

A Christmas Deal

By FREDERIC TREAT.

It was Christmas eve at the Eyrle, the country seat of the Martins, set on a pinnacle in the hills. The place had been opened for the holidays, and the family, with a number of guests, formed a delightful "house party." Tonight general merrymaking was in order. In the hall before the great open fireplace, in which logs were blazing, sat Edith Martin with Ralph Arnold, a recent arrival from the west who had been devoted to her since they had first met, a week before.

"You are not in harmony with the occasion," he said to her. "Instead of a happy Christmas look on your face there is a troubled one."

She drew back for a moment as if withholding a confidence, then suddenly let it all out.

"I must tell you," she said, "but you are not to breathe a word to any one. He is coming by the train that arrives at 11:40 and will be here at 12. He must go back to the city early tomorrow on important business, and—here she lowered her voice to a whisper—"I am to accept him before this gay night is over."

"Who is he?"

"John Trotter, dealer in foreign laces, a thorough business man and rich. Papa has lost a great deal of money by

took out his watch and noted the hour. It was five minutes to 12.

"It is understood and agreed," he said, "that if the party of the first part doesn't show up when the clock strikes 12 the party of the second part shall consider herself released from signing the contract and will make the same arrangement with the party of the third part—that in lieu of the sum of half a million dollars at 4 per cent interest—"

"The bonus?" She was losing her business equanimity, tapping her foot on the lion skin beneath it. There remained only a few minutes to 12, and the party of the first part might walk in at any moment.

"The bonus shall be optional."

"With whom?"

"The party of the second part."

"But the party of the third part?"

"Will only accept it entire. The heart must go with the hand."

"It's a bargain," she said, extending her hand, which he grasped. At the same moment the clock at the other end of the hall began to strike the hour. It was an old fashioned time-keeper with enormous weights and wheezed out its arithmetic strokes with provoking slowness. The pair sat motionless, their clasped hands concealed under a fold of the lady's dress, their eyes turned upon the front door. Each stroke brought them nearer to a consummation of their bargain. At the fourth there was a tinkle of the electric doorbell. At the eighth a servant passed the couple on his way to open the front door. Arnold put out his foot, and the man went sprawling on the floor. At the eleventh stroke the servant was on his feet and rubbing his shins. At the twelfth he proceeded on his way. There was a pressure between the two concealed hands. In another moment the door opened and Mr. Trotter entered.

But what entered with him? Christmas morning. Twenty such mornings had come in the lifetime of Edith Martin, but none that brought her such relief and at the same time, such happiness as this one. Instead of being obliged to sacrifice herself to save her father she had accepted a man whom the first moment she saw him she knew to be the man she could love.

Ralph Arnold was indeed a promoter and had made a fortune in organizing gold mines. The day after Christmas he telegraphed his acceptance of an offer he had had for his principal mine and loaned the proceeds to Mr. Martin, who in six months regained all he had lost. Mrs. Ralph Arnold on last Christmas eve, sitting before a blazing fire beside her eldest daughter, now sixteen, told her the story of her Christmas deal.

Christmas Service in Stable.

At Santa Cruz, Cal., there is an old Spanish church in which the people worship only on Christmas eve. Externally it looks like a stable and has no chandelier. The floor and walls are of stone, and on the eastern side there is a manger, looking through the bars of which one sees the scenes of the Nativity, with the towers of castles and palaces in the distance. In the foreground the Virgin sits by the manger, holding the infant Saviour, with St. Joseph leaning over her and the wise men offering sheep, oxen and various precious gifts. Outside this exterior stable there are figures of men carrying sheep and calves on their shoulders, hastening to the sacred scene. In this chapel worshippers remain all night on their knees. This manger side of the church is against the east wall, high upon which is the only window in the edifice, so that the first rays of the morning sun irradiate the scenes of the Nativity. The rays lend a rosy glow, and as soon as this reaches the worshippers they leave their chairs, light cigarettes and begin their festivities.

A Christmas Game.

A Yuletide version of the donkey party is played thus: On a sheet sketch or paste a design of a Christmas tree. Have each branch of the tree terminate in a circle containing a number, using the numbers from one to ten or one to twenty-five, according to the size of the tree. Each person playing is blindfolded in turn and is given a rosette with which he must "decorate the tree." Each person aims to pin his or her rosette on or near to the highest number of the tree. Each competitor has three trials, the three numbers to which he pins nearest being written down to his credit by the hostess, who keeps tally. The one whose three numbers added together gives the largest sum total wins the first prize.

The Day of Hope.

The day of the Nativity is the day of hope—the day of hope to the struggling conscience of man; to the human nature which is uplifted in Christ and made partaker of God; to the families of men who believe that sacred human love is not given to perish with the earth, but in Christ is destined to some eternal purpose; to all who labor and pray for the coming of a kingdom where God shall reign in men, and men shall live in peace and good will, where the war drum shall throb no longer and the battle-flags be furled.

