

HOLLY BERRIES.

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Through the dusky evergreens
Like sprays of coral gleaming.

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"LEFTY."

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

CERTAINLY he was a woe-begone object as he rode up to the Rita Blanca ranch house.

Clark had just come in from where all the headquarters hands, including the cook (for your genuine ranch cook is always a rider, too, and quite as liable as not to be the best broncho buster and handler of cattle in the force) were gathering two-year-olds for shipment, and there was no one at the ranch house but himself.

Clark's pony, his saddle, spurs and all his equipments and accoutrements were kept in the shining and speckless condition of a crack cavalryman's; and his clothing was searched for rents and missing buttons with the eagerness of a young wife, new to her duties.

Lifted out of vagabondage into a comfortable home, and freed from the haunting dread of losing it; simply pleased, like a child, at being a valued factor in the comfort of that home, Lefty, whose springtime had been nipped and chilled by adversity's northers, came into late blossom. His face filled out and bloomed till it looked like a young boy's.

In this fostering atmosphere he put forth numberless entertaining little accomplishments; he discovered unsuspected graces and developed the cheerful optimism of the consumptive. His cough was always "getter," and he was mildly impatient of any inquiry as to his health, assuming the attitude of a great stout fellow who ought to be out on the range earning his way, but who accepted these light-or duties because they were of a sort unopporular with the others.

Notwithstanding this, he took faithfully the medicines Clark gave him, as he would have taken, done or endured anything asked or imposed upon him from that quarter.

pitiful effort to pull himself together, and look all right.

"Mr. Sargent," he said, beseechingly, "this ain't nothin'; it don't interfere with my work none; an' you don't know how bad I hate to be knockin' about from one place to another."

"Why, Lefty," said Clark, horrified, "you don't think I wanted to discharge you! Here, let me help you up on the horse, and I'll lead him in."

Clark had a medicine chest, a fair practical knowledge of the effect of drugs, and considerable tact in their use. Lefty, of course, was burning out—but slowly in this high, dry air, so unfavorable to the development of his disease; and Clark doctored him faithfully with tonics and palliatives.

He was not sent out on the range again; work was found for him about the house, and he soon came to be cook and general domestic manager. He developed into a skilful housekeeper and his cooking saved much of the customary wear and tear of the boys' moral natures. Indeed, Fletch Phillips declared that it was a more potent means of grace than the exhortations of the cowboy evangelist over at Lone Jack.

But it was to Sargent's special comfort and welfare that his loving services were watchfully devoted. The pegs and gun racks in the office room at the Rita Blanca are all gleaming buffalo horns, picked up on the plain by Lefty, with the weather worn bark of years of exposure on them, and patiently scraped down and polished till they look like little half crescents of jet. He searched out, polished and put up, too, the great spreading cattle horns over the office doors and windows. Clark likes to hunt, and the heads and skins of

what it'll do for any man that loves it like I do." As Lefty said this he looked carefully away from his employer. Clark's drinking habit was the one gnawing anxiety and distress that he had.

It had been growing steadily worse since Lefty came to the Rita Blanca. It used to be that Clark only drank to excess when he went to Antelope, where there were bar rooms and convivial companions; but now the buckboard could not be got ready for a drive of a day or two across the country without a jug of whisky in it.

Lefty's own bitter experience, to certain passages in which—the most shameful and criminal—he always referred with open simplicity, gave him an appreciation and horror of the delicacy upon which the other was starting; and he only lacked the courage to speak.

When Clark was beginning on one of his sprees Lefty's beseeching eyes would follow him, only to drop humbly when they met his look; and the silent protest and entreaty was as well understood between them as words could have been.

Lefty stood between him and publicity so far as was possible, and lessened by his own watchfulness and care the terrible risks Clark ran when drinking. It came to be the regular thing that whenever the buckboard was brought out for one of the manager's trips, Lefty got old Hank Pearsall to take charge of the house and the cooking while he drove for Clark. It was only so that he felt at ease, for then he knew that whatever madman reaching for the lines or slashing at the half-broke broncho team there was, he was there to take care of Clark, who had more than once of late rolled out of the buckboard, and Lefty had had hard work, what with the wild team

found for miles upon that bare, open, half moonlit plain. The revelation was like a bucket of ice water dashed over him, and he gazed instantly—with a throb of that anxiety for Clark which was always with him—that these were some of the Mexicans with whom the Rita Blanca was having trouble.

His mortal fear for Clark's life swept the befogging fumes out of his brain. It was Clark's life they wanted; he knew that; it was not himself they were after. He could go forward and open the gate safely, since they likely thought him too drunk to notice them.

But if they knew that the one in the buckboard was Clark, they would jump upon it and knife him as he drove through.

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Lefty reeled toward the gate, caught it and clung to it, shaking in every limb. The silent watchers behind the posts might well have thought him very drunk indeed.

Even while his poor spent frame drooped shuddering against the gate, his single and undeviating mind ran desperately through every possible scheme to save Clark.

