

THE FOOL'S SEARCH

EPISODE IN JOSTLING THROG OF CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS.

Order for Purchase of a Fool's Calendar Brings Funny Experiences—Men, Women and Children All Are Mad.



HEY are all mad; men, women, children, spinsters and bachelors, floorwalkers and clerks, drivers and delivery boys, it would seem there could be no madder, merrier time.

The funniest things happen, if one only had time to dwell on them and laugh over them, but such enjoyment is denied in these days of strain and struggle.

In a moment of thoughtless good-nature we promised to do the

family shopping. Among the thousand and one commissions handed over in immediate response to the thoughtless good-nature was the order for purchase of "The Fool's Calendar." We set forth, a list three-times-forty long in our groaning, much-abused hand-bag, and entered the first shop come upon, in our sub-consciousness feeling that we, like the rest of the jostlers, fitted in pretty well with the title of that calendar. Down the aisle came a rattled-looking, hair-disturbed, generally disturbed gentleman whose province seemed the directing of frenzied fanciers to the respective departments of their fancy, but the Christmas spirit so possessed him he was not quite himself, not able to place his "Madames" and "Sirs." As short-skirted, rose-wreathed hatted, we steered his way, he glanced with wrinkled brow and questioning worry to what might be our demand. "Do you sell calendars here?" We asked in heat of hurry, to which he replied glibly, "Yes, Sir," and never knew he was not using the usual form of address to a woman. He led us then with rapid step to the calendar square, where spread out and uprose floor, roof and pillars of calendars, it would seem every time—chronicler for every taste. And then feeling very like a fool ourselves, we asked in a low voice, "Have you 'The Fool's Calendar'?" "No," says he, "But," and a gleam of keen intellect lights his eye. "We have 'Saints and Sinners.'"

We wanted to shriek with laughter, we forgot all the hurry and not-money-enough or time-enough. It paid for all the crowding and mobbing and back-ache and heart-ache of the day. Funny enough was the woman encountered in mid-afternoon entering the much-advertised, much-crowded book-room of a department store in haste to get at the forty-eight centers and thirty-niners: she was high and broad and muscular, an Amazon that need not have put on extra effort to make her way—but the spirit of Christmas—the modern—was strong upon her, and as we passed her on the way out into blessed out-of-doors, even in our hurry we could not but notice her wild look, her panting breath, her elbows out on defensive and offensive the way in which she marched on, unswervingly, unrelentingly, like an avalanche, toward the bargain books.

Overheard at the book counter: "Don't you think a nice little book like this is a good present to give?" "A little book? What is the name?" "Why I don't know, but it's a nice little book in clean white binding, I believe I'll get a dozen. A dozen, please, and see that they're all fresh." The calendar square again. Women madly struggling; another Amazon, this one brow-beating a pale-faced girl afflicted with a cold and, wearing a too-much Christmas air: "Can't you get me envelopes to put those calendars in?"—dimensions of calendars 18 by 24 inches—"It's so hard when you get home to hunt around and pack things, I wouldn't have bought the calendars if I hadn't thought you would pack 'em. Say, take that new one out of that nice box, hang it up and give me the box. Not allowed to? What's the diff, they'll never know." And the pale-faced clerk bends to the Amazon's will.

A large, canny, prosperous gentleman at a candy store, carefully selecting and considering purchase of 25 cents worth of Kinderzarten mixed.

Brave, foolish, big-hearted shop girls many spending their present—all, and drawing on the future, to make a Christmas for the army at home.

We do a generous deed, one that calls for large sacrifice. We have gone down town all saddled, all bridled, for the day's work, three neat long pencils neatly sharpened to long points, when we become one of a mob assailing the enclosure where blank-books, tissue-paper, holly-stickers and all that are confined from the greedy hands of thousands hungry to get their share for the urgent necessity of doing up gifts with approved ornate complexity. The clerks here all pale and gripey looking; one, so we and pallid, has momentarily lost her reason because of the loss of her pencil. A line of people wait with feverish impatience, scowls deepen, muttered growls are heard, the wee, pallid girl grows more pallid and gripey looking. With mighty effort of the will,

we hand forth one of those precious, neat, long-pointed pencils; the pale face glows, the tension of the crowd lessens, we feel ourselves both private and public benefactor.

