina finally, "that is why I have kept it from you until now. But listen to me, Edith, in all seriousness. I must make you understand. When I left you that day to pay the gas bill, because to have failed would have meant no heat, with the thermometer standing at zero, and you with pneumonia, I was nearly crazy. I returned as soon as possible and found you unconscious. The new woman across the hall had already called the doctor. He said you could not live unless there was a change for the better by midnight, and I am quite sure he did not expect that change."

"Next morning, Mr. Clark, the clerk of whom you say I begged, came to see if there was anything he could do for us."

"Poor little sister," from Edith. Ina continued:

"He took in the situation at once and sent his own physician, Doctor Danks. It is to Doctor Danks that we owe your life. Then Mr. Clark sent everything that was needed for your comfort and mine, too. No doubt the doctor made out the list for him. Nothing helpful was omitted. You were too sick to notice, and I too anxious to refuse whatever might be of benefit to you. I simply used my common sense, instead of clinging to that old family pride that should have spent itself long ago. This basket is from him also. See!" handing her the card on which were inscribed holiday greetings and his full name. "And, oh, Edith, he is—a dear!" Ina clasped her hands over her heart to add emphasis to her enthusiasm. Edith listened in amazement while she rambled on:

"I am sure you will like him, dear. You just must, for my sake, because—because—" A merry twinkle in the happy girl's face as she hesitated, "but I'll not tell you now—I'll let you guess."

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AUROCRAAT OF THE LIVERY STABLE

(By Wessie Holbrook, in the New York Herald Tribune Magazine.)

There is an Old World legend that dumb animals become articulate on Christmas Eve; for a few moments just before the morning of the festive day they enjoy the privilege of expressing their thoughts in words—releasing in one burst of garrulity the pent-up emotions of an entire year.

But most of the dumb animals in this county have never heard of the end. In their ignorance they assume that the night of December 24 is like any other night, and they make no attempt to exert their latent powers of speech. To us they go from the cradle to the grave factory as mute as Vice-Præsidential candidates.

If the doctor had not ordered Mr. Humberton Smith-Smythe to take up riding, the night might have been nothing but somnolent silence in the East Teabon Livery stable on Christmas Eve. Returning from a summer abroad, Mrs. Smith-Smythe had brought back in English saddle horse.

It was a simple charger that introduced his stable mate to the pleasures of oral expression. He had been packed in the East Teabon livery stable for the winter, along with a fat gray mare named Beesie and Junior Mifre's Shetland pony. And when, shortly before midnight on Christmas Eve, he suddenly looked over his shoulder and exclaimed, "Me y Christmas!"—there was a violent stampede in the stable. The Shetland pony squealed and the gray mare reared backward, coming down with both feet in the feed box.

"Sorry," said the English saddle horse. "I realize that we haven't been introduced formally, but under the circumstances I thought you wouldn't mind."

"I didn't know we were on speaking terms," cried the gray mare incredulously. She turned to the Shetland pony. "Can you talk, too?"

"Not very well," the pony admitted doubtfully. "I'm just a little hoarse."

"Of course, conversation isn't obligatory," said the saddle horse, "but I think it's rather nice to observe these old Yuletide customs, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," agreed the gray mare. "I'm not science, wonder you?"

"That isn't science, my dear," said the saddle horse. "It's superstition."

"I feel as if I ought to say something dreadfully important now that I've got the chance," the gray mare sighed, "but I can't think of a thing."

"There are several things I'd like to say to that Mr. Mifre but if he were here," growled the pony. "He fed me salt-water taffy day before

yesterday and my teeth aren't unstuck yet."

"He meant well, no doubt," said the gray mare philosophically. "Whatever else you may say against humans, you must admit that their intentions usually are good."

"Just the same," the saddle horse argued, "it's a good idea to have an understanding with your owner. He may not like it, but he will respect you for it. Although human beings are sensitive creatures, all their actions are based on instinct rather than on reason. You can't teach them to think for themselves, but you can teach them to think that they are thinking for themselves. They are natural imitators. If one human does something all the others around him immediately do the same thing. Thus you have such phenomena as books-of-the-month, bull-markets, week-end excursions and Democratic landisides."