They were of much the same height and size—enough so to be mistaken in the semi-darkness. Why not make it seem—why not—

He tore the gate open with a lurch and flung it wide—"Lefty!" he screamed, "Lefty! Drive for your life, Lefty!" And as the excitable team of cow ponies, trained to run at the shout, swept through at a gallop, he slashed the rear horse with his whip. The outfit whirled away like a cloud, while Lefty turned to face Clark's fate.

When Clark Sargent, thoroughly sobered, got the wild ponies pulled down, turned around and drove back to the gate, there was nothing in sight on the great, gray, glimmering level but a dark, motionless heap by one of the gate posts.

He flung his lines over the post, went and knelt beside the still body. "Lefty," he whispered, with his heart in his throat. There was no answer. He found the man's shoulder, lifted them, and straightened him out—it was Lefty.

Clark raised him gently, and felt for the wounds that were soaking his clothes with blood. Lefty moaned and opened his eyes.

"O, Mr. Sargent, I'm going to die; and who'll take care of you then, when—when you're drinking. "Who is it knows like me that's been through it, the hell you're walkin' right down into! And who'll be willin' to go with you, faithful, through the worst of it all, like I'd been glad an' proud to? Nobody! Nobody! O, I can't go! I ain't ready! Mr. Sargent—O, my God!—promise me—promise—promise—"

"I do, Lefty! I do—I do promise! The Lord be my witness—" The dying man, with some reminiscence of a cradle-side prayer, raised his life-scarred hands and laid them together, "For Christ's sake, amen," he whispered, and breathed no more.

As the buckboard went slowly homeward with its freight, the dim light of Christmas morning wrought pallidly upon the plain. It sought out and touched upon the face of that patient care taker, never eloquent as now in its voicelessness.

When Clark came to his own door it was broad day. But Lefty's Christmas was spent elsewhere.—Washington Star.

Christmas in the Past. The father of the boy or girl of today can well remember, if he has reached the age of forty or upward, a time when Christmas had practically no existence for him. In certain parts of the country, indeed, Christmas has never been forgotten. In New York City, in Pennsylvania, and in the South generally, Christmas, as well as Easter, has always been observed. In New England, however, in many of the rural parts of New York, and in portions of the country which were settled from New England and from rural New York, Christmas was, forty years ago, but a name.

Some trace of it seemed to have survived in the occasional practice of hanging up the stocking on Christmas Eve. Boys and girls often hung their stockings by the fireplace, and in the morning, if they were fortunate, there was in each stocking a store of nuts, a little candy, and perhaps a jack-knife or a thumb. But next day—Christmas Day—the boys and girls went to school as usual, and fathers and mothers went about their usual tasks. There was no holiday and no big Christmas dinner.

The one feast of the year had been eaten at Thanksgiving. The mince pies accumulated for that festival were still making their appearance upon the family table; and the pies, and the memory of all the other good things and sports of Thanksgiving, had to serve the children of that period, as far as holidays were concerned, until Fast Day came round again.

In most of the States, indeed, the children had not even Fast Day to look forward to. There was no real holiday until the Fourth of July. For them there were practically but two holidays in the year.

The recollections of Christmas which a person of fifty should undertake to relate to his children would be very much like the celebrated chapter about the snakes in Ireland, which simply stated that there were no snakes in Ireland. He might, however, have a vivid recollection of a rather lonesome ten minutes spent in hanging a woolen stocking by a fireplace, during which time his parents sat solemnly by, looking as if they did not altogether approve what he was doing. The joy with which he might anticipate a possible gift was tempered not a little by the remem-

brance of one Christmas morning when he arose eagerly, searched his stocking, and found nothing whatever in it.

Very few, however, the real Christmas began to grow up, as it were. The most powerful agency in making its observance general was the Sunday-school. Always on the lookout for something with which to arouse the interest of children, the Sunday-school of thirty years ago early made choice of Christmas. "Trees" were introduced as a feature of an annual observance, and many little gifts were distributed.

It was customary to have the passages in the Gospels relating to the birth of Christ read aloud by one of the pupils of the Sunday-school who could read well, and this office was greatly coveted. The chance of being selected to read these passages aloud at Christmas was a sufficient incentive to many pupils to pay particular attention to their reading lessons at school for months together.

The interest of the children in these exercises was very great from the start, and it soon drew the older people into an almost equal interest in the revival of the old festival. In a surprisingly short time Christmas had become the most important day in the year.—Youth's Companion.

Old Christmas Carols. The earliest collection of Christmas carols was published in 1521. Many are little more than drinking songs used at social or religious festivities, of which singing and dancing then formed a prominent feature. In one old legend a jolly knight is made to say:

"Not a man here shall taste my March beer Till a Christmas carol he doth sing; Then all clap their hands, and shout and sing. Till the hall and the parlor did ring."

