

# TIT-BITS

CHRISTMAS  
EXTRA



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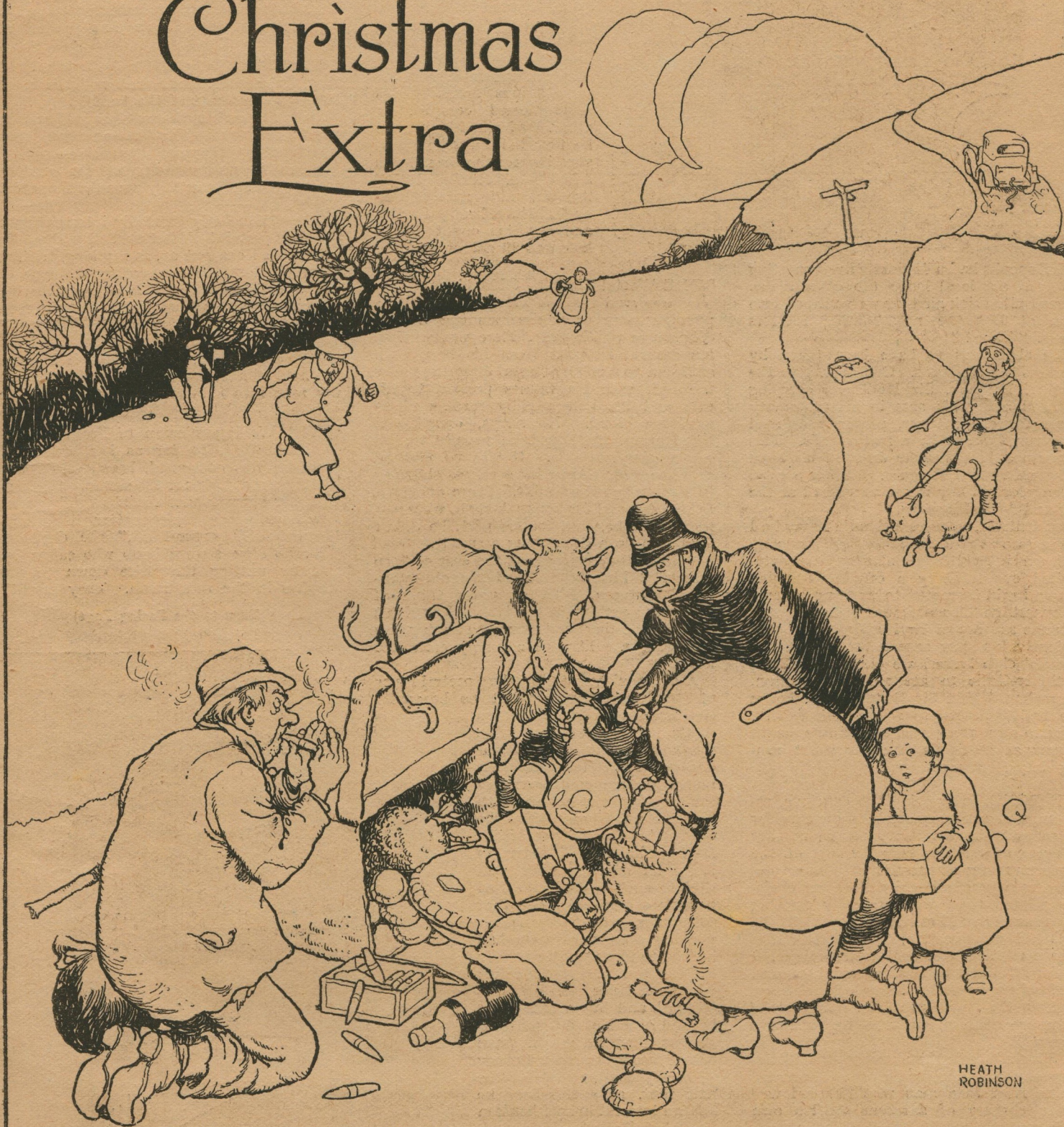
SPECIAL  
CHRISTMAS  
ATTRACTION

'LET'S  
GO GAY!'

A SUPER ATTRACTION

# TIT-BITS-1937

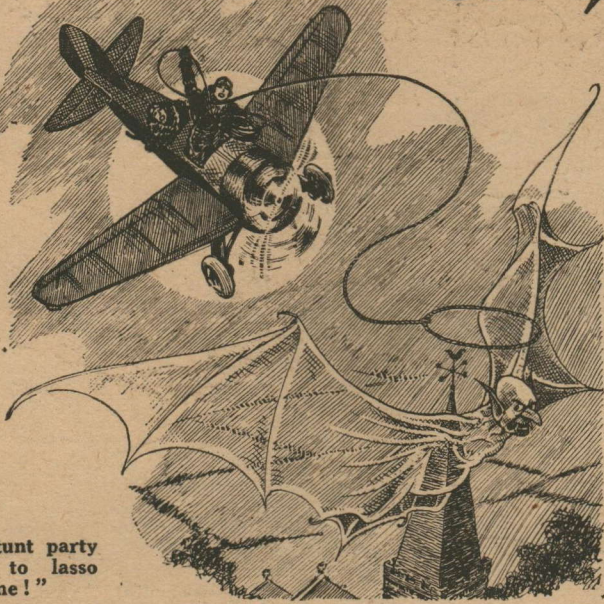
## Christmas Extra



HEATH  
ROBINSON

# UP, THE SPOOKS!

## By F. MORTON HOWARD



"A stunt party tried to lasso me!"

WE spooks had a distinctly lively meeting at our local lodge the other night. It was quite thick air that we vanished into when at last the neighbouring roosters crowed "Time!"

The chair was to have been taken by Headless Sir Hudibras. On his way to the meeting, however, Sir Hudibras, carrying his head under his arm in his customary rigger forward manner, narrowly escaped being run through by a motor-cycle. This so alarmed him that he dropped his head and couldn't find it again. Rather a pity, as the poor old boy is not very good at the deaf-and-dumb language.

Incidentally, we have a clue that may lead to the recovery of Sir Hudibras' property. We learn that a hitherto unknown ghost gate-crashed our territory a couple of nights ago, and said he meant to work up a name for himself as "Two-Headed Pete."

In the absence of Sir Hudibras (last seen anxiously fumbling among the contents of a bowls' club locker) we elected Sir Bonq de Silver-Grille to act as our chairman. We reckoned that Sir Bonq, as the baron who had indicated to King John exactly where to sign along the dotted line, ought to know as much as anybody about running important meetings.

SIR BONQ, in opening the conclave, reminded us that its object was to consider the present dissatisfactions among us that are doing so much to take the edge off the simple pleasures of haunting.

Giving a personal experience, our chairman related that, while recently crossing the common in full armour at midnight, he overheard the question, "What's all that bally clattering and rattle over there, I wonder?" And to this the response was, "Oh, only some golfer staggering back home late from the nineteenth hole. Don't take any notice of him, in case he wants to cadge a lift."

"Which," feelingly observed Sir Bonq, "say what you like, was a darned annoyin' way to refer to a man who'd scored well over a century of Saracens off his own battle-axe, what?"

The Ghastly Spectre of the Moated Grange said he agreed all the way with the chairman's opening remarks. Haunting was

not what it was, by any means. (Cries of "Hear, hear!" and a voice, "You're telling us, big boy!") He thought all this psychology stuff was to blame. As soon as one started to do a spot of haunting nowadays, people just gave you a dirty look and told you that you were nothing more than the subconscious reaction of some blessed complex or other. By his halidom, when he first took up the sport, ghosting *was* ghosting. If you asked *him*, concluded the Spectre, old man Freud ought to have been poleaxed, and aspirins ought to be listed as illegal drugs.

THE Woeful Harper of Mouldring Castle observed that, in his opinion, the deplorable state of affairs was due to the changes in public taste. Time was when a few mournful strains from his harp were sufficient to send any mortal dithering under the bed, with his fingers pressed to his ears and his hair rapidly turning ultra-platinum blond. Nowadays, complained the Harper, his repertoire usually turned out a complete flop. It was no unusual experience for him to have people shouting to him to pep it up a bit. There appeared to be a demand for hot chah-chah, whatever that might be, but, for his part, he didn't intend to do a darn thing about it.

"Little they care about the cost of harp strings!" bitterly declared the old-established virtuoso. "They never think of dropping anything in the kitty. You don't catch *me* wasting good money on buying new music for the likes of a mingy crew like that!"

A distinguished visitor, the Spectral Piper of Struthamichty, said that he heartily concurred with the criticisms of the previous speaker. He mentioned that he had endeavoured to take up the matter of free complimentary copies of their music with various publishers, but the dead-letter department of the Post Office didn't seem to know its own job. He said that to such a low ebb had high-class ghosting come that sometimes, when playing his weirdest strains, listeners had bawled to him to put a sock in it. He had also been asked why he did not stab his pipes to death and buy a saxophone instead? He assured his hearers that he would have retired from active spookery several years ago but for the fact that, as a side-line, he had an interest in an Aberdeen market-stall that sold second-hand hair-brushes, odd boots, and part-worn cakes of soap.

The Phantom Drummer of

Rattatat said he wished to associate himself with the remarks of his fellow musicians. More than once, when going his rounds with his instrument, mortals had angrily yelled to him to stop that row on his drum, and beat it. To him, that was clear proof that the public nowadays simply didn't know what it wanted.

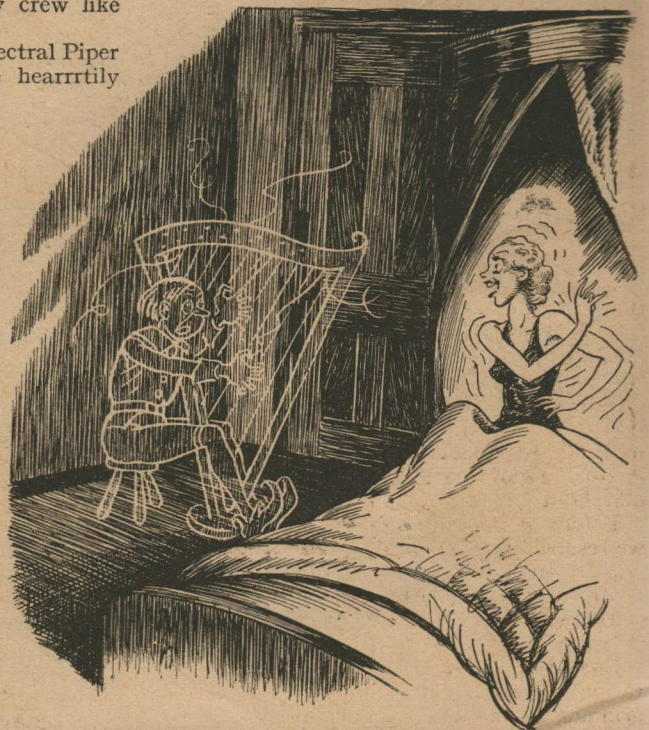
The White Lady of Stryke-Dumbe said that, in her opinion, modern girls were largely at the root of the trouble.

Beau Chuckchin, the well-known Regency wraith, at once rose to question that statement. "Damme," quoth he, "I'll hearken to no traducing of the modern jades, egad! I vow they have the shapeliest ankles, and—"

The White Lady (heatedly interrupting): "That's just it! What sort of a show do you think I can put up, in my long, trailing robes, against the so-revealing fashions of to-day? What's the good of *me* jibbering around a week-end party when all the men had got eyes for nothing but the girls' legs? Unfair competition, that's what it is! If things don't alter, beshrew me if I don't get hold of a pair of scissors and cut down my robe into a ballet-dress!"

THE Wailing Woman of Freezam Hall said that, so far as her branch of spookery was concerned, broadcasting was mainly responsible for the slump. She said that her eldritch cries cut absolutely no ice nowadays. It doesn't matter if I howl the top of my head off," she declared, "there's always some boob who calms the riot by putting the noise down to the wireless in the next room. They say it's

(Turn to the Facing Page)



"Little they care about the cost of harp strings!"

(Continued from the Facing Page)

heter-something or other. I can never remember the dratted word!"

The Murdered Minstrel of Mumbleby Manor said that he felt very strongly in the matter of broadcasting. It had caused the blood of the public to lose its good old habit of curdling. "I can do my weirdest stuff out on the terrace, but people simply don't go all palsied-up, as they used to," he complained. "No, they just groan, 'Gosh, another of those crooners!' and let it go at that."

There was some discussion as to whether the next to rise should be allowed to address the meeting, since he didn't possess full ghost status, but was only one of those Things That Go Wump In The Night. Eventually, being permitted to speak, he said he desired to point out modern conditions had practically put the tin hat on him and his like. "What cop do you think there is in Night-Wumping in these times?" he asked, indignantly. "No one takes the least heed of us with these bottle-parties and night-clubs and road-houses all over the place. What chance have we got to be heard against jazz-bands and cork-poppings? Why, even in a quiet neighbourhood, we're simply put down to someone getting back late from a binge and slamming the car door!"

**T**HE Wicked Marquis said his kick was against the autograph hunters. "The moment I materialise," he said, "a gaggle of girls start crowding me with their wretched autograph books and stubs of pencil. A nice come-down for a man who forged his rich uncle's will and signed orders for three successive wives to be incarcerated in mad-houses!"

Sir Marmaduke of the Doom observed that, for his part, he thought all this shamanistic racket was to blame. "Can you wonder," he inquired, "if folks won't fall at sight for an Elizabethan ghost in a country that's full of 'Ye Olde Wirelesse Shoppes,' and 'Ye Old Petrolle Pumpes'?"

The Vampire of Leatherwings said it was this new kind of aviation that got his goat. "It isn't only the way they sky-hog to the danger of us older, slower flyers," he said. "It's the crude ideas of humour among modern aviators that feed me up to the fangs! Do you know, only the other twilight, when I was taking a few quiet flaps round the churchyard, a stunt party of 'em zoomed up in their 'planes and tried to lasso me!"

**T**HE Miser of Mullygrub Manor blamed modern education. "They didn't ought to be allowed to teach it, putting wrong ideas in the children's heads!" he stated, very, very crossly. "A ghost can't scare a six-year-old into even a mild attack of hiccoughs these nights! They've been taught we're done just by arranging a few glass prisms and mirrors! Bah, that's modern education, that is!"

Several other speakers supplied humiliating personal experiences, infuriating the meeting to speechless jibberings, hollow groans, awful screams, ghastly gurglings and faint, unearthly moans.

Before we were compelled to break up, we resolved to take drastic steps to reassert our prestige.

We're going to larn you mortals.

Just you wait till Christmas Eve, and see!

—\*—

**CHRISTMAS VISITOR:** "Your dog seems to be a very friendly fellow. He keeps grinning at me and wagging his tail."

**Little Bobbie:** "Yes, you've got his plate."



**Husband:** "They don't wish to be disturbed, dear—they're on their honeymoon!"

#### DODGING THE DROPS

THE two men had escaped from an asylum and had managed to steal a 'plane from a nearby airport. Up in the 'plane at fifteen thousand feet one of the men grew fidgety.

"I think I'm going to jump out of the 'plane," he told his companion. "I feel I can't stand it in here any longer."

"Better take a parachute with you," advised the other.

"What do I want with a parachute?"

The other wagged a finger.

"Don't be silly," he cautioned. "Can't you see it's raining?"

#### APOLOGY

A PANTOMIME chorus girl introduced her young man to another chorus girl, with the result that he transferred his affections. The aggrieved girl gave her rival a piece of her mind in a letter which read:—

"You Heartless Creature—You knew very well we had been going about together for six months. Wait till I lay my hands on you, you good-for-nothing bleached blonde. I'll scratch your face, pull out your hair, and throw things at you. Yours truly, L— B—.

"P.S. Please excuse pencil."



**"Judging by the way things disappear from the pantry overnight, your ladyship, I greatly fear the ghost of this manor is suffering from this 'ere night starvation."**

## BRINGING HOME

## THAT YULE LOG

By DENIS DUNN



Sidney screamed and dived to the bottom of the bed.

FROM the hall downstairs came a piercing falsetto:—

"Christmas comes but once a year,  
Tra-la-la, hip hooray!"  
Sidney gave a deep groan and buried his head under the eiderdown.  
"Awaaaaake, oh merry gentlemen, and greet the blithesome morn!" shrilled the voice.

"She's off!" I agreed, bitterly.  
Sidney and I spend every Christmas with Aunt Patty. We are her favourite nephews, and she is our rich aunt. She is rather a difficult old girl, and is known privately to the family as "Patty de Faux Pas." Her sense of humour is somewhat on the grim side. Last Christmas, every member of the family received an autographed copy of the song, "When I am Dead."

On Christmas morning, Sidney and I ask very little. A taste of orange juice, or a cut of the aspirin. We shuddered at the sound of galloping came from the stairs. Apparently the merry old relative was taking them three at a bound!

The door flung wide, and on the threshold, a great grin over her face, stood Aunt Patty, a coil of rope in one hand and a meat-axe in the other!

"Nuts at last!" screamed Sidney, and dived to the bottom of the bed.

"Aunt!" I quavered, "would you have innocent blood upon your head?"

"Very probably," she chuckled, "if you two fools don't hurry up and dress. You are going out to get a Yule log!"

"Eh?" gasped Sidney, emerging warily from the end of the bed.

"A Yule log," she snapped, "And hurry up! Take this rope and axe, and get the two-seater from the garage. We will have breakfast when you get back!"

She slammed the door and went downstairs to the tune of "Hark, ye merry goblins!"

Sidney and I shivered into plus-fours and groped our way round to the garage.

It was pouring with rain outside and an icy wind zipped down the drive.

"What on earth does she want a Yule log for?" grumbled Sidney as we drove out. "What can she do with a Yule log anyway?"

I told him with some detail.

I was driving and Sidney was carrying the axe like a halberd. The rope was tied round his waist. A policeman stopped us in Cutter's Lane.

"Wot?" he asked, logically, "are you doin' with that axe and that rope?"

"This axe and this rope?" replied Sidney, politely.

"Them!" said the officer, and then, as an afterthought: "Yus!"

"It is a suicide pact, officer," I explained. "My friend will shoot himself with the axe, and I will hang myself in a fit of remorse."

"'Ere, 'ere!" said the Law, warningly.

Finally, after the passing of half a crown, the Law said we might find a tidy stump in Parkgate Spinney, but "we 'ad left it late like."

WE bounced up the outsize rut, called a road, leading to the Spinney. We got out. Immediately we knew we had left it a little late like. The honest villagers had removed all the tidy stumps days before. We took off our caps and cursed the honest villagers.

"Now what?" said Sidney, coldly.

"It's a pity one is not permitted to cut down a tree," I said, carefully, "because over there is a tree which is not big as trees go."

"Practically a root," nodded Sidney.

"Nothing more than a big bud," I agreed. Gazing furtively around, we approached the tree.

"You hit it with the axe and I'll yank it with the rope," I suggested.

Sidney took off his coat, spat on his hands, and swung! I retrieved the axe from the bush, helped Sidney out of the puddle, and decided that I should hit it, and he could yank. I smote. I began to enjoy myself. The chips flew merrily, and I burst into "See the stout woodsman!"

"I see a man!" said Sidney, suddenly. "This man carries a shotgun, and this man is running!"

I dropped the axe and looked round. One in velveteen breeches was pounding down the hill! He seemed perturbed about something. He kept waving his gun above his head and shouting great shouts.

"I don't much like this tree, you know?" I said to Sidney.

"Hardly a good log, I agree," he murmured.

"I think a good run would keep the chill out," said Sidney.

"Nothing like a good run in the crisp morning air," I nodded, and reached the car three seconds before Sidney.

The rain started down in buckets. We chugged miserably down a lane, when suddenly Sidney gave a shout, pointed up the road, and yelled "Wholesalers!"

Down the lane came six small children with the most magnificent Yule log I have ever seen! The caravan boss, a young female named Aggie, was exerting the five colleagues to get their backs into it. They had the log upon a small trolley mounted on bicycle wheels. Sidney stopped the car.

"Good morning, my little dears," he smiled. "What have you got there?"

"Sprig of 'olly," said Aggie, wearily. "Why?"

"My friend and myself," said Sidney, "are in need of help."

"We can see that!" said Aggie. "Push along, Arfur!"

"You do not follow me, madam," said Sidney. "We too are seeking Yule logs. Would you consider selling us your log?"

"'Ow much?" said the caravan leader briskly.

"Bobeach!" suggested a caravan member with shining eyes.

"I am willing to close at a bobeach," agreed Sidney, "but the log is too large to go in our dickey-seat. Could we purchase your trailer?"

"Nother bobeach?" inquired the caravan leader.

"Eleven bob in all!" nodded Sidney.

"Twelve bobinall!" snapped the leader.

"Twelve bobinall it is," blushed Sidney.

We paid up. We tossed them the rope and asked them to hitch the trailer up. Then we hurried into the car to get out of the driving rain.

"O.K., mister!" called the tribe. "Off you go!"

WE drove merrily home. Auntie Patty was on the porch to meet us. As she caught sight of us coming up the drive she waved frantically and began to sing, "Home, the poor wanderer!"

We jumped proudly from the car. We both kissed Aunt Patty.

"Well, what do you think of it?" I chortled. "Isn't it a beauty?"

"Isn't what?" asked Aunt Patty, coldly.

We turned round. Attached to our car was the trailer, but where was the Yule log?

"I wonder . . ." said Sidney, suddenly.

"Do you think it's possible . . ." I began.

As one man we turned up our collars and strode rapidly down the drive.

"Why—where are you going?" called Aunt Patty.

"A little matter of twelve bob each," we shouted over our shoulders.

"Don't wait up!"

# STARLETS OF THE CIRCUS

## By CLAUDE F. LUKE



**ON THE ROAD:** Mr. Frank Foster, popular Ringmaster of Bertram Mills' Circus, directing children of the circus to school when the show was at Swansea recently

**H**OME for Christmas! That radiant dream will soon be a reality for thousands of school-children. But there is at least one school—at London's Olympia—which will be in full swing for the next few weeks, the young scholars grappling with fractions and verbs while thousands of their contemporaries throng the Circus and Fun Fair a few yards away.

The scholars don't mind; in fact, they rather like it. For this is a special sort of school, a place more exclusive than Eton or Harrow, more cosmopolitan than a University, drawing its scholars from a world where alert and courageous minds and healthy bodies abound.

### Juggling with Figures

It is a school for children of the circus, and neither wealth nor rank can get a child into it unless the parents belong to that ancient aristocracy of circus artists, famous families like the Cookes, the Sangers, the Ginnetts, the Fossets, the Loyals, the Paulos, the Duffys, the Hannafords and others.

At Olympia and other big indoor circuses there is a certificated schoolmaster specially appointed to instruct the children of the artists and some of the younger artists themselves. Here you may find two young girls absorbed in a mathematics lesson, quite unmoved by the knowledge that in an hour or two they will be careering round the circus ring perched on the shoulders of their brothers who are themselves balancing precariously on a pair of lively horses.

That bright-faced youngster is son of a clown ("I'm Coco's little boy," he tells you). While that little group of slant-eyed maidens are some of the Chinese acrobats, now working out an equation with the same grave concentration with which, shortly, they will be balancing twirling plates in the ring.

other children that the circus youngsters shine. Masters have told me how they welcome "the circus kids."

"They're a tonic to the whole class," said one teacher; "they have a quaint sophistication and quick intelligence. They seem amazed that other children find difficulty with certain subjects. Languages, for instance.

### Tower of Babel

"The circus child lives in a moving Tower of Babel in which he picks up foreign languages from the cradle. He can prattle in two or three foreign tongues before most children have properly mastered their own. French and German are almost as natural to him as English—the Esperanto of the circus folk. Next to English, German is most often spoken; and we have had circus children here, barely in their teens, who could speak French, German and Italian fluently, with enough Russian, Spanish and Danish to make themselves understood."

The circus child usually has a passion for geography. To him a map is something of a personal diary. Cities like London, Bristol, Manchester, Leeds or Glasgow are not merely dots on the map of Britain. They are real places which he and the circus have visited. And each brought its own adventure.

At the mention of Southsea the child recalls the excitement of a blow-down when the Big Top was whipped to ribbons in a ninety-mile gale; at Glasgow one of the elephants wandered off into the main thoroughfare; at Leeds there came a famous Princess who gave bouquets to all

They receive the equivalent of a secondary school education. By the time they reach their middle teens they are well up to matriculation standard. When they are on tour, elaborate arrangements are made for them to attend local schools at each stop.

This frequent change of school does not disturb them in the least. They are accustomed to change. Indeed, it is in the ordinary schools where they sit with

the girls in the show. He needs no master or book to tell him the association of Bristol with tobacco, Bradford with wool, Liverpool with shipping, because he has explored those cities, their factories and shipyards.

Foreign travel, too, he accepts as a normal routine. At an age when most children have been no farther afield than the seaside, he can talk at first hand of Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, Milan or New York, and think nothing of it. He knows that Poland is famous for its horses, Italy for its horsemen, Germany for its acrobats, and parts of Asia for its freaks. And because he has seen the clean bright cities of Scandinavia, the vineyards of France, the coalfields of Germany, the skyscrapers and wheat belts of America, he finds his lessons on world commerce as interesting as most children find them boring.

### Walking the Wire

Apart from his organized schooling, a circus child's education is proceeding in other directions. Courtesy is one of his first lessons. This he learns by the example of his parents and other adults in the show. Circus folk are naturally courteous and have a rigid etiquette of good manners; there is more hat-raising, bowing and the paying of compliments in a circus than at the Court of St. James's.

(Turn Overleaf)



**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Miss Priscilla Kayes and her lion "Monty," who will help to thrill audiences at Olympia this Christmas

# STARLETS OF THE CIRCUS

(Continued from the  
Preceding Page)

Then, too, at an early age he learns the ways of men and animals. He learns to ride a horse, to groom it and keep it fit. He is encouraged to be athletic, his parents watching for any sign of talent that might be moulded to circus art.

A friendly clown teaches him to tumble, turn cartwheels and perform hand balances. He is allowed to walk a wire set a foot or two from the ground. The acrobats teach him a trick or two. The animal trainers show him the secrets of keeping their animals fit.

And by watching the men of the circus, he learns afresh the vital importance of physical fitness for himself, knows that often a circus artist's life depends solely on clear eye, cool brain and strong muscles.

## Home on Wheels

He becomes a "handyman" at an early age. There are a thousand small jobs in a modern circus to which a boy can turn his hand, from repairing a guy rope to mending a faulty stove. He learns much of mechanics, particularly in a highly mechanized unit like the Bertram Mills touring circus with its fleet of motor-cars, lorries, trailers, caterpillar tractors, fire-engine,

telephones, a complete electric-lighting plant, and even a private aeroplane.

Oddly enough, he learns to love home life—the life of the caravan. From his earliest days he is taught to cherish that moving homestead, to enrich it, preserve it and, if necessary, fight for it.

Circus folk take intense pride in their caravans; it is perhaps their only conceit; and the youngster soon learns the importance of cleanliness, tidiness and the art of saving space.

Spruce and neat as a battleship, the modern circus caravan is a miracle of much-in-little—separate sleeping cubicles for the children, a concealed bath sunk into the floor, a separate kitchenette fitted with running water from a roof tank, efficient cooking stoves, electric light, wireless, even miniature sideboards and settees.

When the circus moves, the artist comes straight from the ring at the end of his act, hitches his caravan as a trailer behind his car, and while his wife and children sleep soundly, he motors possibly a hundred miles through the night to the next site.

The most prosperous circus artist will not give up the caravan. I remember talking to a charming Hungarian, a trick

rider who has been in the £200-a-week class for some years. His small boy played on the caravan floor.

"I suppose I could easily afford to stay in the best suites in the best hotels," said the father—and shrugged; "but that would not be circus. It would give the boy wrong ideas, too. I am passably rich; I have bought a big farm in Hungary, and one day I shall retire there and breed horses. But my son—he will get no financial help from me, no pampering, no town habits. He belongs to the circus. He must work as I did, and suffer, too. I would be a poor father if I willed it otherwise."

## University of the Big Top

There you have the circus philosophy. A circus artist works hard all his life—just because he is an artist; and the children of the circus know it. Because their parents live with and for their work, they grow up with the notion that to work is as natural as to breathe. And though his parents may be earning hundreds a week, the circus child who looks forward to leisured independence because he is a rich man's son has yet to be born.

His developing character is fed in other ways. All around him he sees that personal courage is taken for granted, that hard work is performed without grumbling, that loyalty to the show is the law of the circus artist, that self-reliance is of the first importance. And when at last he graduates in that University of the Big Top—he is a man, a fit member of one of the grandest communities on earth.

—\*—

A LITTLE girl was put in an upper berth of a Pullman sleeping-car for the first time. She kept crying till her mother told her not to be afraid because God would watch over her.

"Mother, you there?" she cried.

"Yes."

"Father, you there?"

"Yes."

A fellow-passenger lost all patience at this point and shouted: "We're all here! Your father and mother and brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins. All here; now go to sleep."

There was a pause; then, very softly: "Mamma!"

"Well?"

"Was that God?"

SHE had noticed the huskiness in his voice, and the nervous manner in which he fidgeted in his chair. She knew what was coming.

"Joan," he said, and his throat seemed dry and parched, "would you—could you—"

"Go on, George," she murmured, encouragingly. "I'm listening."

"Would you—er—do you think you could—get me a drink of water? I'm as dry as a bone."

THE teacher was explaining things to the boys in his class.

"For instance, I want to introduce water into my house. I turn it on. The pipes and the taps are in order, but I get no water. Can any of you tell me why?"