"But the instinct is really superfluous at times," remarked the gray mare. "I'll never forget how one of them saved my life. It was back in 1918, when I belonged to old Judge C. D. Mifre. He was driving me home late one Saturday night, after spending the evening at the Silver Dollar saloon; it was raining hard and pitch dark. As we approached the wooden bridge over Teabon Creek the Judge suddenly pulled up and turned the buggy around."

"Come on, Beesie," he said, "we've got to go back and have another drink! Naturally, I didn't want to go. But he took the whip to me—and back we went to the Silver Dollar, where the Judge finally fell asleep under a table while I dozed against a hitching post."

"In the morning we learned that the bridge over Teabon Creek had been washed out during the night! But for the Judge's instinct—an instinct inherited from a long line of Southern ancestors—we both might have plunged into a raging torrent and drowned. I'll never forget that night—and neither will the Judge; his wife won't let him."

"I will give human beings credit for one thing," the saddle horse conceded. "They are loyal. The man who owned me in England used to follow me around by the hour, like a dog."

"What for?" demanded the Shetland pony.

"He was trying to put a halter on me."

"By the way," said the mare, "do you shy?"

"Well," replied the saddle horse reflectively, "sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. I used to shy at everything, even at mere curates on bicycles. But after I came over to this country a day or two, many horses got to shying, I rather got out of the habit."

"You'll find a few Middle-Western horses who shy," the gray mare informed him. "But not these sophisticated city nags. They consider it an affront on personalty, I shy whenever I'm with some one who appreciates it. After all, when you're two nags, you must do something to keep up an appearance of cohesiveness."

"Really," protested the saddle horse gallantly, "I wouldn't have said you were a day over sixteen."

"You couldn't if you wanted to, until tonight," the Shetland pony reminded him.

"When I was sixteen," the gray mare mused, ignoring the interruption, "my father was so long that the coachman could sit on it. I used to pull the family phaeton down Main Street on Sunday afternoon and every body turned round to admire me. There was a big blacksmith shop on the corner where the White Front filling station is today, and the shoemakers were real artists. You remember the old poem, 'Under a spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands for no nonsense.'"

"That must have been a long time ago," the saddle horse observed. "It's impossible to get a comfortable shoe nowadays."

"It was a long time ago," she

agreed complacently. "Why, I can remember when Mrs. Humberton Smith-Smythe didn't have a hyphen to her name. She was plain Minnie Smith, a fat little girl in pink calico bloomers and—"

"Don't tell me," groaned the saddle horse, wincing. "She's bad enough in her riding habit."

"Habit, my eye!" the Shetland pony put in. "That costume she wears is a major vice."

"Mrs. Smith-Smythe can afford to dress as she likes," the gray mare explained. "She comes from one of East Teabon's first families."

"Ridiculous!" the saddle horse snorted. "She doesn't look to me like a person who is suffering from blue blood pressure."

"Kind hearts are more than coronets," said the gray mare. "It's true of horses as well as humans. Probably I could trace my genealogy clear back to the Little Epiphanus if I wanted to. But what of it? I believe in living in the present. All I ask is a pall of water, a bale of hay—"

"And who?" enquired the saddle horse provocatively.

"Not you, certainly," the gray mare replied, edging away.

"But there must have been some one—some time," he insisted.

The gray mare blushed a delicate mauve. "I see," she admitted at length. "His name was Bolivar. He was a big black Percheron who stood sixteen hands high in his bare hoofs. What a horse! He pulled a brewery truck and when he went thundering over the cobblestones with the brass on his harness jingling and his muscles rippling in the sun—there was a slight you could never forget."

"Twelve years ago he went away; I have never seen him since. Yet I still love him, and for me there will never be anyone else. Sometimes when I am half asleep I seem to see him—standing impatiently in front of Emil S. Hepler's Saddle Room. But, the mare sighed, "it is only a dream like the bale of hay at the end of the rainbow. You can't eat your wild oats and have them."

"Hush!" cried the Shetland pony. "The wind's coming by the door."

The stable door slid open and two men entered with a lantern. "I'm postive I heard voices," said one, holding the lantern above his head. The flickering light revealed three horses dozing peacefully in their stalls.