Another pale-faced, gripey looking clerk, this one standing looking wistfully at cases where bright silver gleams through the glass. "Give me a spoon for a child, something cheap." And she herself needs a pair of shoes!

Husband and wife shopping in unwonted personal partnership, always the talk of what "It" will like, The Child. And the sight of the deeply interested faces of the many husband-and-wife groups, sets us to believe, after all. There is method in the general madness, for who would not be a fool for The Child's sake!

KATHERINE POPE.

OLD STORIES OF CHRISTMAS

Some Have Interest, Freshness and Beauty That Keep Them Always New.

There are some so-called "old stories" that are really not old, for they have an interest, a freshness and a beauty that keep them always new. Of such are the story of Christmas and all the legends and tales that belong to the great festival.

There is a legend in Germany that when Eve plucked the fatal apple the leaves of the tree immediately shriveled into needle points and its bright green turned dark. The nature of the tree changed and it became an evergreen. In all seasons preaching the story of man's fall through that first act of disobedience. Only on Christmas does it bloom brightly with lights and become beautiful with love gifts. The curse is turned into a blessing by the coming of the Christ child, and thus we have our Christmas tree.

The visits of St. Nicholas to the homes of the people on Christmas eve as an annual custom grew out of a festival in honor of Hertha, a Norse goddess. At this festival the house was decorated with evergreens and an altar of stone was set up at the end of the hall, where the family assembled. From Hertha's stone we get our word "hearthstone." On the stones so set up were heaped fir branches, which were set afire, and through the smoke and flame Hertha was supposed to descend and influence the direction of the flames, from which were predicted the fortunes of those present.

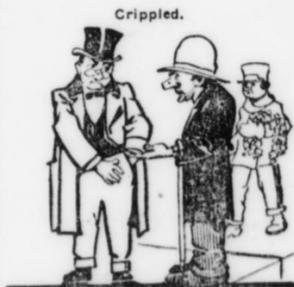
EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

Throw Forebodings to the Winds and Let Christmas Season Be One of Joy.

Let joy reign! Let care go to the dogs. Throw forebodings to the winds! Christmas comes but once a year. Let the young folks enjoy it to the full! Let the old folks stop their croaking about rheumatism for that day at least, and remember the time when they, too, were young and could dance with the merriest.

And let the little stockings be filled, and let us all bear with equanimity the blowing on toy trumpets, and the tooting on mouth organs, and the drumming on sixpenny-halfpenny drums, which are sure to follow! The boys can be boys but once, and what is a boy if he cannot make a noise?

And so the years go on, and one Christmas follows another, and we eat and drink and are merry; we greet our friends, and we part with them, and our lives march along, and through faith in the sacrifice which our Christmas day commemorates we look forward to a more perfect Christmas when the guests shall gather in the Father's house.



Beggar (piteously)—Please help a poor cripple at this festive season, sir.

Kind Old Gent (handing him some money)—Bless me! Why, of course. How are you crippled, my poor fellow?

Beggar (pocketing the money)—Financially crippled, sir.

Christmas Giving.

There are a great many people in the world whom we know more or less, but to whom for various reasons we cannot very well send a Christmas gift. But there is hardly one, in all the circles of our acquaintances, with whom we may not exchange the touch of Christmas life.

In the outer circles, cheerful greetings, courtesy, consideration; in the inner circles, sympathetic interest, hearty congratulations, honest encouragement; in the innermost circles, comradeship, helpfulness, tenderness.

After all, Christmas—living is the best kind of Christmas giving.—Henry Van Dyke.

Just a Smart Boy.

There is nothing the matter with the small boy who presents his mother with a pair of felt slippers for Christmas. He is just a smart boy, that is all.

A CHRISTMAS HYMN

DONATION CAUSES CONSTERNATION IN CHURCH.

Little Ad Slipped Into Stately Anthem by Charitable Summer Cottager Breaks Up Christmas Day Services in Confusion.



IT WAS a charitable summer cottager who put up the money for a new church at the summer resort of X—, down on the Atlantic coast. The village parson was grateful beyond words, for the old structure had been an eyesore to the folk who desired of all things to attract wealthy summer resorters.

