Bubbles—bubbles—see they fly, Mounting gaily to the sky; Watch their lovely colours glow, Floating—floating—on they go i

Totaung—hoaung—on they go this world of rain and sunshine, Do not we, or grave or gay. Blow our bubbles, like the children, Like them, watch them fade away—Hopes and longings—loves and doublings—just as fragile—just as fair, Just as delicits and feeding. As the bubbles floating there,

Bubbles—bubbles—see they fly, Mounting—gaily to the sky: See their lovely colours glow, Floating, fading—on they go! —Cecil Lorraine

PHANTOM'S -FEAST.



T was claimed that Helstead Hall was an open house to the neighboring gentry; it had been for many generations, and was likely to remain so, for young Jack Holstead had all his father's love of good cheer and mad merrymakings. Squire Hel-

ther's love of good cheer and mad merrymakings. Squire Helstead had plenty of money, and spent it freely. At 50 he married the daughter of one of himelshbors; but was destined to have but a short spell of connublal bliss, for his wife died within two years of their wedding day, leaving him a baby boy. The baby flourished; was sent to school, to college, finally entered the army, and at the age of 24 was ordered abroad for two years and probably forever. His father was now a merry old fellow of 76 or thereabouts; and although he had passed the allotted age of man he strove or carry on the pleasures and excession which he had delighted thirty years before.

before.

It was now near Christmas time, and as Captain Jack Helstead had been warned for foreign service on the 15th of January next, the squire was determined to have the joillest Christmas imagina-

He issued 100 invitations to friends

He issued 100 invitations to friends old and young, a good percentage of which were accepted, and huge preparations for the celebration of the grand festival were begun.

Captain Jack Helstead, with half a dozen brother officers, who were all, like himself, ordered for foreign service, arrived on Christmas eve; but as the bulk of the guests were not expected un in Christmas morning and the day following?

of the guests were not expected un it Christmas morning and the day following?

"Gentlemen," the squire cried, "we have the joys of feast and wine, and can freely indulge in our loudest and merriest jokes. The banqueting hall shall ring with our hlarity, and tomorrow, the blessed day of our Lord's nativity, shall be dedicated to gentler pleasure, when the rooms and passages rustle with the skirts of woman and echo to the quisic of her feet.

This having oven cordially responded to by the guests, the squire prepared them for the great banquet ne had, in a measure, so far as the magnificence went, retained until the last moment as surprise. The splendid diving-haliwas ablaze with light, which fell upon the glittering glass of the decanters and other vessels in a shower of pearly gleams.

And so the banquet began, and the

other vessels in a shower of pearly gleams.

And so the banquet began, and the wine flowed, and the ceiling trembler before the continuous battery of shouts and laughter.

"Gentlemen," shouted the squire, struggling to his feet, "I am an old man, but in my veins flows the fire of youth. My seventy-sixth Christmas eve I have enjoyed more than any preceding, with the brave form and face of my son, Captain Jack Helstead, before me. Here sto his health, long life and happiness. May he be as good and joily a man as his father, and live to as ripe and honorabe an age."

This questionable toast was drunk with This questionable toast was drunk with boisterous mirth, and Jack's bosom friend, Lieu e ant Wymark, ross to reply. "At 76 our gental host looks twenty years younger, and his wit is as sparking as the best wine his cellars contain both of which we have this night partaken of freely. Here's to another Christmas gathering—ay, and twenty of them at which Squire Helstead may preside!"
"My friends," Jack exclaimed suddenly, "are you aware that our company composed of the unlucky number of thirteen? If the witches' oracle is to be believed, the same persons can never sit down together at a similar gathering, and the one who leaves the table first or last will be in the spirit land ere we can meet agair."
"And Gog forbid it may be you my

A severe engagement was reported be-tween the British and the rebel tribes whom they had been commissioned to subjugate, and the terrible news came to the old squire that his gallant son has been killed. That was the last that his

Irlends had ever seen or heard of him, and they never doubted for a moment that he was killed. But the squire indulged in a fond belief that the boy would yet return.

"I will prove if he is dead or not," he said. "Remember, Wymark, the terrible compact we made to meet again on the first Christmas eve my son is able to spend in his own house, and dependupon it he will come, either in the spirit or in the first Christmas eve the banquet will be spread, and then the truth of his fate shall be known to me."

Again were the windows of the old hall ablaze with light, and the host sat at the head of the banqueting table, but now his face was pale, and no smile enwreathed his lips. He expected a spirit guest to night. One by one the guests in rived, until all were present but the young master of the house.

A sorry spectacle was this feast for the guests trembled as though stricken with ague, until the clocks had chimed he hour of 12; and the white haired old squire rose to his feet a light in his eyes.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have cause to rejoice this night, for we have proved that Captain Jack still lives. You remember our compact, to meet once more, the whole thirteen of us, either in the fiesh or the spirit. Only one is absent, my brave son. But, gentlemen, had his spirit fled from this world, it would have returned here tonight to keep good the eath made. He is not itead; my son lives, and my life is relilled with hope." Lieutenant Wymark concurred with his host, and then the neglected wines and vlands were drunk and eaten, and every heart was lighter.

Before breaking up the squire insisted that the oath should be repeated, his mind confident that Captain Jack would surely return. As on the preceding Christmas eve, the company stood up, and, with hands clasped, repeated after the squire the same oath.

