

In the Christmas Rush
By Willard Hartwick

THEY had been doing their Christmas shopping together, and stood with burdened arms waiting to board a street car for home. Again and again they joined the line-up of would-be passengers only to see the car move off without them.

"Look here, Mrs. Young. I think we're crazy to try to get home in this crush," said plump Mrs. Older. "Let us go to the Purple Tea-room and have dinner and rest till the crowd thins out a bit."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," almost wailed pretty little Mrs. Young. "I simply must get home. Teddy would be so annoyed if he got home and found me out and no dinner ready."

"But you could phone from the tea-room," said Mrs. Older.

"Teddy wouldn't like it," objected Mrs. Young. "He would say I shouldn't have stayed shopping so late."

"What nonsense," scoffed Mrs. Older, with the license of an old friend.

But Mrs. Young was firm. She was going to get home before Teddy if it were at all possible.

However, after a few more ineffectual attempts to board a car, during one of which she spilled her parcels on the pavement, Mrs. Young reluctantly accompanied the hobbling Mrs. Older around the corner to the Purple Tea-room.

Under the spell of the purple-and-gold shaded lights, the two weary women ordered substantial dinner. Mrs. Young's body relaxed into ease, but her mind did not. She ought to be at home. Home was the place for married women at meal-time.

"Teddy and I promised each other when we were married that we'd never eat dinner apart if we could possibly avoid it," she murmured. "I hate to be the first to break that promise—I know Teddy wouldn't."

"Well, six months is quite long enough to keep a promise like that," asserted Mrs. Older. You might just



She noted hungrily what an unusually attractive meal it was.

as well settle down and enjoy yourself."

But Mrs. Young couldn't smile or even pretend an enjoyment she didn't feel. She wanted to be at home preparing a cozy welcome for Teddy. Just at her most homesick and contrite moment, she raised her misty eyes to the wall opposite and read on a little framed card—"If you want a taxi call Main 0909."

She rose to her feet, the light of decision flashing across her face.

"I'm going to ring for a taxi to take me home," she said.

"Don't be foolish," admonished the rather disgusted Mrs. Older. "A taxi will cost you quite a bit and you said you were broke."

"I still have that \$10 bill Teddy gave me to buy a Christmas present for myself. I'll use some of that—and I can get home in time to get dinner."

Mrs. Young gathered up her numerous parcels and on her way out she met a waitress carrying in her dinner. As she stopped to take her check off the tray she noted hungrily what an unusually attractive meal it was.

In an amazingly short time the summoned taxi whirled her home without notable incident—except the smash-up that occurred in the \$10 bill when it came into collision with the taxi fare. Mrs. Young found that she had just 21 minutes to the good, and she did a meal-marathon that broke all records.

At the exact minute of Teddy's usual arrival she was ready for him with a smile on her face. And just then the phone bell rang. She could hardly believe her ears which she heard Teddy telling her over the wires that he would not be home to dinner.

"Go right ahead and have your own dinner, dearie," Teddy said, and his voice didn't sound a bit regretful. "I've had an extra hard day, and I don't feel like standing all the way home, as I know I would have to do if I got on a car at this hour. Older and I are going to drop into the Purple Tea-room for dinner. Bye-bye, dearie."

(Associated Newspapers—WNU Service.)

First Printing of Christmas Carols

Christmas carols had a wide appeal from the very beginning. They pleased both the devout and the roisterers, and it was inevitable that they should find their way into print. The earliest printed collection is probably Wynkin de Worde's "Christmas Carolles Newwy Eaprinted" (1532). Only a single leaf is extant. It contains two complete carols—one a lullaby song, and the other a boy's head Carol.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS
By Joan Stedman

"WE'RE tired of the camp and we're going to move on. See?"

Orrek Gordon lifted his head. "Going to walk out on me and quit? Your wages are good here."

The foreman of the lumber gang sneered. "Say, money ain't everything. We want to get back to town and we're going." He slouched back to the tent and joined the crowd of surly men around the great camp-fire.

