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NO. 11.

Wheat harvesting in Egypt this year showed that the crop of the world's ancient granary to be excellent both for quantity and quality.

The great problem of picking cotton by machinery has been solved, according to the New York World. The machine invented by Willis Lisperand is a glorious triumph of human ingenuity.

A plague of locusts have been worrying the farmers in the Argentine Republic. Late reports state that the locusts have completely destroyed the flax, wheat and potato crops in San Geronimo and Santo Tomas.

Out in Mashonaland, South Africa, butter is \$3.10 a pound; jam and milk, \$1.56 a tin; cheese, \$3.60 a pound; and brandy has been sold for \$19.50 a bottle. And with this prospecting is very poor, no gold being discovered.

R. S. Witherbee, who is known as the "Sapphire King of Montana," says "Inside of five years I thoroughly believe the value of precious stones produced in Montana will equal the value of the annual output of all the precious metals produced in the country."

Although the soil of Mexico and its tropical location are both favorable to agricultural, the lack of energy of its working population, combined with the lack of a sufficient water supply, neutralizes its geographical location, and the production of corn, beans, coffee, sugar, and other kinds of products are barely sufficient to supply the home demand.

The City Court of Winona, Minn., has just rendered a decision in the case of Susan Jones, a school teacher, who was tried on the charge of assaulting Willie Forb, one of her pupils. The teacher had whipped him for some misdemeanor, and the prosecution held that she had no lawful right to do so. The court decided that the teacher had a right to whip the pupils, at her discretion, so long as the punishment was not brutal and excessive.

They are talking in Cleveland, Ohio, of drawing fresh water from the lake by building a steel tunnel two and a half miles out from the shore. An engineer representing a company went before the Board of Control the other day and described how the work could be done. The tunnel, he said, would be built of steel, one-half inch thick, in sections one thousand feet in length and eight and one-half feet in diameter. Bulkheads would be put in at each joint. Each section would be filled with air and could be floated out to the place where it is necessary to sink it. All the sections would be joined together by men working on rafts. The entire length of two and a half miles would be sunk in a solid piece by opening the manholes and pulling out the bulkheads. The manholes would then be closed by a mechanical contrivance. The tunnel would cost half as much as one of brick, and the company offers to lay it in the lake in four months. It has been estimated that the construction of a brick tunnel would take four years. The Board of Control is disposed to favor the proposal.

The cultivation of the thin shell pecan has, according to the New York Post, become one of the most profitable industries of Texas. The tree begins to bear nuts when six years old; at eight it more than pays all expenses of growing, and at ten yields a handsome profit. The demand in the market is much greater than the supply. The following glittering prospect is held out to the farmer by a pecan-grower of experience: "Fifty acres in pecans will, when ten years old, bring him an income equal to a bank with a capital of \$300,000 earning ten per cent. In California, fruitlands sell at \$300 to \$500 per acre. At these prices the value will be earned in five years; in six years they earn ten per cent. on a valuation of \$4000 to \$5000 per acre, and in ten years ten per cent. on a valuation of \$10,000 per acre. When I say the pecan exceeds these figures largely, I am only saying what others who have investigated the profits on pecan-growing will confirm. The pecan nut is a favorite everywhere. No fear of growing more than can be sold, for, when the markets of the United States are supplied, the markets of Europe will be open for them. At one cent per pound they pay better than cotton will at ten cents per pound. Ten acres in pecans (the Texas thin-shell) will earn more clear profit than 500 will in cotton."

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.
Bosoms 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 there be
None of God's poor in Christmas Land.
—William Lule.

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 misanthropical 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."

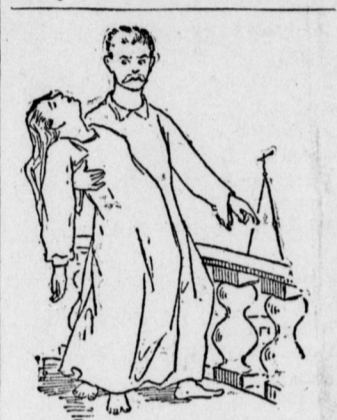
The idea of spending Christmas in any solitary rooms, with only my landlady and her domestic to talk to was a contingency which I had never contemplated for a moment; but last year I was very nearly brought face to face with it. I generally had at least two or three invitations to select from, and chose 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 Houghtons 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



satisfaction. It was an invitation to spend a week or two with my old friend, Fred Hallett, at his place in Leicester-shire; and with the vivid recollection before me of a pleasant Christmas spent at Gaulty Hall some three years ago, I lost no time in penning a cordial assent to the welcome invitation. A few days later he 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 Liv-

erpool 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.



During our drive to Gaulty 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. Hallett 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, Neillson," he said slowly (Neillson 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, Neillson. 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."

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. Hallett was beginning to look very excited and dangerous."

"Of course if you are frightened, Mr. Neillson," 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 Eurdett'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. Hallett'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. Hallett'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 mine.



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. Hallett'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.