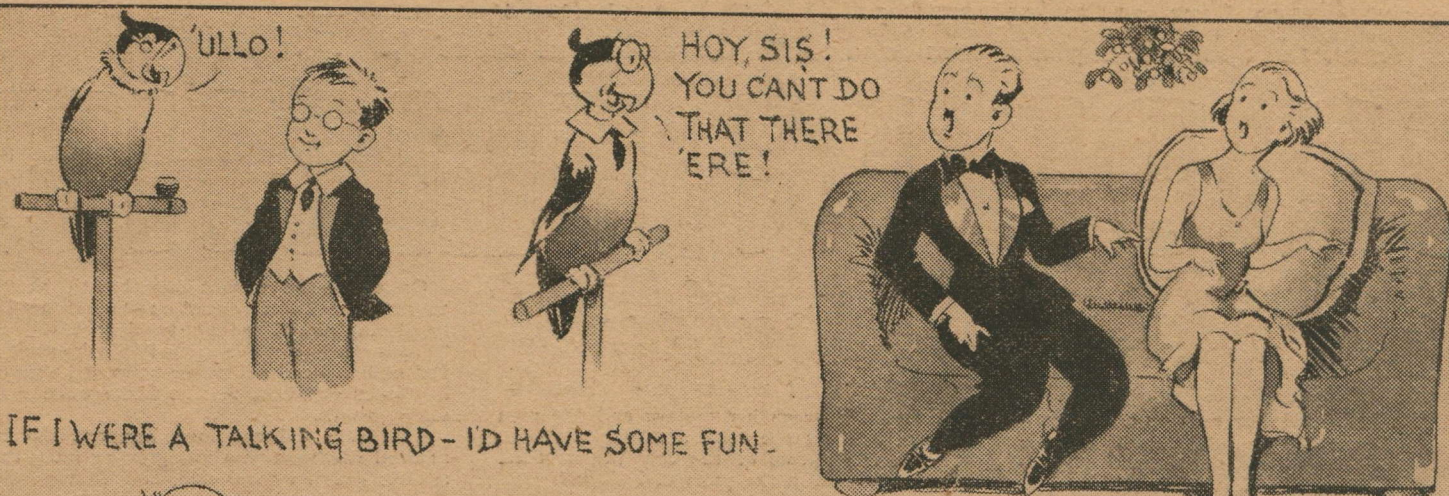
He expected the children to see that it was because he had not made a connection with the main in the street. The boys looked puzzled.

"Can no one tell me what I have neglected?" the teacher repeated.

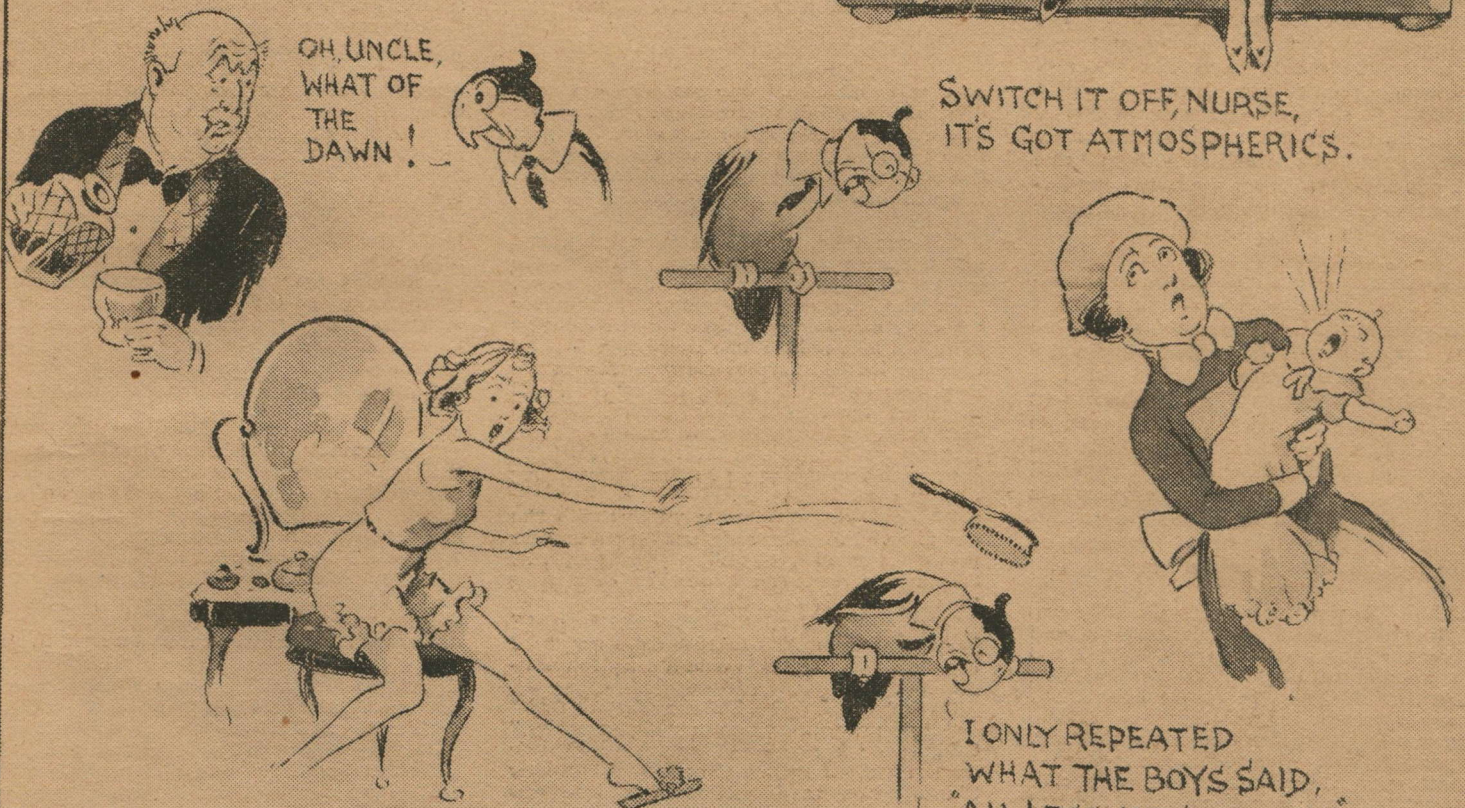
"I know," said one boy at last. "You don't pay up!"



"Permit me to introduce you. Our oldest inhabitant—four hundred years old."



IF I WERE A TALKING BIRD - I'D HAVE SOME FUN.



BERTIE'S LITTLE DAY-DREAM



... "Let me look at this Bride, this Tai-tai, this trash from the alleys. Why, it is not bigger than an unfeathered pullet!" The woman's taloned left hand fastened upon Chin-yen's arm and Chin-yen cried out aloud . . .

# BRIDE IN FLIGHT

BY Maryann Manley

CHIN-YEN fixed her eyes on a tremendous peony vibrating in splendour upon the huge red satin banner behind the man she was marrying. The blood pounded in her temples and waves of dizziness went over her. The collar of her brocade sheath was stranglingly high and tight; she fumbled surreptitiously with the buttons of jade and brilliants at her throat, but dared not unfasten them. She must not faint, not here upon the scarlet-hung stage before all these people, not now while she was being married.

She felt like a puppet doll worked by three sticks—a gorgeous costume draped on a handful of sticks, a nodding head and acquiescent hands, no feet at all, gliding about a floorless stage, her movements and her very voice supplied by some unseen manipulator. She bowed three times to the man she was marrying. She faced about and bowed to the assembled guests. The man she had married was offering his arm, and confused though she was by the peculiar modern custom she slipped her hand under his grey sleeve and tottered gracefully from the dais on the high gilt heels of her foreign slippers.

CHIN-YEN was just seventeen. She was dazzlingly beautiful. Her sleek little bobbed head was weighted with a tiara of pearl and crystal, and clouds of pale pink gauze wedding veil swirled about her, floated far behind her. Her *san*, sheathing her slim body from chin to heels, was of supple brocade shot with silver. Her pearl-like face was lovely as the morning—wide-set eyes under brows pencilled slender and black, delicate narrow nose, lips full and richly curved, small pointed chin.

The man she had married patted possessively the little hand upon his arm and Chin-yen looked up at him in quick, half-frightened inquiry. "You are very beautiful!" he said under his breath.

Chin-yen looked at him. She had never seen him so close before. His face looked as big as the moon and he was smiling at her with thick dull-red lips and a great many teeth under his clipped military moustache. His eyes were greedy between their heavy lids. He was very splendid in his uniform, with bands of gold lace and a red shoulder sash and rows of glittering medals across his big chest. He looked ten feet tall with the white plume springing from his cap like a fountain. Chin-yen felt dizzy.

They led her away and served her with tea, and the women guests clustered around to finger her veil. Their voices were loud and meaningless like the shrieking of parrots. Her mother presided, resplendent in peacock blue velvet a little too tight upon her ample person, with a dozen new rings on her hands, her conversation proudly punctuated with "the General—the General—the General."

Presently the General's car (the maroon and chromium one), completely overflowing with blossoms of a vivid and virulent pink, stood throbbing at the gate. They led Chin-yen out,

and seated between her mother and the man she had married, she made a triumphal circuit through the streets of the city her husband practically held in the palm of his hand.

When they returned, the tables had been laid for the feast. Chin-yen was startled to find that she must sit at her husband's side at a table all men. She sat with downcast eyes, and her blushes burned under the powder and rouge, and she could not eat. The men talked in loud voices and made her outrageous compliments. Chin-yen sat like a small-frozen image in their boisterous company.

SHE was thinking of Tsen Wha. No, no! She must not think of Tsen Wha now—she must put him out of her mind. That was over. Tsen Wha . . . and remembering . . . in assembly together, how her right shoulder felt different from her left, a kind of shivering, a kind of delicious itching, because his seat was on the right side of hers. Coming out of class, and his hand touching hers in passing, perhaps only the tip of his finger drawn across her wrist. Leaning on the parapet of the city wall at dusk, watching the crows . . . the crows flying over in great flocks. . . .

"Tsen Wha, I can't come walking with you any more." . . . His sharp, sudden stare under brows black and level, and no pity at all. . . . "Tsen Wha, what can I do? They are going to marry me off to the General—"

"Oh yes, the General with the motor-cars!" Why must Tsen Wha be so cruel, so unjust? He had no pity and he would not try to understand.

"What can I do? Tell me what to do?" "But you will do as you wish, of course." Cold, cold anger and cold contempt. "Girls are not sold off against their will, not in New China. You have consented?" She was silent. He shrugged. "Then you have consented."

He was cruelly unjust. How could she tell him how she had resisted, how she had wept night after night? "No and no and no! Never!" Choked defiance while her mother commanded and urged. Chin-yen was a vile, unfilial child. It was this schooling had ruined her. In her day a girl who dared to answer her parents so. . . . And so advantageous a marriage! Even to be a concubine in such a house—

"Concubinage is against the law in New China," Chin-yen had flared back.

Very well, very well! Whose was this talk of concubines? The General was asking her in marriage. Chin-yen was a fool, obstinate in rejecting her own miraculous good fortune, to say nothing of what she owed her family. But consider! The General himself, the General! No, but the girl must be half-witted who would not be overjoyed. . . . On and on. There was no escaping her mother's insistence. If Tsen Wha had loved her he would have understood.

If he had loved her as she loved him, he would have given her instead of bitter reproaches a memory of tragic renunciation to keep with her through the long lonely years. Something very beautiful and sad. Something poetic to remember in the moonlight and the starlight. . . .

Or even—she caught her breath at the audacity of her imagination—oh, if he had loved and dared enough to defy them all! "Chin-yen, you belong to me! You're mine!" But he had stood before her tense and straight, his hands clenched, and he had spoken cruel, searing words.

Tsen Wha did not love her, and she had married this man who was growing more than a little drunk by her side, and all women in the city must envy her the wealth and position she had as the General's Tai-tai. She had put behind her all childish regrets. She would behave even in her thoughts as befitted the General's Tai-tai. She carefully arranged the little painted smile she wore, and sat through the interminable courses of her wedding feast, from live shrimps to chrysanthemum soup. Her head ached under the pearl tiara. She was exceedingly miserable. "I shall grow used to it," she thought. "I shall not mind it after a while."

And with that a strange numbness came upon her, which lasted for days and months. It was as though she had died and wakened to a new, unreal, gaudy existence. Someone wearing Chin-yen's face walked through those days like a lovely marionette, making the appropriate gestures, docile, pleasing to her lord.

The General's great house occupied most of the space between four streets. Court after court extended deep into the hollow of the block. Hundreds of people came and went, for it was populous as a village with the General's retainers. The house was never friendly to Chin-yen. It ramified in tortuous passages and walled courtyards, and there were closed doors she never opened. She could never grow accustomed nor feel that she had a right there.

SHE was lonely. There was nobody to talk with. It was not possible to talk with Chin-yen's mother. That lady's words flowed like a river, steady, powerful, and inexhaustible. And as for the man she had married, it never occurred to Chin-yen to talk with him, he was so imposing.

She sent for the laughing girls who had been her schoolmates. They came when she invited them. They stared and whispered among themselves in awed admiration, and made polite little responses, half rising from their seats respectfully, when she spoke. It was useless—she could not talk with them. She was the General's Tai-tai, and there was a great distance separating her from them.

She was invited to this great house and that, and obedient to her mother, Chin-yen arrayed herself to out-dazzle other guests. These women's parties were all of a sameness. There were endless sessions of mahjong which Chin-yen played well enough, but even the stake of silver could not redeem the monotony of idle talk and shrieks of silly laughter. Chin-yen was bored and lonely. Something must happen to break this spell. She could not continue like this.

Chin-yen gathered up her winnings and excused herself from the party, for the women were done with gaming and were spinning endless gossip. As her motor-car (the small, light-blue one) came to a stop at the General's great gates, Chin-yen drew together her composure as she would draw her furred cape around her, and assured herself, "I will not be startled. I am expecting it and I will not jump. I will put up my chin and look through those men as I pass. I am the Tai-tai."

For day and night at the gateway the General's

# LOVE AND ADVENTURE IN CHINA TO-DAY

soldiers stood guard, stiffly straight in belted grey uniforms. Whenever she went in or out, they snapped to salute and shouted all together, "Shin-li!" It was as terrifying as thunder. If she could only press her hands over her ears and duck her head and scuttle through—but that would not befit the dignity of a Tai-tai.

So Chin-yen tilted her small pointed chin and glanced haughtily to left and right—and found herself looking into the level dark gaze of Tsen Wha! Tsen Wha in a belted grey tunic, with his visor pulled down to his straight brows and his young mouth set in a sternly straight line, and his eyes saying everything his mouth denied.

Chin-yen stumbled at the high doorsill and dropped her bag, and thirty silver dollars rolled and spattered everywhere on the threshold. She stood with her small hands dangling helplessly, while all the guards stooped and hopped about the threshold picking up money for her. The tall new recruit was the one to snatch up the Tai-tai's bag, a large, floppy confection of beaded pink satin. It lay over his hands and hers as he presented it respectfully. The tip of his finger drew across her wrist . . . and she walked through all the

courts with the feeling of a burning bracelet invisible on her wrist. Tsen Wha loved her and had always loved her.

Then she remembered she was married to the General. . . .

**T**HE General had a war on in the western part of the province. Occasionally, it was necessary for him to give it his personal attention, but only briefly. He would drive away in his motor-car (the brown one) and return safely in a few days none the worse but for red mud plastered all over the car.

The house was quieter when the General was away. There were fewer soldiers about, and discipline slackened a little. When the guard shouted "Shin-li!" it was a scattered volley, not one thunderous report. Chin-yen passing through the gate looked at the doorsill, looked straight ahead, but her right shoulder itched marvellously.

She lived in a precarious happiness these days,

keeping the thought of Tsen Wha apart from all else in her mind.

Her mother had invited guests for her, and all the afternoon Chin-yen bowed and smiled and repeated pretty phrases of courtesy appropriate to the General's Tai-tai. In the tall mirror panels she saw herself in her long violet *san* slit to the thigh over pale jade-green trousers. She saw the long earrings swaying from her ears, her small pretty hands with their rings, her forearms circled with bracelets. To her mother and the guests this was Chin-yen. She laughed inwardly, for a secret joy she dared not name even to herself.

Beyond the furthest courtyard, in a corner of the wall, there was an old neglected bamboo grove with a tiny, half-ruined pavilion. Chin-yen had discovered it after some months in this household. There she could be alone. In the bamboo grove she had never met anyone but once, a kitchen boy coming to cut a stick. He was a sooty half-grown boy in a cast-off soldier coat, his head bristling with a two-weeks' growth after a shave. He was no more disturbance than the hens who scratched among the fallen leaves.

It was dusk when, the last of the guests gone, Chin-yen slipped away through dark passages, seeking the bamboo grove. She met no one, though once it seemed someone had just rounded a corner ahead and once she thought she heard footsteps behind her.

She walked on through the corridors and stepped out into the pale, soft dusk of the quiet grove. The stems of the bamboos were close and clean and smooth; the leaves dripped silently in the dusk, twirling down slowly through the still air, and overhead the plume tips bowed delicately above her, dark against the dim sky. Chin-yen stretched out her arms and drew a deep, free breath.

Tsen Wha was near her. She dared to think no further. What could possibly come of it she did not permit herself even to wonder. She

(Turn Overleaf)



Someone leaped catlike from the bamboo thicket, caught the woman's wrist, and slowly wrested the knife from her

CHANDLER



## BRIDE IN FLIGHT (Continued from the Preceding Page)

would not think beyond to-day. Tomorrow, perhaps, the General would return.

Chin-yen was so lost in day-dreams that when she finally became aware of the presence just within the passage-way it must have been there for some time,

silent, watchful. A woman, by the line of the garments. Being discovered, she came forward and her face grew clear out of the dusk. Chin-yen recoiled. A skull-white face with narrow, venomous eyes, the chin and mouth thrust forward and the lips pressed taut over the teeth. The woman stood tall, confronting Chin-yen, hating her with malevolent eyes; and then she laughed soundlessly, and began to speak as though to herself.

"Let me look at this Bride, this Tai-tai, this trash from the alleys. Why, it is not bigger than an unfeathered pullet!" Her taloned left hand fastened upon Chin-yen's arm and Chin-yen cried out aloud, startled. The woman laughed, her lips drawing back from long white teeth. "It mewls like a kitten new-weaned, this girl-thing, and I have done nothing to it—yet."

She seemed to forget her then, staring past her and mumbling occasionally, until Chin-yen moved to free herself.

"Wait, I have more to say to you. So you would be Tai-tai in my house, you slave-thing! What would he bring home next, if his fancy lights on such a half-fledged offspring of a scheming mother as you? I told him I would have no more of his concubines. Have I not given him sons? Is my family to be insulted with this one and that one given preference over me? And with this one even the mockery of a wedding! No, it is too much. I will not abide it. I will be mistress in my own household." With sudden violence she flung Chin-yen to her knees. Her right hand flashed upward, a hand holding a thin blade, black against the sky.

As everything reeled before Chin-yen's sight, someone leaped catlike from the bamboo thicket, caught the woman's wrist in mid-air, and slowly wrested the knife from her. "Of course you can have me shot if you will," Tsen-Wha's voice was low and even, "on any false charge. We all know your power here." He stood waiting respectfully, but the knife he kept behind him.

"Who are you to interfere?" the woman spat. "Has the General set you to spy on me?"

"On the contrary, if the General knew I were here and for what purpose I came here, I should not live to see daylight again," Tsen-Wha answered simply.

"But this is a dream!" Chin-yen thought, crouching back on her heels, pressing her palms to her temples, bewildered. "It is all some wild, fantastic dream." Then suddenly she was awake—alive again, and the long lonely months behind her fading into a dream. She was not married to the General!

She threw herself at the woman's feet, kowtowing eagerly. "Tai-tai, Honourable Lady, I will go away. I will go far away and never return, and so you shall be rid of me. Only give us your help, for without it the General will send after me and take me again, and I shall be guarded too closely for escape a second time. Tai-tai, we love each other"—somehow she was in Tsen-Wha's arms—"as man and maid may love in New China. They tricked me with this mock marriage. By the

law of New China I am not wed, for a man may have one wife and one only."

Tsen-Wha locked his hard young arms around her and said nothing, but he loved her. He would never let her go. The Tai-tai watched them between narrowed lids.

"A runaway soldier is shot," she said, "and a faithless concubine is strangled." She turned to go.

Chin-yen twisted her fingers together behind Tsen-Wha's neck, and he bent his head so that his cheek touched hers. Three steps away the Tai-tai turned to them again. Her teeth flashed white in the gathering darkness. "Conceive a way to get past the gate, and I will give you a pass that will get you out of the city and out of the province. I have the General's seal, and it is not the first time I have counterfeited his papers."

Chin-yen sank in a little heap before her with a sob of relief. "Honourable Lady, our gratitude—"

"Go quickly. To-night, before the city gates are closed."

"To-night! To-night, yes!"

"In half an hour the paper will be ready. Oh, and a packet of silver, perhaps. You will go further with money for the road. So keep your rings, girl." She moved away from them. "It is less trouble this way. I will be mistress in my own house."

They were alone. Tsen-Wha spoke: "We must be quick. I have a way"—and he whispered hurriedly. Then, "I will be back. Make ready."

CHIN-YEN slipped between the bamboo stems where the dark lay blackest, and stripped off her *san* and the green trousers. She tore off rings and bracelets, unhooked the earrings from her ears, knotted them all in her handkerchief and thrust it inside her vest. She stepped out of her little flat satin slippers and peeled off her silken stockings. Then she stooped and rubbed brown earth into her bare legs and arms.

A dim light yellowed the doorway and she cowered deep in the thicket until she saw it was Tsen-Wha. He came balancing carefully a tin tea-kettle, a brass basin, a bundle of something grey, and a pith-wick lamp barely alight.

"I am ready," she called, softly. He passed her the bundle. After a moment she came out into the light, a shuffling, grotesque, small figure in a cast-off soldier coat far too big for her slim shoulders, carrying in her hands a shining cascade of violet and jade-green silks, her dainty head like an incongruous blossom—pearl-white, pearl-pink face, and silky soft hair swinging.

Tsen-Wha gave her one brief look, then wrung out the cloth from the basin of hot water and began scrubbing her face firmly. When that was done, "Lean over," he ordered, crisply, and pushed her head into the basin. Something cold slid up the back of her neck and behind her ears.

"What are you doing?" she gurgled.

"Shaving," he replied. "Keep quiet or I may take an ear off." She held her breath until he was finished. "Look up," he commanded. He took her chin in his hand and expertly shaved off her eyebrows. Then he picked up the water-kettle, rubbed his hands on the bottom and smutted her face and neck.

"If I lift my feet," she said, "my shoes come off. And I can hardly get my hands out of my sleeves."

"Roll up your sleeves. Tie on your shoes and tie them tight!"

He gathered up the violet *san* (she saw that he had spread it to catch the wet locks of hair) and disappeared among the bamboos.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Digging a hole. Bring me the basin. There's hair in the water."

The lamp wick had burned down to a minute bluish point of light. She watched Tsen-Wha drop into the hole her *san* and her embroidered slippers and silk stockings. Obediently she poured the water in after them, wiped out the basin with her green trousers and dropped them

in. Tsen-Wha filled up the hole and spread bamboo leaves over it.

He stood up. "Now!" he said, breathlessly.

He gave her the kettle and basin to carry and strode ahead into the dark tunnel. She shuffled after him, head down, shoulders drooping. They crossed an empty courtyard, they passed lighted windows. Tsen-Wha never looked back. He was not near her now. She had reached the outer courts. Tsen-Wha was not in sight. A soldier hurrying to his evening meal jostled her and warm water slopped on his feet. He fetched her a blow on the ear that brought tears, and cursed her for a clumsy, half-witted kitchen-boy. She stood snivelling and wiping her eyes and nose on the dirty sleeve of the soldier coat.

WHERE was Tsen-Wha? Hadn't she given him time enough? She had come to the courtyard by the gate. The gateway was last aflame with harsh white light. The court was full of soldiers and full of confusion. They were changing the guard. Tsen-Wha—where was Tsen-Wha? Had the Tai-tai failed them?

"Hey, boy, here with the hot water!" A soldier called across the court, and Chin-yen felt her heart turn over. She hesitated an instant, and a loud, angry voice stormed from a doorway behind her: "It's my hot water! This way, boy! Son of a tortoise, didn't I send you for it an hour ago?" Tsen-Wha's grip closed upon her collar and he jerked her inside and stood panting, his back against the door. "That and that and that for a slow-footed ape!" he shouted, striking his thigh with the flat of his hand resoundingly. "Cry!" he whispered, and Chin-yen whimpered shrilly.

"I have the pass and the money," he continued in a whisper, pouring water and clinking the basin as he talked. "Get your breath. Are your shoes tied on tight? Don't hurry until I yell, and then run like forty devils and keep on running. Ready?"

Chin-yen nodded. He opened the door for her and she slipped through sideways. She edged toward the blazing light of the gateway. If she should trip at the door-sill! Beyond, the street lay dark and deserted.

"Hey! Hey, thief!" a great bellowing arose behind her. Chin-yen ducked her little bullet-head and shot through the gateway, clearing the high sill and dodging the half-hearted clutch of a guard. "Hey, that brat of a boy's got two dollars of mine. Picked my pocket while I was washing." Tsen-Wha came roaring after her, his tunic unbuttoned, his belt flapping, his wet arms flailing. There was a raucous shout of laughter from the guard.

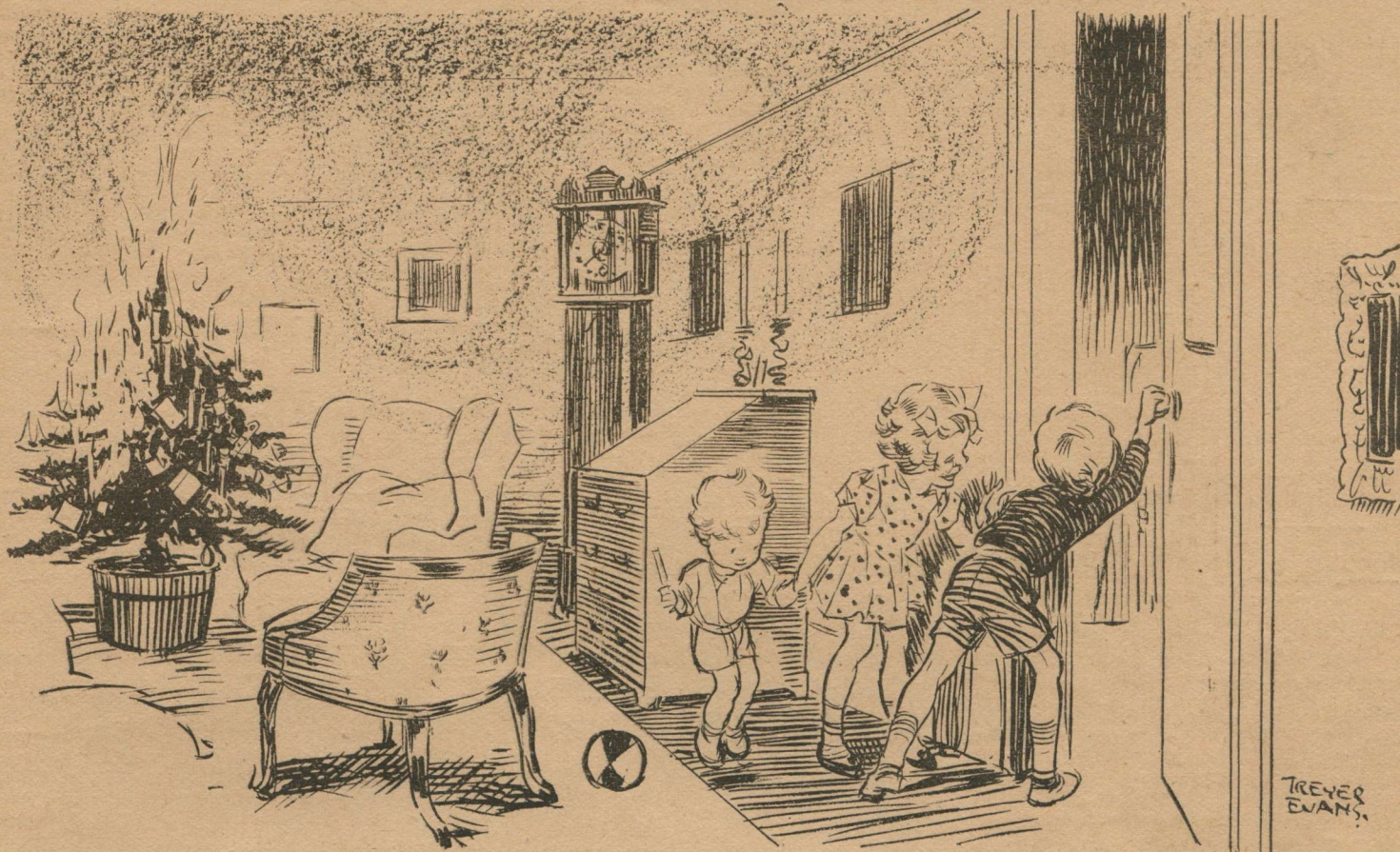
That was Chin-yen's last "*Shin-hi*!"

THEY had run the rapids of the upper river on a narrow bamboo raft; they had sat five days on a swift salt-boat; they had fought for deck-space on a fast steamer; they were safe out of the province. One more stage, the last stage to the capital of New China, where their General's name was only the name of a bandit.