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.

—Right Rev. Davis Sessums, Bishop of Louisiana.

Limited.

"Does you feel thankful dis Christmas?"

"Dess middlin'. Providence gimme a good appetite, but he stopped right dar!"—Atlanta Constitution.

Christmas.
A chandelier,
A mistletoe,
A lover near,
A maid below,
A scuffle dear,
A lass or so.

And that is Christmas, don't you know?
—Elliot Kays Stone in Lippincott's.

WIVES ON CHRISTMAS TREES

Strange Christmas Customs That Prevail in Parts of Russia.

Of all Christmas tree customs, one of the strangest prevails in parts of Russia. A gift tree is set up in the village, on the branches of which roost young unmarried women, cloaked and hooded and veiled so that their identity is concealed. The swains are admitted one by one, just as they are in our familiar American game of "spat in, spat out." Each as he enters lifts a veil—of course at random—and the face thus disclosed belongs to his future wife. The act of lifting the veil betroths the couple, the penalty for breaking the engagement being a heavy fine to be paid into the village treasury.



A RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS TREE.

A star shaped paper lantern to represent the "star of the east," another carries on his back a miniature theater, on the stage of which puppet performances like "Punch and Judy" shows are given at every farmhouse where the motley pageant halts.

The modern Christmas tree comes to us from Germany, the Yule log from Scandinavia, Santa Claus from Holland and the Christmas stocking from France, but the Christmas turkey—ah, that is America's contribution to the world's stock of Christmas cheer! But there is one part of the world where the people are afraid to eat turkey. In Armenia it would be too much like treason to their cruel ruler, the Turk. If they do venture to eat the fowl they call it "Egyptian hen." Down in Egypt they name it "Indian hen." Thus both Armenians and Egyptians save themselves from Moslem vengeance.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Christmas Table Decorations.

The dinner table itself should proclaim the season by its decoration. A snowy cloth patterned with holly leaves or mistletoe, a centerpiece of glossy holly leaves and brilliant berries, silver candelabra and silver bonbon dishes are appropriate and dignified. Flat wreaths of holly tied with bows of "berry" red ribbon are very effective on the table, one in the center and one encircling each candelabrum. A silver or a cut glass bowl of holly and meteor roses or holly and mistletoe may be set in the wreath to complete the centerpiece. The outline of the Christmas star may be used instead of the wreaths. In this case the bows of ribbon are omitted. And for the guest cards either bells, stars, plum puddings, holly or ivy leaves, cut out and painted and ornamented with Christmas verse or greetings, are appropriate, and a little silk stocking of bonbons may be laid by each card as a souvenir.

Christ's Birthday.

There is something akin to sadness in the fact that in tracing the origin of many of our church festivals we find it in pagan celebrations antedating the Christian era. There is nothing certain even about the birthday of Christ. Some authorities assert that December was in the dry season, when shepherds were on duty day and night. In the controversy over the date, extending from December to May, Pope Julius (337-352) had an investigation made by St. Cyril and was satisfied that the 25th of December was correct. It was so established in the Roman church, and before the end of the fourth century the dictum was universally accepted.—Boston Herald.

Mrs. Leader's Liberty.

Struggling Pastor—Nearly all the congregation has subscribed liberally for the Christmas tree fund, and I feel sure that I can also have your hearty co-operation. How much will you—

Mrs. Leader—Let me see. Oh, I am the only member who has a carriage and coachman, I think.

"Yes, the rest are poor."

"Well, I will drive around and collect the subscriptions."

Christmas Day.

Oh, blessed day which gives the eternal life
To self and sense and all the brute within—
Oh, come to us amid this war of life;
To hail and hovel come; to all who toil
In senate, shop or study and to those
Who, sundered by the wastes of half a world,
Ill warned and sorely tempted, ever face
Nature's brute powers and men unmaned to brutes—
Come to them, blest and blessing, Christmas day.
Tell them once more the tale of Bethlehem—
The kneeling shepherds and the Babe divine—
And keep them men indeed, fair Christmas day.
—Charles Kingsley.

THE MYSTIC MISTLETOE.

Once a Feature of Pagan Rites, It Now Belongs to Lovers.

From time immemorial the white berried mistletoe has played a leading part in Yuletide festivities, though it has not always conveyed the osculatory privileges which give it its value in the eyes of the romantic youth of today. Like so many other features of the Christmas celebration, mistletoe has been borrowed from the pagans of antiquity and Christianized by the lapse of centuries. The Persians before the birth of Christ used the mistletoe in their sacred rites, and in parts of India pagan priests still incorporate it in their ritual. It figures largely in Scandinavian mythology. Baldur, the son of Odin, though a demigod, was slain by a spear of mistletoe, a proof of its magic powers.