From the log bungalow beyond the camp twinkled many lights. Orrek stared at the Christmas candles. Marcia had placed them there, saying they brought peace to the household. And now, with his men walking out on him, Marcia would be lost to him.

A skimming sound on the firm snow aroused him and Marcia, a gay little figure in her white furs, caught at his arm and came to a stand-



"Why stay out here when I want you?"

still on her skirts. "Why stay out here when I want you. Orrek? We're making up a bridge table.

A bridge table when his future career was toppling down!

"Orrek, what's wrong with the men?" she asked. "My maid told me there had been a row there."

Orrek's eyes blazed as he tucked the small hand under his arm. How he loved her! In a few brief sentences he told her of the discontent among his men. "It's the loneliness that gets them," he finished, "the lack of amusement."

"If they walk out you cannot keep your contract. That will queer you with the owners." She turned and left him in silence.

Back at the bungalow Marcia tumbled the contents of her clothes chest while talking rapidly to her maid, Ninette. "Isn't it lucky that I taught you those chords, Ninette?"

The camp-men, grumbling around the fire, fell into a sudden silence as the gay plunk-a-plunk of a banjo sounded in the clearing.

Gebert, surly gang leader, jerked out his pipe. "Listen, boys!"

Down the hill Marcia came gaily, her fingers bringing jolly notes from the strings. The frosty air echoed and re-echoed as Ninette joined in.

"I know that," declared Gebert. Carried along by memories, the men joined in, forgetting the loneliness of the Christmas eve, forgetting their fancied troubles.

Marcia had come to the very edge of the great fire and stood there picking at the strings. Above her towered the man she loved, just beyond her stood the men in a semicircle, their unshaven faces lit by a mutual love of music.

"How many of you play small instruments?" she asked softly.

The answers brought a quick smile to her lips. "I thought there would be many of you to help me out," she cried.

"I want to have a string-band," hurried to Marcia, "and I need volunteers. A violin, maybe two or three. A guitar."

"I play the fute," interrupted Jacques.

"At home I have an accordion," came a wistful voice, "but—"

"Fine," interrupted Marcia. "I have, tonight, made out an order that should have been mailed sooner. It is my Christmas gift to our men. The order is for musical instruments. I wish each man would write down his instrument and give it to me. With luck we should have the orders filled in three days and we'll practice hard so that New Year's day may find us ready. How about it?"

There was an instant response as hardened palms came together.

Just beyond the pines a wolf howled, but Marcia was looking up into her lover's eyes.

(Associated Newspapers—WNU Service.)

Wrapping Small Gifts

An unusual way to wrap a number of small gifts that are to be given in a good-sized Christmas box is to tack each one in an envelope made of either plain red, holly, silver or gold paper. Wrap each gift first in plain white tissue paper, folded in envelope style, and seal envelopes with contrasting ends. Patterns for the envelopes can be cut from ordinary envelopes by tearing one apart and either enlarging on it or trimming it down.

Martha's Happiest Christmas
By BARBARA ROBERTS

MARTHA was dependable. Like a patient, willing and uncomplaining horse. Her life on her small farm was not different from a treadmill, always the same, day in and day out, month after month, year after year.

There had been a time when Martha was not alone. That was when her older sister Helen and her younger sister Nancy and her still younger brother Curt lived there at the farm. But that was a long time ago, longer still since their parents had died. The sisters were beautiful and had married well, and Curt, possessed of burning ambitions, had left to make his way in the world.

Frequently they came out to call, to "eat one of Martha's wonderful dinners," and "get a breath of country air."

It was on a Christmas day that Nancy brought Barre Howard out. "I knew you wouldn't mind, darling," she gushed. "Mr. Howard is a traveler and he's lecturing in town tomorrow night."

Martha smiled and nodded and looked up into Barre Howard's tanned face, a face that was strong and kind, with eyes that held a dreamy mystery in their depths.

But no one would have dreamed that there were any thoughts in Martha's head save those that centered around preparations for the Christmas dinner.

It was a sumptuous meal, one of the best Martha had ever prepared. She knew a vague sort of pride at the way her guests attacked it.

