



Christmas Window Shoppers

Grandmother's Christmas Day

by Vivian Hayes

EFFIE ANN adjusted her furs and arose, her round black eyes refusing to meet the piteous gaze of the little old lady before her.

"I know you'll be reasonable, mother," she concluded, "and see that, needing money as Edwin does right now, he couldn't do differently. When pa died and Edwin bought this house of you to help you out, he had every notion of letting you stay right here, as he told you; but the \$1,000 is absolutely needed to set us on our feet again—and with a customer turning up right now and willing to pay cash—well, 'twas nothing short of providential, and the deed was made out last night."

She bit her lip and reddened as she shot a furtive glance at the bent figure, then rushed on, nervously: "Of course you're to come right over with us as soon as Christmas is over. Packing up will be easy, for, knowing you'd have no further use for your furniture, Edwin's told the customer he could buy it just as it stood, and, of course, the money'll be yours—a nice, tidy sum—for Mr. Craig was all carried away with your braided rugs and old dishes and furniture; said it made him think of his boyhood home."

"He's over to the Glendale sanitarium now for his health—got nervous dyspepsia, or some such thing. Well, I must be rushing along."

Halting in the doorway, she called back sharply: "If that good-for-nothing brother of Edwin's comes round here tomorrow asking for us, you send him about his business lively. He can smell a Christmas dinner a mile off."

Sunshine poured into the spotless kitchen in a golden flood, lingered lovingly on the bright braided rugs and china closets laden with willowware, china and pewter. The grandfather clock ticked contentedly in a corner. The kettle hummed drowsily. Gleeful, the canary sang one exultant song after another.

was early astr. Sprigs of holly graced the many-paned windows. The deep armchair had been drawn invitingly before the fireplace. The plump and tender turkey was turning an irresistible brown. Onions, turnips, squash and potatoes—white and "sweets"—were cooking merrily. The cranberry sauce had been strained and set to cool upon the pantry windowsill, and, adhering to a long-established precedent, grandmother slipped away to don her black silk dress, lace cap and snowy apron.

She was becoming a trifle anxious about her guest when she spied a gaunt figure coming up the walk. She fluttered hospitably to the doorway and beamed at the visitor.

"I declare I was getting worried for fear you wouldn't come, after all," she said. "Edwin and Effie Ann have gone away and you're to have dinner with me. I'll dish it right up."

The visitor's gaze fastened itself upon the loaded table, and power of speech seemed to desert him.

At grandmother's request he dexterously carved the turkey, and having

served his hostess, devoted himself unreservedly to eating.

"My land," mused grandmother, aghast, "that poor creature must have been fasting for a week!"

But when the Indian pudding, pumpkin pie and fruit cake had been eaten and they were picking placidly at the nuts, the guest waxed talkative.

"How this all reminds me of home when I was a little boy—this room—a facsimile!—and you—how you remind me of mother! It must be great," he broke off sharply, "for you to have your own little home all to yourself—eh?"

The Christmas Present Letter

by HELEN GAINFORD

HERE was sadness in the Jordan's cottage on Indian Hill. Even the merriment of an approaching Christmas season could not supersede the fact that Foster Jordan was going blind.

That was bad enough. But Foster Jordan, swathed in bandages from the operation that had failed, knew that Helen could never carry on alone. It had been so expensive, that operation that had only served to pronounce his doom more surely. All their savings were gone, and what could the most faithful of wives do, with a baby in arms, and a blind husband? The cottage would go, too, and then—

He roused himself from these gloomy forebodings at the sound of her step at the door. And that she should not think him grieving, he began to sing.

"Foster," his wife called, as the door opened, "who do you suppose is here? My old chum, Pauline Westland! You know, the costume designer in New York? Pauline, this is my husband, that I've written you so much about."

"How do you do, Miss Westland. Sorry I can't—my eyes, you know—"

"Of course, I'm so glad to meet you, Mr.—may I call you Foster? Helen has told me so much about you."

"And oh, Pauline, Helen interrupted, 'here is our baby. Isn't he adorable?' Then in a whisper, 'Do look more cheerful, darling! If you don't I'll cry and I mustn't do that!'"

"The doctors give you no hope?" "None whatever. But we'll get along—somehow—" Helen dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief. "Foster, dear," she said aloud, "you were singing as we came in. Won't you sing for Pauline?"

"Yes, please do." "I'm afraid I can't." "Yes, you can, dear. I'll play for you." And so he sang.

Nick's Christmas Bag

By Jane Osborn

HERE are a lot of men out in the lumber camps that aren't going to get home for Christmas," Margaret Tompkins told a group of young men and women at the country club early in November. "I want to get a Christmas bag for every one of them. Who'll promise a Christmas bag?"

"I'd like to help," said Nick Loring, "only thing is I'm green at that sort of thing. Do you suppose you could get someone to make a bag and fill it if I paid for it?"

"Yes; I've thought of that," said Margaret. "I've figured out that a nice bag can be got up for three dollars."

A little later when Nick Loring found Margaret alone he told her he wanted to be responsible for ten of the bags. "I'll send you the check in the morning."