But when the season was over and the new church was finished his reverence discovered that no provision had been made for hymnbooks. The congregation, was notably poor and not in the habit of pinching itself for the sake of charity, so the outlook for a supply of new books was very precarious. It was a late summer man—a man of reputed wealth and influence in the distant city whence he hailed—who came to the relief of the devout clergyman.

"I'll buy hymn books for the church," said he, "and send them down to you—on one condition—that you let me insert a small ad. that will really not be noticeable. It's an ad. that I assure you will bring great comfort to your flock."

The simple country divine pondered the offer carefully, and finally, after a vestry meeting, it was decided that there could be no possible sin in accepting such an offer. The donor was a man of such integrity and character that the rest was assured.

"Well, the books came down from the city, 100 of them, finer than anything the people had dreamed of. They were still very new at Christmas—in fact, had never been in use until that day. In great pride, the parson called out the number of the good old favorite Christmas hymn: "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

The congregation, equipped with their new books, turned the pages rapidly and were ready. The organ struck up the tune that everybody knew. And lustily sang the people, gazed steadfastly on the written words:

"Hark the herald angels sing, Fakes' pills are just the thing." The parson listened, looked, brushed his hand over his eyes, and a moment's panic passed over the church. But it passed. Then on into another verse they plunged:

"Peace on earth and mercy mild, Two for a man, and one for a child," rang the impious words. The parson coughed, closed his book, and the service broke up in confusion. Everybody had forgot that the generous hymn book man was interested in a patent medicine.

Christmas Superstitions.

The United States is almost poverty stricken in so far as its collection of superstitions is concerned, our early settlers having failed to import many from Europe, and not adopting those of the Indians. Of course some of us don't like to see the new moon over the left shoulder, or start on a journey on Friday, and the like, but few of us take even these very seriously. We must go to "the old countries" to get superstitions with any genuine thrill in them. There are a number which have to do with Christmas.

In North Germany, where the practical yet poetic spinning wheel still hums in the cottages, one must not spin during the 12 nights of Christmas lest he or she walk after death. (To the American reader it may occur that this would probably be more disturbing to others than to one's self.) If the spinning is done after sunset on Saturday, mice will eat the work. If one wishes to have money and good luck all the year, one should not fail to eat herring on New Year's day.

Rustling of Leaves.

Until a few years ago Hampshire rusties used to sit up till 12 o'clock on old Christmas night, and as soon as they heard the leaves rustling they went to the nearest constable to watch the animals get up and lie down on the other side. The idea of watching the animals arose from the belief that at 12 o'clock on the night of the Nativity oxen knelt in their stalls in honor of the event; that the rustling of the leaves refers to the tradition that thorn trees blossom at midnight to commemorate the Saviour's birth.

Cornish folk believe that sheep turn to the east and bow their heads on old Christmas night in memory of the sheep belonging to the shepherds at Bethlehem, and in Yorkshire bees hum in their hives on the same occasion.

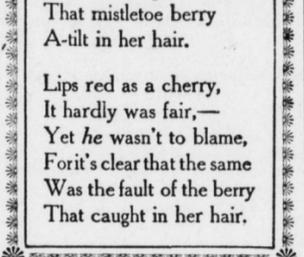
A Christmas Absent.

Father—Sammy, what is your teacher going to give you for a Christmas present?
Sammy—A holiday.
Father—I should call that an absent instead of a present.

The Real Culprit

A mistletoe berry Had caught in her hair! She wasn't to blame, She had not put it there, That mistletoe berry A-tilt in her hair.

Lips red as a cherry, It hardly was fair,— Yet he wasn't to blame, For it's clear that the same Was the fault of the berry That caught in her hair.



THE CALL OF CHRISTMAS

Inspiration of Time Should Bring Us Deeper Sense of Personal Responsibility.

It is Christmas time, and at this moment the call is to lift up our hearts and welcome the Light of the World, to rest for a while in the glory of that light; not, indeed, forgetting the lessons he would have us learn, nor those great servants of his who taught us to know and love and work, and have passed away; but in thankfulness and adoration seeking to learn more and more how he would have us serve him. The inspiration of this blessed time should bring us a deeper sense of personal responsibility, and of our duty to our neighbor in regard to questions touching the general welfare; and, beyond all, a deeper faith—that faith by which mountains can be removed—and a truer love, a devotion that can bear even the reproach of the cross, if permission may be granted to share in bearing a part of that burden.

