

Christmas Camelia

(By John Scott Douglas)

Stenographers hovered around as Manning unwrapped the package that had just reached the law offices. There were startled gasps of admiration when the paper fell away, revealing a potted camelia. Large and pure white, except for crimson-touched petals, its heart was filled with delicate golden stamens.

"Oh, how beautiful!" Tessie gasped. "Who sent it, Marta?" "My boy friend," Marta said, her voice warm with happiness. "I didn't know a camelia bloomed in time for Christmas," said Bess. "The Dal Baugura does," said Marta. "But it's all crimson. This must be a new hybrid that Colby Blakely stocked for the Christmas trade."

Could Colby have developed it himself? she wondered. She remembered the day, when he had been showing her around his nursery, that she started to enter a small, new lath house at the back.

Sne heard Colby's voice. "I feel terribly to beg off on another date, Darling. But Roberts sprained his back lifting a tubbed tree, and had to go home. About twenty customers are coming in to pick up Christmas plants this evening, and someone must be here. Let me explain about that camelia."

Sick with disappointment, she said, "Never mind," and hung up. Tears pricked her eyes. Wasn't she ever as important as a customer?

"Garral Ladd wants you to take a letter," said the switchboard girl. "Any of the other girls would have gone into a tizzy if he'd suggested a date. Only Marta had had the chance to refuse him, not once but many times. For to her, he wasn't quite real."

Now, with a confident smile, he dictated: "To do the town on Christmas Eve with a lovely young blonde like you would make this my most wonderful Christmas. Will you say, 'Yes?' Devotedly, Garral Ladd."

"To whom shall I address it?" "To Miss Marta Manning."

Her cheeks grew warm. On the point of refusal, she remembered the broken date. "I'd be glad to, Mr. Ladd."

That evening, on her way home to dress, she stopped at a nursery to buy a small tree for her apartment. The tree, she recalled with a pang of disappointment, that Colby had promised to bring when he called. A woman loaded with bundles was leaving the nursery with a plant identical to the one Marta had received that morning.

"Isn't it lovely?" the woman asked, noticing Marta's glance. "It's the new hybrid developed by the Blake nursery." And she told Marta its name.

Marta stood, stunned when the woman left. Then, abruptly, she turned back to her car, thinking, "I can call Garral Ladd later."

She found Colby wrapping red paper around a potted holding one of the new Christmas camelias.

"Can you forgive me, Colby?" she asked humbly. "I'll help wait on customers so we can be together Christmas Eve. You've made me so proud and happy."

"It was the only name for a flower so beautiful, darling."

She felt a touch of awe as she stared at the camelia he was wrapping. How like Colby to express his love by naming it the Marta Manning!

Their Christmas Eve Expectations



she just wanted to pull the ornaments a little closer to the edge of the table. But there it was—broken ornaments all over the floor—still shiny red, blue and silver—but broken. "Petitee", she said.

"That does it!" shouted Mommy, bursting into tears. She swept up the pieces and dumped them into the wastebasket. "You put the kids to bed, John. I'm going over to Mother's for awhile—maybe there'll be some Christmas spirit left over there."

But John lay down on the sofa in the living room and fell asleep. He didn't wake up until Martha shook him frantically, screaming, "The children! The children are gone!"

There was no anger—no accusations now. Just terror. John was the first to recover enough to start thinking. He ran down to the basement and found the puppy gone. He went outside, and Martha was left sobbing alone.

She was picking up the telephone when she saw it. A light in the garage. John was standing at the garage door looking in—just standing there.

A small pine branch was propped up in one corner—John had snipped it off himself that afternoon because it made the tree look lopsided. From each twig of the pine branch hung a bright shiny piece of ornament, laboriously tied or with a string.

At the base of the Christmas tree slept a huddled mass of legs and arms and a tail. The tail twitched a little and brushed Mandy's forehead. "Prettee", she murmured softly.

Christmas Dinner

Mother serves the dinner. Every-one sits in. Restless after waiting Ready to begin. Yearning, — and longing to eat.

Carve the turkey. Father—Heap my plate up high Remember this is Christmas I'm a hungry guy.

Serve me another helping. Turnips too, — I shouts May-be I'll have a drum-stick. And some more brussels-sprouts. Say, — do I feel full.

Oh, — why was I so greedy. Yawning, — yawning, — all the time

Oh, — now I feel quite seedy Undo my belt and let me lie. And perhaps, I will come to. Leave me be and let me dream Lovingly, of you.

—Martin MacGougan

The Armenian church observes Christmas on January 6; the Dutch on December 6; the French have their own particular Christmas observances, as have the Germans.

Imagination Brings Yule Indoors

By Anne Larsel.

For those who begin early enough to put a bit of time and thought into their efforts, indoor Christmas decorations can be among the most pleasant of holiday chores.

An elastic imagination can stretch your budget this year, since a lively eye can spot decoration supplies everywhere from the cellar workshop and the coal bin to the sink cupboard.

The cleanser you use to clean the sink and the bathtub makes an excellent art material when it's worked with water into a paste the consistency of poster paint. Make up a bowl of this brush, and you're all set for one of the merriest decorating sessions ever.

Window panes may be adorned with reindeers, snowmen and jolly St. Nicks; glass-topped coffee-tables take on a festive air when sprinkled with white stars or a wreath design.

