

CHRISTMAS and NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS FROM KING'S COUNTY

BEST WISHES



Good health and prosperity... all of God's bountiful blessings be upon you in the Christmas season and in the new year to come.

BELL'S Service Station

MONTAGUE

Among Those Present Was Santa Claus

—by—
VINCENT CORNIER
John Burnicle halted a moment on the threshold of the housekeeper's fire room—and he listened. The whoops and singing of village children sounded all

SEASONS GREETINGS

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over the great house. A piano played "Nuts in May" and hand-clapped, merrily. Outside, the sleet and wind of the afternoon made contrast, booming and thrashing at the ivy.

"Well, Mrs. Tateleigh, and how did it go?"
For once, Lord Betwode's housekeeper was no longer the Stately Tateleigh. Her shrewdly handsome Scots face was glowing and she—actually—extended a welcoming hand.

"Mr. Burnicle, she almost purred, "you was a masterpiece! Oh, the wee bairnies—didn't they enjoy themselves?"

His cheeks and upper lip still stinging from the spirit gum, the recent Santa Claus of the Hall children's party rubbed his face, ruefully, and entered the room. Two tall glasses, cold chicken, wine, fruit and a flaring fire made the sombre panelled chamber a place of cheer.

"Wicked little devils," Burnicle chuckled. "One potential fire-raiser was dispossessed of a box of matches and a raid on my whiskers—otherwise, I agree, they certainly were happy." He still could smell the fierce breath of a newly-cut fir tree set up in the main

hall; gleaming with lights and old German glass toys; laden with presents. "His lordship doesn't do things by halves, does he?"

"A grand old gentleman, Mr. Burnicle. When he goes, it'll be a sore day for this part of the world." She sighed. Then sparkled, as she indicated the lovely table. "But, come on now, I'm sure you must be famished."

Burnicle settled down and ate and drank. "All this, he gleefully told himself, "and ten guineas, too!"—Yes, old Lord Betwode was one of the best.

"I—I was mortally terrified," Mrs. Tateleigh suddenly and merrily said, as she poured out wine. "When his lordship told me he'd engaged a professional Santa Claus from a big London agency. Ocht thought I to myself: loch, he'll be a hairy old nasty, smelling of beer and baccy, and—"

"And, I've disappointed you—eh?"

Mrs. Tateleigh found herself blushing. He saw the flush, steal up clear-skinned cheeks, accentuating likeable Scottish grey eyes and taking years from a woman's age. She saw a neat, iron-grey haired man in his fifties, as clean and rosy as his lordship, and all as gentlemanly.

"Oh no! For the moment Lord Betwode told me you were an ex-inspector of police. I guessed you'd be decent." She handed him chicken and thick ham. "Forbye, and what does a pensioned police officer want, playing Santa at Christmas parties?"

"Loneliness, madame—loneliness." Then, conscious of a stiffness in his attitude, ex-inspector Burnicle expanded. "I—I was one of a large family, y'see. And, since I'm an old bachelor, with too much time on my hands, I took up this annual Santa Claus impersonation job...since it gives me two

Greetings



things, good fellowship and the bubble and squeak of—of kiddies. Frankly, Christmas sets me up, in sheer happiness, I mean, for most of the year."

"I see," Sarah Tateleigh also thought, deeply, craftily, excitedly. "Well, and how do you like our Cotswold countryside?" It seemed an inconsequent question—but she had her own reasons for asking it.

"What, you've seen of it, of course."

John Burnicle astounded the Hall's housekeeper.

"Why, good Lord, I'm a Cotswold man, Mrs. Tateleigh! Did fifteen years of my service here—about. What's more, my old dad was the last Lord Betwode's head gamekeeper."

Then they were away. The bond was established—Mrs. Tateleigh's

last bastions of reserve were down and two cronies sat a-talking. So it came about that Burnicle learned more—much more—than he otherwise would have been told.

The housekeeper not only outlined the scope of the after-dinner party at which he was to officiate—she added snippets which, ordinarily, she would have kept to herself.

Sitting back, smoking one of Lord Betwode's cigars, ex-inspector Burnicle pondered.

His lordship was no fool. He had deliberately singled out "a responsible chap" from the Agency list. When attracted by the name "Burnicle" and found under "Former Occupation"—"Police; attained rank of Inspector; 28 years service"—the old man went to London to interview his Santa Claus.

In that interview, Betwode had said searching and uncomfortable things. Now his housekeeper had, in part, confirmed them.

Apparently, more than half a dozen odd incidents of theft had occurred in Betwode Hall, during the year. A miniature, a water-colour a very valuable vase and other odds and ends vanished.

Each item was small enough to conceal in anyone's clothing. None was recovered. It seemed that a kleptomaniac, or worse, was at work in the Hall...either one of the family or a servant.