Margaret pressed Nick's hand and looked up gratefully into his eyes. "You're the most generous man in the world," she said.

Nick yearned to take this opportunity to tell Margaret just a little of his ever-increasing love for her, but to do it now, it seemed, would be to taint with self-interest the tenor of his generosity.

The afternoon before Christmas Margaret telephoned to Nick at his office.

"I want to tell you, Nick," said Margaret, "that I filled all the bags and they were so wonderful. Each one cost just three dollars. Now I find that there is just one left over after all the men at the camp have been supplied. As it is all filled, I can't return the money, but I thought maybe you knew of some poor fellow who might like one."

Nick thought a moment as he held the telephone receiver. "I do know a fellow," said he. "Used to work for us. Then he quit and went to farming over in the next county. Sort of a luckless fellow. Suppose I take that bag over to him."

So after the office closing at five, Nick called at Margaret's for the bag. He planned to drive the fifteen miles to the shack where Barry Smith lived and back before his seven o'clock dinner.

The cabin seemed deserted. Nick forced a window and walked in. But Barry was not to be found. Nick felt in his pocket for a match, but matches he had none. Then he groped around Barry's room, but was no more successful. So with nearly frozen fingers he undid the wrappings from the Christmas bag, opened it and found,

An Invitation to Santa



Good Christmas

By EDWARD SANFORD MARTIN, in Missouri Farmer.

THOUGH doubters doubt and scoffers scoff, And Peace on earth seems still far off; Though learned doctors think they know The gospel stories are not so; Though greedy men are greedy still And competition chokes good-will, While rich men sigh and poor men fret, Dear me! we can't spare Christmas yet! Time may do better—maybe not; Meanwhile let's keep the day we've got! On Bethlehem's birth and Bethlehem's star Where'er our speculations are, Where for us may run the line Where human merges with divine, We're dull indeed if we can't see What Christmas feelings ought to be, And dull again if we can doubt It's worth our while to bring them out. "Glory to God; good-will to men!" Come! Feel it, show it, give it then! Come to us, Christmas, good old day, Soften us, cheer us, say your say, To hearts which thrive, too eager, keeps In bonds, while fellow-feeling sleeps. Good Christmas, whom our children love, We love you, too! Lift us above Our cares, our fears, our small desires! Open our hands and stir the fires Of helpful fellowship within us, And back to love and kindness win us!

Jerry drove from his sister's straight back to the big square house that had been left jointly to Molly and himself.

Today he strode through the long living room to a small study where he picked up a tiny snapshot from his desk and addressed it tenderly. "Phyllis sweetheart," he murmured, "here's hoping my wild schemes won't go wrong!"

Molly hustled through the preparations for her own three youngsters, who had been put to bed unduly early, and flew into her party clothes. Peter was inclined to grumble over the whole business but Molly bore with him good-naturedly and carried him off in plenty of time.

Jerry flung wide the door at their ring. Molly entering, stopped short. "How perfectly lovely!" she cried. "I've been so busy with shopping. Jerry, that I've hardly seen you to ask what luck you have had with your guests."

Jerry drew down the corners of his mouth. "You were right," he said, "as always. Six absolutely could not see their way to come."

"That leaves—" began Molly. "You an' Peter, yours truly, and—Phyllis Rowe. You know she has no family at all."

Whatever comments his sister was about to make were not uttered, for at that moment the doorbell rang, and there stood Phyllis, a lovely vision in furs.

Molly, looking from Jerry to his pretty guest, was struck with a sudden thought. The two of them made a handsome pair.

After a truly typical Christmas feast, Jerry managed an aside with his sister as Peter was discussing a recent play with Phyllis.

Jerry's Christmas Eve Guests

By H. LOUIS RAYBOLD

MOLLY," said Jerry Blaine to his sister, "will you do me a little favor?"

"Possibly," drawled Molly. "What is it?"

"Well," began Jerry, "I want to give a little party on Christmas eve."

"Christmas eve! That's not a good night for a party, Jerry. People have a habit of being frightfully busy about their own affairs."

"Christmas eve it must be," insisted Jerry stubbornly.



"All right. Christmas eve it shall be, old obstinate. And I suppose the favor you're asking is my help on that most inconvenient of nights?"

"Rather your presence, Molly. As a matter of fact, the guests to be are all unmarried."

"Why not have it here at the house?"

"Molly," said Jerry solemnly. "I already have that party planned down to the very last bonbon and the only place I can picture it is in the old home."

The Man of the Hour



Phyllis did not speak for a moment and Jerry's heart sank like a plummet. Then, softly, there stole from the study the sweet strains of "Silent night, holy night."

Phyllis lifted her pensive eyes to Jerry's and laid her slender hand on the arm of his chair where it was instantly grasped. "Every chance in the world," she whispered.

Later, Molly took Jerry to task. "I believe," she said accusingly, "you asked those people on Christmas eve just hoping they wouldn't come."

Her brother looked sheepish. Then, "Right you are," he admitted. "I got an acceptance from Phyllis first, however, and gambled on the others being too busy."

"You're a fraud!" said Molly. "Merry Christmas!" said Jerry.