The advent of Christ makes us debtors to God and man. It is therefore not for us to question whether others are kind to us, as whether there is love, gentleness, meekness, sympathy and helpfulness in our own lives, or not. With this spirit of the season reflected and perpetuated in the life, Christmas giving will resolve itself into Christ-like giving every day from Christmas to Christmastide of every year of grace. Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, to suffer, and to die for others, even his enemies. Rising far above the lower aim of getting and gaining solely for self, the grateful heart will ask: "What can I give to my Redeemer who gave himself for me, and what can I do for others, for his sake, and the gospel's?" That is the reincarnation of the Christ spirit, and exalts him who said: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

THE GOOD TIME COMING

Christmas an Earnest of Better Day When War and Devastation Shall Cease.

Christmas is an earnest of that better day when the awful waste of war, the devastation of preventable disease and the burdens of poverty which so shame our overabundance shall die out like some evil dream of an ignorant past. Then, indeed, there will be no trace of mockery in the resounding professions of good will; the poet's forecast will take form in that realized state "wherein no lives are seen huddled in lanes unseen," but where a righteous plenty spreads itself far and wide:

"Tis where the home is pure,
Tis where the bread is sure,
Tis where the wants are fewer
And each want fed:
Where plenty and peace abide,
Where health dwells heavenly eyed,
Where in nooks beautiful
Slumber the dead."

Important.



Millionaire (to his daughter)—"Tell me, child—that young man who wants to marry you this Christmas, has he got any money?"
Miss Innocence—Money, father? Why, he has just given me a cluster diamond ring studded with pearls!
Millionaire—Yes, I know. Has he any money left?

Christmas Omens.

Happy and prosperous will be the babe born at Christmas; long-lived and happy the bride that is married then; and it is very lucky for Christmas to fall on a Monday. It is good to give gifts of many kinds at this season; but let no housewife, be she the most free-handed woman in the world, throw or give away ashes or salt before breakfast on Christmas morning. A bright Christmas means a bright New Year, and may this Christmas be of brightest omen!

FOLK LORE OF DAY

BELGIAN CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS THAT ARE DYING OUT.

Celebration of Festival Still Presents Much That Is Interesting—Old Customs Traceable to Heathen Rites and Practices.



ALTHOUGH not so keenly followed up as in Germany and England, the festival of Christmas, as celebrated in Belgium, still presents a certain amount of interest, especially in respect to its traditional aspect. Many of the old customs, which today are but a mere mockery of their original selves, are traceable to old heathen rites and practices.

The priesthood, realizing the veneration in which these customs are still held, not only refrain from discountenancing practices which the holy church regards as heretical on account of their origin, but even enjoins the due observance on the people. Wherever possible, details of these customs have been modified with a view of bringing them into as close obedience as possible with the instructions of the Vatican.

One of the easiest tasks in this respect was the encouragement of the old custom of ceasing work for 12 days after Christmas and postponing the discussion of all differences and legal disputes for the same period. Among the "seasonable customs and beliefs" which have for the most part been dying out, if they are not already dead in many parts of the country, are the following:

Christmas eve being dedicated to Adam and Eve, boys born on that day were christened Adam, and girls Eve. Fortune telling on Christmas day was indulged in; at Brussels, for example, the burghers assembled around the fire and roasted chestnuts, listening to their "fortunes" meanwhile. At Spa, a handful of salt was cast upon the table by the host; if it melted there would be a death in the family or else a wet year in the country, though if the salt remained hard a guest would die, if, by chance, one of the lights went out at the critical moment.

Among the metal workers of the province of Hainaut molten lead was plunged into water, and the figures produced by the operation were supposed to represent incidents in the life of the "plunger."

In the Ardennes, the weather for the coming year was determined by placing lighted candles in walnut shells, which were allowed to float on a basin of water. If the candles went out the year would be a bad one, agriculturally speaking; if the remainder alight until the end it would be a good year.

Nuts thrown on the fire by lovers foretold joy if they burned with a sputtering; sorrow, if there was any noise.

According to an existing belief, everything living changes its position at the hour of midnight on Christmas day. Everything sown in the fields that day is bound to bear fruit—even though it be sown on the snow itself.

