

THE KEY OF CHRISTMAS LAND

Who has the key of the Christmas Land?
Where the bonfire shines,
And the holly twines,
Carollers sing—a merry band—
And stars are bright o'er that fair strand—
Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Light are the hearts in Christmas Land;
In each group you meet
There are faces sweet.
Booms young and guileless are there,
And brows not yet wrinkled with care—
Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Dear baby hearts in Christmas Land,
We want to be near,
And join in your cheer
When the tree with its strange fruit bends,
And you wait for what Santa sends—
Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Love has the key of Christmas Land,
Oh! come, Cherub Love,
With wings like the dove,
Spread over hearts thy light of peace,
Sow for a harvest full of increase—
Open the gates of Christmas Land.

Open the gates of Christmas Land;
There is much to do
And the days are few.
Bid all men set Charity free;
By thy grace, let us see thee here
None of God's poor in Christmas Land.
—William Lisle.

A MAD CHRISTMAS.

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

If there is one thing more than another when a bachelor commences to doubt whether his state of single blessedness is the most desirable form of existence it is at Christmas time. The joys of the season are essentially domestic joys; and every one is either looking forward to convivial meetings with a circle of relations and friends or a happy reunion with his own family. At such a time a middle-aged bachelor with no relations feels rather out of it.

Now, although I must plead guilty to ten years of bachelorhood, I never was one of the misanthropic type. I was single (observe the past tense) not from principle, but merely from force of circumstances, and I was never addicted to shutting myself up with my books and a cat, and growling cynical remarks at the pleasure seeking world. On the contrary, I am of a somewhat jovial disposition, and was always fond of society. Christmas time I liked to spend at a jolly country house, and could turn my mind to charades, dancing, romping with the villagers or children, conjuring and many other accomplishments. In fact, I may say with fine modesty that I once heard myself described by a country hostess as an "extremely useful sort of man."

The idea of spending Christmas in any solitary rooms, with only my landlady and her domestic to talk to was a contingency which I had never contemplated for a moment; but last year I was very nearly brought face to face with it. I generally had at least two or three invitations to select from, and chose the one where I should be likely to meet the most interesting set of people; but on this occasion my usual invitations did not arrive. The Harwoods, with whom I had spent the Christmas before, had lost a child, and were in mourning; the Houldens were wintering at Nice (Mrs. Houlden was delicate) and at Houghton Grange both the girls were married, and the Christmas house parties were things of the past. These were my stock invitation; and as I recollected others among my circle of acquaintances to whom something or other had happened since last year it slowly dawned upon me that if I desired to avoid a Christmas in London I had better make arrangements to remove myself either to a northern hydropathic establishment which I had occasionally honored with my presence, or to a Brighton hotel, where I was sure of falling in with some pleasant company. Just as I had arrived at this melancholy decision, however, a letter arrived which afforded me the greatest



"WITH MY BACK TOWARD THE ENGINE."

satisfaction. It was an invitation to spend a week or two with my old friend, Fred Hallston, at his place in Leicester-shire; and with the vivid recollection before me of a pleasant Christmas spent at Gaulby Hall some three years ago, I lost no time in penning a cordial assent to the welcome invitation. A few days later beheld me, followed by a porter carrying my various impediments, on the platform of St. Pancras, prepared to make my journey down to Leicester by the half-past three Manchester and Liverpool express. The Pullman was crowded with a pack of noisy school-boys, so I eschewed it and selected an empty first-class carriage. I took possession of my favorite corner seat, with my back to the engine, and wrapping my leg round my knees and unfolding a newspaper glided away from the city of smoke in a remarkably good humor, partly inspired, no doubt, by a capital lunch, and partly by pleasurable anticipations of my forthcoming visit.

Fred met me at Leicester station, and I saw with regret that he was looking pale and ill and much thinner than when I had seen him last. He seemed pleased

to see me, however, and greeted me warmly.



"I'M GOING TO CHUCK HER DOWN."