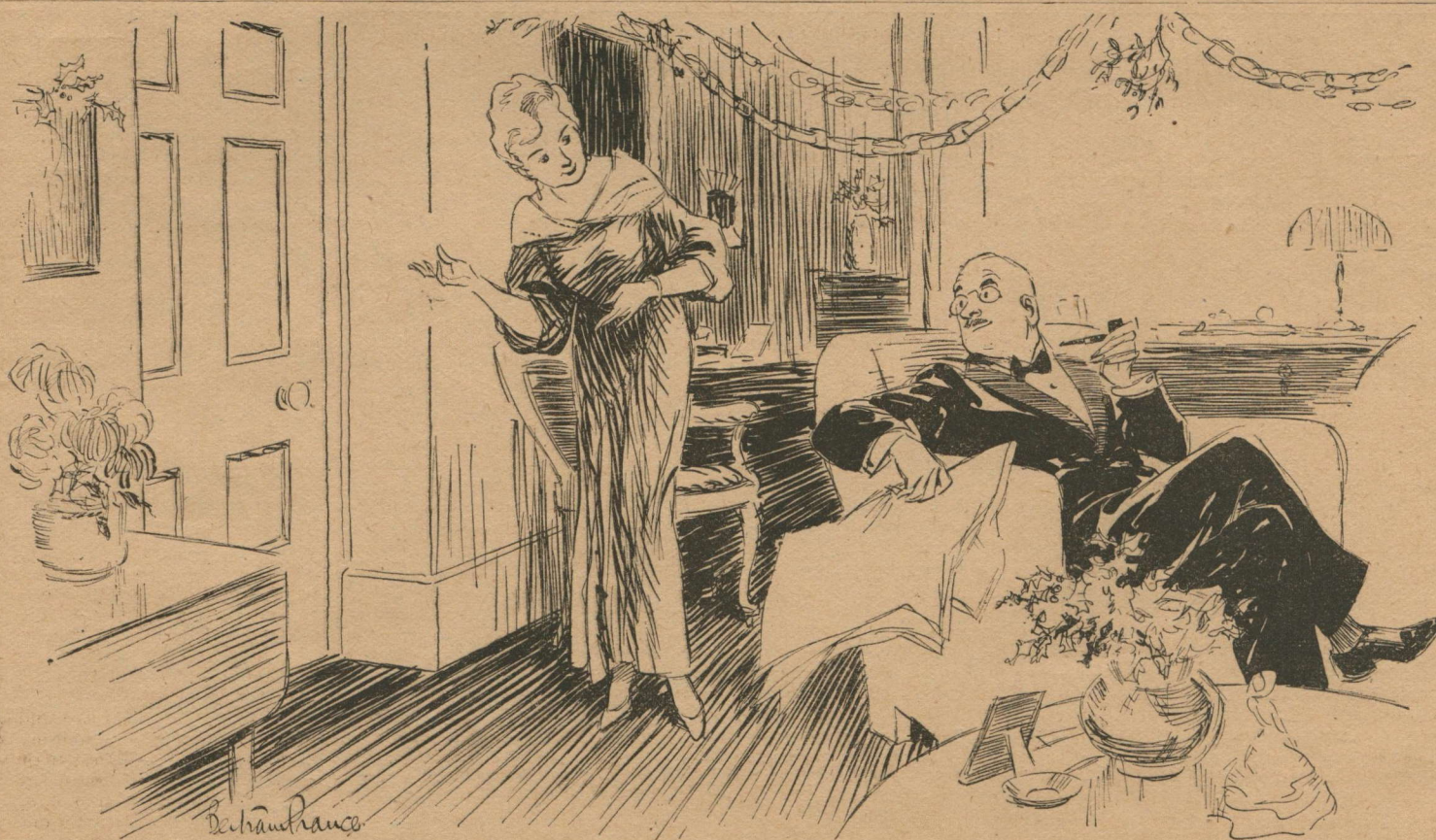
It was two o'clock in the morning. They were on a mooring hulk waiting for their ship. "Sometime to-night" was as near as anyone could tell them as to when it would appear. Tsen-Wha and Chin-yen had found a secluded corner barricaded with cotton bales and reeking of salt fish, and they were very content.

"Only a few days more and I can wash my face!" Chin-yen sighed. "Tsen-Wha, I saw myself in the office window on the wharf to-day! How could you endure to look at me? Why haven't you quietly dropped me overboard to be rid of me? How can I ever make you forget—"

Tsen-Wha took her gently by the ears and turned her face to him. "Lady and my bride," he said, "you are the ugliest little imp I ever expect to see, but if you never wash your face nor grow out your hair, still you are my love and my heart's one choice." And he rubbed his cheek fondly on the ten-days' stubble of her small round head.

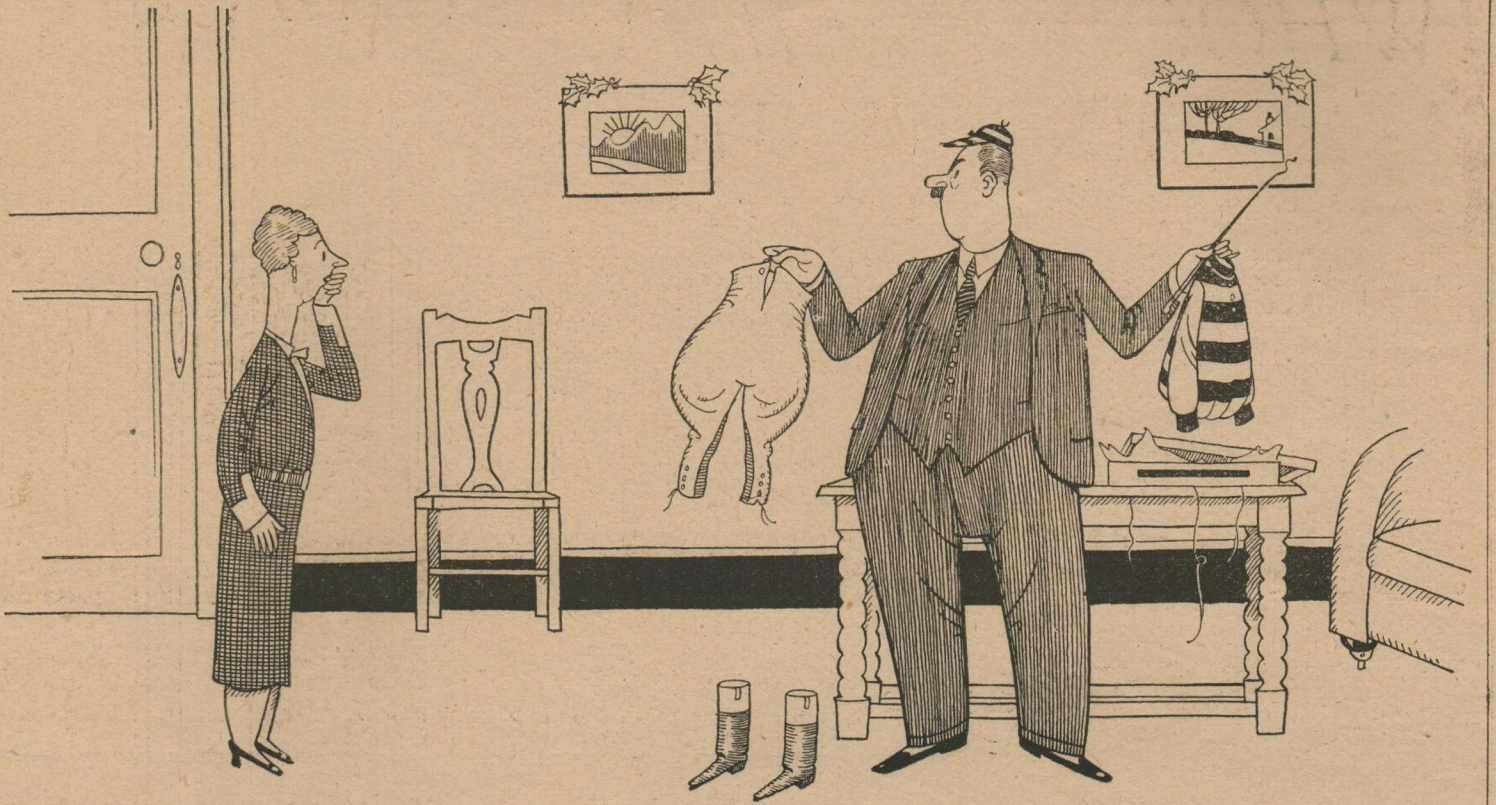


"Come on, Mummie, the tree's all lit up!"



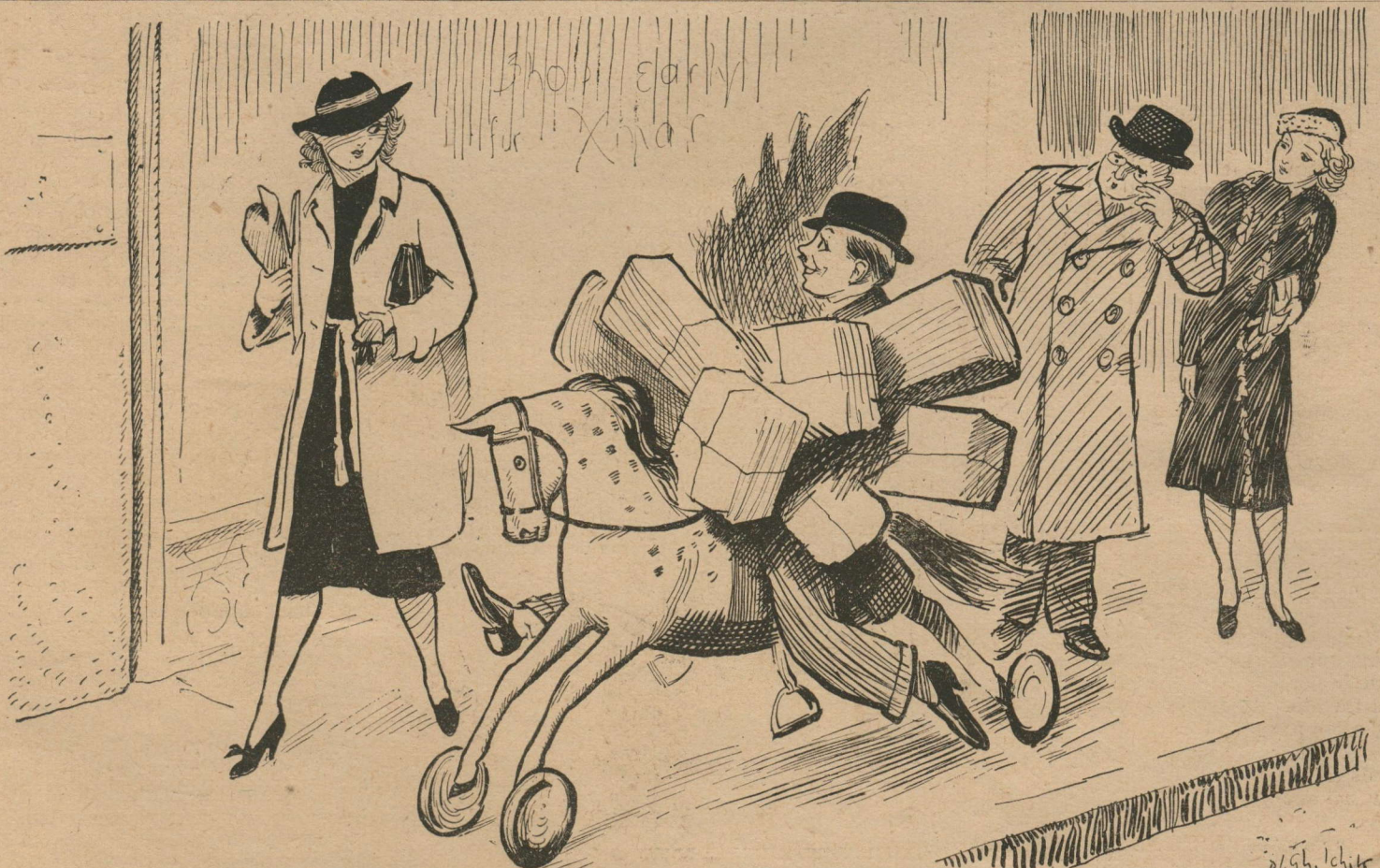
Mother: "How quiet they are in the next room."

Father: "Yes. Reminds me of my old army days. It was always very quiet just before an engagement."



RIDGEWELL

"Look at this, May! They've sent the wrong fancy costume!"



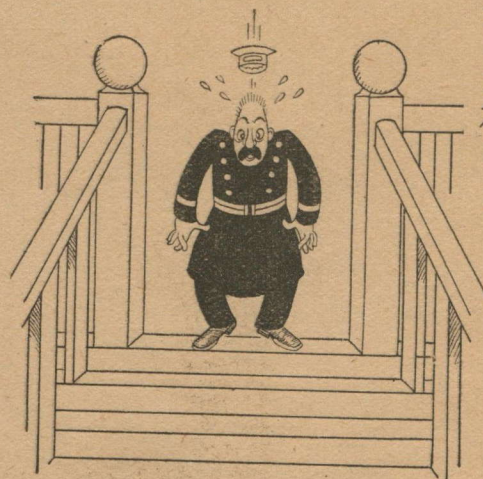
"You see, Muriel, if you'd insisted on a rocking-horse we'd have been stumped."

25th. 1914

# WHOOPEE at the WAXWORKS

## By F. W. Thomas

The Famous Humorist of the 'Star'



I crept to the top of the stairs

"There were Knights and Dames and Courtiers bold, and Criminals by the score: Princes and Peers and Pioneers, and Poisoners galore.

"And (can you imagine it?)

Richard Plantagenet

talking to Burke and Hare, with Mrs. Dyer, the baby farmer, chatting away to Voltaire.

"All of a sudden, one stood up and rang a bell with violence, and several shouted 'Order, please!' while one demanded 'Silence!'

### CHRISTMAS FEAST

"'Twas Mr. Dickens, in the Chair, who said 'My lords and ladies, though some of us are now in Heaven and one or two in Hades, on this glad night we meet again, no odds 'twixt saint and sinner;

"And that is why

This evening, I

invite you all to dinner.'

"No sooner said, the board was spread. Forgetting rank and station they all sat down from King to Clown, with noisy acclamation. From what I heard, the Christmas bird was tender, plump and young, and by the Hangman, Berry, had been well and truly hung.

"Though many rusty jokes went round, they kept the party clean, and Greta Garbo sliced the loaves upon the guillotine. Then Richard Cœur de Lion said in obvious concern, 'Now, by my fay, and lack-a-day, you've got a lot to learn.

"Go, fetch King Alf the Beeton Book, for, though he's got a regal look, I bet he is a rotten cook. He's bound to let it burn.'

"Now when at last the bird came in, Napoleon rose to carve, but Wallace Beery said, 'I guess you guys are gonna starve.' And Charles the First cried, 'Swelp me bob, and 'ods my little life! I don't know how I'm going on. I haven't got a knife.'

They ran about, and in and out, to find the missing things, and underneath the table crawled both Commoners and Kings; but

(Turn Overleaf)

It was an ancient vagabond, a weary, woeful wight, who stopped me in New Oxford Street a week come Wednesday night. A wild and woolly tramp he was, with a haircut overdue.

He looked a most pathetic case, his nose was slightly out of place, and all around his ruddy face luxuriant herbage grew.

"Excuse me, sir," he softly said, "if I may make so free——" But holding up my hand, I cried, "Now wherefore stop'st thou me?"

"It's cold and damp,

I have no gamp

to shield me from the rain; and I must catch yon motorbus to help me catch my train."

"Your pardon, sir!"—his voice was low—"if I may make so bold, I have a dreadful tale to tell, a tale that must be told. And since you have a kindly face with eyes of tender blue, I really think I'd like to tell that dreadful tale to you."

He held me with his fishy eye on which a teardrop glistened; and though I have a hearty sigh, I stopped and looked and listened. The wind did pour, the rain did roar, his glittering eye did quell me, and in a whisper he began the tale he wished to tell me.

"'Twas Christmas Day in the Waxworks, the day that evermore——" "No, no!" I cried, "don't bother. I have heard that one before. If you don't mind, I think that I will catch my bus instead. So thank you very kindly, and here's tuppence for a bed."

### TELLING THE TALE

HE held me with his glittering eye. What could I do but stay? "I want no bed," he sadly said, "so put your pence away. I mean to tell this tale to you, no matter how you frown; and don't forget, young feller, that the price is half-a-crown.

"For once in every year, you know, my weird I have to dree; though what that is and how it's done 'tis no good asking me. From further interruption I must beg you to abstain, for every time you stop me I shall start all over again.

"'Twas Christmas Day in the Waxworks, crowds came to see the sight;

"And I was there, Commissionaire,

to guard the place at night. And all day long the people came until the evening when I helped to put the lights out, for we always close at ten.

"And now an awful silence had fallen on the show. The noise was hushed, no children rushed or scampered to and fro. The blind, dumb figures, still as death, in gorgeous raiment clad, until the morning dawned, were all the company I had.

"Three times I went upon my rounds to see that all was well; the Kings and Queens upon their thrones, the Felon in his Cell; and I thought of all the things they did, the stories they could tell.

"And, oh, it is an eerie sight, a waxworks show at dead of night, those figures in the pale moonlight, who stare as you go by. For as I wandered in and out, the shadows danced and leapt about; and some among that motley rout would wink a glassy eye."

He paused, at which I took his hand and thanked him very much. A pretty Christmas story with a sweet domestic touch. But, when I tried to creep away, he really seemed upset, and grabbed my arm and murmured, "Stay! I haven't started yet."

He held me with his glittering eye, just as he did before; and having got his second wind he started off once more.

### FANCY MEETING YOU!

"'Twas Christmas Night in the Waxworks, and all was calm and still. Slowly a clock struck midnight, and I sat up with a thrill. Up from the Chamber of Horrors, where the naughty murderers go, there came a sound of laughter, and a hurrying to and fro.

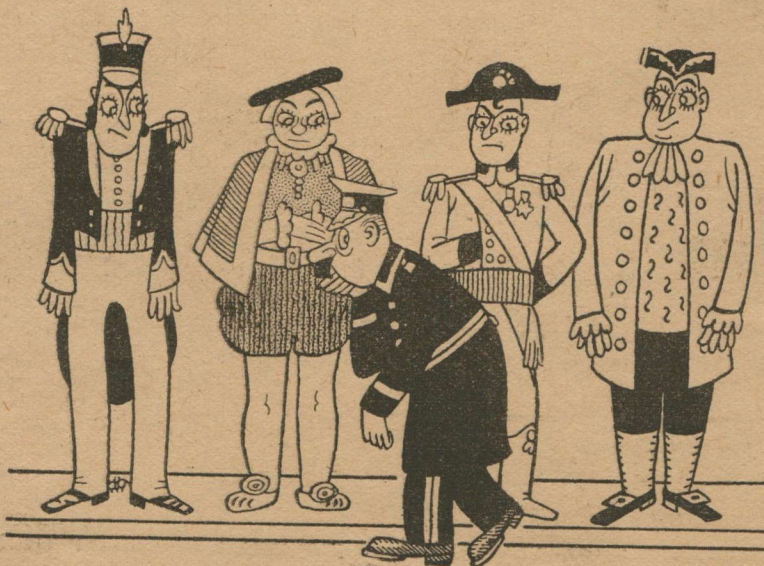
"I heard the clatter

Of swords, the chatter

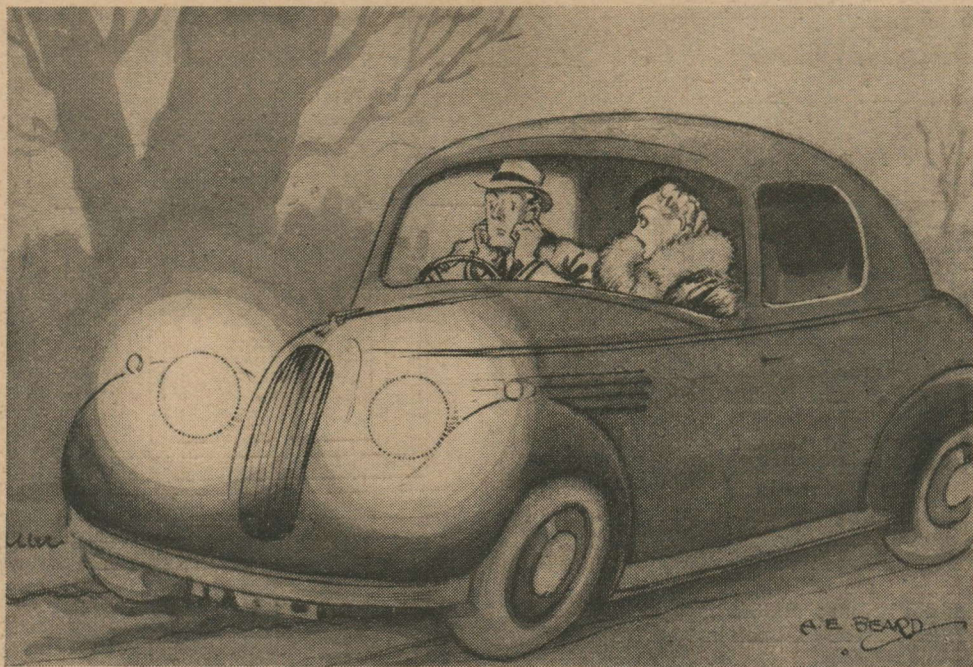
of lords and ladies fair, and all in a sweat, with fingers crossed, I crept to the top of the stair. The lights were on, and the Hall below was buzzing like a hive; for see that wet, and see that dry, the figures were all alive.

"I watched the model of Shakespeare toddle stiff-legged across the floor, and saw him rudely stick out his tongue at Mr. Bernard Shaw. And Henry the Eight was making a date with that buxom wench, Mae West; and Monsieur Marat, who died in his bath, was there in his pants and vest.

"Then Anne Boleyn came wandering in, a lady of grace and charm; but looking a bit off song, you know, with her head tucked under her arm. And far away, among the crowd at the other end of the room, was Stanley shaking hands with 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume.'



Oh, it is an eerie sight, a waxworks show at dead of night



"Well, we can't do *anything* until the fog lifts, Miss Pondersby."



"All the mistletoe was sold, Tom, but I've made a cross directly under a bunch in the flat above."

## F. W. THOMAS

(Continued from the Preceding Page)

not a bit of cutlery could any of them find, except a sword that some old Lord or Duke had left behind.

"Then suddenly a shout was heard; I think it was King John, who'd stayed outside because he hadn't got his undies on. For since that little accident he suffered in the Wash, the few odd bits of things he wore were anything but posh.

"Say, chaps," he cried, "I think I know what's happened to your gear. There's one among your company who's now no longer here. For, while you were all busy in the pantry pulling corks, old Charlie Peace, the burglar, bunked with all the knives and forks."

"And that," said my old vagabond, "was quite enough for me. I dashed outside to see if I could capture Mr. P. For, if he got away with it, and wasn't coming back, there'd be a model missing, and then I should get the sack.

### BALD AS A BASIN

"All night I sought, assisted by a squad of our brave police; yet not a single sign we found of Mr. Charlie Peace. But when at dawn I wandered back to count my wayward flock, I found him in the Horrors, calmly standing in the Dock.

"And every other model was exactly in its place; and, except a spot of stuffing, of the banquet not a trace. But such a sight has ne'er been seen by mortal man, I swear; and look, kind sir, at what effect it had upon my hair.

"It never even turned it white, my last few years to chasten. It all fell out that Christmas night, and left me bald as a basin.

"And that is why I loiter here a-telling of the tale, to buy some Embrocation that is never known to fail. It's ten-and-six a bottle, and my story true and strange will cost you half-a-crown, kind sir. . . . I thank you. . . . Sixpence change!"

F. W. THOMAS WRITES IN "TIT-BITS" EVERY WEEK

### NOTHING DOING

ALL down one street he went without making a sale. He determined to try a new method. At the next house, a grumpy woman answered the knock.

"Have you a Charles Dickens in your home?" he asked, politely.

"No!" snapped the woman.

"Or a Robert Louis Stevenson?"

"No!"

"Or a Walter Scott?" continued the canvasser, hope dawning in his eyes.

"No, we ain't," said the woman, sharply.

"And what's more, I don't take in lodgers. Try next door; they do."

### COUNTING THE KISSES

WOMAN (at the Golden Gates): "I have come to join my husband."

St. Peter: "Delighted to meet you, ma'am. What was your husband's name?"

"Joseph Smith."

"I'm afraid that will not be sufficient for us to identify him. You see, strange as it may seem, we have quite a lot of Joseph Smiths up here. Are there any other means by which I can identify him?"

"Well, before he died he told me that if I ever kissed another man he would turn in his grave."

"Oh! I know the chap. Up here we call him Whirling Joe!"

## A COMPLETE CHRISTMAS STORY



# Baby of the Storm

By URSULA BLOOM

CHRISTMAS comes to the land of the Christmas-tree, with the snow blowing down the streets of the cities of Denmark, and the ice holding fast the ponds and the canals. The Christmas-trees in their fir forests stand rank upon rank, grown whitely brilliant to meet the *Glaedelig Jul*.\*

In the house at the corner of the cross-roads, the *frau* made gingerbread men with black-currant eyes, and she cooked diligently with her caraway bread and her special treats for the great festival. But her heart was heavy.

Christina was over forty. She had married Hans twenty years ago, and they had come here and had made this their home. They had worked for it, toiled for it, and had prayed for children to bless them. There had been that first *Jul* when they had brought in a great Christmas-tree and had trimmed it with tinsel fripperies, and with spun glass balls, and had set it in the window, drawing back the curtains so that all the world should see it.

"So," said Hans, admiringly. Next year there would be children, they prayed. A little one who would stretch out small fingers to catch at the tinsel showers. For is not *Jul* the spirit of childhood? Is it not the feast of the greatest Baby of all time?

THE years had not brought the child to them.

Every *Jul*, Christina had toiled at her work, and had prepared a fine feast, and had tried to believe that luck would change. Hans had gone out to the fir forests. He had selected a tree from the whole wood full of Christmas-trees, and had dragged it home through the Danish street and had set it up in the window. A tree laden with jewels. A tree to show the world. This is *Jul*. This is festival. *Glaedelig Jul* to you, all people!

But the heart of Christina yearned for the baby she had never had. She yearned and she ached, but she did not tell Hans about it. How could she, because perhaps there was a pain in his heart? Maybe there was in his soul the same feeling that he was not quite happy without the little one to throw out chubby hands to the tree. The spirit of the real *Jul* was missing.

One does not speak of the things that hurt most.

As she made the little gingerbread men with the black-currant eyes she felt that this *Jul* was the worst that had yet been. For in the Spring she had been so happy.

In the Spring, when the snow goes away, and the frosty sparkle leaves the rivers so that they burst free again, and there is the music of moving water, all things wake.

The stork had nested on their roof.

All the world believes in the legend of the stork, and when she had glanced up and had seen him standing there so wisely on his one leg, and looking so foolishly sage down his long beak, she had laughed to herself. For does not the stork



She carried in her arms a bundle wrapped in a shawl. "She is ours," she whispered.

bring babies? Does not all the world know that?

"This is promise," Christina told herself. "This means that by *Jul* there will be a baby in our house, a baby who will laugh and reach out for the Christmas-tree. It shall be the finest Christmas-tree we have ever had."

And she called Hans out into the garden. "Look, Hans, there is the stork on the gable! You know what that means."

They laughed together. The neighbours watched. They said, "The stork is building on Christina and Hans' roof. You know what will happen? After all these years. Is it not a miracle?"

Autumn had come. There had been fine young storks, who had poked their heads out of the nest, and had gradually come to the age when they stood on one foot and surveyed the land in faithful imitation of father stork. But in Christina's home there was no sign of the baby.

It is true that she had gone into Copenhagen and had bought for herself little garments. She had bought all manner of foolish fripperies, because she believed passionately in the stork, and she hoped so much.

It had not happened. She was standing here making gingerbread men, and there was no hope of a baby to share their *Jul*. At the feast of the Greatest Baby of all time there was no baby.

Hans had gone on his journey to the fir forest, and soon he would be back. The bells would be

ringing down the *Langeleine*, giving their message to the world.

But there was no baby.

She would not have believed that the storks could have promised her and failed her all in the same year. The truth of the legend was broken, and here she was utterly disappointed. She knew that Hans was disappointed, too, although he had not mentioned it. The hurt went right through him.

THERE came a knock at the door. She went to it and opened it widely. It was snowing outside. The flakes were large and thick as Mother Goose's feathers drifting down the little street. Far away on the horizon she could see the lights of Copenhagen and hear the distant music of bells. The snow made it almost dark, although the day was still in its morning.

In the porch a girl stood. She said, "Please let me in. The storm has overtaken me, and I can go no farther." In her face was a look of tragedy and of fear.

For a moment the natural suspicion of Christina deterred her. Then she said, "Come inside." It was intensely cold out there, and in charity you could not turn a girl who looked like that from the door. Her eyes were large, her face pale with an incredible pallor; her hands twitched as they pulled the cloak about her. Christina indicated the corner by the

stove, which let out a vigorous heat. She said, "Sit there and warm yourself. *Glaedelig Jul* to you, my friend. See, I am making gingerbread men for the feast."

And she went on with the dough. The girl watched her. Gradually they began to talk, and Christina brought a cup of hot chocolate to her by the stove.

"You go to friends in Copenhagen—on a visit perhaps?" asked Christina.

The girl shook her head. "I have no friends. I am alone. I have no people. My parents died when I was little. I lived with a grandmother not far from Elsinore. Now she is dead, too."

"You are married?" asked Christina. She shook her head.

"No, I am not married. I have loved, but he too has gone. It was an accident. Life grows so difficult—it is so hard. That was what we found."

Christina nodded. She said, "I have been married twenty years. Yes, for twenty years I have lived here in this one house, with the finest man in the world."

"And you have children?" "No," said Christina.

THE girl gave a quick intake of breath as though she understood. Across her face there passed swift pain; it was a lovely pain in that it stirred deeply the heart of Christina, and for some strange reason moved her lips to speak. She could tell this girl the one thing she had not been able to tell anybody else. She could speak to her of the stork.

(Turn Overleaf)

\*Glaedelig Jul is Danish for Happy Christmas.



# BABY OF THE STORM

(Continued from the  
Preceding Page)

"You would take the baby?"  
She started up in the bed and  
stared into Christina's eyes.

She said, "It nested on our roof this Spring, and I was so full of hope. I have yearned for a little one, but I am too old. I kept saying to myself, 'It will be a miracle.' After all one must believe in miracles, for is not actual living a miracle?"

"And the baby did not come?"

"No," said Christina softly, and her eyes were dewy. They

might be old eyes, but they still held tenderness. "When the cold winds blew, the stork flew away. I hoped perhaps he had come to stay. I hoped that if he failed me this year, maybe it would be next year. I believe that my husband hoped so, too. But it will not be. I do not mind growing old, in that all people must age, but I do mind never having held a baby in my arms."

"You poor soul," said the girl gently.

"And always at Christmas it is worse."

"Naturally, it is much worse," said the girl.

"My husband has gone to find us a Christmas-tree. We shall set it in the window as we have always done, and light it with candles, and trim it with tinsel strips and with spun-glass balls. But there will be no child to reach out for it. There never will be now, and I know it. The real spirit of *Jul* is not with us."

THE girl took Christina's hand. She held it fast, and as they sat there, two strangers whose paths had met and merged for a moment, they could hear the sound of the bells down the *Langeleine*, and the sound of Hans trudging home through the snow, dragging the Christmas-tree after him.

He came into the room. It was a fine Christmas-tree. It smelt of the forest, tarry and pungent; a dribble of light snow trailed after it.

"We have a guest," said Christina, rising.

"*Glaedelig Jul*," said Hans solemnly, doffing his astrachan cap.

They set the tree up in the window. Christina brought down the box of ornaments stored carefully from one Christmas till the next. The tall green boughs reached almost to the ceiling, and there was little room for the star to set there. The great five-pointed star such as had guided three wise men nearly two thousand years ago.

"It led them to the Child," thought Christina, "and the stork misled me." She could have wept for distress.

That was when the girl gave a little cry.

She had the star in her hand. It shimmered in the light, a lovely golden star with its points bejewelled. The girl gave a quivering cry of distress, and, turning sharply to Christina, clung to her whimpering.

THEN she knew.