Indeed, the burden of many a carol might be condensed into "plum pudding, goose, capon, minced pies and roast beef," and everybody was expected to indorse the sentiment expressed a couple of hundred years ago in "Poor Robin's Almanack":

"Now, threes welcome, Christmas Which brings us good cheer, Mince pies and plum pudding, Goose and strong beer, With pie, goose and capon, The best that may be, So will doth the weather And our stomachs agree."

No less characteristic is the quaint Nowel—el el el. Now is wot that evers was woo;

Now make we myrrth, For Crysates byrrth, And sing ye jole till Candelmas, While the innate sweetness of God rest you, merry gentlemen! Let nothing you dismay; For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Was born upon this day, and of Herrick's "Star Song," and similar carols, can never be lost.

Early Celebration of the Nativity. Very in the first century there were indications that the Nativity was celebrated by the early Christians. Though the date of Christ's birth is only traditional, the 25th of December is believed to have been appointed in the fourth century, by Julius I., Bishop of Rome, as the anniversary of that event. Previously the Eastern Church had observed the 6th of January in special commemoration of the appearance of the Star which guided the Wise Men to the Saviour's birthplace in Bethlehem. For a while the Eastern Church adhered to this date, in spite of Julius's edict, though the Western Church observed the 25th of December. This had a natural tendency to extend the festival over the time intervening between the two dates. In the sixth century all Christendom united upon the observance of the 25th of December.

Greens for Church Decoration. People used to be rather more particular than they are now as to what greens they used for church decoration. The favorite plants were holly, bay, rosemary, and laurel. Ivy was objectionable because it was formerly sacred to Bacchus. Cypress was sometimes used, but its funeral associations made it out of place at so festive a season as Christmas. Mistletoe was excluded because it was sacred to the Druidic religion, and perhaps because it was considered too frivolous in its suggestions. The decorations should properly remain in the church till the end of January, but must be cleared away before February 2, Candlemas Day. The same is true of private dwellings, for superstition regards it as a fatal omen if this period is overstepped.—New York Sun.

THE LABOR WORLD. ANDREW CARNEGIE employs 22,000 men. The Pennsylvania Railroad has 1625 locomotives.

The lowest paid to any American carrier is \$59 a month. Liverpool, England, is to have the largest watch factory in the world.

Shippers of Mediterranean iron ore from Philadelphia have been restrained. The striking clockmakers at New York have decided to continue the strike until spring.

The last census puts the number of employed in the sugar refineries of the country at 7500. JOHN BRUNS, the English labor leader, shares New York to be the worst manufacturing city he has ever seen.

A LOCAL JUDGE in Germany has aroused general indignation by fining a working man appearing in court in a blue blouse. In France and Germany the wool combing mills are contemplating a strike in the hope of arresting a further fall in prices.

A PLAN has been formulated by philanthropic persons in New York City whereby it is hoped that strikes and lock-outs may be avoided. LABOR COMMISSIONER BOWLING's report shows labor-saving machinery is running so fast, and that labor organizations are kept wages up and hours down.

The Swiss Federal Council has been requested to resume negotiations with foreign governments for the establishment of international regulations upon labor questions. The British postal employees are subject to police duty and may at any time be sworn as special constables to assist in maintaining order.

The Locomotive Firemen's Brotherhood Magazine contains a farewell from E. V. Dots, who severs his connection with the magazine as editor. The magazine articles of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen have been moved to Point, Ill., from St. Louis, Ill.

JAPANESE workmen bathe the whole body once a day and some of them twice. But baths are provided on every street. They are led by a constant current of cold and water. The bathers plunge in, remaining several some ten minutes, then come out, and receive a warm shower of fresh water.

W. W. HANBELL, a boat carrier, became sane at Baltimore, Md., and was sent to view Asylum. His insanity is peculiar, according to an expert, the man has been mentally deranged by carrying the heavy weight constantly affected shoulder nerves; this was communicated to the brain, and the result is insanity of a dangerous form. One of the strange features of his insanity is a voracious appetite.

GENERAL ELEAZAR P. SCAMMON died recently at New York. General Scammon was the father of General Grant, General Sherman, and a roommate of General Sherman at West Point. He served in the Seminole, Mexican and Civil Wars.

The demand for Western cow ponies increased, owing to their being used as pointers in the East. Prices have risen and would appear as if there was money in business.

CALENDAR FOR 1895.

Calendar table for 1895 showing months from January to December with days of the week and dates.

Eclipses in 1895.

Five Eclipses occur in 1895—two of the Moon and three of the Sun—as follows: I. A Total Eclipse of the Moon, March 10th-11th, visible in North and South America, Europe and Western Asia.

The seasons. Winter begins December 21 (1894) and lasts 89 days, 23 hours and 58 minutes. Spring begins March 20 and lasts 92 days, 19 hours and 55 minutes.

Morning Stars. Venus, after Sept. 19. Mars, until Oct. 11. Jupiter, from July 10. Saturn, until Feb. 6.

Fixed and Movable Festivals. Epiphany, Jan. 6. Easter Sunday, April 14. Low Sunday, April 15. Good Friday, April 12.

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