It is from the Druids of old England, however, that mistletoe has come to us. The Druidical priests, sprung, it is said, from the magi of the east, the wise men who worshipped at the cradle of the infant Saviour, held the mistletoe as their most sacred possession, and the cutting of the pretty parasite from the oak, the tree which the Druids claimed God loved more than any other, was attended with the greatest solemnity. On the Druids' festival day a grand procession, leading two white oxen, moved to the mystic grove. There the oxen were fastened to the oak by their horns, and a white robed priest climbed into the leafless branches and cut the bunches of mistletoe with a golden knife. The oxen were then sacrificed and religious services performed, after which the procession returned to the temple in the forest and the mistletoe was deposited in the Druidical arcanum.

Besides taking its place in the religious observances of the Druids, the mistletoe, which the priests gave a name meaning "hall healing," was made into many curious decoctions by processes in which times and seasons and incantations were supposed to add to its mysterious powers. These medicines were regarded as cures for human ills generally, whether of mind or body. With the advance of civilization and the death of superstition mistletoe has lost its religious character, but not its popularity, and the forests of England and of our own southern states are as eagerly frequented by mistletoe gatherers as ever were the dark woods of the ancient Druids.

CHRISTMAS IN SWEDEN.

One Day When There Are Neither Rich Nor Poor.

If you were in Sweden on Christmas eve you would hear the church bells begin to ring at 5 o'clock, for everybody stops work then and the festivities begin in great earnest everywhere in the kingdom. Class distinctions are forgotten and servants are allowed to sit at table with the family. After supper comes the universal Christmas tree, for Sweden is one of the early homes of this beautiful custom.

On Christmas morning at 6 o'clock, while it is still dark, you would go to church, for everybody goes, unless you stayed at home to mind the lights in the house, for every home in the kingdom is illuminated. There is almost sure to be a deep snow, and you would go to church in a sleigh. Behind every sleigh you would see two boys standing on the runners and holding pine torches—a beautiful spectacle as a long procession of sleighs glides over the snow on a forest road. These torches are stuck up in a circle around the church. A whole week is given to good cheer and hospitality.

Christmas Bills.

The Christmas bills
Give dad the chills;
He'll never climb
The heavenly hills
Nor wear the angels'
Wings any frills
Because o' them
Same Christmas bills!
—Atlanta Constitution.

—Krumrine's Instantaneous Headache Powders will relieve the most obstinate cases of nervous and sick headache. 10 cents.

The Penny Buys Farms.
The Pennsylvania Railroad Company has recently purchased five large farms at the mouth of the Juniata river near Clark's Ferry and will utilize the land for the purpose of raising locust trees, to be used at maturity for railroad ties. This plan is being carried out by the company at many places adjacent to or near its lines. The company is already meeting with some difficulty in the purchase of railroad ties and they are becoming scarcer each year as more lumber is being cut down, 50,000 trees will be planted at the Clark's Ferry reservation and the work will be done under the supervision of Hugh Quick, of Rupert. Mr. Quick states that it will take twenty years for the locust trees to mature.

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The Centre Democrat, Bellefonte, Pa.

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WHY?
Spend your time shopping from store to store and finding only one or two of the items you want?

WHY NOT?
Start in on your Holiday shopping at the place where you can find all the goods you are looking for. We have the goods—the right kind; the right quality and at the right prices. But we did not buy them to keep. We want to sell them quickly and buy more to keep business moving. And we want to sell some of this stock to you.

In fact YOU are the particular person we have in mind. We invite you, have made preparation for you, will expect you and will be disappointed if you do not come.

But, of course you will come. **WHY NOT?**
Our stock of Pure Foods are drawn from every country on the face of the earth, and includes hundreds of items unknown to the trade a few years ago.

Our line of CANNED GOODS alone would make a good sized store. Then comes our line of Fruits, Oranges, Lemons, Grapes, Bananas, Cranberries &c.

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IN CONFECTIONERY—Chocolates, bon bons, mixtures, boxes of fine confectionery for the Holiday trade and a full line of the latest goods.

Our TEAS, COFFEES, AND SPICES are worthy of more space than we give here. What would Christmas be indeed without a cup of fine coffee or fragrant tea? Or pure spices for seasoning. Fine table syrups, cream cheese, nuts of all kinds, flavoring extracts, olive oil, olives, sardines, ketchup and a large line of condiments and preserves.

We conclude that you have now accepted our invitation and we are expecting you. We will be glad to see you and think you will be glad you came.

SECHLER & CO., PURE FOOD STORE.