Olives.

ser, I'm a mean, cowardly, cruel—a regular tragedy uncle, in fact."
My dear uncle," said Milly, "of course we didn't know. And you were only in joke,

"Well, my dear, I'm not so sure of that; but a man mayn't marry his grandmother, you know; and I rather think there's a simifar foolish prejudice as regards nieces. So, on the whole, perhaps it's just as well you didn't say yes.

"I'm sure I heartily beg your pardon, brother-in-law," said Mr. Todd. "You won't bear malice for words said under a mistake,

"Well, I'm not quite certain whether I will or I won't," said Mr. Hawkins. "I should like to punch that young rascal's head for calling me an old humbug, but I'm afraid I should get the worst of it."

"I'm very sorry, sir," began Charley.
"No, you're not, my dear boy; or if you are, you need n't be," said Mr. Hawkins. "It was an old man's joke, and I rather think I saw the fun of it better than you did."

"But I had always heard you were dead, Hawkins," said Mr. Todd. "Many a time my poor wife used to talk and cry over her only brother, who was thought to have been drowned at sea."

"I ought to have been, by rights," said Uncle Tom. "I've been in three shipwrecks, but I was preserved, probably for a higher and drier fate. I've been a digger, and a storekeeper, and a good many other things besides. I'll tell you all my adventures, one of these days. And now I've made as much as I care to make. Yes, that twenty thousand pounds is a fact, Miss Milly, and I've come to England to enjoy myself with my nephews and nieces. So you won't marry me, ch?" Milly shook her head saucily.

"Well, then, as I've set my heart on a wedding, I suppose you must marry some-body else. I think I know somebody who'll find that security, Mr. Charley, though you did call me a canting old humbug. thanks!-don't like 'em: always makes me feel as if I was being tickled and wasn't allowed to laugh. Milly, little woman, if you're very good, you and I will take a run out of town the very first fine day, and see if we can't find that same cottage we were talking about—small garden in front, and the name of John Todd on the door, you know." In spite of Uncle Tom's objection to thanks there was a simultaneous outburst of grateful joy—the overflow of happy hearts. John Todd squeezed his brother-in-law's left hand, John while Charley Collins violently shook his right, and Milly, with both arms round his neck, kissed him repeatedly. Miss Pinnifer wept so violently that her small pocket-handkerchief looked as if it had been recently washed, and not recently dried.

The excitement rather increased than diminished in intensity, and Uncle Tom was in a fair way to be literally smothered with caresses, when the door suddenly opened and Miss Pinnifer's brother, in a white and peculiarly airy costume, stalked into the room. The unfortunate man had waked from his first sleep with an uneasy sense that the promised pudding, with the hope of which he had been beguiled to rest, had not been duly furnished; and he had therefore risen at once, without the formality of dressing himself, to claim his due. There was an exclamation of astonishment followed by a shout of inextinguishable laughter, and then Miss Pinnifer, with much presence of mind, seized the table-cover, and hurriedly draping it round the intruder, marched him back to bed. For a little while longer the little party sat around the fire, talking of the hard times past, and the pleasant times to come, and hearing the story of the tempest-tossed life,

come to an anchor at last. And then the time for "good-by" came, and as with loving kisses and hearty hand-shakes, they said 'good night," the chimes from a neighboring church tower rang out midnight, and Christmas day was over. And Uncle Tom, reverently doffing his hat, said:-Thank God for a merry Christmas. "Amen!" said Charley Collins.

"Amen!" said John Todd, "with all our hearts, amen!"

Thank God for Christmas! So say we all, and God help him who cannot say Amen! For peace and good-will, for the quickened pulse of charity, for quarrels reconciled and love renewed, the golden gifts of Christmas, God be thanked. Thanked, not alone with our lips, but with our hands and our hearts, by spreading these golden gifts, that others may thank Him too. None is so poor but that, once a year at least, he may be a "rich uncle" to somebody; none so joyless but that he may catch a reflected ray of happiness, by doing something, be it ever so little, to make merry Christmas in the heart of another.

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SEASONED CHERRY. 18
ASH.
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