"I hope not," replied the other man fervently. "By the way, I sold that old gray mare in the end stall to Mr. Smith, the brewer yesterday. Of course, he'll have to use trucks when his plant begins running at full capacity, but he wants to have one horse-drawn wagon for old times' sake—so he's going to team her up with a big black plug named Bolivar."

Peacock Dinner English Custom Many Years Ago

FASHIONS in Christmas dinners come and go. In olden days at a Christmas feast in England, next in importance to the boar's head as a Christmas dish was the peacock. To prepare the bird for the table was a task entailing no little trouble. The skin was first carefully stripped off with the plumage adhering. The bird was then roasted; when done, and partially cooled it was sewed up again in its feathers, its beak painted with gilt and so sent to the table. Some times the whole body was covered with leaf gold and a piece of cotton saturated with spirits placed in its beak and lighted before the carver commenced operations. This "food for lovers and meat for lords" was stuffed with spices and sweets, basted with yolks of eggs and served with plenty of gravy.

The noble bird was not served by common hands; that privilege was reserved for the lady guests most distinguished by birth or beauty. One of them carried it into the dining hall to the sounds of music, the rest of the ladies following in due order. The dish was set down before the master of the house or his most honored guest. The latest instance of peacock eating recorded was at a dinner given to William IV, when duke of Clarence, by the governor of Grenada.

One Way to Keep Warm

Perhaps the best of all possible ways to keep warm during the Yuletide season is to become employed as the fully-outfitted Santa Claus in a basement toy department.

Like Colorful Tree

IF THERE are young children in the home, you should have a real Christmas tree, as nothing else can take its place. Older people may like the stunning effects that appeal to the imagination, or symbols in a fairy manner that will do this, but children want it loaded to overflowing with baubles of colored glass, lopped around with tinsel strands that gleam and glitter.

Great Yule Feast Given By King Richard in 1399

CHRISTMAS in England, of course is an old feast day though the Santa Claus and Christmas tree traditions come to us from another source. William E. Mead's "The English Medieval Feast" (Houghton, Mifflin) quotes, from Stow's "Survey of London," an account of the great feast which King Richard gave in Westminster Hall in the year 1399. Just after rebuilding the hall of William Rufus:

"A most royal Christmas with daily joustings and runnings at tilt, whereunto resorted such a number of people that there was every day spent 28 or 26 oxen, and 300 sheep, besides fowl without number; he caused a gown for himself to be made of gold, garnished with pearl and precious stones, to the value of 3000 marks; he was guarded by Cheshire men and had about him commonly 13 bishops, besides barons, knights, squires, and other more than need; inasmuch that to the household came every day to meet 10,000 people, as appeareth by the messes told out from the kitchen to 300 servants."

Saxon Words "Waes Hael," Meaning "Be in Health"

CHRISTMAS fare has always occupied a big part in Yuletide celebration. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers were excellent trenchermen, and eating and drinking were a necessary part of every gala day. Stuffed boars heads, peacocks, geese, capons, pheasants, mince pie, plum pudding—these decked the board. The turkey was unknown. That excellent fowl did not enter into the bill of fare until the discovery of the New world. Of course, there was drink aplenty. Punch was the customary wassail bowl. This bowl takes its name from the Saxon words, "waes hael," meaning "be in health." It was a great bowl of punch into which baked apples were thrown to enhance its flavor. Mince pie originated in 1596. It first was made from mutton. The Puritans condemned it as an ungodly dish, and the Quakers would have none of it.

Ancients Gave Presents as Most People Do Now

THE custom of making presents at Christmas is derived from very ancient usage. It was a Teutonic invention. In Latin countries gifts were exchanged at New Year's, writes James Waldo Fawcett in the Washington (D.C.) Evening Star. The decoration of churches with mistletoe and holly is likewise a pagan survival. Nativity plays and pageants trace back to a pre-Christian era. The sports of the Lords of Misrule in England are supposed to be an inheritance from the Saturnalia of heathen Rome.