She knew much that she had been blind to before—with the stupid blindness of a woman possessed only with her own sorrow. She knew that the girl had been deserted. Betrayed in the loveliness of a Spring day when the storks had been nesting, and the apple blossom had blown in pearl drifts across Denmark, and everything was romantic. That now, when the festival of the Child came again, the fruits of that sweetness would be born.

"I am so alone," cried the girl wretchedly.

"Hush, you are not alone. We are here. Come, Hans, help me upstairs with her."

They had forgotten the fine Christmas-tree in its half-dressed state in the window. The star had shown them the way.

They went into the best bedroom which was usually never disturbed. Christina could not remember when it had last been slept in. But to-day it was ready for a special person. It was ready for the miracle, to receive the baby the storks had promised.

Christina sat herself beside the wide bed. She said, "You must be brave."

The girl whimpered again.

"I do not want a child. What will I do with it? I have no home. I have nowhere I can leave it. I want to go away, right away. I want to leave Denmark at once, and live in a new country where I shall have the chance to begin life all over again. I cannot stay here."

"You shall not stay here," said Christina, and her kindly arms encircled her. "You shall go away, right away, if you wish, and we will see after your baby."

"Yes, did not you realize that? I would take your baby."

"I have no money. I cannot pay for it."

Christina said huskily, "I ought to pay you," and she meant it.

"You would be good to it?"

"One is good to miracles," answered Christina, gently, and the girl knew that she meant it.

Downstairs Hans trimmed his tree.

It was the finest tree they had ever had. He had known that when he set the saw to it in the forest. It had brought good fortune on the house. He swathed it in tinsel, so that it shone like a spiritual tree from a heavenly forest. He hung the glass balls upon it.

In the oven the little gingerbread men were baked brown. He lifted them out. There was going to be a baby. It was their first real Christmas, he told himself. Their first joyous Christmas in all these years.

He had not told Christina how distressed he had been by the storks. The wise storks with their long, prim beaks and their foolish standing on one leg. But they had not fulfilled their promise. Or had they?

From upstairs came the thin wailing of a very new child.

They had, he told himself.

He listened, and the tears ran down his cheeks. He could hear the bells in the *Langeleine*, could hear the children singing in the street:—

Oh come, all ye faithful!

He had been faithful! But stronger than all the other sounds in this miracle of *Jul* was the sound of the very young baby in the room above him, and the shine of the five-pointed star on the Christmas-tree.

LONG afterwards, Christina came down. Her face was tired and strained, but in her eyes was that completeness that he had longed to see there. He had hated their pain through the years; he was glad to see them like the calm eyes of a Madonna who has looked unto the stars.

She carried in her arms a bundle wrapped in a shawl. It was the pathetic shawl she had bought in Copenhagen when she had believed that her own little one was coming.

She turned back a corner of the shawl and disclosed a small, red face.

"She is ours," she whispered.

He did not know what to say because his heart was so full, and when he spoke at last he could only whisper, "*Glaedelig Jul*."

Out in the street the singing came closer. The children paused before the window to look at the Christmas-tree standing so proudly between the drawn curtains.

"But it is a wonderful Christmas-tree," they said.

"It is the most beautiful."

And they stood staring at it. Its boughs were so far-reaching, its sparkle so superb. Its star was so big and so bejewelled.

But none of them saw the two people in the room behind the Christmas-tree. Two people with a very young baby in their arms, the spirit of the true *Jul*.

—\*—

"Most interesting man, that — an authority on fish culture."

"Really! I never supposed that fish had any culture—that is, to speak of."

A CHORUS girl, deliciously pretty but decidedly lowbrow, somehow found herself at a very select party given by a famous Society woman.

The girl, lonely and uncomfortable as a fish out of water, was leaning against the wall, framed against the dark oak, when the hostess took pity on her.

"My dear," she said, kindly, "you look just like an old Rembrandt."

"Well," retorted the damsel, sharply, "you don't look too darned snappy yourself."



Husband (with great presence of mind): "There! That's better, Mary—and don't come into the drawing-room again with your cap all crooked!"

# CHRISTMAS PRESENT PROBLEMS

Solved by  
**MAURICE LANE-NORCOTT**

**H**AS it ever occurred to you that with the aid of a chopper (for chopping), and a poker (for poker-work), and maybe a hammer and a saw (for hammering and sawing), you can make the most acceptable little seasonable gifts in your own woodshed, thereby saving the money you would have had to waste on them if you had bought them for cash in a Christmas Bazaar?

Fortunately, not all of our friends appreciate a gift solely for its intrinsic value. Most of them do, of course, but there are exceptions. Just a few, here and there, are ready to say: "Oh, it isn't much, I admit. And I don't really want it or know what to do with it. Still, it is the kindly thought behind it that counts."

And then they put our present in the boxroom or hang it up at the end of that dark passage, and every time they see it—which isn't often—they think of us.

Well, it is in the hope of assisting you all to make such personal little gifts that this treatise is written.

For example, how many of you realize that an inexpensive deal plank, measuring 8ft. long by 1ft. wide, can be made into two useful presents for book-lovers?

## With Love to Auntie!

**P**RACTICALLY no skill is required for this work. All you need do is to saw this plank through the middle—being very careful, of course, not to saw your knee while doing so. If all has gone well you will then have two splendid book-shelves in natural unfumed deal, all ready to be packed up and posted with your very best wishes.

Or, maybe, you would prefer to give a cabinet or casket this Christmas, suitable for an aunt to keep her boots in or an uncle to hide his gift slippers.

Well, there is nothing easier than that, although personally I am rather shy of cabinet-making, because of the effect it has upon women.

"Oh, you and your everlasting planing and chiselling!" women say, coming into the drawing-room and catching a man putting the finishing touches to his cabinet. "Just look at the splinters all over the carpet!"

Then there is a distressing domestic scene and, frankly, I don't think that a cabinet for an aunt to put her boots in is worth it. A man would be wiser to sit up quietly in bed at night and paint her a Christmas card on vellum.

However, for the benefit of single men who can afford to risk cabinet-making, I would recommend the following method.

Take a flat piece of smooth wood and divide it into six equal bits with a saw or a sharp chopper. Carefully join these bits together with nails and hinges in such a way that an empty space or hollow, large enough to contain boots or slippers, is left in the middle. Put the tools away and

bandage the hands where necessary to prevent dirt or shavings from getting into the cuts. Stain the cabinet a rich oak colour and place in the oven to dry.

At this point I think I should warn readers against one of the main pitfalls of cabinet-making. I refer, of course, to pigeons.

Having completed his cabinet in the manner recommended a cabinet-maker is apt to start musing.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure," he is liable to say, staring thoughtfully at his handiwork. "Maybe, after all, such a practical present won't be appreciated. Perhaps I'd be wiser to fit it on a pole in the garden and keep pigeons in it."

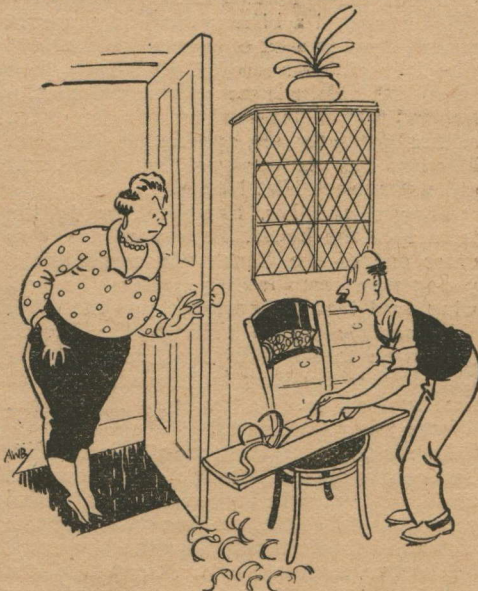
Well, of course, there's a great deal to be said for this plan.

I well remember way back in 1927 coming to the conclusion that a cabinet I had made for my Uncle George to keep his surplus stock in—he was a cabinet pudding maker by profession—would be more suitable as a pigeon loft.

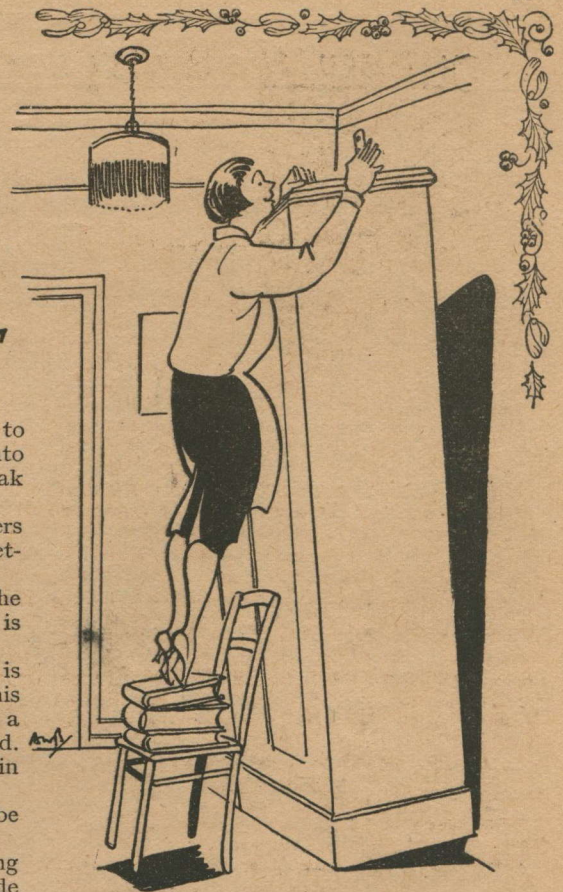
In those days I was living in a house called "The Nest" in Birdcage Walk—in itself a rather queer coincidence—and after mature consideration I bought two very handsome pouter pigeons on the instalment plan and put them in my cabinet or dove-cote with a handful of grit to make their eggs hard.

However, during the night both escaped through the lid and I was obliged to buy two more pigeons in the morning to take their places.

This time, though, I took the precaution to fasten down the lid with several stout screws. As a result of this the cote became very airless, and the birds would certainly have suffocated if I hadn't had the foresight



There is a distressing domestic scene



"I'll put that by for Christmas!"

to cut a small hole in the side of it. Through this both birds scrambled out and flew away, and once again I was faced with the alternative of buying more pigeons or remaining pigeon-less.

By this time keeping pigeons was beginning to bore me and, in the end, I reluctantly decided to give them up. That afternoon I scrubbed out my cabinet with a little hot soda water and emery paper, carefully mended the hole in the side of it, and after filling it with notepaper and envelopes, sent it to an aunt whose birthday it happened to be.

To-day she keeps two of the sweetest tumbler pigeons in it that you could hope to meet in a day's flight, and every year when Christmas comes round she sends me a present of stationery.

Well, so much for cabinet-making for those who care for it.

## Every Little Helps

**I**NOW come to what I will call: "PLAN Z. MAKING A CHRISTMAS GIFT BY FINDING AND ASSEMBLING USEFUL PIECES."

For example, how often can a wife, by using her eyes, discover a discarded razor blade in some easily accessible place—say, on top of the wardrobe or behind the geyser in the bathroom.

In itself, of course, this discarded razor blade is quite useless. However, by following her husband about in the morning she is sure to pick up a wrapper sooner or later. All that remains for her to do is to assemble these two pieces. By Christmas time she should have the ideal present to send to that cousin in the Malay States—a dozen safety razor blades.

Indeed, no object is so insignificant that it cannot be used to make an acceptable Christmas gift for someone.

In this connection I would like to tell

(Turn Overleaf)

## They Saw the Past In a



A young man, greatly excited, was shouting a jumble of French

**AFTER** a century and a half, ghostly memories of the court of Marie Antoinette have been raised in her own theatre in the gardens of the Little Trianon at Versailles. The theatre, so long neglected, has been restored, and the first play presented there was one in which Marie Antoinette herself appeared.

IT is said that ghosts of Marie Antoinette and her court do not need to be invoked at the Little Trianon, that they are there of their own accord. This story of two Englishwomen of the twentieth century, who walked one day into the Little Trianon of the eighteenth century, and saw Marie Antoinette herself sitting sketching in her garden, is one of the best-documented "ghost stories" in existence.

### Strange Happenings

The two Englishwomen first published their story in 1911, with the title, "An Adventure," but not until a new edition was published by Messrs. Faber and Faber were the identities of the authoresses revealed. One was Miss Anne Moberly, the first Principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford; the other Miss E. F. Jourdain, who, at the time of the adventure, was headmistress of a girls' school and later succeeded Miss Moberly at St. Hugh's.

In 1901, Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain paid a visit to Versailles, and Miss Moberly suggested a walk to the Little Trianon, of which she recollected only, from dim memories of a magazine article, that it was a farmhouse where the Queen had amused herself.

They passed the Grand Trianon, and came upon a deserted green drive, which would have led them directly to the Little Trianon. They did not know this, however, and walked instead up a lane that crossed the drive at right angles.

They turned to the right at some buildings, and then, with three paths in front of them, decided they had lost their way. Along the centre path they saw two men, dressed in long, greyish-green coats and three-cornered

# GARDEN of GHOSTS

By **DUDLEY BARKER**

hats, with staves in their hands, whom they took to be gardeners, from a wheelbarrow and a pointed spade close by. They asked their way, and these most dignified "gardeners" told them, in a curiously mechanical manner, to keep straight on.

At this part of the adventure, Miss Jourdain noticed more than her friend. She saw, to the right, a solidly-built cottage, with a woman and a girl at the door. Both were dressed in curious fashion, with kerchiefs tucked into their

bodices. Miss Jourdain had also noticed, just before, an old-fashioned plough in a yard.

Miss Moberly saw none of these things, but both women felt a deep sense of depression, which they hid from each other. They walked on to the end of the path, and found a wood facing them. In front of the wood was a light garden kiosk, on the steps of which sat a man in a cloak and a big Spanish hat. He turned towards them, and they saw an evil expression on his face.

### The Woman in White

Suddenly there was a sound of haste behind them. They turned to see a young, dark-haired man in big hat and cloak, his face red with exertion, greatly excited. He was shouting a jumble of French at them, from which they picked the phrases: "Mesdames, il ne faut pas passer par là. . . Par ici, cherchez la maison."

He bowed, pointing to the right. They took the direction he offered, and when they looked round—he was gone.

They crossed a little rustic bridge over a ravine, through a lot of trees which shut out the sight of the house till they were close to it. Miss Moberly saw a woman in a white hat and a light, long-waisted summer dress, sitting by the terrace, apparently sketching. Her face was not young, rather pretty, and did not attract Miss Moberly.

They passed her, and went on to the terrace of the house. They were about to enter one of the french windows when a young man came from a door in the west wing, said that the entrance was the other side, and led them through the French garden on to the front avenue, quite near the place where they had branched off at first up the lane. In the house they joined a large party of trippers.

It was not until three months later that, by a chance remark, Miss Moberly discovered that Miss Jourdain had seen no one at all where she had seen, so close to them, the woman sitting sketching by the terrace.

The two, intrigued by the suggestion of a problem, decided to attack it in a manner of scientific investigation. The investiga-

tion took them ten years, and the whole of the papers relating to it have been deposited in the Bodleian Library.

The gardens had been completely altered many, many years before, but old maps bore out many of the things they had seen.

The oldest map of all, made by the Court gardener of the time, and discovered accidentally in a chimney, contradicted some of the later maps, and confirmed the Englishwomen's story!

The dark man on the kiosk steps corresponded exactly to the Comte de Vaudreuil, the pock-marked Creole who so ill-advised Marie Antoinette; the running man, to the messenger who had come to Marie Antoinette, at that spot, with news of the approach of the Paris mob, and with a plea to "cherchez la maison," while he fetched a carriage.

The cottage, the girl, the women, and the man who directed them at the house, all had their counterparts in obscure French history. The sketching woman was recalled exactly by what is admittedly the best likeness of all the portraits of Marie Antoinette herself. The uniforms of the "gardeners" were those of the guards who watched the gates of the Little Trianon.

Every point, when checked, proved historically correct. Two things are certain. The things those women saw could not have been within their own knowledge, and were far too accurate in detail to have been a faked story.

## MAURICE LANE-NORCOTT

(Continued from the Preceding Page)

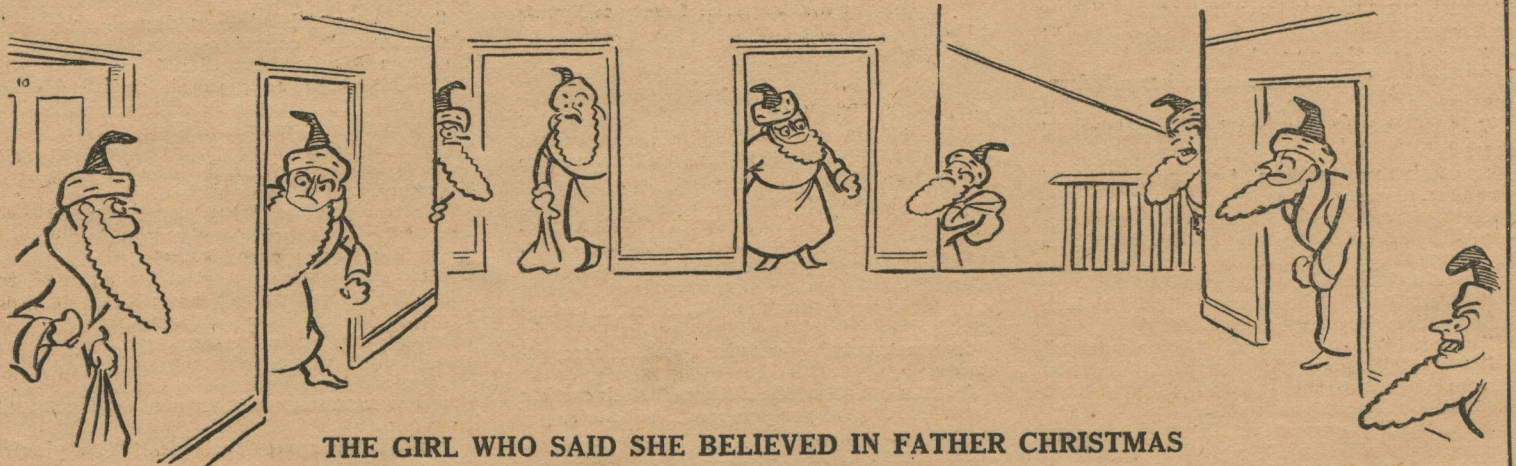
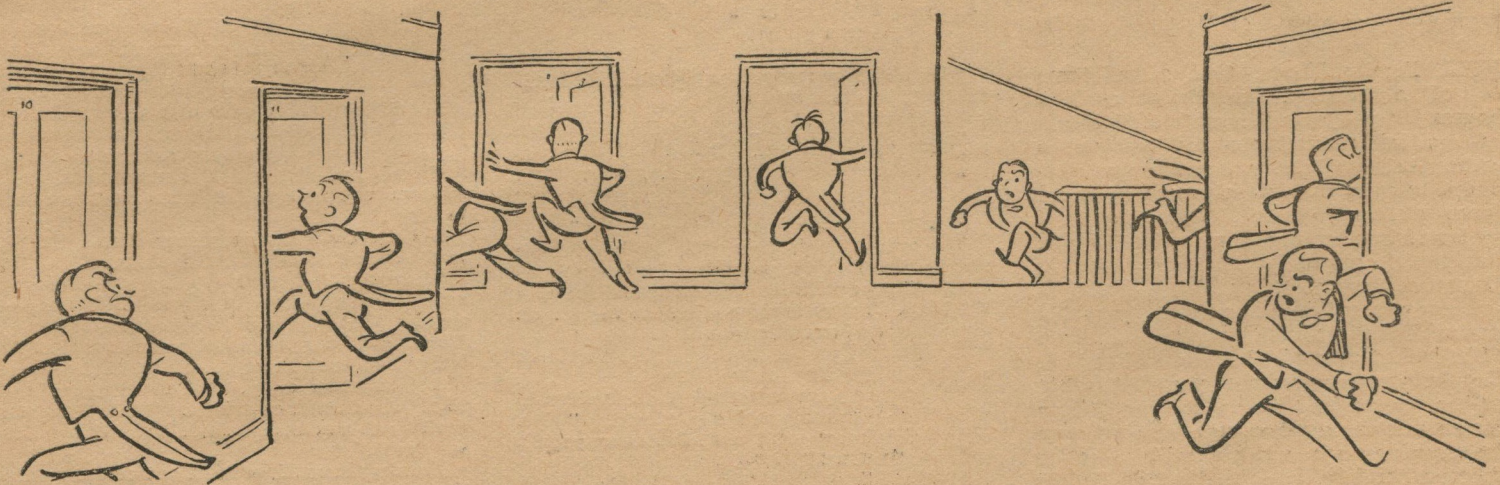
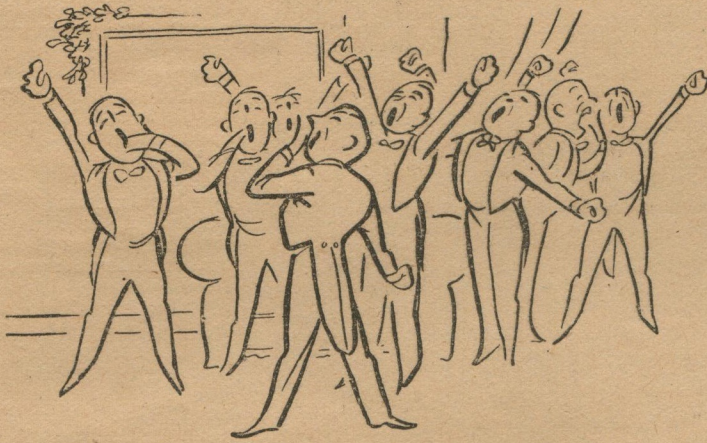
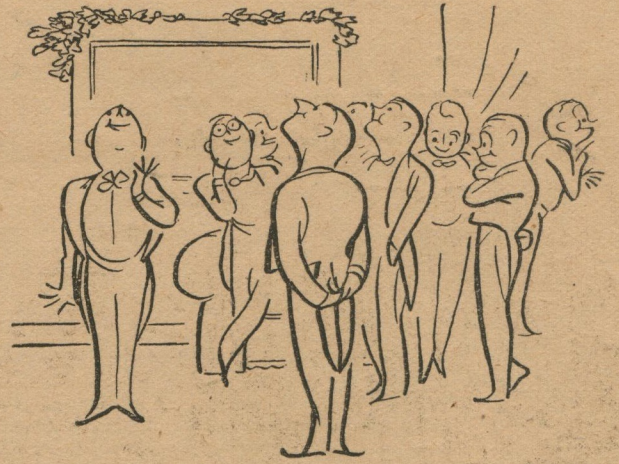
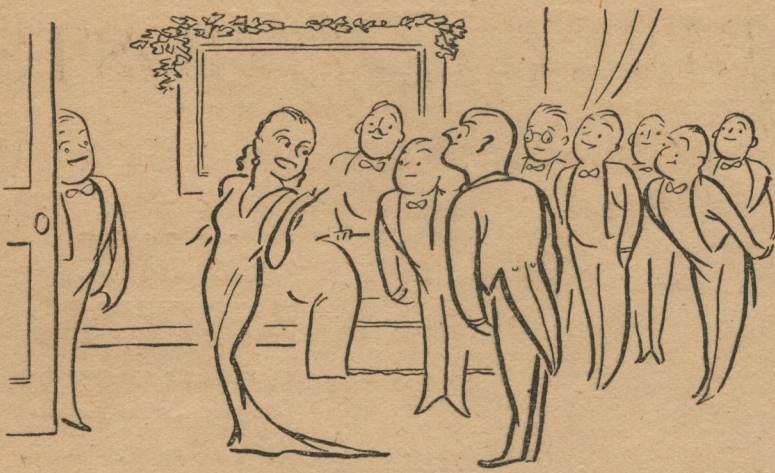
you about my friend, Catchpole, who happened to find a pram wheel while strolling in Kensington Gardens one day. After that he kept his eyes glued to the ground and it wasn't long before he came across one or two spokes and part of a scooter.

He then went on to the main roads and picked up many little unconsidered trifles that had been knocked off passing cars and bicycles by lorries and 'buses. In this way he soon acquired an assortment of nuts and bolts, cog-wheels, dynamo parts, hood covers, screens, and pieces of steel tubing. All these parts he put together in his spare time, until by Christmas he was able to give his grandmother one of the smartest air-flow, electric bath-chairs it is possible to imagine.

Of course, Catchpole was particularly clever at guessing just when something was going to be lost. What is more, he had a positive genius for being on the spot so that he could find it first. Naturally, we haven't all got his remarkable ability.

Still, by holding ourselves in readiness to put our foot on anything directly it falls to the ground, and by keeping a sharp look-out for policemen, we should soon have a stock of Christmas presents that will come as a complete surprise to our friends and relations.

And when I say "a complete surprise" I mean "a complete surprise." They will be literally dumbfounded.



THE GIRL WHO SAID SHE BELIEVED IN FATHER CHRISTMAS

## A CHRISTMAS LOVE STORY

## DESTINY CALLS TRUMPS

BY

JAMES  
WEDGWOOD  
DRAWBELL

He stared at the company  
as though living in a  
dream

THE Family Album, that sacred tome of a hundred memories and a thousand laughs, was the cause of it all.

On a rainy Sunday about two weeks before Christmas, Sally Antrim was persuaded to cross the drawing-room floor and glance at the volume. The suppressed giggles of her brother Tom as he skipped from page to page helped in the persuasion. His amazed query, "Say, Sal, did women ever really wear things like this?" provided the final bait to which Sally rose.

She looked over his shoulder and smiled. The photograph uppermost was that of her mother, taken just before the war. The woman was the same woman who sat near the drawing-room window with a quiet smile on her face, but the dress, to Sally's modern young eyes, was something weird and wonderful.

"Mother," she appealed.

The older woman rose from her window-seat and joined them.

"Is this really you, mother, in this awful mess?"

Mrs. Antrim, with a twenty-one-year-old daughter, never looked more than thirty herself, and was actually forty. She was old enough to remember things, and young enough to be able to play with her children.

She joined in their laughter readily.

"Afraid it is," she confessed. "It does look rather funny nowadays, doesn't it?"

"Funny!" Tom chuckled. "It's a scream."

"Doesn't it show how women's fashions change," murmured his sister. "Why, that was just before the war, mother, wasn't it?"

"Yes." The eyes saddened. "Just before the war; 1913, I think."

The girl's eyes widened.

"But did they really wear tight, hobbly kind of skirts like that?"

"Oh, yes."

"And high waists?"

"They did, darling."

"And blousy things, and high necks and great big picture hats, mother?"

"Just as you see them all there, Sally."

The eyes of the mother could see beyond the strange dress to the events and the emotions that had gone with it. The girl could see only the dress. To her modern mind the thing spelt dowdiness and encumbrance.

She glanced at her mother, noted the frock as smart as her own, and wondered.

"I suppose women just adapt themselves to whatever comes along," she mused. "But, anyway, I know what our Christmas party's going to be now!"

"What?"

"A party in the dresses of twenty-odd years ago!"

They stared at her.

"Yes! Can't you imagine it?" she rattled on joyously. "All of us dressed up like that—and worse! Wearing high necks, and funny skirts, and the men——" She turned over a page. "Look, Tommy! Like to dress up like that?"

He gazed, and yelped.

"Just for a day!" he agreed. "It's a great idea. Ordinary evening dress absolutely taboo, eh? We've got to tell the whole gang that they've got to come along toggged up as they used to tog up years ago. Or as their fathers did!"

In a moment they were in a whirl of arrangements.

"But what about the clothes?" their mother reminded. "Are you sure you'll be able to get the clothes you want?"

They were thoughtful only for a moment.

"Oh, yes," Sally said. "Theatrical costume

people will be able to give us what we want. And besides, some of the older people may be able to rake up things from old wardrobes. You know some people keep their wedding-gowns and coming-out frocks and all that kind of thing. Haven't you anything you've ever kept, mother?"

"I might be able to get something of long ago, but I'm afraid I'm not so slim as I was."

"Then it could do for me, and you could get a theatrical rig-out, mother. Oh, it's easy! Come on, Tom, let's tell the people now so they'll have time to get ready for Christmas."

THEY were coming for dinner at seven-thirty, in the clothes of twenty-odd years ago, the clothes of the theatrical costumiers and the scraped-together remnants of their mothers' and fathers' old wardrobes. Sally Antrim went up to her room at six o'clock to dress.

A little thrill of expectancy stirred the girl as she opened the door of her room.

"I really feel that it's twenty-odd years ago," she whispered to herself. "Only—I wonder what mother feels about it all."

And suddenly it flashed upon her that her father had been living then, but that the war had taken him away. "I never thought of that," she mused, contritely. "I do hope that the dresses and things won't bring things back too much."

Flossie, the maid, whirled out of the room as she entered.

"I'll come and help you dress later, miss," she panted. "I've got to give mistress a hand first, and help downstairs too."

"Don't come back at all then, Flossie," Sally said. "I can manage this frock all right."

She went in and closed the door. Her mother's old dress, a tight-waisted, mutton-chop sleeved affair, redeemed from a forgotten box-room, was laid out on the bed.

She was standing in front of the long mirror, clad only in a very modern under-garment, when her fingers closed over something concealed in the placket pocket of the old dress she was about to put on. It was a letter, and she drew it absently from its hiding-place, and as absently tore open the envelope, before she noticed that it bore no name or address.

Then she came back to life and stared at the envelope in amazement. It was crumpled and creased.

"But it has never been opened," Sally mur-

## DESTINY CALLS TRUMPS

(Continued from  
Page 22)

mured. "There's a letter in it, and mother has surely never seen it! I wonder—"

The realization dawned upon her that she had stumbled upon a page of the past. She held the envelope in her hand and gazed at it in fascination. To think that someone had sent a letter to someone else, years and years and years ago, and it had never

been read!

Why, there might be anything in such a note. Anything might have happened through the note not being read. Anything.

And as she drew it from its cover, and read the two scrawled lines of writing, she knew that something had happened.

It said:—

I think you're the most wonderful girl in the world.—HARRY.

Harry! A letter from someone called Harry, in her mother's frock of years ago. A letter she had never received. And she had married—not Harry—but gay Tommy Antrom, because she had never opened the letter!

**M**ANY Christmases had come and gone since Harry wrote his unread letter.

Where was Harry now? What had happened that he could not have come along, if only to be with her mother, when Tom Antrom was killed in action? Perhaps Harry himself had . . .