Martha sat with the others at the table after the dinner was over, listening to Barre Howard tell of his travels, of far away places he'd visited. He looked at her twice while he talked, directly, penetratingly, and she flushed.

After a while Martha got up and began clearing off the table. No one

offered to help. She washed and dried the dishes and stacked them away. And when she came back into the living room, they were ready to go, all of them. After she left she closed the door and turned and went back into the kitchen.

For a moment she stood in the center of the floor. An expression came into her face that was the un-leaving of years and years of suppressed desires. She took a quick step forward, seized a broom by its handle, swung it toward the shelf of canned preserves with all her strength.

Martha laughed, shrilly, piercingly, and struck again. The shelf gave way this time, swinging on one hinge. Half a hundred jars of varying size crashed to the floor.

Directly following there was an instant of silence, and in that instant a voice spoke near the kitchen door. "In heaven's name, what are you doing that for?"

Martha whirled, and there, just inside the door, an amazed look on his tanned face, stood Barre Howard.

"Why?" she cried passionately. "Why? Because it's what I've wanted to do for years and years and years and it's just today I've had the courage. Because I hate this place, hate being cooped up here. Because I'm plain and unattractive and can't have the things my sisters have. Because Nancy's so selfish. Because she isn't satisfied with one man, but wants another, the only one—I-I—"

She stopped at last, breathing hard, leaning heavily against the sink, pale, ashamed of what she'd almost said.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it. Really. If there's something you forgot, I'll help you find it."

"There's nothing I've forgotten. Then—why did you come back? Why don't you go and leave me alone, like all the others do?"

His eyes were steady, penetrating, a dreamy mystery in their depths. "Why do you think I came back?" he asked.

"Why?" She brushed a hand across her eyes. Something was stirring inside of her, something she thought dead. "Why?" she repeated. "How should I know?"

"Why do you think?" he asked again.

Barre Howard laughed and stood before her, and suddenly the look in his eyes was no longer mysterious. It was like a picture, readily interpreted, telling her why he had come back.

(Associated Newspapers—WNU Service.)



Martha laughed, shrilly and piercingly, and struck again.

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STORK MAKES CALL IN STATE AT THREE MINUTE INTERVALS

Pennsylvania is doing its part in the Nation's greatest boom in baby production since 1921 with the stork making a delivery every three minutes.

That's far under the 14-second rate he's turning up with new arrivals over the country which expects 2,300,000 births this year or about 157 babies for every 10,000 population.

The State Bureau of Statistics reports 145,558 births for the first 10 months of 1941, a rate of 17.6 per 1,000 population—highest since the depression—compared with 157,894 and a rate of 16.7 for the same period of 1940.

And while the undertaker makes a call every 23 seconds over the Nation, he isn't doing better than every five minutes in the Keystone State what with 68,658 deaths at a rate of 10.7 per 1,000 population for the first 10 months of this year against 90,075 or a rate of 10.9 in 1940.

Census Bureau officials accredited the upswing in the birth rate to both the world war and the present defense boom. Babies in the big crop born after the boys got back from France in 1918 are now old enough to have children of their own and those who held off getting married during the depression have wed with the business upswing and are raising families.

Pennsylvania births for the year are expected to approximate about 17.6 per 1,000 population, which would be the highest since 1921 when the rate was 18.5 or 178,714 births. Highest number of new arrivals since start of statistics records in 1906 was 220,452 or a rate of 25.9 recorded in 1921. The state's birth rate was more than 200,000 from 1910 through 1925 when it started a decline that reached a low of 157,046 in 1933. The 1940 total was 165,059 or 16.7.

Deaths are expected to be slightly lower than last year's 111,498, a rate of 11.5 per 1,000 population. The number of fatalities have ranged from 147,808 to 120,000 since 1918, when the highest of 25 years was reached with 187,953, a rate of 22. The lowest total since statistics were started in 1906 came in 1939—108,007, a rate of 10.9.

Navy hospital ships follow, with fuel and supply ships, in the wake of the fighting fleet.

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