During our drive to Gaulby I hazarded a few remarks, with a view to ascertaining what sort of a party there was collected at the Hall, but I got nothing definite out of him. He was quite unlike his old self, and I came to the conclusion that he must be ill. As we drove up the avenue I leaned out the window to gaze at the fine old mansion, and it struck me at once as looking cold and uninviting, while the grounds were certainly very much neglected. Something seemed wrong all round, and I began to feel almost sorry I had come. We overtook Mrs. Hallston at the hall door, just returned from a walk. She was as gracious and as pleasant as she had ever been to me, but I fancied that I could detect in her manner and appearance something of the ill being which seemed to exist around her.

We all three entered together, and the moment we passed through the door I felt convinced that my expectations of a jolly Christmas party were doomed to disappointment. There were no decorations about, only one doleful looking servant and apparently nothing stirring. I felt sure something was wrong, but at any rate I consoled myself with the reflection that I had lost little by coming, as it had been a choice between here and the hotel. But, all the same, I did not feel particularly cheerful as I followed the doleful looking servant upstairs, along wide corridors, across passages, upstairs again, and then down a long corridor, until at last we reached my room in the west wing.

My surmises were correct. When I descended, after prolonged and careful toilette, my host was lounging about in a shooting jacket and he and his wife were the only occupants of the room. I was the only guest.

"I've something very serious to say to you, Neilson," he said slowly (Neilson is my name). "I'm going to make a confidant of you, if I may, old man."

I bowed my head and listened.

"You haven't noticed anything particular about my wife, I don't suppose, have you?" he asked, with a searching glance.

I admitted I had thought her strangely silent, and apparently having some anxiety weighing upon her mind.

He laughed, a short unpleasant laugh, and leaned over to me confidentially.

"I rely upon your discretion, you know, Neilson. I wouldn't have it known for the world; but my wife is mad."

"Mad!" I stared at him incredulously.

"Yes, mad," he repeated impatiently.

"It was the sun in India last year that did the mischief. She would expose herself to it. The doctor whom I have consulted advised me to send her to a private asylum, but I haven't the heart to do it. She's perfectly harmless, you know; but, of course, it's an awful trial to me."

I stammered out an expression of sympathy. To tell the truth, I scarcely knew what to say. I was bewildered at this painful explanation of the gloom which reigned over the house. Presently Fred closed his eyes and left me to digest this strange and unwelcome piece of news. I am naturally somewhat selfish, and before very long my sympathy was diverted in some measure from my host to myself. It occurred to me that it was by no means a pleasant prospect to be a guest in a house the mistress of which was mad. It was not altogether kind of Fred to invite me, I thought, under the circumstances, without some explanation of his wife's state. I began to feel quite as injured man. I was quite tired of my own company, and Fred was fast asleep. So I opened the door softly and made my way down to the hall. As I passed an open door Mrs. Hallston appeared and beckoned me in. I had no alternative but to obey her invitation.

"Mr. Neilson," she said, in an agitated tone, "as you are going to stop here for a day or two, there is something connected with this household which you ought to know. Has my husband told you anything?"

I bowed and told her gravely that I knew all, and that she had my profoundest sympathy.

She sighed.

"Perhaps you are surprised that I should ask whether Fred had told you," she said, turning a little away from me.

"It seems strange, doesn't it, that one should be mad and be conscious of it? It only comes on in fits, and they are terrible."

She shuddered, and so, to tell the truth, did I.

"Such a phase of madness is probably not incurable," I ventured to suggest timidly.

"Incurable! of course it is not incurable," she answered, vehemently.

I edged a little toward the door. I had no experience in talking with lunatics, and felt anything but comfortable in my present position. Mrs. Hallston was beginning to look very excited and dangerous.

"Of course if you are frightened, Mr. Neilson," she said a little contemptuously, "you can leave us whenever you please. These fits do not come on often, but they are anything but pleasant

things to witness when they do come on."

"I should imagine so," I assented, devoutly hoping a fit was not then pending. Soon I managed to make my adieu, and with a sigh of relief found myself once more in the hall. I made my way to Eurdlett's room, but he had gone to bed, and seeing it was nearly 11 o'clock, I decided to go to bed, and, preceded by a servant (I could never have found the way myself), I mounted again the wide stairs and threaded the numerous passages which led to my room. It was at the end of a wide corridor, on either side of which were six doors.

"Does any one sleep up here?" I asked the man as he bade me good night.

He pointed to a door exactly opposite mine.