"Fred!" I cried; but Fred was not there, nor had the bed been slept on. A candle was burning on the dressing table, and in the right hand corner of the room was what appeared to be a hole in the wall, but when I stood before it I saw at once that it was a secret passage running parallel with the corridor. Looking down it, I could see a light at the other end, and knowing it must lead into Mrs. Hallett's room, I caught up the candle and bending almost double half ran, half crept along it, until I reached its other extremity and found myself in Mrs. Hallett's room. I stood upright and glanced half eagerly, half fearfully around. The room was empty, but the window directly opposite to me was open, and as my eyes fell upon it I stood petrified with a dull sickening horror, and the candle dropped with a crash from my nerveless fingers. There was a miniature balcony outside the window, and on this stood Fred Hallett, hold-

ing in an embrace, which was certainly not of love, the fainting form of his wife. The moon was shining full on his face, ghostly and demoniacal, with the raging fire of the madman in his eyes and the imbecile grin of the lunatic on his thin lips. In a moment the truth flashed upon me, and as I stood there gaping and horror struck he saw me and burst into a fit of wild laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You Neillson! What a joke! See what a glorious view of the grounds! Come and bend over me; don't be afraid. Does the height make you dizzy? It's made her," and he motioned to the insensible figure of his wife, whom he still held clasped in his arms. "Do you know what I am going to do with her? I'm going to chuck her down there," and he pointed to the garden below. "A mad woman is of no use to anyone. Come and lend me a hand."

Mechanically I rushed to the balcony and strove to wrench from his encircling grasp the fainting form of his wife. Like a flash his imbecile grin vanished and his eyes filled with a malignant fury as he let go his grasp of his wife and sprang at me like a tiger cat. It was in vain that I wrestled with him. His long arms were around me and held me as if I were in a vice. I tried to shout for help, but my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, and a faint gurgling was all the sound I could command. Nearer and nearer we drew to the parapet's edge, until at last I could see the lawn below, studded with flower beds like the pattern of some fancy work; for Gaulty Hall was built high, and we were on the third story. I felt his hot breath in my face, and caught his diabolical look of triumph as he slowly forced me backward against the outside rail, which creaked and swerved with my weight, 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 Hallett.

That Christmas party at Gaulty 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.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Sea-stories—The decks.—Puck. The miner is the man who gets down to his work.—Tonkers Statesman.

The man who wants the earth is satisfied if he secures the dust.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Offenders against the law are usually arrayed in breaches of the peace.—Lowell Courier.

The shillelah still seems to be the most striking issue of the Irish campaign.—Chicago Mail.

A new broom sweeps clean. So does the new gown with the six-inch train.—Detroit Free Press.

The tramp is the man who waited for the wagon too long and had to take a walk.—Galveston News.

We never saw a man so sanctified that he smiled when he paid his taxes.—Martha's Vineyard Herald.

One peculiarity of the skin on an animal is that the fur side is the near side to you.—New York Journal.

Nurses make the meanest kind of white cap gentry, for they will even hold up babies.—Baltimore American.

The writer of cheap stories does not feel it at all degrading to live on his poor relations.—Boston Transcript.

The reader who gets his news in a nutshell frequently finds that the kernel has been abstracted.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Some men get a reputation for bravery just because they are unable to conceal how scared they are.—Somerville Journal.

Big men are the most merciful. The fatter the judge the more inclined he is to be a spare man.—Binghamton Leader.

Jagson says that there are men who go to political meetings, but who never cheer without inebriating.—Elnira Gazette.

A very little thing will often discourage a man, especially when its mother has gone to a sewing society.—Elnira Gazette.

Photographers are never progressive. They always impress you with the idea that you must not move.—Richmond Recorder.

This is the season of the year when the young man goes to his funeral and pulls his gun over the fence after him.—Columbus Post.

Hackett—"How is your wife getting on with her dress-reform movement?" Sunette—"Immense. She has two new dressmakers."—Cloak Review.

It is not until a man goes on a quest for a hired girl that he fully appreciates the immense proportions of the woman question.—Baltimore American.

It is a sign that her husband is making money when a woman begins to get the look on her face of looking at you without seeing you.—Atchison Globe.

SHEPHERD LULLABY.

The silver moon high in the sky
A-thro' the clouds is creeping;
The soft winds sigh a lullaby
While bonnie barin is sleeping.
Hush, baby—hush, my darling!
Heigho; Hi—laddie!

Out in the night wee jasper stars
Above thy cot are peeping,
And at thy side sweet angels bide,
Their silent watches keeping—
Sleep, baby, sleep!—so weary,
Thy mother loves her dearie!

Hush, little one, and take thy rest
With peaceful dreams beguiling
Upon thy breast the fairest nest,
Their dewy lips a-smiling.
Hush, baby—hush, my darling!
Heigho; Hi—laddie!

So close thy drowsy blue-bell eyes
With never a thought of sighing!
On misty wing, while elfins sing,
Old witches are a-flying.
Sleep, baby, sleep!—nor fear thee,
Thy mother loves her dearie!

Sleep, little lambkin, softly sleep,
I hear thy father calling,
While he doth keep the gentle sheep
Ghost shadows are a-falling;
Hush, baby—hush, my darling!
Heigho; Hi—laddie!

Up in the sky a golden web
The dream-gods are a-weaving,
With tinkling song they flit along;
Beware! They are deceiving!
Sleep, baby, sleep!—so weary,
Thy mother loves her dearie!
—J. LaRue Burnett, in Youth's Companion.

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