If you wish to join in the fun yourself, a nativity scene or a

Santa landscape makes an effective decoration for the mirror above your living room mantel, or, for a Christmas Eve surprise, try a free-hand drawing of angels or toy-maker elves on the bureau mirror in your children's room.

For a teen-ager's holiday party, a decorated coal scuttle is sure to break the social ice as well as hold the actual ice and soft drinks. This conversation-piece is simple to make, requiring only a dash of spirit, a new coal scuttle and several gay shades of paint. Peter Hunt, who is known throughout the country for his artistry with peasant designs, suggests a modified design that is sufficiently general that the scuttle may be used for various household purposes throughout the year.

John Drill, who is noted for his versatile designs in unexpected materials, turns to copper screening as the basis of an attractive cornucopia for dining room side-board or hall table. To make one for your home, begin with a rectangle of copper screening 10 by 11 inches, shaping it into a



cone diagonally and securing it with staples or sewing it into place with wire. Stretch the mouth of the cone until it yawns invitingly to receive an arrangement of silver leaves, stem ornaments and frosted snow ornaments. Roll the edges gently backward to give it a sweeping flair. The tail of the cone should be twisted until it curls upward.

This is finished with a smaller arrangement of ornaments. Gay candle decorations to complement the cornucopia can be devised from wire, heavy enough to hold its shape, which has been wrapped around a broomstick to form a spiral. You'll need eight inches of wire for this, and florists' tape—of the sort used for stems in corsages—to wrap about the wire before twisting it into its corkscrew-shape.

To this spiral, attach three ornaments made of metallic-paper fringe or Christmas tree bulb reflectors through which stem ornaments have been thrust. Slip the entire arrangement down a candle to its base. Low candleholders are particularly effective when these adornments are paired with the cornucopia.

If base metal is available in your neighborhood, an attractive candle sconce can be made from 12 cones of this material mounted upon a circle of cardboard. The candles are held in spirals of heavy brass wire which is attached to the back of the sunburst, and silver stars with Christmas-ball centers are used to adorn the whole.

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Suffer Little Children

(By Vera Tarpley)

Standing on her tiptoes, Mandy could see the whole bright array of them—shiny red, blue and silver ornaments spread out on the table, waiting for Santa's nimble fingers to arrange them on the tree.

"Prettee", she murmured longingly. If only Santa would let her help him. Just handing them to him one by one would be wonderful. She turned to Gerald, who was busily fumbling with train tracks and getting nowhere. "Gerry, you touch?" she asked, looking back at the ornaments.

Gerald looked up despairingly from his train tracks. "Sure, I touched them lots of times" he said carelessly. "Only you can't," he added. "You're too little."

Voices floated into them from the kitchen. "The kid's old enough to know there isn't a Santa Claus, anyway!" That was John Martin who said that. John Martin, the most wonderful Daddy in the world.

They must still have been talking about what happened before supper. Mommy had fixed hamburgers—they always had hamburgers on Christmas Eve, and this was the first year Mandy could have a hamburger like everybody else.

There was really nothing to get mad about. Mandy and Gerald had been standing in the kitchen smelling the wonderful smells, while Mommy was fixing supper. The basement door was standing open to let out some of the smoke from frying, and up the stairs he

"It's just plain stupid carelessness on your part!" And he snatched the puppy from Gerald's arms and carried him down the basement stairs.

Mandy was still looking over the edge of the table at the beautiful ornaments. If she could just touch them—just touch one—then nothing else would matter.

She hadn't meant to jerk the newspapers under them so hard—

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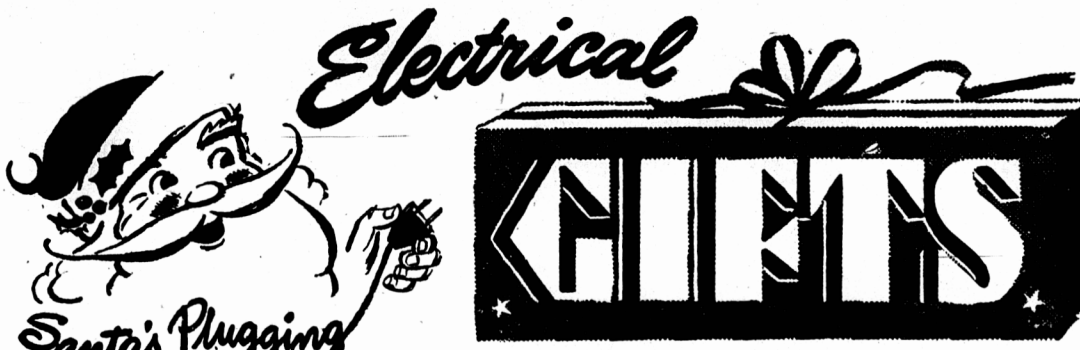
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If she could just touch them—just touch one—then nothing else would matter.

came, one step at a time, and peeked his little head around the door. Mandy saw him first and screamed in happy delirium. Gerald ran over and picked him up—he wriggled and squirmed and licked Gerald all over the face. Gerald knew it was a fox terrier pup—he knew all the names of the different dogs, but he had always wanted a fox terrier.

Daddy came into the kitchen at that point. He acted even more queerly—he was mad! And he started saying terrible things to Mommy—terrible things that made Mandy cry and Gerald want to run far away so he wouldn't hear. "I told you to keep the basement door closed!" Daddy roared.



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