"That is the master's room, sir," he replied; and the one at the bottom end is Mrs. Hallston's. No one else sleeps in this part of the house. The servants' rooms are all in the north wing."

I am generally able to sleep at whatever hour I retire; but it was early, and the fire looked tempting; so, instead of immediately undressing, I changed my coat for a smoking jacket, and, lighting a pipe, made myself comfortable in an easy chair. Soon I heard Mrs. Hallston's light footsteps ascend the stairs, and the door of her room open and close, and a little while afterward Fred halted outside my door to bid me a cheery good-night, and then entered the room opposite.

How long I sat there I cannot tell, for I fell into a heavy doze, and when I woke up with a sudden start it was with the uneasy consciousness that something unusual had awakened me. I sprang to my feet and looked fearfully around. The flickering flames of my fire, almost burned out, were still sufficient to show me that no one had entered the room; but while I stood there with strained senses I heard a sound which made my blood run cold within me; and, although I am no coward, I shivered with fear. It was the half-muffled shriek of a woman in agony, and it came from Mrs. Hallston's room. For a moment I was powerless to move; then I hastily unlocked my door, and, hurrying down the corridor, knocked at hers. There was no answer. I tried the handle; it was locked; but, listening for a moment, I could hear the sound of a woman gasping for breath. I rushed back along the corridor to Fred's room. The door was closed, but unlocked, and I threw it open.

The music is often excellent, many of the carols being composed during the best days of the ecclesiastical masters, and in not a few of these compositions appear fugue, counterpoint, and even canon of excellent composition and harmony.

They were originally sung in all the churches at Christmas time, instead of the hymns for the day, and in the rural districts of England this custom is still observed. But more frequently at present they are heard from the lips of strolling bands of singers, while a solitary warbler sometimes serves to recall the caroller in Dickens's Christmas story, who begins outside the door with:

"God bless you, merry gentlemen,
May nothing you dismay," when old Scrooge cuts the song short with a ruler.

Many collections of carols have been made, and some of them are really remarkable compositions, being fugues in three to six parts, and the words of not a few convey ancient legends, occasionally remarkably poetical, both in idea and language, such as "The Carol of the Holy Well."

All under the leaves, the leaves of life,
I met with virgin seeds;
And one of them was Mary mild,
Our Lord's mother of Heaven.

Oh, what are you seeking, you seven fair maids,
All under the leaves of life!
Come tell, come tell what seek you
All under the leaves of life.

We're seeking for no leaves, Thomas,
But for a friend of mine;
We're seeking for sweet Jesus Christ
To be our guide and thine.

Christmas Hints.

Buy no more than you can afford.
Give no gift where you do not delight to.

Shop no more than you have the strength for.

Entertain only within your means.

Keep your Christmas nerve and muscle and heart and hope and cheer first for your own home, your own fireside, your dearest, your closest, your sweetest—and then for the homeless, the fireless, the unloved, the "undeaded," and be true, true to the last Christmas card that goes to your postoffice, or the last "Merry Christmas" that crosses your lips!

Couldn't Fool Santa Claus.

Santa Claus—"One of the boys has been trying to ring in his father's stocking on me, but he's going to get badly left."

Christmas Proverbs and Saws.

A warm Christmas, a cold Easter.
A green Christmas makes a fast graveyard.

If ice will bear a man before Christmas it will not bear him afterward.

If Christmas finds a bridge he'll break it; if he finds none he'll make one.

The shepherd would rather see his wife enter the stables on Christmas Day than the sun.

Yule is come, and Yule is gone,
And we have feasted well;
So Jack must to his stall again,
And Jennie to her wheel.

Getting Ready for Christmas.

Husband (who is laying the carpet)—
"Oh, gee—Blank it."
Wife—"Go on, dear, say what you think; I've covered my ears. You know I can't bear to hear such talk, especially when Christmas is so near."
Texas Siftings.

and then my struggling feet seemed to part with the earth, as with a wild yell of:

"Leicester! Leicester!" I opened my eyes and sat up with a start. The paper had slipped from my fingers, and the train was slowly steaming into Leicester station, and there, standing upon the platform, smiling and robust, looking the very picture of health, was Fred Hallston.