"And since the family consists, only, of the honourable Agnes and Chloe," Mrs. Tateleigh's eyes

If Santa Misses, Reindeer Supply Will Be at Fault

If Santa Claus misses some youngsters this year, it could be offered plausibly that he was not able to round up enough reindeer for his yearly trip around the globe.

The reindeer shortage has become, in recent years, much too acute. It has been estimated that wolves have destroyed 500,000 of Santa's helpers within the decade or so, leaving an approximate 50,000.

The difficulty of keeping the animals alive in a temperate climate makes it unlikely that any of the



few remaining will be transported from their native regions to other lands for the holiday season, as has been done in the past.

Boys and girls will have to be satisfied with stand-ins. The few department stores featuring Santa's complete outfit this year will be using native deer as substitute for Dasher, Prancer, and company.

"Winkled, "and each is a severe and saintly old maid, surely he can rule them out."

"The servants," Burnicle ruminated. "You're sure all are trustworthy?"

"What few of us are left—five in all—have been here for 'teens of years, Mr. Burnicle. I could vouch for every one. Apart from Hicks, the chauffeur, and he lives outside in the lodge at the gates, none of us is a chicken."

"Hicks? He's young, eh? How long's he been here?"

"Oh, a man in his early forties; a widower—came here in nineteen forty-five I believe. He was young Anthony's tank-driver during the war."

"Young Anthony" was the Betwode heir and was in Delhi on the High Commissioner's staff.

"So, I think we can leave him out of it all."

"I learned in police practice never to leave anyone out of anything, when mystery was afoot," smiled Burnicle. "But, let's be hearing more about this after-dinner. Any tips you can give me, Mrs. Tateleigh, I'll be glad to have."

"Inspired" by the year-long problem of the thefts, Lord Betwode had staged a "burglary" for after-dinner entertainment. Burnicle was to play Santa Claus and give each guest his or her present. Then, with lights lowered, one of the younger members of the party had to stage a melodramatic "burglary" to the "victims" had to identify the "thief"...If so—Mr. Burglar paid forfeit. If not—if "victims" had to pay his car license for a year and look pleasant about it, too.

"There's Mr. Clavering from Betwode, a nephew—and Sammy

Bennet, he's Lord Betwode's steward, and Edward Fortescue," Mrs. Tateleigh explained. "Each is to dress up as a burglar. The guests are to do exactly as they would do in an actual burglary. If anyone—or all—are identified, they're out of the game...and as a forfeit for a similar business, last year, consisted of no drinks or smokes for a month, you can guess they'll be careful!"

"Oh, so it's been done before—eh?"

"Yes. Every year we have one of these 'murders' or 'mystery plays.' Young Mr. Anthony began 'em. And," the housekeeper sat up with pride, "they're quite famous, in a way—so cleverly done." After a while, since the weather had calmed, ex-inspector Burnicle muffled up and took a walk through the moonlit gardens of the Hall. He got as far as the gates. He had a talk with Mr. Hicks and, on the way back, fell in with two guests walking over from Betwode village for the night's festivities: Samuel Bennet, Lord Betwode's steward and a slightly tipsy young fellow called Fortescue, an artist, so he said.

Among the three—Burnicle recalled something from his official

(Continued on page 7)



It's no secret at all—we're wishing one and all the merriest kind of Christmas and happiest New Year.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS
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MONTAGUE



GREETINGS
MERRY CHRISTMAS and Happy & Prosperous NEW YEAR to all our friends and customers
THE PURINA STAFF
James E. Cudmore
Montague



We take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with happiness. It has been our great pleasure to be your "family drug store", and we are, as ever, at your service.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS



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And a Happy New Year

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It is an old happy custom and it warms the hearts of giver and receiver—so we are happy to wish you the merriest of all Christmases and a Happy New Year.

JO-ANNA DRESS SHOPPE
MONTAGUE



Our greeting is an old one, but Christmas is a time for old songs, old wishes and old friends. So may we say, Happy Holiday

Montague Garage
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GEORGETOWN



Greetings

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Montague & Charlottetown



And a Happy NEW YEAR
Montague Furnishing Company

Our Christmas Wishes

That Santa will bring you lots of wonderful presents... that your Christmas will be the best ever... that God will bless you in everything you do in the New Year.

BISON RESTAURANT
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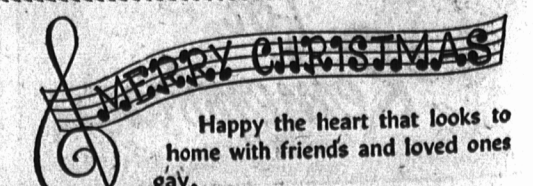


To all of you who have so pleasantly served...

MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR

Fraser & Anear
MONTAGUE

SHUR-GAIN FEED SERVICE



Happy the heart that looks to home with friends and loved ones gay.
As the herald angels sing the great and happy news of Christmas once more, may your heart be filled with glowing peace. May the coming year be one of good health and achievement.

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BEST WISHES

OF THE SEASON

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