Father Christmas or Santa Claus is identified with St. Nicholas or Nicholas, and also with Knecht Ruprecht and Robin Goodfellow. Grimm says that in some parts of Germany Knecht Nicolas is merely an attendant on the real gift-giver, who is sometimes the infant Christ and sometimes Dame Bertha, but who is also frequently conceived as an ugly dwarf, called Krampus.

Carol singing by waifs, strolling street musicians, is an old British custom.

The first Christmas cards date from about 1846.

The setting up in Latin churches of a Christmas creche is said to have been originated by St. Francis.

Selecting Christmas Cards

We unconsciously betray our true selves when we select Christmas cards. People who live in city apartments are apt to send drawings of farmhouses; this nestle cozily among tall trees; a lawyer's holiday card is likely to be sugary with sentiment.—Collier's Weekly.



HE did not have very much money. In fact, they had very little. If you had peered into Ma Grady's worn pocketbook you would have seen only a two-dollar bill, and a few stray coppers. This represented three months' careful saving for Christmas. The Grady's were poor and there were seven of them. Pa Grady was killed in an accident three years ago, since when Ma Grady and Susie and Bill had worked hard to keep the family together. But all the hardship in the world could not dampen the spirits of that fighting family.

Susie Grady was a plucky fifteen, and got small jobs of looking after the neighbors' babies, or coming in as a mother's helper. Bill Grady was twelve. He picked up odd quarters in all sorts of clever ways. Ma Grady, that rosy, smiling, bawling woman had her big arms in the suds from morning until night. She did the washings of half the town.

And so Christmas Eve came. And Ma Grady stepped down to where the stores were and expended her two dollars and a few coppers on gifts for her family. In the meantime Susie and Bill were busy about a Christmas tree. Bill had bought it at a great reduction because it was so ugly.

Susie paused in draping a bit of tinsel on a branch. "Don't you hear a crying?" she asked.

"Haven't got time to listen to the wailing," growled Bill, who was feeling too important to be bothered with trifles.

Susie went on with her work.

"Then—'But I do hear something, sure as the world!'" she insisted. Bill grunted and stood off to squint up his eyes at some cotton he had just arranged like snow.

"It's a scratching sound and a whine. I'm going to see," Susie slipped into the hall. She opened the door. There, shivering on the sill, was the coldest little dog she had ever seen in her life. It had long, silken ears and the biggest brown eyes imaginable.

"Why, you poor little beastie!" Susie gathered him up in her arms. A grateful pink tongue lapped her face. A cold little body pressed against her warm neck. She hurried back to the Christmas tree.

"Look! Look what I've found!" Bill came over to examine the dog. "Cute little feller, ain't he?" he conceded. "Guess he's one of them new fangled kind: a Chinese Pekingese. Wonder why he came to our door?"

The children stood patting the new treasure. And the wee dog made tiny snortings of pleasure, wriggling and squirming with delight. The Christmas tree was forgotten.

"Don't get him barking or it will wake up the other kids!" warned Susie.

For half an hour the two children played with the small stranger. Bill and Susie had never seen such a friendly little creature. They began to think of him as their own, as a Christmas gift come especially for them.

A loud rapping on the door. A rapping as of a cane knocked smartly against the panels.

"Mercy!" said Susie. "Who's that? And she flew to answer it."

"Have you seen?" asked a man's voice, a deep businesslike voice, "a small dog about here?"

"Why—" stammered Susie, "why—eh—"

"A sharp little bark from the other room."

"Ah," said the stranger, "I perceive that you have. Allow me to enter and retrieve my property."

Before Susie could say a word the big man had pushed by her and was in the room where the Christmas tree stood.

Bill had the dog tight in his arms. There was an expression on the boy's face of dogged determination. He looked as though nothing in the world could separate him from this new-found happiness.

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Took From a Messenger Boy a Large Well-Filled Basket

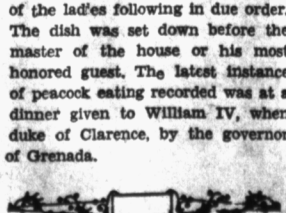


"You Were in a Critical State," Ina Went On.



UNDER THE MISTLETOE

Marion—Jack is getting near-sighted. Myrtle—It doesn't follow that there is anything the matter with his eyes because he can't see you under the mistletoe.



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