That Christmas party at Gaulby Hall was the most enjoyable I was ever at, and the people (the house was crammed, full of visitors) the most entertaining and agreeable I ever met. There was one young person especially—a Miss Alice Pratison she was then—with whom I got on remarkably well. I never enjoyed a visit so much in my life as I did that one, nor a ride so much as one afternoon when Miss Pratison and I, after a capital run, rode home together with her little hand in mine and our horses very close together. Next Christmas, if Alice doesn't object, I mean to have a jolly little house party of my own.

Scientific and Industrial.

Aluminum makes the best artificial limbs.

There are six thousand pieces of to a locomotive engine.

Sixteen million horse-power goes to waste every hour at Niagara Falls.

Few persons are aware that carbolic acid is combustible; but it is, nevertheless.

If your shoes trouble you by squeaking, drive a peg in the middle of the sole, clear through both layers, and it will stop all the annoyance.

A translucent mineral substance, the color of amber and with properties of asbestos, is reported to have been discovered in immense deposits in the United States of Columbia.

According to Swedish papers the expedition of Dr. Nansen to the North Pole has been postponed until 1893. The delay is caused by the impossibility of sooner finishing the ship to be used.

The attempt to establish an observatory for meteorological purposes on the summit of Mont Blanc, Switzerland, recently abandoned owing to the thick crust of snow and ice on the mountain, is to be renewed.

It is said that 1000 sheep will fairly enrich an acre of ground in twenty-four hours. Estimating that each animal would drop eight pounds of manure, solid and liquid, there would be four tons of a pretty good phosphate.

At the newly discovered metalliferous mines in Texas, the miners struck a "blanket lead" of silver ore almost at the surface of the mountain into which they had begun tunneling. There is a crowd of laborers, promoters and speculators at hand.

The most interesting of recent photographs of the sun shows a remarkable solar disturbance, in which vapors ascend to a height of 80,000 miles. This eruption lasted fully fifteen minutes and was accompanied by fluctuations of the compass needle.

A Canadian electrician states that electricity causes the tides, and demonstrates it by electrifying a rubber comb by rubbing it through the hair, and then drawing it over the top of a glass filled with water, the result being that tidal wave follows the comb.

A company has been formed in Germany to erect works for the production of the new explosive dynamite, which is especially adapted for mine use, having more power than dynamite, at the same time being perfectly harmless under ordinary circumstances.

Many curious and pretty devices are used for softening the electric light and adapting it to household use. A library-table lamp consists of an adjustable shell supported upon a graceful spiral shaft. Other shells of mother-of-pearl are used to soften lights for the ceiling.

Hammerfest, the most northern town in Europe, has a night lasting from November 18 to January 23. Near the town are three streams with current so strong as never to freeze, and these have been utilized for electric light, which has been introduced into every house.

On the estate of the Marquis de Laguna, in Spain, a water wheel of twenty-horse power runs a dynamo. Powering by electricity has been proposed, and the current is to be transmitted to a field three miles distant, where a motor on a plow is to be operated. The cable attached to the plow is to be wound on a reel and drawn over the field.

The Boomerang.

The boomerang is an instrument used both in war and in the chase by the aborigines of Australia. It is usually about two feet in length, made of hard wood bent into a curve resembling an obtuse angle, flat on one side and rounded on the other. The method of using this curious weapon is very peculiar. The thrower takes it by one end, holding the bent side downward, and hurls it forward as if to hit some object twenty to twenty-five yards in advance. Instead of continuing to go directly forward in accordance with the Newtonian law, it slowly ascends in the air, whirling round and round, describing a beautiful and geometrical curved line till it reaches a considerable height, when it begins to retrograde, finally sweeping over the head of the projector, striking the object for which it was intended, which is always in the rear.

This surprising motion is produced by the reaction of the air upon the bends and curves of the oddly-shaped missile.

Lieutenant Breton, in his book entitled "Excursions in New South Wales and Western Australia," has this to say of that singular weapon: "The boomerang is one of the most curious weapons of war ever invented, at least by a barbarous people, nor is it easy to comprehend by what law of projectiles it is made to take the singular directions that it frequently does. I have seen a native throw one so as to make it go forty or fifty yards horizontally, and not more than four feet from the ground. It would then suddenly dart into the air to the height of fifty or sixty yards, describe a very considerable curve and finally fall at his feet. In all cases, no matter how thrown, the boomerang keeps turning with great rapidity, like as if on a pivot, making a loud, whizzing noise all the while."
—St. Louis Republic.