She read the two lines again. Then she folded the note, reached briskly for her dressing-gown, swept across the floor, and made for her mother's room.

She went in. Her mother was alone.

Holding the letter behind her, Sally said, quickly:—

"Mother, I found a crumpled old letter in this frock of yours. It wasn't addressed to anyone, and I read it. But it's for you, and it's something you've never read. It's something you should have seen, I think, a long time ago."

The eyes of the older woman looked into hers and seemed to understand. She held out her hand without a word and read the note.

It was quiet in the room after she had looked at the letter, but at last she spoke, and in her voice there was something the girl had never heard.

"It is the message I've always wanted to get," she said. "Years ago I cared very much for Harry Treviss. We quarrelled over some trifling thing. I was to blame. Penitently I wrote him asking him to forgive me. He never answered."

She gazed at the note, and went on talking as if she had forgotten her daughter's presence.

"I was leaving almost immediately for a trip abroad, and I never saw him again. During the holiday I met your father, and I came to like him tremendously. We were awfully happy together, and I was only too glad to find someone with whom I could forget Harry."

"But, mother," the girl broke in, "how was it that you never saw this letter? It must have been delivered by hand."

"Yes. But probably one of the maids slipped it into my pocket so that my mother could not see it. Or my sister might have done it, and forgotten. I don't know."

She rose and walked slowly to her dressing-table, avoiding Sally's eyes. But the girl, with sudden tragedy thrust upon her, was eager to help.

"But couldn't he have got in touch with you afterwards?" she asked.

"After I was married?" Her mother looked across in surprise. "Men don't, Sally."

"No, I mean—after—after—"

"Oh." She thought for a moment. "Who knows what has happened to the people we knew in the last twenty-five years, Sally? The war has a lot to answer for, you know." And then she changed her tone. "Now, what about dressing?"

"But, mother—"

"The people will be here soon," she said, firmly, with no suggestion of the old memories that had come to life in her again, "and you've got to be ready."

**S**ALLY went back to her room with a grudge against Fate. With all the passionate longing of her young heart she wanted to make her mother happy, to bring back the lover of her youth, to blot out all the emptiness of things. She wanted to enter her room and find a fairy godmother who would summon a carriage and whirl her to the spot where she would find Harry Treviss. And instead she found plump, cheery, prosaic Flossie waiting impatiently to help her to dress.

Her red face brightened at Sally's entry.

"I thought you was never coming, miss, and I've got so much to do to-night."

"But I told you not to bother, Flossie."

Flossie fussed round her.

"Ah, but I did want to see you look your best, miss. Just for Christmas. It's so nice, I think, to see everybody looking their best at this season of the year. My old mother always used to say—"

She wandered easily into reminiscence, and Sally lost the voice in the intensity of her own dreams and longings.

If only she could find Harry Treviss, or get some news of him that she could take to her mother. If only she could discover what had happened to him during all these years.

The war had swallowed up so many people; maybe it had swallowed up the man who meant such a lot to one woman.

Khaki had probably made her own father so handsome . . . "awful to be lonely at Christmas, I always think," Flossie was saying, garrulously. . . . Sally had been held in his arms, a tiny tot, when he came home on leave . . . "there's my sister what's serving for a real lonely" . . . and her mother had cried when he went back again . . . "he lives all on his own, this gent does, down Queen's Gate way," Flossie prattled on, busy with Sally's dress.

" . . . An awful sad case, miss. Lost his memory in the war, the gent did. . . . Yes, a sad case, I says. I'm always sorry for Major Treviss. . . ."

Sally Antrom was jerked back to life at the mention of the name.

"What did you say?" she demanded, so

sharply that for a moment Flossie lost her breath. "What did you say?"

"I was just telling you about my sister, miss."

"Your sister! But you mentioned a name!"

"Oh, yes, miss. Major Treviss—the poor man that she looks after down at Queen's Gate."

"What about him?"

"I told you, miss. He lost his memory since the war. Shell-shock or something nasty like that. Doesn't remember a thing, the poor man doesn't."

"Doesn't remember a thing?" repeated Sally, slowly.

"Well, he remembers things that happen now, miss, but doesn't remember what happened to him at the war and before the war. Mind's just a blank, they say."

Sally trembled with excitement. Absurd, of course, that there could be any connection between Major Treviss and Harry Treviss of years ago. But still—

"What's his Christian name, Flossie? Quick!"

"No, not Quick, miss; Harry, I think."

She was too excited to laugh.

"Harry!" she breathed. And then in a flash of inspiration: "It's him! I'm certain it is!"

Flossie was becoming as excited as the girl.

"Do you know him, miss?"

"No, but I think my mother does, Flossie. What age is he?"

She pondered the question.

"I've seen him often, miss, but he's difficult to place. I'd say about forty-two!"

Forty-two! And her mother was forty. And his name was Harry Treviss, and he had lost his memory in the war. Oh, it was him! It was! It must be!

"You say he's at Queen's Gate, Flossie? And he's dining all alone there to-night?"

Flossie nodded vigorously.

"Yes, miss, I know he is particularly. 'Cos I did want my sister to come over here and have a look at all your lovely old costumes. My sister did so want to see them all again."

"Get me the telephone book, Flossie."

Amazed, the red-faced woman brought it to her. Sally opened it quickly, turned up the "T's," and shouted in triumph.

"He's on the 'phone. It's him! Anyway, I'm going to take a chance!"

**S**HE fingered the telephone dial. "I don't care," she muttered. "I'm going to risk it."

Mother can say what she likes about it afterwards, but I'm going to bring him here to dinner! I'm going to—"

"Hello?" he said, at the other end of the wire, and she liked his voice immediately. She gulped, and plunged:—

"Oh, Major Treviss?"

"Yes, speaking."

"Oh, Major, this is Sally Antrom speaking."

There was a little pause.

"I'm afraid . . ." he said.

"You remember, Major, we were introduced at the Ritz, and my mother invited you to dinner for Christmas?"

She could hear that he was puzzled as he answered:—

"You know, I almost think—well, dash it all, I can't really have forgotten, but—"

"Of course you haven't. It's just in the stress of our modern life" (she had read that somewhere and liked it awfully) "that we're apt to overlook these little things. But really,

(Turn to Page 26)

# MARIE ELISABETH *Real Sardines!*

- EVERYBODY'S FAVOURITE—
- DELICIOUS, SUSTAINING—
- LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD—

Marie Elisabeths have been before the public for many years and are highly appreciated.

"M.E.s" are packed in Olive Oil, so often recommended by doctors, and are consumed more readily by children when mashed with the oil and spread on plain or buttered bread. because the world likes them.

# Is There A Santa Claus?

**F**ORTY years ago, Virginia O'Hanlon, then eight, wrote to the Editor of the New York 'Sun' to settle the doubt which comes to all little boys and girls at some stage of their lives.

The letter was received by Edward P. Mitchell, then in charge of the 'Sun's' editorial page, who turned it over to his associate, Francis P. Church, to answer. In his "Memoirs of an Editor," Mr. Mitchell writes that Mr. Church at first pooh-pooed the idea, but, finally, turned to his desk with an air of resignation.

"In a short time he had produced the article which has probably been reprinted during the past quarter of a century, as the classic expression of Christmas sentiment, more millions of times than any other newspaper article ever written.

Here is the answer she read in the 'Sun':—

**W**E take pleasure in answering at once the communication below:—

"DEAR EDITOR—I am eight years old.

"Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

"Papa says 'If you see it in the 'Sun' it's so.'

"Please tell me the truth—is there a Santa Claus?

"VIRGINIA O'HANLON."

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable

of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to employ men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives for ever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



# DESTINY CALLS TRUMPS

(Continued from  
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Major,  
we'd be  
very glad  
if you'd  
c o m e

along to-night."

"It's awfully good of you. Matter of fact, I was going to have quite a lonely Christmas dinner—if I'd forgotten your invitation much longer!"

She laughed happily. It was Harry Treviss! She was positive. He had just the kind of voice that her mother would have fallen in love with.

"It was for seven-thirty, Major," she reminded him.

"Was it, by Jove! Then I must be getting a move on. I suppose—hate to ask it, and all that sort of thing—but I suppose you wouldn't really mind telling me your address again. I mislaid it last night. Stress of modern life, you know."

She laughed, and there was laughter in her heart. She told him, and he thanked her.

"Good of you reminding me," he said. "I'll be along in about ten minutes."

And it was only when she had put down the receiver that she remembered he would be conspicuous by not being dressed in the fashions of years ago.

IT might really have been years before, with the war an undreamt-of calamity of the future as that queerly-dressed crowd of people chattered together before going in to dinner.

"By gad!" muttered old Sedgwick to his wife. "Look at Sally!"

It was Mrs. Antrom he meant. She was chatting with the latest arrivals, dressed like a hostess from an old picture, and the sight of her brought back the past to two of those who had shared it with her.

"Isn't she beautiful!" his wife whispered.

"Reminds you of that night when she came home and told us she was going to be married. Remember? I've always wondered what happened to that other young fellow she was—Gad, listen to that tune! Where have I heard it before?"

Young Sally had arranged that the music and everything else should fit in with the period. "Ye gods, Sal," Tom whispered to his sister, "who'd have thought it would go with a bang like this? You know, these old togs might look pretty dud, but there's something to be said for the old geysers, eh?"

She nodded absently, her eyes glued to the door, watching, waiting.

"Good show," she said, briefly. "Better than I thought. But look out for sensations soon, Tommy!"

"Sensations? What d'you mean? There weren't any sensations in 1913, Sal!"

But he was wrong. In Sally's re-created 1913 there was one almost breaking at that moment, and as she heard the rumblings of it in the corridor, she moved across to her mother.

"Darling," she said, "don't be annoyed, please; but I took the liberty of inviting another guest here to-night!"

Her mother turned.

"Why, Sally—"

"He's here now, if I'm not mistaken," Sally said, quickly. "His name's Treviss, mother. Major Harry Treviss!"

"Treviss!"

"Yes. And here he is!"

They turned.

"Major Treviss!" announced the butler.

Instead of advancing towards his hostess, he stood in the doorway and stared at the company

as though living in a dream. His modernness seemed strangely out of place, but it was the wild look on the man's face that provided the sensation.

His eyes roamed the gathering, seeking, searching for something that had come back into his life. He glanced down at his well-cut clothes, stared intently at the other people of years before, and passed a trembling hand across his white forehead.

Then his eyes met the eyes of Sally's mother. There was a stillness in the room, an electric current of expectancy, as he walked slowly towards her.

"Hello, Harry," she said, quietly, offering her hand. "It's so good to see you again."

They waited, hearts stilled, to hear his answer. "I know you," he said, shakily. "I've seen you before somewhere!"

She patted his hand gently.

"Why, of course you have, Harry. And some of these other people too. Mr. Sedgwick, for instance. Don't you remember?"

Old Sedgwick and his wife came forward eagerly, and Marston and his sister, and Joe Whitting.

They clustered round him, and their faces and dresses brought back to the man something of the vague pictures that flitted through his brain.

"It's coming back!" he whispered. "I don't know what's wrong with me, but I seem to be home again somewhere! I know all this! I've seen all this before!"

The elder Sally Antrom looked deeply into his eyes.

"And you!" he murmured. "Aren't you the girl—oh, I don't know. But you look like the girl who—who—"

And then in a flash it came, and he was quivering in front of them with the excitement and the realization of it.

"Why, you're Sally Granger!"

He stared at her, frightened.

"You're the one thing that's always been with me," he said, thickly. "Funny, that."

"Not so funny, Harry, seeing I loved you once."

"And I loved you!" He had said it before he knew what he was saying. "That's something I know. I loved you. But something happened. We didn't love any more. And so I went away."

The room was becoming unbearable. The simplicity of the declarations was putting too great a strain on the crowd.

Sally slipped easily into the conversation.

"And I'm the girl who 'phoned you to-night, Major Treviss," she said. "And you're taking me into dinner."

For the first time the tension was broken. He smiled. But he did not take Sally into dinner. He went in with her mother.

THE orchestra played old waltzes later on, and in their ancient dresses the party whirled to happiness and dreams.

Young Sally danced often with young Waterlow. "Aren't you wonderful?" he murmured as often.

She liked him.

"Look at mother and Major Treviss," she breathed, and he looked.

They were waltzing together, and they had eyes only for each other. Whatever had happened before seemed to have been wiped off the slate of time. But, there, they were back in 1913, and the things had never happened at all!

The boy brought his eyes back to Sally.

"Did I say a minute ago that you were wonderful?" he asked.

"Yes, I think you mentioned it," the girl smiled.

"Then I say it again," young Harry Waterlow insisted. "You're the most wonderful girl in the world, Sally! And that's why I said so in the note that I handed in to Flossie this afternoon to give to you."

## Ninety Years Of CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

ONE of the most popular boxes of crackers some forty years ago was called "Questions and Answers." On the outside of the crackers were these questions:—

When is the weather loudest?

When might a musician be said to settle down to his work?

What is the difference between a masher and a giraffe?

What sex is a woman when she becomes an idolator and atheist?

When does a farmer's wife help her husband?

I handled that faded memento of forgotten Christmases the other day in Tom Smith's Finsbury factory (writes a TIT-BITS man). It had been found, with others, in an old drawer. The answers were hidden inside the crackers, and to open them would be to break up what has become a rare museum exhibit. But among the older readers of TIT-BITS there must be some who actually bought "Questions and Answers" at the time Can they remember the answers?

Another box reclaimed from this limbo had a portrait of a very young and handsome Mr. Winston Churchill on the lid, and on the crackers were portraits of celebrities of the time: Hall Caine, novelist; Julia Neilson, Edna May, and Phyllis Rankin, actresses; Joseph Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, statesmen. An interesting link with an earlier generation. . . .

"Paris Exhibition, 1900," had crackers with old-fashioned Cupid decorations and lace ends. A sentimental souvenir, now somewhat faded; yet the silver wrapping had lost but little of its lustre, and it was interesting to reflect that this year, 1937, also boasted its Paris Exhibition.

### Tiny "Tit-Bits"

"TWENTIETH CENTURY CYCLING," another veteran box, took one right back to the "Daisy, Daisy" days of the music-hall song. The cover depicted a masher and two belles of the Naughty 'Nineties on bicycles, the masher in a bright red coat, with gardenia in buttonhole. The decoration on the crackers was a cycle wheel with wings, now the badge of the Cyclists' Touring Club.

A TIT-BITS box of 1892 had miniature replicas of the famous journal of George Newnes inside each cracker; they could be read with magnifying lenses.

A "Superstition" box reflected the popular superstitions of the day: broken mirror, horseshoe, crossed table-knives, black cat, etc.—superstitions which still survive. "Birds, Beasts, and Fishes" of 1887 contained paper caps representing these creatures, which could be worn with eerie effect.

A "Foreign Stamps" box contained genuine stamps inside the crackers, and reproductions of stamps printed on the outside so realistically that one instinctively tried to pick them off.

These boxes of long ago showed, too, the beginnings of artistic flower decoration on crackers—a type of decoration which the firm has since developed to such a fine art that crackers can be things of exquisite beauty apart from providing the "big bang."

Far away, long ago. . . . Yet when these creations were new, the firm of Tom Smith, established in Goswell Road in 1847, was already half a century old.



# SANTA CLAUS UNLIMITED

## Filling the World's Christmas Stocking

By **G. P. S. JOHNSON**  
General Manager, Hamley Bros., Ltd.

**S**ANTA CLAUS is no longer a woolly-bearded old gentleman who dodders about in a red dressing-gown. He's a hard-headed business man with millions of pounds capital behind him. He has to be, to satisfy the exacting tastes and vast knowledge of modern youngsters! The one thing about him that hasn't changed is the kindly twinkle in his eye, for he gladly goes to endless trouble to give boys and girls precisely what they want.

Vast industries willingly co-operate with him. If he wants to make the latest streamlined locomotive or tiny Rolls-Royce, the blue prints from which the originals were made are immediately forthcoming so that the model is exact in every detail. Children won't be satisfied with make-shifts. The big toyshops even have to engage highly-skilled technical experts to be on duty during the Christmas rush, as the questions fired with machine-gun rapidity by small boys are altogether too much for the ordinary assistant.

But Santa's work begins long before December. All the year round thousands of agents and representatives in every country in the world search tirelessly for fresh ideas for toys. At intervals during the year buyers leave this country to visit various centres and inspect the cream of what their agents have discovered. In this way children are assured of getting the best and most ingenious toys the world has to offer.

### Toys by the Million

Britain is not idle either. Far from it! Before the war Germany controlled the world's toy trade, but now this country exports many thousands of pounds worth of toys each year, not only to Germany, but to every country in the world, and the height of ambition of all the nicest little foreign children is to be given a genuine British toy for Christmas.

Hamleys, which has a good claim to be described as the world's oldest toyshop, is now a unit in a vast organization that manufactures and distributes toys by the million. Each year large numbers of inventions are submitted to the famous house in Regent Street, yet it is the rarest thing to find an idea that is genuinely new. Everything that can please children was thought out long ago, and the best we can do is to give new-twists to the old notions.

The demand now is for something as "real" as possible. The youngster of to-day is simply a small edition of a grown-up, and likes just the same things that please adults. In fact, it is impossible to name a single thing, from a car to a typewriter, from an aeroplane to a zoo, that cannot be bought in miniature form as a toy.

If you are prepared to pay nearly £700 for a toy you can buy a completely furnished toy house in which your child could live and sleep. If that is too ambitious, £50 or so will purchase a doll's house that can be

and girls are curiously conventional in some ways. The oldest toy of all, the Noah's Ark, is still a favourite. Dolls houses have to be built in old-fashioned styles, as little Miss 1937 has no use for the modern "sun-parlour" type of architecture. Children love to have their own little desks, but turn up their noses at the tubular steel desks and chairs found in so many offices.

The amount of money that some parents will spend on Christmas toys is almost incredible. Model engines at twenty pounds apiece go like hot cakes; a single railway carriage may cost 45s.; racing yachts range from five to fifty pounds; aeroplanes driven by tiny petrol engines can be sent on a controlled flight and made to land perfectly at a pre-determined moment if you are willing to pay £35 to fill your son's stocking.

### World in Miniature

Yet, in spite of the tremendous cost of these examples of the toy-maker's skill, cheap toys are more efficient than they have ever been, thanks to modern methods of manufacture. Even toys selling for sixpence or a shilling are strong, well-made, durable and accurate copies of the real thing. Nowadays any nursery, from the richest to the poorest, can be a world in miniature and, through its toys, help to train the child to deal coolly and confidently with everything he is likely to meet in later years.

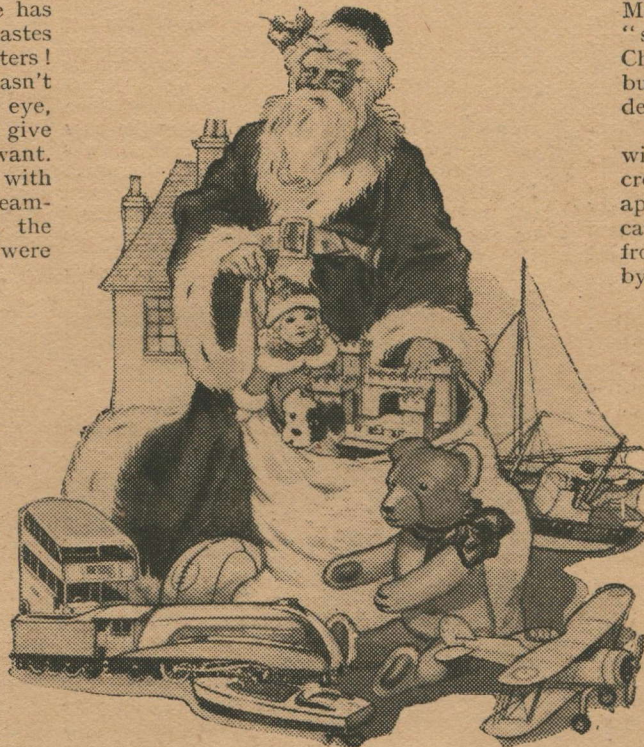
Toys can sometimes be put to unexpected uses. Some time ago an Indian Rajah was amused by a little novelty that looks like a wooden pepper box and makes a "mooring" noise when turned upside down. He asked whether it would be possible to make one big enough to moo as loudly as a real cow, and whether it could be controlled electrically and turned over at will by pressing a button. He was told this could be done quite easily, so promptly ordered a number. Now when he goes tiger-shooting he dispenses with the unfortunate calf that used to act as "bait" and attract the tiger by its plaintive lowing. Instead, Mr. Stripes is lured to his doom by an out-size toy!

—\*—

### Railway Thrills

There is no limit to the enterprise of the modern toy-maker. It is only a short time since the newspapers were full of the fact that the Brighton police force had been equipped with pocket wireless sets. Now, any schoolboy can buy a similar outfit. The limited space in modern flats was having an adverse effect on the sale of model railways, so the latest idea is a track with three rails instead of two, carrying two sets of tiny engines and carriages that are just as perfect in detail as the normal-sized models. With these it is possible not only to run an elaborate schedule of trains, but to stage collisions and such-like thrills!

But in spite of their grown-up minds and craving for something that works, our boys



## A FAIRY TALE FOR ADULTS

## PRESENTS FOR PRINCESSES

By Anthony Armstrong

ONCE upon a long time ago there lived a King who had three daughters. Kings nearly always had daughters by threes in those days, just as woodcutters had sons by sevens, and widowed-mothers-living-in-forests invariably had sole supports.

The family of the King of Cabbodia, however, broke heavily away from tradition in one important respect, and that was that the youngest daughter was, for once, not the Fairest of Them All. Not that Princess Fania was by any means the ugliest, either, all competition in that line being completely ruled out by the eldest daughter, Princess Gaillardia, who could barely be called homely even by accomplished flatterers in the most favourable lighting.

This left the middle daughter, Delphine, as the prettiest of the three, and even if she'd had seventeen sisters she'd still have been the most beautiful. Some of the more susceptible courtiers even put it as high as twenty-two sisters.

Well, one fine summer morning the King, whose name was Maxim, came down to breakfast feeling pretty good. He kissed his daughters,

lifted a gold cover on the sideboard and helped himself to two Royal Rashers. Then he sat down and looked out of the window.

It really was a beautiful morning—just the kind of morning, thought the King, for going on a hunting trip with the King of Arcadia. Not that the actual morning really mattered, for it generally took three weeks to get a Royal Hunting Party ready for the road, and even then the Kingdom of Arcadia, where the only reliable unicorn-hunting was to be had, was at least two months' journey away. But still . . . King Maxim took a piece of toast and looked out of the window again. "Grand morning," he remarked, "for a hunting trip with the King of Arcadia."

"Why don't you go, then, darling?" suggested Delphine.

"Yes, why not?" added Fania, ingratiatingly.

"You'll be back for New Year, I suppose?" asked Gaillardia, casually, as who should say, "Are we to wait lunch?"

"Certainly," said the King, adding with sudden generosity, for he was rather staggered at his suggestion having gone over so well, "and, what's more, I'll bring each of you back a present."

"Is that a solemn Royal Promise asked Fania, quickly. She was a very shrewd and calculating young woman.

"Of course," said King Maxim, stiffly. "Let me know what you'd each like."

His daughters at once relapsed into concentrated thought, but it did not take Delphine long to decide. Though their mother had died some while ago, the three Princesses were by no means free of maternal care. The King's aged Aunt Carla saw to that.

By calling them a Sacred Charge she managed to interfere pretty successfully in their lives, even down to supervising the making—by a troupe of sour-faced sewing women—of most of their clothes, particularly underclothes, for Aunt Carla had ideas on underclothes, ideas which centred round cast-iron modesty and plain, unadorned linen of the apparent texture of sailcloth. Not that Gaillardia minded much what she wore, and the sharp-witted Fania had worked out that it was well worth her while to put up with it and keep in Aunt Carla's good

graces; but Delphine had long pined for laces and silks and at last saw a chance.

"What I want, father—" she began eagerly, but the King was already getting up from the table.

"Plenty of time before I go," he said. "I've got to give the necessary orders to the Vizier now. And," he went on, pausing at the door, "I think during the next week I'd better try and put in a little clay-unicorn practice."

THE morning of the King's departure for his hunting trip came at last. Servants and officials were everywhere; the courtyard was full of horses, and the King was fussing about as though he were going on at least a couple of wars. A courier had long ago set off to Arcadia with a Royal Note from King Maxim proposing himself for the year-end; and a second had set off three days later, in case anything happened to the first, for there was a pretty nasty enchanted forest on the way; and a third had set off a day after that, because the second man was not very bright and in his excitement at going at all had completely forgotten to take the Royal Note.

"Now, my dears," said the King to his daughters for the tenth time, "are you sure you'll be quite happy? And—er—don't forget, if you do catch my State Coachman taking damsels out for joy-trips in the Royal Barouche again, because he thinks I won't find out, give him the sack. Of course," he added, with a great assumption of firmness, "I'd do it myself if only I were here."

"Yes, father," chorused the Princesses, and Gaillardia added: "Are you taking the Magician? Remember that enchanted forest."

"Yes, he's going on ahead on a fast carpet. He's got a couple of new exorcisms."

"You've got your new invincible sword, haven't you?" asked Fania.

"Don't ask stupid questions, Fania. Of course I ha—hrm! that is—Godolphin!" He turned to a small page. "Run and fetch my best Invincible Sword at once. It's in the Invincible-sword-stand in the Great Hall."

"Aren't you forgetting something else?" put in Fania casually at this point.

"Let's see," said the King, running his hands over his person. "Flask, sandwiches, infallible ointment against witches, my—" He saw all three daughters looking anxiously at him, and remembered. "Bless my soul! I promised to bring you each back a present, didn't I? Well, what do you want, Gaillardia? You're the eldest."

"A husband," announced his eldest daughter frankly.

"Jumping warlocks!" exclaimed the startled King. "What for?" The Court Treasurer in the background here cleared his throat noisily, and the King fixed the young man with a stony eye for a moment before resuming. "That is, I should say, what do you mean?"

"I want you to bring back a Prince to marry me. You gave me your solemn promise, you know," she finished in determined fashion.

"Yes, but—" began the King, not quite knowing how to put it. "I mean, I can't guarantee to bring back a husband. I mean, I'll bring back a Prince, but whether he'll—I mean, if I bring back an unmarried Prince, will that do?—I mean, well, to be frank," he broke off testily—"you're not everybody's money, my dear."

"An unmarried Prince will do," snapped Gaillardia.

"All right. Now, what for you?" said King Maxim, shortly, to Delphine. "A husband too, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, father darling," smiled Delphine. "I want clothes."

"Clothes? Haven't you got enough? Very nice clothes, too. What sort of clothes do you want?"

"Underclothes."

"Eh?"

"Underclothes. You know, shifts and step-ins and knick—"



She didn't mind showing any of it to people whatever or wherever it was.

# CESSSES

## umstrong

The King interrupted hastily: "Haven't you got quite a lot of—or—those things? I'm sure Aunt Carla spares no pains to see you're well fitted out."

"That's just it."

This was a new one to the King. He considered. "What do you mean?"

"I'll show you what I mean, if you like," began Delphine, beginning to do so. She was determined to get what she wanted.

"Stop it at once!" commanded King Maxim, whirling round on the Court Treasurer just too late, for he was watching a sparrow on the lawn with every indication of having been doing so for the last hour. "Really, ever since your dear mother died you seem to have—"

"And they must be silk, with lots of lace," pursued Delphine, following up her advantage. "The capital of Arcadia has some lovely markets, I believe."

"All right! All right!" replied her embarrassed parent. "Just tell me what you want and I'll—"

"Two dozen best silk nighties, two dozen cami-knickers, a dozen pairs of panties, some brassi—"

"Write it down, I meant," ordered her father sternly, and rounded on Fania with increasing ill-humour. "I wish I'd never made that infernal promise. Now you, my girl. Hurry up!"

Fania, as has been said, was shrewd. She suddenly saw a way to get well in her father's good graces.

"Nothing," she said lovingly, "except yourself back safe again."

The King had to have this one repeated. It was rather unlike Fania. Then he said: "You mean no present?" He wished to get it quite clear.

"No, I don't want you to bother about getting—er—say, jewellery or anything for your little Fania. I want you to enjoy yourself."

"Thank you, my dear!" The King beamed. "But is there nothing?"

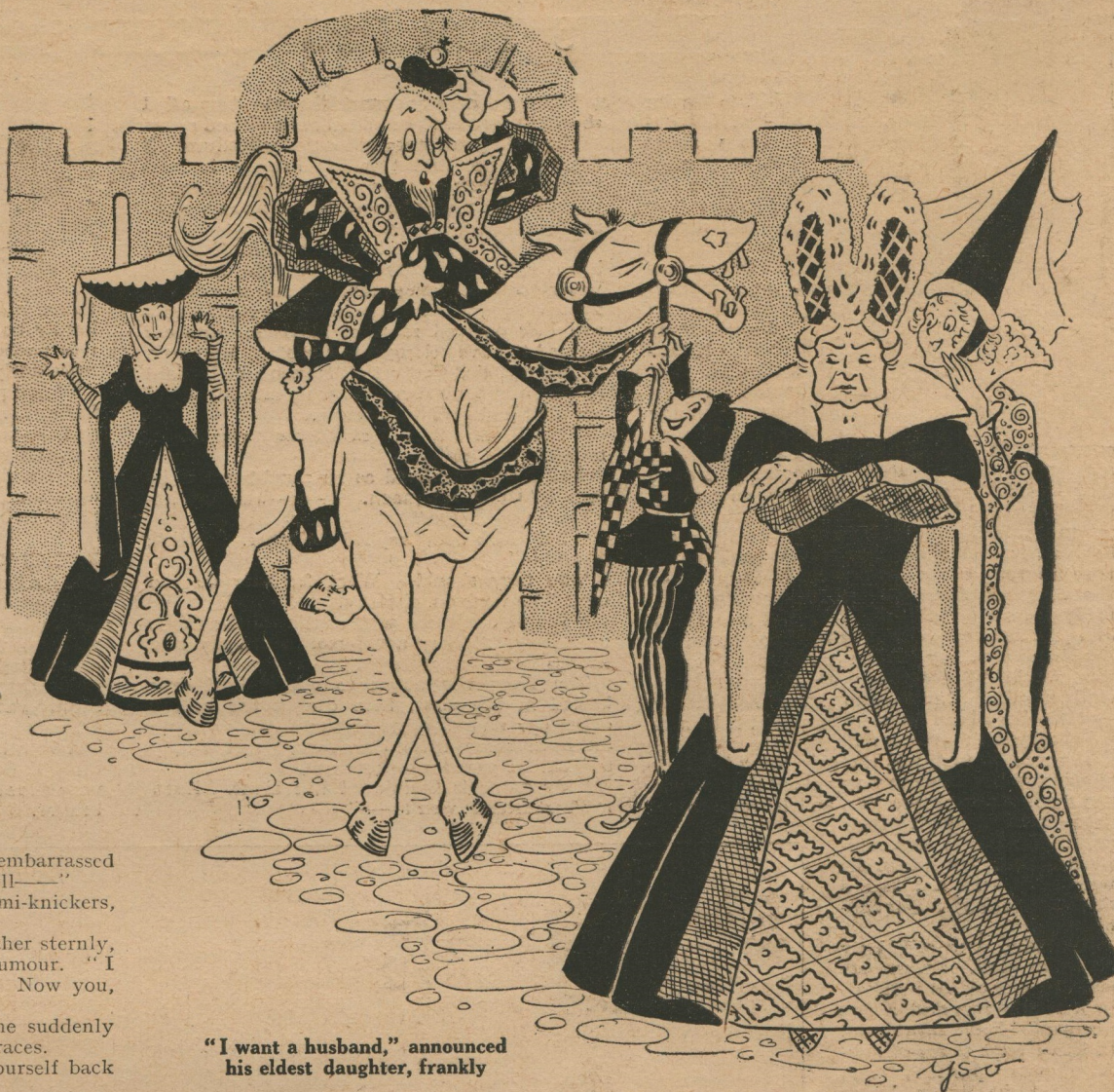
"Well, if you must bring me something—because of your promise—bring a tiny little present that won't cause you time or trouble. Say"—she glanced out of the window at the garden—"say just a red rose. As a token."