Seventeen years have passed, and Christmas is agan at hand, but death had been busy during the past kix months emong the friends who had so long met on a Christmas eve at Halstead hali.

The squire was dead, an

gentlemen who were advanced in years, so that of the original thirteen only eight were known to live.

Within a month of Christmas the lodge-keeper was found dead in the park, nix death being hastened, no doubt, by the breaking up of old ties and associations. Of the eight living members of the dread compact only one was absent, Lieutenant Wymark, his profession having again called him again to India. Two weeks before the seven met in solemn conclave to discuss the matter of their path, for it must be confessed they much regretted their participation in it. Some voted that the matter be allowed to drop as being perfectly senseless, arguing that as the hall was empty and the keys in the lands of the trustress they could not gain admission. The majority, however, proposed that they present themselves at the gates, at least, according to the compact.

at the gates, at least, according to the compact.

Finally this was decided upon, each, however, hopeful that this would terminate what was becoming a dreadful terror to them. Captain Jack was not dead, but had managed to save his life by pretending to conform to the religion and custom of his captors, hoping some day for an opportunity to escape. This opportunity never came, and his fate would probably have been forever shrouded in a mystery had not Wymark been borne to the same strenghold. This stronghold was immediately stormed by the latter, and the Captains Resource. hold was immediately stormed by the bitter, and the Caparity Resolut to liberty. Our two soldlers now made direct for England, and it was only by the most determined efforts that they arrived in the hall in time for the annual least. It was just 11 o'clock of Christians.

rece for England, and it was only by the most determined efforts that they arrived in the hall in time for the annual feast. It was just 11 o'clock of Christmas eve.

'Just in time," said Wymark, "and the old place is filled with light. What a constitutiony our father has. Why, he is near upon 93 years of age, and last Christmas looked as well as ever."

'Dear old chap," murmured Captain Jack; "but how strange everything seems. There is not a footmark in the snow, and the gates look as if they had not been opened for days and days."

As he spoke a spectral figure issued from the lodge, and the gates swung open. It was the ghost of the keeper, and as he beckned to the men he regarded them with burning eyes.

'Ah, good Silas," began the captain, but pause on feeling the tightened grip of Wymark on his arm.

'Hist, Jack. 'Tis a spirit. God forbid that we have come too late!"

'My father!' moaned the captain. They pushed past the spectral gate-keeper, and entered the hall. the doors of which were opened with invisible hands. Up to the banqueting chamber, the table of which was spread for the feast, though not a sound could be heard of any living thing.

'A dread revelation tonight," gasped Captain Jack. 'Il wonder how many of the thirteen still live?"

'We shall soon know," was the reply of Wymaris, "for it is nearly 11.30."

The soldiers seated themselves in the same chairs as they did seventeen years before and waited. Meanwhile the other living members of the compact made their way to the gates, hoping to have to turn back again, but to their horror the iron door swung open, and they were compelled to go forward by some unseen power. Upon entering the banquet chamber they recoiled at the sight of Captain Jack; then explanations followed, and the nine men seated round the table.

"Four of us gone," said Wymark.

"Why, all were here last year! My friends, my oath was here and year! My friends, my oath was here also year! same room upon the very first Christmaseve he again spends in England."

"It same to again spends in England."

"It same room upon the very first Christmaseve he again spends in England."

"It shall be so," declared the squire."

"Ay be it twenty years hence, in the body or the spirit. Every Christmaseve he again spends in England."

"It shall be so," declared the squire."

"It have no wish to displarage to the order of your superiors, but I think they might have chosen another, who was not the only son of his father.

"And he was a widower," chimed in Lieutenant Wymark, merrily. "Away with gloomy forebodings, and let us make a compact, one and all of us, to meet Captain Jack at a banquet in this same room upon the very first Christmase eve he again spends in England."

"It shall be so," declared the squire.

"Ay, be it twenty years hence, in the body or the spirit. Every Christmas the banquet shall be spread in anticipation of my son's return. Gentlemen, do yeal agree?"

"We do?"

"Then all stand up, and with clasped hands repeat after me what I shall say."

The entire company at once rose up, and having formed a circle by clasping one another's hands, the old squire continued:

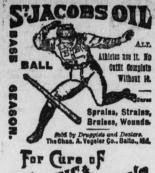
"We hereby solemnly swear to meet again, either in the spirit or in the flesh, on the first recurring Christmas eve upon which Captain Jack. Heistead returns home from foreign service, let it be one of fifty years hence, in the same hall, and to feast according to the custom of the piace."

With the advent of Chrismas day the full complement of guests arrived, with plentv of pretty girls, and then followed lirtations and kisses, and dancing and Akating, and the 15th of Jan. where Jack Helstead had to join his regiment. The gay party broke up, and soon after the young soldier and Lieut, Wymark were on their way to the gates, hoping to the room was plounged in darkness, and the nine men loudied together in fear. Soon they found that the feast had gone—the room was proved to the piace."

The land there we complete the tribes whom they had

was empty.
Soon the Christmas bells were pealing.
The compact fulfilled, no more was the
banqueting chamber invaded by phantoms at the Christmas feast.—Boston
Sunday Globe.





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