While it is considered unlucky to spin flax on Christmas day, a shirt made from flax on that night is "good for many ills." Christmas day eggs always produce fine chicks. A farmer could ensure good crops from his fruit trees by striking them with an ax on Christmas day, always provided that nobody went near the trees with a spinning wheel within 24 hours.

In the province of Antwerp the peasants say that a "heliwagen" or chariot of blood is driven through the sky at full gallop on Christmas night, the explanation being that some impious peasant dared to go out wood gathering with his wagon one Christmas night, and that, by way of punishment, he is condemned to drive through the sky year by year.

Decorations in Middle Ages.

They did their Christmas decorations very thoroughly in the middle ages. "Every man's house, as also the parish churches, were decked with holly, ivy, bays and whatever the season of the year afforded to be green," we read in Stow, but he omits to mention that decking with evergreens in the month of December, like most of the details of our Christmas festivities, was heathen in origin. It originated, for all that, in a very poetic idea, for the Druids did it so that the woodland spirits might have a warm place in which to take shelter until the spring came round again and the trees out of doors once more had leaves of their own.

No Leavings.

Tramp (to little Willie, who has opened the door)—Have yer had yer Christmas dinner yet, little boy?
Willie—No; we're just going to eat it now.
Tramp—Then perhaps if I wait around I can get some of the catables left over?
Little Willie (feeling of his stomach)—There ain't going to be any thing left.

A Christmas Carol

Pause a while, O earth and heaven; draw ye near in wonder dread, For the Lord of Life Eternal lieth in a stable bed; Cradle lowly! Yet made holy, By that resting Infant Head.

Come, ye shepherds, come, ye wise men—high and low your homage bring, For the sleeping Babe your King! cometh as your Saviour King! 'Tis the Christ-Child, Who, self-exiled, Left His throne on love's swift wing.

Come ye here, and taste the earnest of a joy above! Ye shall find within this manger, gauded by the Holy Dove, L'fe immortal, Through the portal Opened by a Saviour's Love!

CHRISTMAS AND MISTLETOE

Nature Worship Reflected in Use of Mistletoe at Christmas Time.

A great many years ago, before the time of Christianity, the oak tree, and especially the mistletoe, growing out of the heart of the oak, were revered for their supposed affinity with the sun. The Druids worshipped the sun as the one supreme god, and believed the oak to be in some way associated with the sun because they made fire by rubbing oak sticks together, the oak being at once the most common tree and the most suitable for the purpose. Twice each year these Celtic priests gave a religious festival in honor of the sun, their places of worship being in the oak groves. In June, when the sun was known to have ceased mounting higher in the heavens, the Druids gave thanks, because a nearer approach of the sun was thought to be possible, and this, of course, would result in the burning up of the earth. In December, at the time of the short days, the Druids prepared a celebration in honor of the sun's turning back from his downward journey, which was recognized as the days began to grow longer. This second celebration was quite naturally the happiest time, the people holding the sun in such fear in June. It was then the mistletoe was honored as being the very essence of the oak.

When eventually the church was established and its followers turned the ancient December celebration into Christmas, the mistletoe was hung up by way of compromise, although it had nothing to do with the new religion. And so even today, in our use of evergreen and holly, and eke the occasional sprig of mistletoe, we reflect the nature worship which gave us, perhaps, not only the foundation of our Christmas, but for our love of nature as well.

SHEPHERDS WATCH AT NIGHT

Refutation of Contention That They Could Not Have Watched on December Night.

Some historians contend that the shepherds could not have watched by night on the Bethlehem plains in December, it being a period of great inclemency. In answer to this a well-known student says: "Bethlehem is not a cold region. The mercury usually stands all the month of December at 46 degrees. Corn is sown during this time, and grass and herbs spring up after the rains, so that the Arabs drive their flocks down from the mountains into the plains. The most delicate never make fires till about the end of November, and some pass the whole winter without them. From these facts I think it is established without doubt that our Saviour was born on the 25th of December, the day which the church throughout the world has united to celebrate in honor of Christ's coming in the flesh."

The New Way.



Nellie—I don't like the man who invented airships.
Jack—Why?
Nellie—Cause papa says they can't carry very much, and if Santa Claus uses one he can't bring all the things I want.