The King kissed her. "As a token. Very charming. I'm glad one of my daughters doesn't think only of what she can get out of her father," he remarked, to no one in particular, and made a mental note that for her consideration Fania should receive as good a present as the others. Let's see, hadn't the child inadvertently let slip something about jewellery . . . ?

Gaillardia merely snorted contemptuously. She saw through Fania's game. Delphine said nothing. With shining eyes and pink tongue just showing between her teeth, she was far too busy writing a large List of Underwear Suitable for a Pretty Princess.

WITH a large retinue King Maxim at last departed for Arcadia, and nothing more was heard of him for two days, when a horseman turned up asking for the King's third-best unicorn-spear which he'd left on the palace steps while mounting his horse.

Thereafter everything went swimmingly for the expedition. The enchanted forest, thanks to the Magician's exorcisms, offered no more difficulties than an ordinary one; the King of Arcadia was delighted to see his friend; and the very first day out Maxim notably brought down with a right and left spear a fine brace of unicorn actually advancing fiercely upon him. (He talked about it for years afterwards, the unicorn getting fiercer and larger and their charge swifter and more menacing—and never knew that they were tame ones specially released in his honour from the Royal Zoo the



"I want a husband," announced his eldest daughter, frankly

day before, their charge being merely a hurried amble in his direction in the hope of the pieces of biscuit they had been led to expect.)

Time, indeed, passed so pleasantly that it was not till nearly his last day he suddenly remembered that he had still to get his daughters' presents.

"By the way, Arcadia," he asked his host that evening, over an after-dinner stoup, "you don't know of a suitable Prince round here wanting to marry and settle down, do you?"

"Shouldn't tell you if I did; I've got three daughters to work off myself," pointed out the King of Arcadia with frankness.

"Quite so. I—er—just wondered. You see, I promised—" and he told the other all about the three gifts. "I did try yesterday to buy one or two of the—er—things my second daughter, Delphine, wanted"—he blushed at the recollection—"but the people in the market didn't seem to understand why I wanted them. And when they started showing me iron buckets with holes in them, fixed on tripods, I felt there must be some mistake. I mean, I feel sure no girls wear things like that, in these days. But it was on Delphine's list."

"Let me see." Maxim showed him. "Oh!" he laughed. "You must have asked for 'braziers.' Quite a different thing. These things are—well, it's difficult to explain. I tell you what. My second daughter, I know—that is, I'm told—has similar tastes to yours—that is, your daughter. Leave it to her to fix for you to-morrow. She'll love it. As long as," he said, pointedly, "you pay cash. She's too good at running up accounts as it is, and I'm always getting stung."

King Maxim agreed so enthusiastically that the other made a note to tell his daughter she might try slipping a few things for herself in the account as well.

"Your rose," he went on, "should be easy. Of course, they're a little scarce over here, but you'll pick up one on the way home; and as for the Prince—now I come to think of it, there is, of course, Prince Baltan, who's staying with us, but—well—he hasn't been quite himself for a long while."

"Dippy?"

"No. A spell. Tell me, which daughter is he for? The ugly one?"

"In certain lights," began King Maxim, loyally, "she's—"

"Oh, quite, quite! You know, I think Prince Baltan might suit."

"Where is he?"

"Staying in our rock-garden. He—er—well, he's a toad at the moment. Been a toad for years, to tell the truth."

"A toad. What on earth will Gaillardia say?"

"Let her say what she likes—you'll have kept your promise. And you won't get another Prince—even here. I mean, the moment you start asking, they'll guess there's a catch."

"Yes," admitted Maxim sadly. "As a matter of fact, there are several in our neighbourhood, Prince Charming of Zooltan and so on, but they hardly ever visit. I mean, even though Delphine's attractive enough, they're afraid that Gaillardia will—well, you know what I mean?"

"I do," replied the King of Arcadia. "Unmarried Princes are far more wary than they were in our young days—"

He broke off and looked cautiously over his shoulder to see if his Consort were in earshot.

(Turn Overleaf)

## PRESENTS FOR PRINCESSES

(Continued from the  
Preceding Page)King Maxim felt the  
conversation was  
getting difficult. "I  
wonder," he cut in,

**I**F King Maxim had felt dubious about Prince Baltan at the time, he felt increasingly so as he neared home. His Highness was accompanied by a Royal - Box-with - Holes-in-the-Lid, but beyond an occasional gurgling croak made no

comment on the situation, and the King did not press the acquaintanceship, feeling they had little in common. The only thing that consoled him was the thought that at any rate his other two daughters would have no kick coming. For several pack mules bore his very expensive present to Delphine—the King of Arcadia's second daughter had really spread herself—while he had also fallen into Fania's trap by buying the latest in Arcadian jewellery as an unofficial present. She would be surprised, he thought, little realizing that Fania—who knew her father—would have been far more surprised if he had only brought a rose after all.

The rose, in fact, was the only thing left and he was now beginning to worry about that, for he had made a solemn promise, and Kings in those days always kept their promises. But it was mid-winter, and, try where he would, he could not find a single rose of any colour anywhere.

His mind was still busy with the problem when one morning one of his horticultural scouts reported a fine rose-garden half a mile ahead. In those days of magic anything was possible, and though there was a heavy frost and six inches of snow, the King, accompanied by a small bodyguard, at once pressed forward, merely hoping that the garden wouldn't disappear in a cloud of smoke before he reached it, and that if he did get a rose it wouldn't turn into a salamander or something until after he'd got it safe into Fania's hands.

He soon found the place. At a high wire fence the snow seemed to stop dead and just inside were masses of lovely roses of all colours and in full bloom.

The King admired them for a short time, tentatively put an arm through the fence, murmuring something casual about wondering whether they smelt as nice as they looked, and found he couldn't reach.

He muttered something under his breath and then, staring steadily at the far horizon, but with an occasional glance at his bodyguard who all had long spears, he began to talk about roses in general and how they sometimes fell off and how, supposing he were to turn his back for a moment and then were to look round and find one had fallen off within reach, he would be so pleased he would give a piece of gold to the nearest person.

"The red ones are most likely to drop off, I shouldn't wonder," he added as he turned away.

His bodyguard were not quick-witted and all stood on one foot thinking heavily for two minutes; then an ugly rush was just about to begin when a most extraordinary figure appeared among the rose-bushes.

King Maxim had seen some peculiar things in his time, but never one quite like this. It looked vaguely like a young man, but the mouth was far too large, two teeth grew out at right-angles and hair covered most of his face. One ear seemed to have belonged to a rabbit. Moreover, he had a squint that set all Maxim's bodyguard looking over their shoulders or up into the sky to see what had held his attention.

"Good afternoon," said the apparition, mournfully.

The King shuddered as he caught one of its eyes. "Good afternoon. I—er—was just admiring your roses."

"They look well," replied the other. "People like them."

"So they should. What fertilizer do you use?" he went on, chattily.

"People don't like me," continued the other, unheeding. "They avoid me. Even my best friends won't tell me why."

The King was about to ask if he'd ever looked in the glass, then caught the being's other eye and changed it to: "Ah, well, we all have some little drawback," and finally averted his gaze for a short rest.

"My name is Chunk. I live alone. Even my best friends won't—"

"if you'd mind selling me a red rose? I promised my daughter I'd bring her one."

"I have three."

Chunk displayed animation. "I'll give you one," he said, "if you'll let me come along with you and watch you present it."

"Well—er—" The King thought this a bit off. Travelling round with Prince Baltan was bad enough, but this—he'd be getting himself talked about. Then he remembered that he'd hardly be likely to come across more magic of this particular sort before reaching home, and reluctantly agreed.

Chunk picked a red rose and climbed over the fence. He had a little travelling wallet with him and appeared to have been all ready for the road for some time. The bodyguard gave way several paces in alarm and looked fixedly in the opposite direction, fingering what talismans they happened to be carrying.

**K**ING MAXIM celebrated his home-coming by a little informal dinner in the back Banqueting Hall. The Vizier was for making a Grand Do of the event, but the King felt that what with Prince Baltan and Chunk he didn't dare risk it. He had not yet broken either of them to his daughters or to the Court, and a little cold supper was laid for them in a side room.

By the time the meal was over and everybody had heard at least twice the story of how he brought down a right and left unicorn, which were about to tear him to pieces, he felt a little braver.

"Now for the presents," he said. "Fania, you're youngest—we'll begin with you." He cleared his throat nervously and turned to a servant. "Ask Chunk to come in."

Chunk's sudden entrance was hardly a success. The assembly simply wasn't prepared for things like that, particularly after a heavy meal. At least two ladies-in-waiting fainted outright; there was a small stampede amongst the page boys, and the Court Chamberlain, who'd been doing himself pretty well, blinked rapidly and swore off marsala for a week. And then when, after the King had taken the rose from Chunk and presented it to Fania, and Chunk had suddenly and unexpectedly blurted out: "Will you marry me? I ask everyone but no one will. Even my best friends won't tell me why," the King nearly had to summon the guard to cope with it all.

Fania, however, was the only one who was unperturbed, and she had a good reason. For the previous evening she had found in an old history book the story of an ancestor of hers, a certain Great-great-aunt Beauty and her husband King Beast, and she guessed what no one else did, that Chunk was only a Prince in disguise who would resume his original handsome shape as soon as a Princess married him. She looked at Chunk. Chunk gazed soulfully back with one eye—the other was quite unconsciously petrifying a maid-of-honour forty-five degrees to her right—and instantly confirmed Fania's intuition; for no one except (Turn to the Facing Page)



**Film Fan:** "Er—what have you got on for Christmas?"  
**Commissionaire:** "Nawt special, miss—I'm free if you are."

(Continued from the Facing Page)

a really handsome, eligible Prince in disguise could be quite as ghastrly.

So she smiled winningly and said, "Yes."

This time it was the King who caused most of the disturbance. He was the only one who was prepared for Chunk's appearance a few minutes earlier, but he was certainly not prepared for him as a son-in-law. He started an argument with Fania—Chunk standing by and saying, mournfully, "I told you no one likes me," which got so acrimonious that she burst into tears and ran from the room without waiting for the additional present she knew well her father had got. But she would not go back on what she said. Magic in those days being what it was, she knew she was on to a sure thing.

Still muttering angrily, the King turned to Delphine. "Now yours," he growled.

Delphine's present took some while to unpack; and as garment by garment was produced, the interest displayed by all the young Courtiers present, including the Vizier, who was old enough to have known better, became so overwhelming that Gaillardia got impatient.

"I'm still here, father," she observed, in a cold voice.

"Oh, yes, yes," said her parent, his temper now restored by Delphine's obvious pleasure, not to say the young Courtiers'.

"That is, if the Vizier doesn't mind," she added pointedly.

The Vizier, who, with a great air of innocence was wondering out loud how Delphine's present would look when no longer, as it were, empty, suddenly broke off in confusion.

"Let me see, Gaillardia," said the King, remembering Prince Baltan a little nervously and affecting to cudgel his memory. "What was it for you?" He was hoping she wouldn't go through with it—after the episode of Chunk."

"A husband," said Gaillardia bluntly. She had no false modesty.

The King's memory suddenly improved. "That was up to you, I think, my dear. An unmarried Prince was the exact wording." He turned to a servant. "Ask His Highness Prince Baltan to step this way."

Prince Baltan entered with all the dignity a toad could command, rather spoilt by having to be helped up on to the table by the hind leg. "Prince Baltan, unmarried—my daughter, Princess Gaillardia, introduced King Maxim. The toad tried to achieve a courtly bow and fell into a bowl of sugar.

Gaillardia, to do her justice, took it on the chin. She swept the Prince a curtsy, picked him out of the sugar and dusted him over.

The King was surprised and pleased. "Charming, charming!" he said behind his hand to the Vizier. "Getting together well, aren't they?"

Prince Baltan suddenly got bold. Moreover, he'd been listening to Chunk under the door. Dipping one foot in fruit-salad juice, he wrote, "Marry me" on the table-cloth.

"If you really are a Prince," said Gaillardia cautiously. "In disguise, that is," she hastily added.

Prince Baltan nodded vigorously and tried to look regal.

There was a silence all round the table as the little romance unfolded itself.

"Then I will," said Gaillardia. "Even though you are so ugly."

"A good one that, from Gaillardia of all people—" the King was whispering to the Vizier when a sort of flash occurred and Prince Baltan resumed his normal shape.

It took a little time to clear up the mess—after all he was on the table at the time—and then it was seen that he was a stolid but fairly presentable young man. "Boot's on the other foot now," murmured the King. "He'll cry off."

But he didn't. It seemed he had been a toad so long that his ideas of beauty had got rather warped, and to his dying day he thought that Gaillardia was the most lovely girl he had ever seen. Indeed, in conversation on the subject he was a little trying and people often found it hard to be tactful.

"Well, that's that," said the King, reaching again for the decanter. "Happy New Year, all!"

**N**EXT week there was a grand triple wedding, for in her quiet way Delphine had been the wisest of them all. For she was so proud of her new present she didn't mind showing any of it to people whatever or wherever it was, with the result that within a few days the palace was full of neighbouring princes who had heard the good words and had just "casually dropped in while passing," and she had the pick of them, finally settling on Prince Charming of Zooltan.

Indeed, the only snag at the wedding was that nothing happened to Chunk. Fania had been too clever for once, for Chunk wasn't suffering from a spell. He'd been like that from birth and nothing, it seemed, could be done. People continued to avoid him, and for once he couldn't complain that even his best friends wouldn't tell him why. A man's best friend is his wife, and he was always hearing about it.

\*\*\*

THE colonel was crossing the parade ground when he passed a recruit. To the colonel's surprise, the latter took not the slightest notice of him.

The colonel demanded, "Why don't you salute?"

The recruit remained silent.

"Don't you know who I am? I am the colonel!" yelled the C.O.

The recruit woke up and said, "Oh, you're the colonel, are yer? Well, you'd better buzz off, for the sergeant-major's been round 'ere three times looking for yer!"



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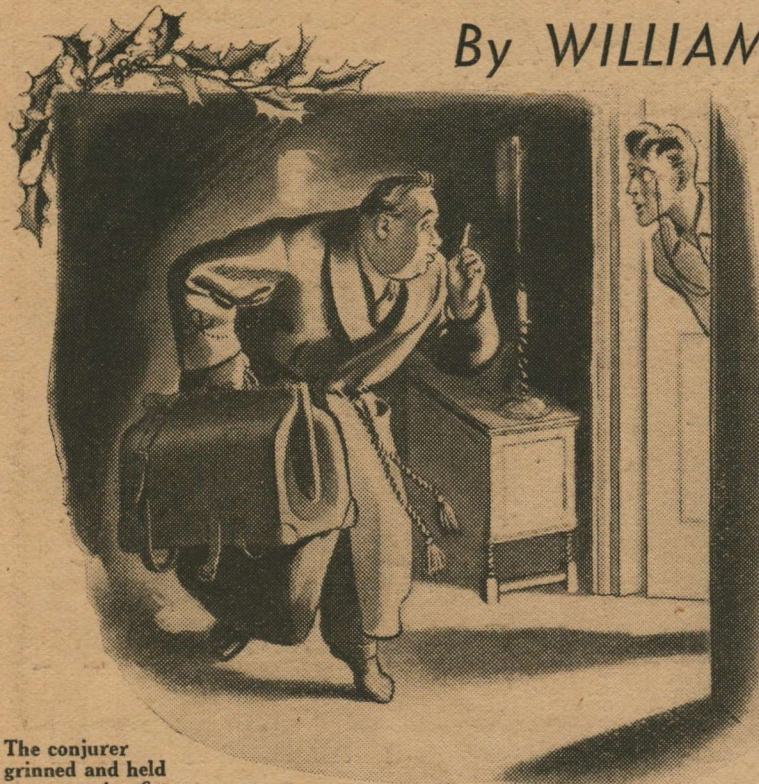
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# HATS OFF TO AMBROSE

By WILLIAM FREEMAN



The conjurer grinned and held up a warning finger

THERE was one other occupant of the bench in the down-platform waiting-room beside myself—a rubicund little man with a large suitcase. For a time the Christmas Eve silence was broken only by the swish of rain and the flapping of a sodden poster imploring us to Bask in Balmy Breezes at Beautiful Bungsea. There was nothing to read beyond a notice on Swine Fever dated 1894, and not light enough to read even that.

At last the rubicund man spoke.

"Going to Chitterly?"

I nodded.

"Staying at the Towers?"

"Er—yes. But how did you——?"

"Practically nowhere else to stay, is there? Apart from the fact that—forgive me—I read the label on your luggage. My destination, too."

"Your first visit?" I asked. I couldn't recall his face.

"Yes." He hesitated, and then continued: "Nominally, I'm a guest. But actually I'm a professional conjurer, hired to amuse the crowd. My name's Mewkes—Ambrose Mewkes. The chap my firm usually sends down on jobs like this crooked up at the last moment."

"Really?" I said. Lady Julia had a habit of adding unexpected ingredients to her house parties. Sometimes she mentioned it to her husband, sometimes she didn't. "Well, I, as a member of the family, come down every year." He cocked a shrewd eye at me.

"From choice?"

"Far from it. But habit's habit, and tradition is tradition."

"Biggish family, isn't it?"

"It is. What with varying degrees of cousins, and jolly old pals, and school friends, I shouldn't be surprised if you'd an audience of thirty or forty. Luckily, the place is as big as the Ritz—the last train goes at 8.30, and most of them will have to stay the night."

Mr. Mewkes murmured "Excellent."

"Is it?" I said. "Half the visitors are schoolboys and unmitigated young fiends. No sense of what's due to middle age—none whatever. Practical jokers of the lowest type. Young Jimmy Busk, for instance, will almost certainly do his best to wreck your show."

"Think so?" He grinned, looking like a mischievous child himself. "Then why shouldn't one carry the war into the enemy's camp?"

I grasped his meaning. "You mean play jokes on the jokers? It ought to be easy enough—the worst of them, as it happens, all sleep in the East Wing. A few apple-pie beds—"

"Oh, subtler than that, far subtler. And perpetrated in the small hours." Mr. Mewkes tapped the large suitcase affectionately. "*The Phantom Toad, Highly Disconcerting; The Onion that Squeaks; The Great Mosquito Illusion; Nightmare Fingers, or Slow Death—ending in a Hearty Laugh on Awakening; The Gurgling—*"

I checked his list of coming attractions; I didn't want to hear too much in advance. Ignorance is the completest alibi.

"It would," I suggested, "be useful for you to know the general lay-out of the Manor. If you possess pencil and paper—"

He possessed both. I sketched a plan of the bedroom floor.

"Jimmy Busk," I said, "will be in the end room. A red-haired little brute, responsible last year for the holly which filled the legs of my pyjamas."

"James," said Mr. Mewkes, "shall be awarded the Order of the Squeaking Onion."

"Next to him I expect they'll put young Bert Parslow, who draped a dead snake round my electric light switch."

"For him I shall prescribe the Phantom Toad, with Noises. There's only one thing that's worrying me. Shouldn't someone drop a hint in advance, just a hint, to her ladyship?"

"My dear sir," I said, "I myself will see to that. . . . Here, I fancy, is our train."

Conversation for the rest of the journey consisted mainly of details, asked and answered.

I CANNOT pretend that Mewkes's entertainment was particularly brilliant or original.

The juveniles were, as usual, more critical than their elders. As I watched their faces, I chuckled at the thought of what was coming to them.

The household retired about midnight. At two o'clock a faint creaking sound in the corridor outside aroused me. I slid out of bed, and with extreme caution—having earlier tripped over a thread tied between two chairs—opened the door an inch or so. As I had anticipated, it was the conjurer. He saw me, grinned, and held up a warning finger.

I nodded, and retreated contentedly.

I AWOKE again to broad daylight and an inexplicable uproar. The entire household appeared to be in a state of protest. The little victims, I told myself. Ha, ha!

I dressed and went down.

The hall was full of people, including three policemen and Sir John. He saw me and literally dragged me into the turmoil.

The facts, emerging, gave me a sinking sensation which had nothing to do with absence of breakfast.

The house had been scientifically and painstakingly burgled. Jewellery, Sir John's celebrated collection of gold coins, the best and most portable of the eighteenth-century silver—all had vanished.

The local police, following a long conversation with Scotland Yard, announced that it was the job of one Michael Pritch, *alias* Chubby, *alias* Music Hall Mike, specialist in forged references.

"Where's that conjurer fellow?" demanded Sir John, suddenly.

His room was empty. He and the big suitcase were missing. I thought of my sketch-plan, of the information I had supplied.

The sinking feeling became more pronounced than ever. Became so acute that, pleading a forgotten engagement, I returned to town that afternoon.

As I left, half a bucket of soapy water descended from an upper window. I looked up and caught sight of Jimmy Busk's grinning face. It certainly wasn't the face of one who has suffered from a Squeaking Onion.

—\*—

Two men had invited two girls to play a foursome at golf. Smith was good-looking but no player. Brown was an ugly little fellow who beat the ball a good furlong every time.

On the tee there was some discussion concerning partnerships, and finally it was agreed to toss up.

"Oh, in that case," said one of the girls, artlessly, "I might as well take Mr. Brown right away. I never have any luck at tossing."

## THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS

SOME say it's just for children, and the lighted Christmas tree

With the glittering toys upon it isn't meant for men like me.

Well, I don't know how to argue with the cynics grown so wise,

And the sad and solemn sages joy can never more surprise,

But disdaining facts and figures, though my hair is turning grey,

I still like the glad excitement and the thrills of Christmas Day.

Let the old curmudgeons scorn it! Let 'em fling their jibes and jeers!

I'm as happy as the youngsters when the Christmas time appears.

Though I do not really need them, I am sure that hurt I'd be

If I woke on Christmas morning and no presents came for me,

With those bits of sweet remembrance love has laboured to supply,

There is no drum-pounding youngster who can gladder be than I.

When I hear the scoffers saying that it's just for children small,

I still hold to my opinion Christmas Day is for us all;

That the fathers and the mothers, and the aunts and uncles, too,

Come as close to being happy as the youngsters ever do.

If it's just a time for children, this is all I've got to say;

I don't want to be a grown-up when it comes to Christmas Day.

EDGAR A. GUEST.

# THE MAN WHO SOLD MIRACLES

BY AIRD GALLOWAY

NIGHT came early that afternoon. The fog brought it as it drifted down in damp shreds from the roof-tops. And Jerry Laker shivered and groaned and shuffled his tired feet by the kerbside as he pulled the thin collar of his jacket closer to his neck.

He stood lost in a sea of swirling oblivion through which came the sounds of laughter as busy Christmas shoppers crushed their way slowly past him. Then the curtain trailed its wet ends across him to reveal him, pathetically forgotten, clutching his tray of imitation brilliants and coloured jewellery.

Three girls passed, arm in arm and brimful of gaiety. . . . "Nice powder-jack, miss," he suggested, throatily. But they passed on unheeding. Lor', it was a heartbreak, Jerry Laker thought miserably. After five chill hours he could count a clear profit of one and ninepence. This would be another dreary return to his room in Pimlico, where Minnie was waiting so patiently and so hopefully.

HE eased the laden tray on its chafing shoulder-straps as he watched an elderly man come out of a shop ten yards away and walk towards him with his eyes searching the pavement at his slow feet; his appearance suggested comfort and plenty; his coat was warm and heavy and he walked with his hands sunk deeply into the pockets and with his umbrella hanging aimlessly from his left arm.

But his face was forlorn under the greying hair that peeped from his black felt hat. . . . Some folks is never happy, Jerry Laker opined bitterly. . . . "Buy a nice bracelet for your wife, sir," he invited confidentially as the man came abreast of him. "She'd love it. Honest!" he added, desperately.

The man stopped. He looked at the pedlar blankly—some inward vision filled his eyes.

"All British made, guv'nor. Genuwine, sir. An' worth double," Jerry explained, expertly. "Miracles o' workmanship, sir—"

He broke off with a short gasp of surprise. Now why the dickens had he thought of a word like that? That was a good one, right enough. He drew himself up to his full five-feet-five-inches and smiled broadly.

"Lovely miracles," he said, almost with reverence in his tired voice.

The man blinked and shook his head.

"Miracles?" he repeated.

Jerry nodded eagerly, grinning his widest. "All of 'em, sir. Look!" and he lifted up a necklace in his thin, frozen fingers and watched it sparkle richly in the light from the shop windows opposite. "Imitashun 'Gyptian," he said, proudly. "The British Museum wouldn't reckernize the difference. One-and-six, sir. And worth double! Wait till your wife sees it."

A wan smile lit the man's features. He pulled at his under-lip with a fidgeting finger and thumb.

"I'm afraid there's nothing that my wife wants. That I know of, I mean. You see, I—she's got everything that money can—I mean," he said, awkwardly, "there's only one thing she needs. But money wouldn't buy it. It—it's—you used the word just now—a miracle is the only thing that would do it. . . ."

Jerry Laker shook his head, bewildered—and his mouth opened to a gape. Then he laughed, harshly it seemed, with his face contorted.

"Lummy, just give me the chance an' I know a hundred things I'd buy m'wife that she wants badly—beginning w' the back rent for our room, a square meal, an' a winter coat." He



**"You'll be famous one day—if you just keep at it," Nancy told him proudly**

stopped suddenly, and embarrassment lit up his face. "Beggin' your pardon, guv'nor," he said, quietly. "But, you see—that 'ud be a miracle to me an' m'wife . . . if you know what I mean, sir."

"Yes, I know." The grey head nodded quickly. "But money can buy that—"

"There ain't nothin' that money can't buy in this world," Jerry exclaimed with a burst of bitterness. "I reckon money can buy everything."

"Not everything!" The elderly man's smile was warm with sympathy. He put out a hand. "I'll take this brooch." And he handed a piece of paper to the kerbside vendor. "Keep the change. Good-night," he said, and turned away.

Jerry Laker's thanks were loud. He unrolled the note—and stared unbelievably at it. Revelation swept through him like a hot wind. "Hi, mister—mister!" he called, and ran after the retreating figure. "Hi—sir!—you've made a mistake. This is a fiver."

The man turned. "I know." His smile was pathetic, forlorn, as he regarded the anxious incredulity in Jerry Laker's thin face. "Maybe it will work a few—cr—miracles for you. . . ."

IT was dark in the roof-top room, except for the meagre light that filtered in eerily from a high street arc-lamp. The woman by the table re-arranged once more the cup and saucer and plate, and drew a clean dish-cloth over the makings of a sparse meal. Outside, down in the night, a clock struck six. She stifled a surge of panic. There was still plenty of time—a full hour, perhaps two hours, before he would return.

She moved quickly, with her breath flailing painfully against her thin ribs. Her face was pinched and sunken as she moved against the light from the street. Soon she was ready, and she stood for a moment in the half-light hugging an ill-made parcel.

Quietly she opened the door and drew it behind her. She locked it and left the key in the lock. Then she tiptoed across the creaking landing and made her way cautiously down the first flight of steep and twisted stairs.

Far below she heard feet scuttle across the linoleum in the hall that opened on to the street. And a whistle, shrill, wavering, inimitable, echoed up the well of the stairway.

She halted, stunned to immobility. He was coming running, taking two steps at a time—coming eagerly as he usually did, no matter how tired he was or how empty his day.

"Minnie!" he called out.

He came barging round the bend of the stairs, humming gaily. Then he stopped. "Why, Minnie? Where are you goin', eh?" He looked at her parcel, at the thin waterproof, at the confusion on her features, the frantic look in her eyes.

"Just—out, Jerry. Just—"

He climbed the last two steps. He stood close to her and caught her by an arm, scared and angry.

"You was runnin' out on me," he exclaimed, bitterly. "Just as you said you would. Oh, Minnie!"

Still holding her he led her back to the room and closed the door.

She swung round. "I'm only a drag on you. Me and my ill-turns

and not able to help, and doctor's bills and medicines, and not enough to pay our room."

"But, Minnie," he began. She interrupted frenziedly.

"Miss Hall was up this afternoon. That woman's the whitest I've met. But she needs the money. We owe her almost five pounds. We'll never pay that back. . . . Then—I thought I'd just go," she said, helplessly. "It 'ud help you, Jerry."

He held her grimly, as if afraid to leave go. "Don't talk soft," he told her, passionately.

"Where d'you think you'd go—you and your sick turns." He was trembling with agitation and his voice broke. "Never do that again, Minnie. Look—" and he held out something that crinkled and was white in the confusing gloom. "It's a fiver. Honest! Genuwine. An old toff stopped to speak to me and gave me it. Queer, he was. And he wouldn't take it back. Come on, now," he cried. "Smile, Minnie. Everything's all right now, china!"

He could see that she was smiling, and the street lamp glinted against the tears in her eyes. She leaned against him weakly.

"Oh, Jerry," she whispered, happily. "That's

(Turn Overleaf)

# THE MAN WHO SOLD MIRACLES

(Continued from the  
Preceding Page)

wonderful. It was breaking my heart to leave you, it was."