Pneumatic Tubes for Passengers.

A Hamburg (Germany) company has in view a curious project. A pneumatic railway—probably underground—is to be constructed between Hamburg and Buchen, a distance of fifteen miles, and passengers are to be sent like parcels through the tube, making the trip in eleven minutes. The passenger carrier is to be of cylindrical form, forty inches in diameter and twice as long. This is to enclose three smaller cylinders, of the size of a human being, in which the passengers are to travel. Each little compartment is to have an electric glow lamp, and compressed fresh air is to be supplied while the train is in motion.
—Trenton (N. J.) American.

HOUSEHOLD AFFAIRS.

CAUSE OF SOGGY PUDDINGS.

An inexperienced housewife who mourned that her dumplings and other boiled puddings were always soggy learned the cause at cooking-school the other day. She had put the mould containing the pudding into a kettle full of boiling water. Now she only puts enough water in the kettle to keep up a good volume of steam, never enough even to boil over the mould. The vessel in which the puddings are cooked is kept tightly covered so as to cook the top as thoroughly as the bottom.—New York Post.

HOUSE LINES.

Do not permit table or bed linen to lie from year to year without being used. It will last longer for an occasional washing. If it is already very yellow, cut up a pound of white soap in four quarts of milk; put it over the stove in a wash-kettle, and when the soap has dissolved, put in the linen and boil fifteen minutes; then wash in soap-suds and rinse in two clean waters, bluing the last water slightly. The possessor of a gas plot can whiten her choice linen by simply rinsing in soap-suds and laying it on the grass for two or three days. Rinse in clear water and dry on the line, and it will be sweet and fresh and white.—Ladies' Home Companion.

SHUT-UP ROOMS.

Having planned to give the rooms the life-giving light, see to it that everyone who is to be occupied at night is opened so as to get an unobstructed flood of it during the sunniest part of the day. The murmur comes back: "It will fade your carpets." Very likely, but carpets were made for people and not people for carpets, and any right-minded mother would prefer to see the roses on her children's cheeks than on her carpets when it comes to a choice between them. There are many houses, occupied by people too busy to use a parlor, where the sunniest corner is occupied by an unopened, unused "best room," which is only the survival of a traditional belief that no house is complete without one. The interest of the money on the carpet and furniture would pay for the services of a stout maid during many of the severest weeks of the year; the room is the expression of a yearning for a dream of leisure that never comes; far better have the reality of aid to lighten household duties that are much too heavy in all the newer and poorer sections of our land.—Farm and Fireside.

A SUGGESTION ABOUT WASTE GREASE.

A writer has defined dirt as "matter out of place." This applies with double force to the grease of the kitchen, which is too often allowed to accumulate on the sides of the sink and on dishes. Properly used this grease is invaluable in making soap. By putting the grease in the sink and on the dishes by the use of some very powerful alkali like potash or soda, we make a substance, which, if not a soap, contains the competent parts of soap, and at once assists as a cleansing agent. A keg of "washing soda" should always be on hand near the sink so that a little water with a lump of soda may be thrown in greasy spiders or griddles or in any other utensil that has become greasy from cooking. After a few minutes' boiling all the grease is eaten up by the alkali, and when the mixture is thrown down the sink, it actually acts as a means of cleansing instead of choking up the pipe with grease. Gridirons should be thoroughly scrubbed with a brush—a common whisk does very well—in boiling hot soda and water. Grease spots on the stove should be washed off, when they occur, with a stove cloth dipped in soda and water.—New York Tribune.

Malaria

Is believed to be caused by poisonous miasms arising from low marshy land, or from decaying vegetable matter, and which, breathed into the lungs, enter and poison the blood. If a healthy condition of the blood is maintained by taking Hood's Sarsaparilla, one is much less liable to malaria, and Hood's Sarsaparilla has cured many severe cases of this distressing affection, even in the advanced stages when the terrible chills and fever prevailed. Try it.

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