THE fog had turned to a sticky rain when Miss Hall reached the corner of Thrale Street, S.W., and broke into a trot. She hoped she would reach the grocer's shop before it closed; then she remembered that as it was Christmas week the hours had been extended.

A car stood by the pavement outside Mr. George Gittins's premises. Its engine was silent, and a man lounged over the wheel. Miss Hall wheeled nimbly into the entrance and opened the door. Above her head a bell clanged its warning.

No one came. She waited, looking about her. She rapped a penny against the counter. Still there was no reply.

"That's strange," she said to herself, aloud. She looked out to the short vestibule by the doorway to see if the errand-boy's cycle was there. It was gone. He'd probably be out with some late orders. There were always inconsiderate customers to humour . . .

"Mr. Gittins!" she called out. The sound of her voice seemed to swell out and fill the shop and fade away into the mocking echoes. She hesitated, then stepped down the length of the counter, past the bacon-cutter and into the short lobby leading to the back-shop and its clutter of assorted groceries and unopened packages. She heard a scraping noise, as if some rats had run over the potato bunker.

She stopped suddenly, her breath in a tight, strangling knot. She let out a scream of alarm as she saw the figure of George Gittins lying outstretched on the floor beside some bulging bags of sugar. Then her scream died as quickly as it had come. A dark shadow leapt at her from a corner, an oath burst redly on her ears and rough arms sent her spinning across the floor to land half-stunned by the wash-basin by the grilled window. As she pulled herself up she heard feet lumbering down the front shop; then the bell rang uselessly as the street door crashed back.

Panic assailed her. She ran to the pavement. It was deserted—and the car was gone, careering madly down Thrale Street with a dark figure clinging to the running-board. She stumbled back into the shop. On a wall bracket she saw the telephone.

"Give me the police," she cried into the mouth-piece. "It's desperate . . . Hullo, police? Come quickly! There's been a hold-up in Mr. Gittins's grocer's shop in Thrale Street. Two men in a dark car. It's GY something, with two nines in the number—hurry, please . . ."

Mr. George Gittins still lay, sprawled and inert, on the floor. Miss Hall ran to the wash-basin, filled a tumbler with water and bathed the face and the wrists.

"Mr. Gittins?" she called to him, fearfully.

He did not stir.

"George?" she cried, frantically, and stroked his face.

He opened his eyes slowly. "Some—something hit me," he groaned. He struggled to rise. She put her arms around him and helped to lean against one of his sugar bags. On the crown of his head, where the greying hair was going thin, there was a great, fiery lump, ugly and contused.

"Motor bandits," she said, quickly, regarding him with concern in her soft grey eyes. "I'll see if they got the till."

She was back in a moment, smiling.

"I must've come in at the wrong moment. It's intact."

He smiled. "That's not the first time you've proved that I need you—Ruth," he told her. "I'm going to ask you again and again till you say yes to me. Ruth," he pleaded, and held out a hand to her as she stood looking down at him, "won't you marry me? We're both so terribly lonely. I've only got Nancy, my girl, but I seldom share her brightness since she went to that place in Devon to be a nurse."

Ruth Hall sat down beside him. She let him take one of her hands in his. She thought of her dingy house, let off in cheap apartments to tenants who either bilked, cleared off at night-time without warning, or else had runs of bad luck and quickly fell behind with their rent. She knew she ought to be firmer, to turn them out when the weeks passed without a penny-piece coming her way so that she had to eat into her slender savings.

"You're far too soft-hearted," George Gittins

had told her repeatedly in his blunt Yorkshire manner. "Letting rooms doesn't mix with sentiment." Maybe he was right—and maybe he wasn't.

If she'd turned out the Lakers she wouldn't have got a penny-piece at all from them. And now something marvellous had happened—right out of the blue . . . and she looked down at the crisp five-pound note with which Jerry Laker had paid her towards his back rent.

She held out the note. "I want to pay my debt first—four pounds one and sixpence," she said.

He laughed softly. "You're a terrible stickler for things like that, Ruth. I've told you I don't want it. Not a ha'penny of it. I'm only too happy to—"

"You've got to take it. I've had all the food it means." She looked down at the floor, blushing hotly. "I don't want to be owing you a—a ha'penny the next time you—the next time you ask me to—"

He grinned with boyish exuberance. He eagerly took the note from her and pushed it into his apron pocket. "All right," he said. "I never wanted it. But I'll send some to Nancy for a Christmas gift. She'll know what she wants most. You see, it's her first Christmas away from me." He paused. He leaned forward. "Now," he said, wonder in his voice, "will you marry me, Ruth?"

She was in his arms. He kissed her tenderly and held her to him happily. They did not hear the rubber-heels tread in the passage from the main shop; they were unaware of anyone but their two selves until a hoarse voice broke in on them. . . . "Excuse me, but I thought there was a hold-up here?"

The police officer smothered an unofficial chuckle.

Mr. George Gittins looked up. His eyes were shining. "There have been two hold-ups, officer. But this one's—er—strictly legal. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

**NURSE NANCY GITTINS** came off early duty at five o'clock and ran fleetly to her room at the rear of Mellycombe Cottage Hospital. She bathed quickly, then, radiant in her dressing-gown, sat before her mirror putting order into the sun-ripe tangle of her hair.

She turned her head as a knock sounded on her door. A maid looked in. "Post, nurse," she announced, and put down a letter on the chair nearest the door.

Nancy picked it up. {The address was typewritten. She slit the envelope open eagerly and trembled with excitement when she saw the letter-heading: Glucker and Larue, Art Dealers. She sat down until she read the contents out to herself:—

"Dear Madam, We thank you for your esteemed inquiry and for your money-order to the value of Five Pounds. The painting you mention—Mellycombe Mills, Devon: Autumn Sunset, by James Ropper—is being forwarded to you immediately under separate and registered cover. With reference to the last paragraph of your letter, you may rest assured that your kind patronage will be treated with the

(Turn to Page 38)



"No, shir, 'ish Grace ish not at 'ome."



# THE MAN WHO SOLD MIRACLES

(Continued from  
Page 36)

utmost confidence and that the purchaser's identity will not be revealed on any account. Assuring you of our respectful attention. . . ."

Her eyes were sparkling excitedly as she completed her dressing and threw on her coat. She fitted a tiny, chic hat to her head, locked the letter away in her trunk and left the room quickly. Across the tiled hallway she ran, out into the frosty night and down the moonlit drive to the roadway.

A young man was waiting. His coat-collar was close to his ears to keep out the chill. But as he kissed her there was a surging warmth in his embrace.

"Nancy," he said, jubilantly, "I've got the greatest news. I've sold that picture of the mills in sunset. Got word from the dealers just before I left the digs."

"I'm glad, Jim. Terribly, terribly glad," she told him. "I always told you you would."

He linked her arm in his and they set off down the long hill towards the village, where they usually took tea and hot muffins in old Mrs. Trelick's Cottage Tea-Rest.

"I got five pounds for it, Nancy," he continued, awe in his eager voice.

She nestled closely to him, fitting her stride to his. "You'll be famous one day—if you just keep at it," she told him proudly.

He shook his head. And he laughed his denial. "It's perhaps strange—but you know, dearest, that letter has made me see things differently. I'm chucking it!"

She gave a choked cry and came to a sudden stop. "Jim!" All her scheming had been for nothing after all; that money she had got from her father for a Christmas gift and had spent secretly on what Jim considered his masterpiece, so that he would have fresh heart and inspiration to work towards his artistic ideals and the fulfilment of his career. "Jim," she said, brokenly, "you can't do that—"

He looked down at her. His face was taut. "Listen, Nancy. The money I had behind me is almost gone. That fiver, less commission, will not last me many more weeks after my own lot is gone. That sale has made me see things in a different light. It'll be donkeys' years before I make enough for us to get married—"

"But I'll wait," she told him.

"No fear, Nancy. It might be a lifetime. I'm going up to London with the midnight mail. I'm quite willing to go back into Dad's business—if it means good money—and our marriage, dear."

She knew she was losing the battle, but she fought on. "That will look like giving in, eating humble-pie. You're not going to do that for me, Jim. . . ."

HE held her warm body to his as they stood in the shadow of a moon-raked hedge. "You didn't come into my scheme of things when I quarrelled with Dad nine months ago and said I'd make my livelihood with painting. We said bitter things that day. To each other. I've never been back. Never written—not after being told to clear out. I've often wanted to—especially to Mother, for she tried to understand. Maybe I was too bitter. Well," and he shook his head and smiled, "I met you, Nancy. And that has made things different—"

"Yes, but your painting—and your dreams," she reminded him, strickenly.

"I won't need to give that up. I can keep at it—as a hobby. With you beside me I'll be able to tackle anything—anything! Even the cotton trade!" he added, with a laugh. "And I won't be crawling. I'll show Dad that letter telling me of the sale. That'll let him see I can do it. Then—I'll tell him about you, dearest."

Nancy took a long breath. She was silent for a moment as she nodded on her inward thoughts. "That means we won't spend Christmas together as we had planned. To-morrow is Christmas Eve."

"I'll wire you to come up to London if every-

thing's all right." He held her tightly again. "Everything will be all right," he assured her, heartily.

They were almost at the bottom of the hill when he said, with a gay chuckle, "It's funny, dearest, but love gives even cotton a glamour. . . ."

JOE HICKS, the commissionaire at the offices of Ropper, Harlby and Chose, Cotton Merchants in the City of London, touched his cap as the squat figure of Mr. Charles Ropper came up the steps. His hands were lost in the depths of his great-coat pocket, his umbrella trailed from his left arm, and his chin was lost

in the silken warmth of his cravat as he entered the building deep in thought.

"Lovely morning, sir," Hicks greeted his employer.

Brooding grey eyes looked up; a ghost of a smile flickered in them. "Yes. Good morning, Hicks."

He continued slowly towards the lift and was shot up to his room on the first floor. It was a large room, with the directors' table running down the centre of the richly-carpeted floor, and flaming fireplaces at either end. It was warm, comfortable, peaceful. But there was no peace for the man whose enterprise had built the vast business from modest beginnings.

He hung up his coat and hat and went to one of the windows and stood looking down on the busy pavements. To-morrow was Christmas Day, and even yet, at the last hour, he had been unable to decide on anything for his customary gift to Madge, his wife—the Christmas token of his affection he had religiously proffered every Christmas morning during their thirty years of happy married life—happy, until the day Jim had left them in a storm of young bitterness. . . .

His telephone bell rang. He turned and lifted the receiver. "Hullo—"

Hicks's voice said: "Mr. James to see you, sir. He asked me to inquire if you were available—"

"James! Jim!" Charles Ropper's colour faded swiftly, then flared to hot fire on his cheekbones. His voice was trembling. "Yes—yes—tell him to come up—tell him to come up—"

He put down the instrument; and he found that the distance between the table and the windows was fogged with the moisture in his eyes. . . .

HALF an hour later, Hicks saw the two men come down the stairs together, arm in arm.

"Heavens," thought Hicks, "but the Old Man looks twenty years younger."

He heard Mr. Ropper say as they crossed the hall. . . . "and, Jimmy, my boy, it means I'm taking home the finest Christmas present of a lifetime. Wait till your mother sees you. . . ."

Hicks touched his cap and held open the glass door. Mr. Charles Ropper halted. He took a piece of paper from his pocket and scribbled something on it. "Oh, Hicks," he said, "send off this telegram, will you? I'll read it to you: 'To Miss Nancy Gittins, Mellycombe Cottage Hospital, Devon—catch evening train—will meet you London—love—Jim.'"

Hicks took the paper. "Yes, sir. Right away, sir."

As he preceded them down the steps to call a taxi, he heard the Old Man say: "You know, Jim, just the other day I gave a pavement pedlar some money to—to—well, he said he was selling miracles." Mr. Charles Ropper laughed softly. "He said money could buy anything. But he didn't know that the miracle I was looking for was you coming home to us for Christmas. . . ."

—\*—

The foreman eyed William thoughtfully. "Ave you ever used a pick and shovel before?" he asked.

"No," answered William, "but I'm willing to try."

"Do you drink?"

"I neither drink nor smoke," came the reply.

"Ave you got a young lady?"

"No, boss," sighed William.

"Well," said the foreman, "you'll be 'andy to collect the tanners for the football sweep."

"SINCE we've moved to the country," explained the hostess, proudly, "we raise nearly everything we eat. We even keep our own cow."

"Well," said the small son of the guest, setting down his glass disgustedly, "somebody stung you with a sour cow."

## THE HAND THAT CHEERS

By NOEL JAQUIN

CHRISTMAS is a time of blazing log fires, eating and drinking, the telling of ghost stories. It is a time when we remember the people and events of the past. Family gatherings are attended by ghostly shadows—the memories of friends who have passed.

This is the time of the hand that cheers, the hand that dips deep into pockets for toys for the kiddies, for cheerful atrocities in the form of unwearable neckwear for relatives. It is a time when every kindly human sentiment becomes a living thing, a time when we remember the poor and envy the rich their power in the cause of charity.

At the end of the day of feasting and fun, we may sit and watch the dying fire and think of what we have done with our life in the past year, and, maybe, wonder what we may do with it in the year that is before us. There is, generally, a sad note in such musings—an element of "what might have been."

What would you not give for a true glimpse of what the Future holds for you? How you would love to have some spirit waft you, like it did old Scrooge, to see "what is yet to be"! What alterations you would make in your conduct and life!

We cannot summon spirits to our aid, and there is no need. All the warnings, all the possibilities and prospects of your life are written in your hand. The hand that cheers is the hand that betrays a balanced mind, a healthy body, an aptitude to gather happiness from life.

Does your hand offer a solution to your problems? Does it give a warning or does it give encouragement?

Send the outline of your hand (by laying the left hand on a sheet of white paper and drawing a pencil or pen from one side of the wrist round the fingers and thumb to the other), together with a sixpenny postal order, the coupon below, your name, date of birth, and any ONE special question that you wish to ask, with a stamped addressed envelope, to the Editor of "Tit-Bits," Tower House, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.2, marking your envelope "Hand." You will NOT receive a reply if you fail to send a stamped envelope. Readers living abroad must send an International Reply Coupon. You must be prepared to wait at least a fortnight for a reply.

### "TIT-BITS" HEALTH AND CHARACTER GUIDE.

I enclose an outline of my hand, a sixpenny postal order, and a stamped addressed envelope for Mr. Noel Jaquin's reading.

Date of Birth.....

LESLIE FULLER, Stage and Screen Comedian, Plays

# Policeman's Knock!



"It d-doesn't ma-ma-matter," I gurgled.  
"Sorry you've been tr-tr-troubled"

LAST Christmas I arranged to stay with friends in the Midlands. Driving there in my car I missed my way and in the late evening found myself crawling along a narrow lane in a part of the country I'd never seen before. Just ahead I saw a man walking towards me and stopped to ask him the way. As he came up to the car I felt my backbone going all wobbly, because he had a mask over his face, his cap pulled down over his eyes, and a huge bludgeon sticking out of his pocket.

"It d-doesn't ma-ma-matter," I guggled, putting the car into gear. "Sorry you've been tr-tr-troubled."

I trod on the accelerator, but in my panic I'd put the car in reverse, so all I did was to back into the hedge. The horrible-looking thug ran up and I tried to crawl under the car and pretend he wasn't there.

"Merry Christmas, gov'nor!" he shouted. "I suppose you've come to help in the fun."

## Welcome to Crookland

I THOUGHT that if there was any fun I shouldn't be in a position to enjoy it much, so I just cowered down and waited to be put out of my misery.

"Give us a lift, gov'nor, and we'll be down at the big hall in no time."

He opened the door and sat beside me, so I had no option. We drove along twisty roads for about five minutes and then came to quite a large town and stopped outside a hall that was packed with people. My pal and I got out, and I was immediately surrounded by an excited crowd shaking my hand and patting me on the back. Then a big man wearing a false beard stepped forward and cried, "Welcome to Crookland."

"You're not disguised," he added, looking at me anxiously. "Look, here's a false beard for you. Put it on—you never know who might see you."

I hung it on my ears and it tickled my nose and made me sneeze. My big pal led the way into the hall where, apparently, the excitement was just about to begin. A couple of dozen small boys, all wearing masks and carrying jemmies and electric torches, stood in a row.

"All ready?" yelled the big chap. "Then off you go! Each boy has a grown-up with him to see that he doesn't play fair. Don't forget, the boy who does the best bit of crib-cracking gets a special prize."

I was sent hurrying off by the side of a tough young egg of thirteen or so who led the way down a dark lane. He pulled something heavy out of his pocket.

"I gotter gat!" he announced, proudly. "It's loaded, too."

"Put that away befoffw phyaffwl whillvff," I snorted. I tired to sound menacing but my false beard got tangled in my tonsils and spoiled the effect. I tugged the wretched thing off and hung it on the bottom button of my waistcoat.

"Now I'm disguised as a Scotsman," I announced. "At any rate, I can talk. What is all this about?"

"Haven't you heard? We're all going to break in and pinch each other's Christmas stockings. I'm after Tony the Blood's. He'll have the best lot of toys in Crookland, and I blackmailed him into leaving a back window open so even if some of the others go there we'll beat 'em to it. I ought to get the special prize as well if I pull it off."

"But why don't you all have your own toys?" I asked in amazement.

"Now where would be the kick in that?" demanded my companion, scornfully. "Shut up. Here we are."

## Easy Winners

WE slipped round to the back of a large house. The boy pushed gently at a window and it opened.

"Stay here," he whispered. "You see me get in. If you see me come out with the swag, that's O.K. Don't go away from here, whatever you do."

He disappeared, and I stood alone in the dark and shivered. Then I started to give a yell but choked it off into a noise like the last bit of water running out of the bath. Something hard was sticking into my back and a nasty cold voice said, "Move, and keep moving." I was just moving off when there was a clatter behind me and, peeping round, I saw that my young pal had come back to the window and dropped a sack over the head of the lad who was sticking a gun in my spine.

"Tie him up and shove him in the bushes," grinned the youngster, pitching a coil of rope at me and vanishing once more. I did as I was told, and then my friend returned staggering under the weight of a huge parcel of toys.

"Let's beat it!" he said, and ten minutes later we were back in the hall, easy winners. Not only were we first back, but we had the best collection of toys.

The big man seized me by the arm and dragged me out of the hall.

"We want more toys to share round at the party," he exclaimed. "We're taking your car to do a smash-and-grab raid on the toyshop, and you may as well drive."

We tore down the street, skidded round corners on two wheels and, at a signal from my companion, we drew up outside a big shop.

"Leave the engine running," he yelled, seizing a heavy spanner and jumping out of the car. A few hefty blows, and the window was shattered to fragments. Armfuls of toys were thrown into the car and then, as people ran up and down and whistles began blowing, he leapt on to the running-board and we shot off. We got back to the hall alive, but I was shaking like an over-ripe jelly.

## "Blind Tec's Bluff"

THEY were all playing "Policeman's Knock," and midst shrieks of laughter Mrs. W. Sykes had just gone outside to receive three months' hard from Sim the Snowbird. I soon got called out to do a spot of ticket of leave with a charming young blonde confidence trickster. Gosh, could that girl kiss! Later we played jolly games like "Blind 'Tec's Bluff," "Miss, and You Swing," "Stick 'Em Up, Jenkins," and "Hunt the Swindle." Then we began to get ready for the big event of the evening.

They'd got wind that a strong force of policemen, all disguised as Santa Claus, was coming to round them up. The crooks planned to kidnap the bobbies, take their red cloaks and beards from them, and tie up each cop in a huge Christmas stocking. Then there was to be a triumphal torchlight drive in sledges all round the town, with a crook dressed as Santa Claus driving each sledge and stockings full of infuriated policemen fastened on behind. To round off the night's merriment, each child crook was to be given a policeman for his very own.

Everything went without a hitch. The bobbies were taken completely by surprise and captured almost without a struggle. I was given a Santa Claus outfit and told to drive the last sledge in the line. Amidst terrific cheers and hoots we set off on our drive round the town, but as my sledge was heavily laden with all the cops who were left over, we began to drop farther and farther behind. I felt a tap on my shoulder and found, to my horror, that one of the policemen had wriggled free of his bonds and was standing behind me.

"Take the first to the left and then drive straight on," he said, grimly. "Don't you understand, sir? First to the left and straight on will take you to Midhampton. It's not more than ten miles. Mind you don't go to sleep again. We can't allow people to sleep in cars in the middle of the road. Really, I suppose I ought to summons you, but—well, Merry Christmas, sir."

# CHRISTMAS BRAIN BRIGHTENERS



**TRIPLETS**  
**T**HE Tryon triplets, all girls, were so much alike that you couldn't tell them apart. At the Christmas party they wore different fancy dresses so that their

boy friends could make no mistake.

During the party their father fixed a number on each of them and stood the girls in a row. The illustration shows how the numbers appeared to the guests. A prize was offered to anyone who could arrange the triplets so that the whole number could be divided by seven without remainder. Can you do it?

**CHRISTMAS GIFTS**

**A**LFRED, Brian, Charles, Dick, and Ernest gave presents to their girl friends. The girls' names were Alice, Betty, Cora, Doris, and Ethel. They received the following gifts: Album, Bicycle, Chocolates, Diary, and Engraving.

None of the boys had a girl whose name began with the same initial letter as his, and none of them gave a present with the same initial letter as his name, nor did any of the girls receive a gift with the same initial as her name. Further, none of the gifts had the initial next to that of either giver or receiver. The letters in the names of one pair contained all the letters but one in their gift.

For instance, if Ethel was Alfred's girl, the gift could not have been an Album, Bicycle, Engraving, or Diary. The only possible gift under the above conditions must have been Chocolates.

Can you pair up the boys and girls and fit the appropriate gift to each pair?

**NEW YEAR TIME**

**J**UST as 1937 was about to be ushered in with the striking of midnight by Big Ben, a clock was set exactly right. If the clock loses a minute and a half a day, will 1938 have been born when it indicates 3 p.m. on New Year's Eve? State what the correct time was.

**A SHOPPING LIST**

**M**RS. BRAIN BRIGHTENER had novel ideas about shopping lists, as the local tradesmen well knew. Her lists, instead of giving the actual name of a thing she wanted, merely gave a clue to it. For example: "Film star's Christian name" was one item. That represented GINGER, the film star being Ginger Rogers. Here are six more items from Mrs. Brightener's Christmas shopping list:—

1. Contains a fog and extremity.
2. Film fans want wood with it.
3. Country.
4. Ottoman sovereign's wives.
5. Calendar fruits.
6. Harbour.

Can you discover the names of these items?

**LETTER WANTED**

**"N**OW," said Uncle Rebus, when the nuts and wine appeared, "you all pride yourselves on your spelling, so here's a little teaser for you. On this paper I have written six groups of letters. If you add the same letter thirteen times, they will spell six ordinary words. I'll give you an example. Take the letters ALE, which in this case spell a word, add three B's, and it will spell BABLE.

"Fire away. I'll give you four minutes and there's a prize for the best effort."

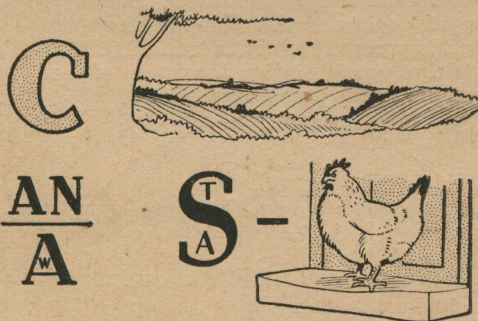
Young John did it in three. Here is Uncle Rebus's list:—

1. ILE; 2. ARLE; 3. UAE; 4. RUDE;
5. RANE; 6. INER.

Can you beat young John's time for the task?

**RADIO STARS**

**M**ANY radio stars are so well known that it is possible to recognize them merely by hearing their voices. Three are shown here in unfamiliar guise. Can you read the symbols in the illustrations and discover who they are?



**FESTIVE CHARADE**

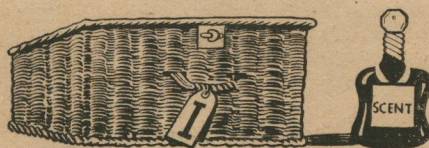
**T**HE following hides the name of something very necessary for the Christmas festivities:—

- My first is in feast but not in dine.
- My second is in nuts but not in wine.
- My third is in port but not in gin.
- My fourth is in crackers but not in din.
- My fifth is in mincemeat but not in grog.
- My sixth is in Yule but not in log.
- My whole will be in many after Christmas dinner!

What is it?

**MUCH IN LITTLE**

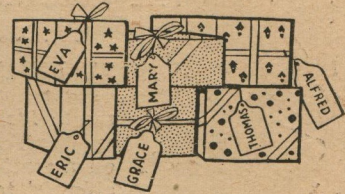
**O**UR illustration shows two familiar objects which make seasonable gifts. Write down their names, together with the letter which appears on the label of one of them. Having done this, use the letters to spell two words which aptly describe the illustration. The letters may be repeated as often as necessary, but no other letters may be used.



**GIFTED NAMES**

**S**IX Christmas parcels, labelled with various names, are shown here.

The letters in these names, with the addition of the letters C.N.P.S.S., will spell the names of six Christmas gifts. Only the letters in the names and the five given above may be used. None may be repeated more often than given here. Can you discover what the six gifts are?



**HIDDEN CAROL**

**I**N the sentence given here, the title of a well-known Christmas carol is hidden. All you have to do to find it is to take two consecutive letters from each of six of the words and three consecutive letters from one of the others. Here is the sentence:—

"Each Christmas stocking causes radiant children's laughter and when withdrawing gifts little hands shake with excitement."

No arrangement is necessary. What is the name of the carol?

**DIAMONDS**

**J**OHN BULLION was always lavish with his Christmas gifts and especially with the one he gave his niece. He selected seventeen beautiful diamonds and, as nine was his niece's lucky number, he instructed the jeweller to set the stones in such a way that she could count nine stones in six different ways.

The jeweller was puzzled. Can you assist him?

**WATER AND WINE**

**T**HIS isn't a question of turning water into wine, but merely of pouring it in. Two tumblers of equal capacity are respectively one-third and one-quarter full of wine. Each is filled with water and their contents mixed together in a jug. Half the mixture is poured into one of the tumblers. What part of this is wine and what part water?

**FOUR GOOD TURNS**

**T**HE manager of the Frivolity Theatre not only provided good turns on the stage, but entertained his patrons during the interval.

On the programmes he printed the names of the artists without stating the nature of their turns. The audience amused themselves puzzling that out between the acts.

Here is a typical programme:—1. IAN MEDOC; 2. CATA BROS; 3. RENO ROC; 4. MASTER ORPINO.

Re-arrange the letters of each name and you will soon discover the kind of performance each gave. Can you do it?

Solutions on page 45.

**BRAIN BRIGHTENERS APPEAR IN "TIT-BITS" EVERY FRIDAY.**

# CHILDREN'S OWN PAGES

## THE CIRCUS GOES ON STRIKE



Elephant speaking. "Lion, it's time we went on strike. That Ringmaster of ours is becoming a nuisance. Yesterday he took all the buns the children threw to me and ate them himself. And he dropped a cigarette-end on my ear as we rode into this town."

"He certainly tangled his whip in my mane and dragged out handfuls of hair," agreed the Lion. And then all the animals joined in with: "He trod on me!" "He dropped me!" "He stole my pennies!" "He punished me for nothing!" "We ought to do something about it!" The indignant voices sank to whispers and Robin heard no more.

He rose next morning very excited and hurried through his work in record time so that he could be in the Big Tent when the show began. What would the animals do?

### ROBIN THE RINGMASTER

First came the Lion—he bit the Ringmaster's whip in two. Then the Horse threw him and the Monkeys pulled the curl out of his waxed moustache. Then the Donkey kicked sawdust in his eyes. The Dogs hung on to his coat-tails, and the little Bears clawed at his top-boots! And then the Elephant lifted his long trunk and brought it down *whack!* on the Ringmaster's top-hat, wedging it so firmly over his eyes that the performance had to stop.

And about time, too, for the audience was weak with laughter! Never in their lives had they seen anything half so funny. For a long time they would not leave the tent; they had enjoyed themselves so much. When they did go it was to spread the news that a quite different and much more comical circus had come to the town than had ever been there before!

"We've done more good than harm," grunted the Lion as he watched the proprietor receiving the congratulations of his friends.

"No, I think we have won the day," said the Elephant. For at the tail of the crowd was the Ringmaster, tattered and miserable; and he was refusing to appear with any of those wicked animals again.

This was the moment that Robin, the odd-job boy, had been waiting for. He approached the proprietor. "Please, sir, I can do all the Ringmaster does," he begged. "For one night, at least, let me try."

It took some persuasion to make the proprietor agree, but in the end he did. Robin was given a new top-hat, glossy boots, and white breeches. And so well did he act, and so gladly did the animals obey him, that he was given the job for good.

### LAUGHTER SONG

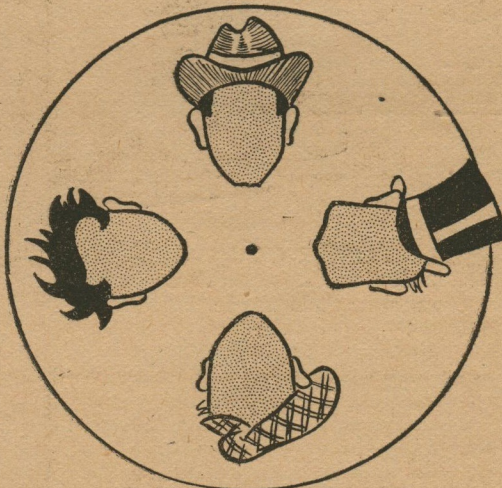
LAUGHTER is the voice of Heaven,  
So let us laugh this Christmas, ho!  
For to us all this day is given,  
So let us laugh this Christmas, ho!  
Let us go all-tumbling round  
With our fun and presents jolly,  
Waving Christmas mistletoe  
(And don't forget the holly!)  
Laughter is the voice of Heaven,  
We will laugh this Christmas, ho!  
And whether we are ten or seven  
We will laugh this Christmas, ho!  
Let us all play games and things  
(We won't forget the holly);  
No matter if we're kids or kings  
We'll all be very jolly!

### QUICK CHANGE!

CAN you make people laugh or frown to order?

If you cut out these two circles very carefully you can have a lot of fun. You must cut away the blank, shaded parts of the faces in the first circle, too, and for this you will need the most pointed pair of scissors you can find.

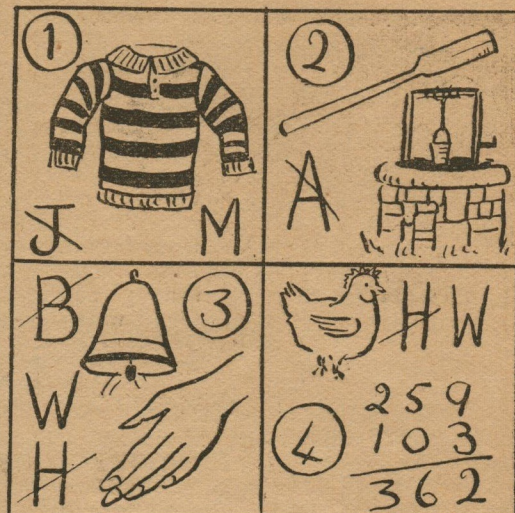
Place the first circle on the second so that the two centre points are exactly against each other, and push a double-pronged paper fastener through them and bend the prongs flat. Now turn the bottom circle slowly so that into the frame of each face there comes a new expression!



### HIDDEN RIVERS

THE names of four British rivers are hidden in these four pictures. Can you find them?

(Solutions at the foot of this column.)



### HIS BEST DRESS

HERE is an odd dancing-dress—not at all the kind of thing you see at Christmas parties in this country! The dancer is a Kaffir and he is taking part in a tribal dance.

His skirt is made of reeds, and so is his head-dress, which covers his face. The rest of him is smeared with lime and chalk—you can see where it has been rubbed off to show the skin beneath. He wears bracelets and anklets of nuts which rattle as he dances, and as a finishing touch he carries a wand of bamboo.



### HUSHABYE, DORMOUSE

—at the tree's root, under the dead leaves, under my boot!

THAT might be the dormouse's lullaby, for he is sleeping so soundly that he can feel nothing of what passes above his counterpane of last year's twigs. As fat as butter, curled comfortably, he will sleep the winter away.



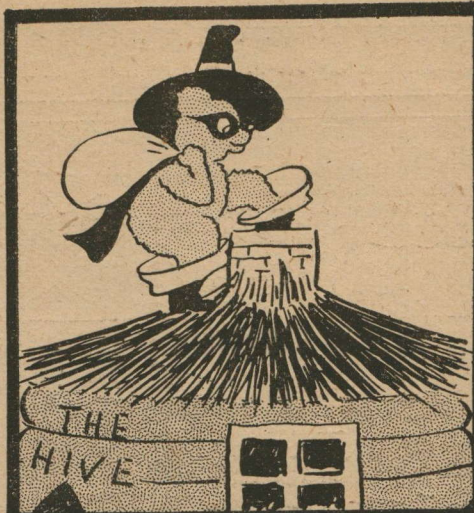
It took him a lot of hard work and hard eating to get so fat, but he gave up the whole autumn to it, and his reward is a long warm sleep while the frost bites our noses.

**Hidden Rivers Solution:** 1. Mersey. 2. Orwell. 3. Welland. 4. Wensum.

# THE BEES' CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE



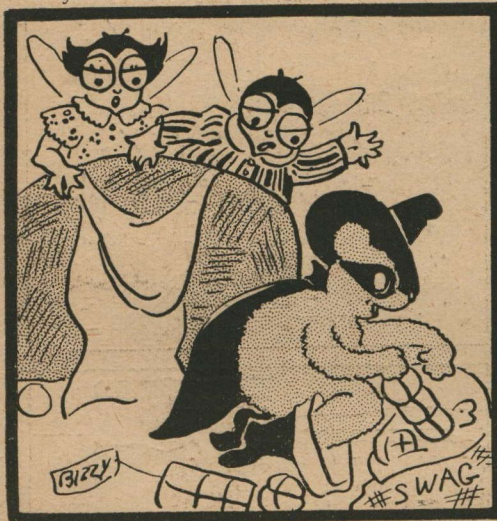
AS Father Christmas flies away  
Up creeps bad Burglar Bear.  
"He's left those Bees fine gifts, I'll lay."  
Says he: "I'll rob the pair."



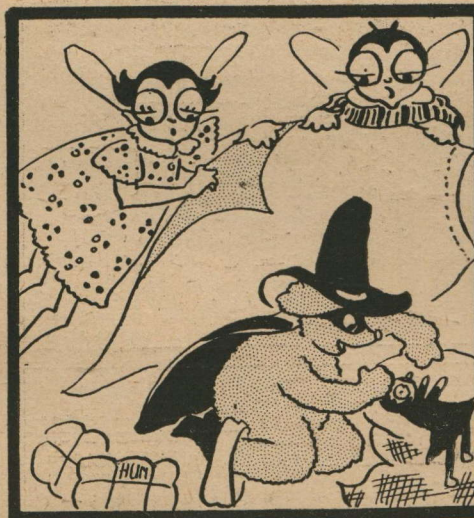
He climbs upon the Bee-hive top  
As quietly as a mouse;  
And down the chimney soon he'll drop—  
Plonk! right inside the house.



"Great jemmy-cracks!" he grunts with glee  
"By grizzly! What a find!  
This is the very place for me;  
I'll not leave much behind."



As Burglar Bear fills up his sack  
The Bees start wide awake.  
They gaze in horror at his back  
And both with terror shake.



Then Humble has a great idea  
The burglar to defeat;  
They fly towards him, stiff with fear,  
But carrying a sheet.



Flop! Wow! Down on the bad bear's head  
The sheet drops suddenly.  
They struggle till they're hot and red,  
But Bear cannot break free.



Hum binds the bear and takes his gun;  
Bizzy calls Scotland Yard.  
"We want a policeman—a large one—  
This great bad bear to guard."



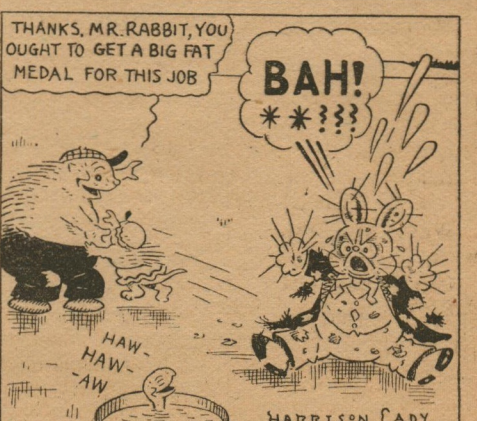
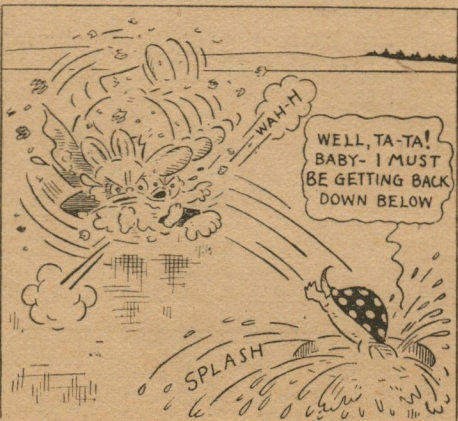
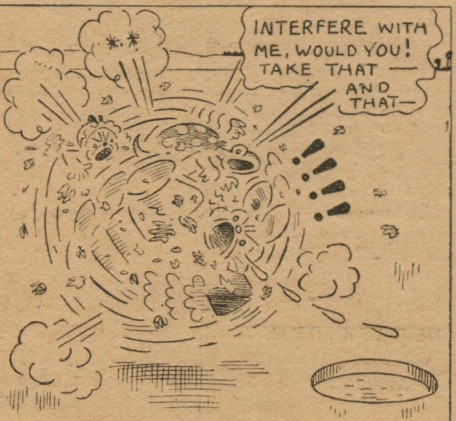
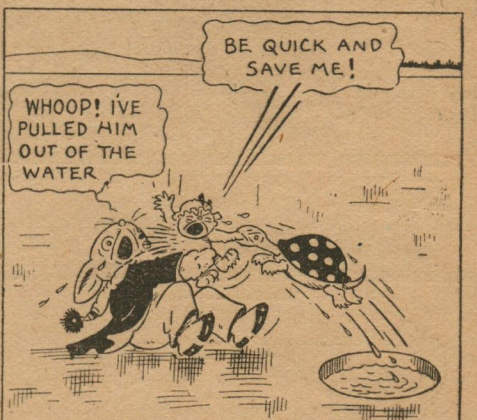
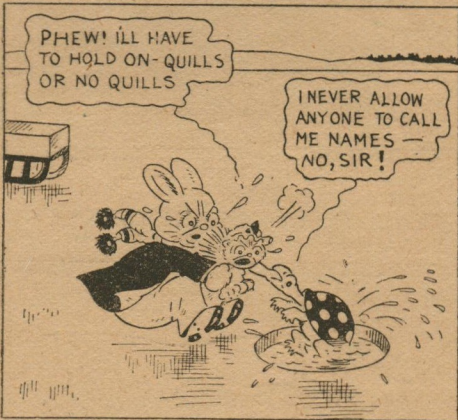
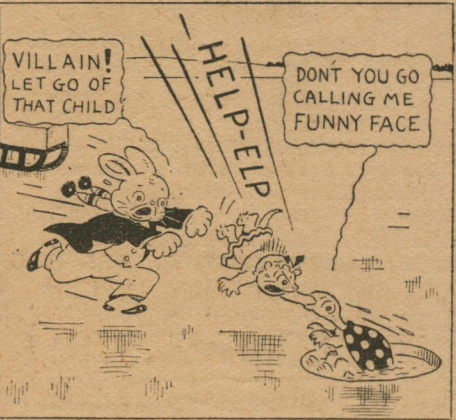
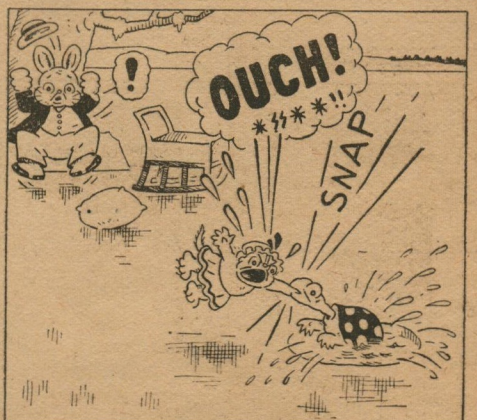
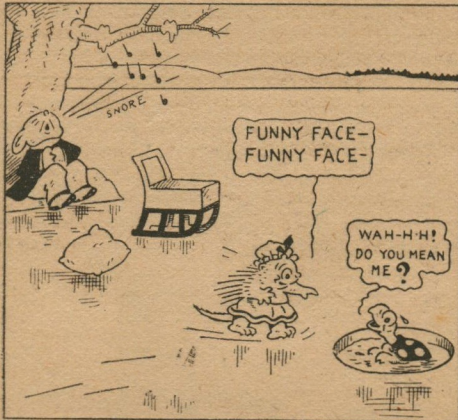
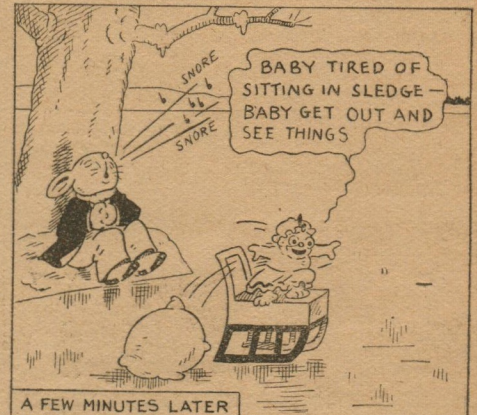
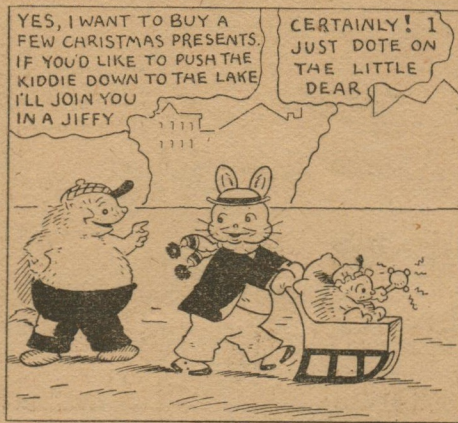
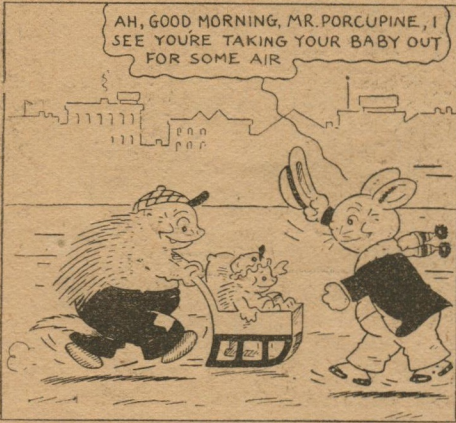
A policeman comes, big, stern and wise;  
He soon handcuffs the bear.  
Hum helps to push him out, and cries,  
"Now jail him, sir, with care."



The bear, when caught, forgot his sack;  
Hum finds it with a cheer;  
He cries, "We've got our presents back,  
Here! Greetings, Bizzy dear!"

THE ADVENTURES OF HUMBLE BEE AND BIZZY BEE APPEAR IN "TIT-BITS" EVERY FRIDAY

# Mr. RABBIT'S CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE



# CHRISTMAS CROSSWORDS!

MAKE a hobby of **TIT-BITS Cheery Crosswords**. Don't fail to send in your solution; it may bring you a welcome prize. Five books will be awarded as prizes, at the Editor's discretion, for correct solutions of this puzzle. Address your entry to **TIT-BITS CHRISTMAS EXTRA Crossword**, 39, King Street, London, W.C.2 (Comp). The closing date is Monday, January 3rd, 1938, and the result will appear in the issue of **TIT-BITS** dated January 29th, on sale January 21st. Cheery Crosswords appear in **TIT-BITS** every week.

### CLUES—ACROSS

2. May yours be a merry one.
8. Forbidden.
10. Watery fluid.
12. This William knew all about shooting apples.
13. Propeller.
15. Father Christmas might need one for his sledge.

16. When this is sweet, it's a flower.
17. This would cause a shortage of Christmas spirit!
18. Face that's sticky one way!
20. Perhaps you'll do this with paper caps.
22. Dry when applied to Christmas wine.
23. Celebrates not wisely but too well.

25. Maybe these will ache with laughter.
27. They're blacks, but not Negroes.
29. Take your partners for this one.
32. Resist.
33. Something for the sweet tooth.
34. Anoint.

36. Some music on this helps the festivities.
37. Possibly No. 57 across will lead to this!
39. Negro's master.
43. Manner.
44. Fetch.
47. Most of No. 12 across.
48. Signify.
49. Abyssinian vizier.
50. Italian coin.
52. Monetary reverse!
53. Inquires.
55. Animal.
56. Cosy dwellings.
57. What about a kiss here?

### CLUES—DOWN

1. You must do this well at Christmas.
2. Mountain pass.
3. As a festive decoration, it has points!
4. Wagered.
5. Good entertainer is this to any party.
6. Group.
7. Musical composition.
9. Don't be one with a sore head!
11. Slope.
13. Fertile spot.
14. Hastened.
16. Entertainment in season.
19. Seasonable exchanges.
21. You'll need muscatels with these.
24. It has to do with kissing.
25. Upright stone slab.
26. More sensible.
27. Spring.
28. Put to some purpose.
30. Curtailed head.
31. The big "I."
35. South African antelope.
36. "Good King Wenceslas" perhaps.
38. This'll give sparkle to the Christmas tree.
40. Sally is intimately connected with this.
41. Christmas fare isn't good for keeping this.
42. Small insects.
44. Festive jollification.
45. Wearies.
46. Unpleasant.
51. Christmas spirit, of course!
54. Observe.

I agree to abide by the Editor's decision.

Name.....

Address.....

### BRAIN BRIGHTENERS (Solutions)

**Triplets.**—931. No. 6 stood on her head, thus turning the 6 into a 9.

**Much in Little.**—CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

**Radio Stars.**—1. Grey C. (GRACIE) FIELDS. 2. AN on A, W in.—ANONA WYNNE. 3. S TA in, less (minus) STEPHEN, STAINLESS STEPHEN.

**Gifted Names.**—GLOVES, SCENT, CAMERA, SCARF, HAMPER, DIARY.

**Water and Wine.**—7/24 wine and 17/24 water.

#### Christmas Gifts:—

Alfred } Diary	Dick } Bicycle.
Betty } Engraving	Ethel } Chocolates
Brian } Album	Ernest } names contain the letters D A R Y of Diary.
Cora } Album	Alice }
Charles }	
Doris }	

#### Hidden Carol.—CHRISTIANS AWAKE.

**A Shopping List.**—1. MISTLETOE; 2. HOLLY; 3. TURKEY; 4. SULTANAS; 5. DATES; 6. PORT.

**Letters Wanted.**—Add the letter G. 1. GIGGLE; 2. GARGLE; 3. GAUGE; 4. GRUDGE; 5. GRANGE; 6. GINGER.

#### Diamonds.—

- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*
- \*

**New Year Time:** Yes. The correct time was 6 minutes 56½ seconds past midnight.

**Festive Charade.**—TURKEY.

**Four Good Turns.**—1. COMEDIAN; 2. ACROBATS; 3. CROONER; 4. IMPERSONATOR.



# COLDS & INFLUENZA

often start with a sore throat

Beware the raw tickling throat which precedes a cold or influenza. That is your signal to take Cephos! The effectiveness of this famous prescription of an Eminent Harley Street Physician is remarkable when taken at the early stages of infection. Keep Cephos always handy! Take it at the first sign of 'sore throat' and 'hotness' due to fever. Even when a cold has got well hold of you, a few doses of Cephos will quickly arrest the attack, removing all traces of headache and stuffiness, and restoring your temperature to normal.

YOUR SAFE AND CERTAIN CURE IS

# Cephos

*Pronounced See-foss* REGD

THE PHYSICIAN'S REMEDY

Also invaluable for

**HEADACHE**

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**CEPHOS DOES NOT AFFECT THE HEART**

*From all Chemists & Stores*

**IN POWDER OR TABLET FORM, 1/3 & 3/-.**

**SINGLE DOSE 2 D.**

POWDER OR TABLETS **2** each.

NOT A SINGLE DRUG BUT THE PRESCRIPTION OF AN EMINENT HARLEY STREET PHYSICIAN

*Sole proprietors Cephos Ltd., Blackburn.*

# Merry Games for Christmas Parties



## ON THE SPOT

**E**VERYONE has either read or heard about gangsters putting people on the spot. In this jolly game all the members of the company try to put each other on the spot, the spot in this case being a sheet of newspaper placed in the middle of the floor.

The company form a ring round the paper. Have someone at the piano. When the music strikes up, the ring begins to move. As it does so, the players bump against each other, each making an effort to push his neighbour on to the paper.

The slightest step on to the paper and the victim is out. The ring re-forms without him or her and the game continues. The last is the winner.

## WHOSE VOICE?

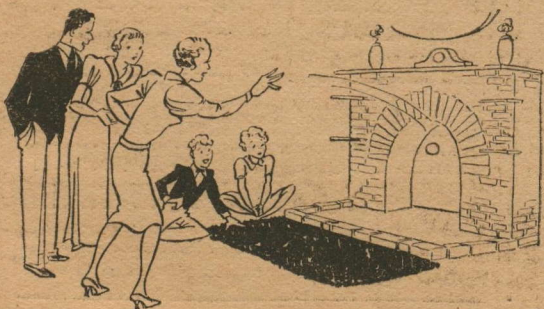
**F**OR this game, divide the company into two sides. Have a screen or sheet so arranged that each side is hidden from the other.

The members of one side speak in turn, but they must disguise their voices. The object of the game is for the other side to identify the speaker. As soon as a speaker is recognized the sides change over.

This game is improved if a small microphone is wired to the pick-up terminals of the wireless set. The microphone can be placed in another room and recognition of the speakers made more difficult. A suitable microphone can be obtained quite cheaply at most wireless shops.

## GRATE BALL

**A**LL you require are a tennis ball and an ordinary modern fireplace—of course, minus the fire! The game is to throw the ball into the fireplace from a spot on the other side of the room. It is difficult, because you must judge the strength of your throw to a nicety. If you put too much "beef" behind it, the ball bounces out; if you don't throw hard enough, then the ball fails to reach the fireplace.



## ALLITERATION

**A**NY number of players can join in this word game. The one who is chosen leader gives each player a sheet of paper and a pencil. Then he instructs each one to write a sentence, each word of which begins with the letter A. Next the same procedure is followed for the letter B, then C, and so on through the alphabet to Z.

There is a time limit of three minutes for each letter, making the duration of the game 78 minutes.

A perfect score is 100, made as follows: 50 for the longest sentence; 25 for the second; 15 for the third; 10 for the fourth. The player with the highest score is the winner.

## VACUUM-CLEANER FOOTBALL

**D**ON'T read this if you have no vacuum-cleaner.

One player is goalkeeper. The others are all "agin" him. He sits at one end of the table, armed with his vacuum-cleaner—which should have just the bare nozzle (no fittings). The others are seated round the table, and in the centre is a ping-pong ball.

The cleaner is set going, and the attackers try to blow the ball on to the nozzle—which, of course, is only too anxious to seize it. The goalkeeper, who has to prevent the ball



from being sucked on to the vacuum-cleaner, may defend in only one way: by moving the nozzle pipe from side to side along the table. He can dodge about as quickly as he likes, but he may not raise the pipe from the edge of the table. If he does so, the attackers claim a penalty kick. The ball is set in the middle of the table, and one of the players takes a straightforward "blow" towards the mouth of the cleaner. For such a penalty shot the goalkeeper must hold the cleaner perfectly still; he is not permitted to dodge in any way.

When the ball goes off the table in any direction, it is "centred," and play begins again.

Each player should be goalkeeper for an agreed time—two or three minutes is usually long enough—and the winner is the one who lets fewest goals through.

## ARE YOU OBSERVANT?

**T**HIS game is a good test of memory. Arrange a number of objects on a tray. Bring the tray into the room and allow the assembled guests two minutes in which to observe the various objects set out on it.

Now remove the tray. Provide pencils and paper so that members of the party can write down the names of as many of the objects as possible. After two minutes collect the lists. A prize might be offered for the most complete list.

## WHAT PLACE?

**I**N these days of easy travel, most people are familiar with a number of places. Anyway, in a family party each member will know with what places the others are familiar.

In this game a member of the party starts to describe a place something like this: "I'm watching the tide go out. It goes out a long way, and I see a very long pier. There are crowds of people looking at the wonderful illuminations." The others have to say, from this description, what the place is. The place described here is obviously Southend.

The one who first names the place correctly proceeds to describe another place, and so the game continues.

Care should be taken to describe places with which the members of the company are acquainted. With a little imagination this can be made a very entertaining game.

## WORD SQUARE

**E**ACH member of the company must be provided with a pencil and paper. Ask each to draw a square and divide it into twenty-five other squares. Having done this, each in turn calls out any letter of the alphabet. As each letter is called, all players write it in their squares in whatever position they think it will be most convenient to make a word. When each of the twenty-five squares contains a letter, everyone counts up how many five, four, and three-letter words they have made. These are counted only from left to right, or top to bottom. Fix ten points for five-letter words, eight for four, and six for three. The one with the highest number of points wins.

In calling out the letters, it should be remembered that you give a letter likely to be most useful to yourself and as awkward as possible for the others. The letter X, of course, would upset many.

## JAY WALKING

**T**HIS jay walking is not the kind that turns drivers' and policemen's hair grey, but a jolly and quite harmless sort.

You will need a pair of opera or field glasses. Stretch a white tape along the whole length of the room, on the floor, or hearthrugs end-to-end will do as a make shift.

The victim is then asked to walk along the line, one foot before the other, at the same time looking through the opera-glasses the wrong way round.

He or she will lift their legs in a most peculiar fashion and the antics never fail to set the whole company roaring with laughter.







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Our Representative called to inspect some of the joke novelties, and was immediately handed a box of Cigarettes (half a dozen flew at him at once) and a box of "Matches that won't light." To compensate for his pained expression he was invited to try some chocolates, and a live-wire snake popped out when he placed one in his mouth. Heavens! how they roared with laughter at the look on his face when they revived him with a glass of Wine in a "Dribble-glass." By this time he flatly refused to wash his hands with the "Black Face Soap," and ignored the invitation to press the bell (the "Water Squirt Electric Button") for assistance, to protect him against a Mad Dog (which was apparently a "Barking Dog" Novelty). On his way out he dodged a few "Running Mice" and "Dancing Skeleton," and on passing through the door he was presented with a Catalogue.

He decided it was best to inspect the Novelties at his leisure, and in his own home. You can do the same by writing to Ellisdon and Son, of 246, High Holborn, London, W.C.1, for their free Catalogue.

A good joke is appreciated by the wisest of men. "Did you have a good Xmas?" You could answer truthfully if you make that "Wish I Had" into a "Glad I Did." Get your Catalogue to-day.

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## A DELICIOUS DRINK

A drink that is so well known that its merits scarcely need mention, is Ginger Wine. At Christmastime it is not only much appreciated by adults, but solves the problem of a non-alcoholic beverage for children's parties. It is very easy to make at home, from Essence prepared by one of the most eminent firms of Manufacturing Chemists, and this is the way to obtain the best ginger wine. Apart from Christmas, it is an excellent beverage during the chilly Autumn and Winter evenings. Being non-intoxicating, it suits everybody. It is inexpensive too, and is obtainable at Grocers, Chemists and Stores everywhere for only ninepence a bottle. The manufacturers—Messrs. Newball & Mason, Ltd., Nottingham—claim that one hundred glasses, equivalent to eight pints of delicious, warming, and refreshing wine, can be made from one bottle of the essence. They have also Orange and Black Currant essences, and you should send ninepence to them mentioning TIT-BITS XMAS ANNUAL, when you will receive in return a trial bottle of each of the three essences post free.

# MAGIC AND MIRTH

## DICE TRICK

**I**NSTRUCT a member of the company to shake up and throw on to the table three dice and to add the uppermost numbers together. He is then to pick up any one and add its bottom number to the total already arrived at. That one is to be shaken and thrown again, and whatever number turns up is to be added to the total. While this is being done, you either turn your back or go out of the room.

Here is an example: Suppose the first throw to be 6 2 4; this added is 12; the bottom number of the middle dice is 5 and this brings the total to 17. This one, thrown again, turns up a 1. So the final total is 18. The numbers now left on the table are 6 1 4.

At this stage you turn round or enter the room, pick up the dice, shake them, and press them against your forehead. Look very hard at the person who threw the dice, as though you were calculating. After a few moments you announce to the company that 18 was the total.

This trick can be repeated again and again. The secret is in the number 7. Simply add this number to the total of the uppermost numbers as left on the table by the thrower. No matter what the total arrived at, you will always be correct.



counting from the number of the hour thought of. For example, if the hour thought of were five, then the first tap would be six, the second seven, and so on, until twenty is reached, when "Stop" is called.

The first seven taps are haphazard, but the eighth tap must fall on twelve o'clock, after which each hour must be tapped consecutively in a backward direction, that is from twelve to eleven, and so on, until "Stop" is called.

## BALANCING THE CIGARETTE

**A** CIGARETTE is taken from case or box and placed on the edge of the table so that about two-thirds of it overhangs. Yet it does not fall.

There are two methods of doing this simple but puzzling trick. The first is to hide a small piece of metal, a small lead shot for instance, in one end of the cigarette. This makes that end heavier than the other. It is this end which rests on the table.

The second method is to moisten one side and press that side down firmly, but not obviously, on to the table. This will cause it to stick. Do not moisten all the tip, as this will give the game away.



## MATCHBOX MYSTERY

**A**N ordinary drawer matchbox, a piece of string and two beads, counters or small blocks of wood are needed for this simple yet puzzling trick. The problem is to release the box from the string without cutting. The string has five knots in it, one in the middle, two each side of this, and a bead tied at each end.

This string passes through the box and drawer as shown in sketch A.

The solution is simple. The string is double and the knot in the centre is a false one, the other four being genuine.

If the sham knot is loosened the nearest bead can be drawn through the loop and the box can easily be released from the string, as shown in picture C. Diagram B shows how the false knot is made. This, when pulled tight, looks very similar to the genuine ones.



## MY HAT!

**T**HIS little catch is sure to raise a laugh. First place a number of hats on the table, then select a lump of sugar.

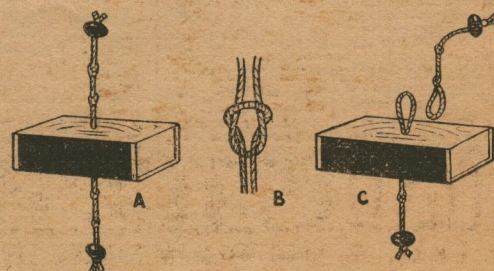
You are now ready. Inform the company that you will eat the sugar, but owing to your magical power you can promise that it will be under one of the hats. Some will smile with a superior air and say to themselves, "Two lumps of sugar, of course; one eaten and one slipped under a hat."

You now eat the sugar and ask the company which hat it is to be under. When one is selected, pick it up and put it on your head. This, of course, fulfils the contract!

## TIME, PLEASE!

**T**HIS trick is performed with the aid of either a watch or clock and a pencil. Holding up the watch, the performer asks one of the company to think of any hour he likes. The hour having been thought of, the performer begins tapping the hours with his pencil until called upon to stop by the one who thought of the hour. Where his pencil rests will be the hour thought of.

The one who has thought of the hour has to make a mental note of each tap,



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**GOOD ENGLISH—The One Asset  
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## A Christmas Tour Through

# WILDEST WALES

By W. T. PALMER



"An illigant bed, too," said the Irish lass.

IN 1854 George Borrow of Norfolk (who had spent adventurous years in many European countries), tramped northward from Llangollen in Wales to Bangor and Holyhead. Except about mountain ridges his tracks can be followed a wheel.

On October 21st, with frost on the ground, George started from Llangollen for South Wales, and this trip is worth considering for a Christmas or New Year spin. For a hundred who have followed the author of "Wild Wales" into Snowdon and Anglesey, I doubt whether one can be found who has traced the way to Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire. On the whole the going is heavier for wheels, with big hills and stormy moors; a few paths cannot be followed; but the charm is that "Wild Wales," where English is rarely spoken, is still reached in remote farms, cottages and hamlets.

George's preparations were simple: an experienced traveller on foot and horseback, he indulged in no superfluity of gear:—

*"I bought a small leather satchel with a lock and key in which I placed a white linen shirt, a pair of worsted stockings, a razor and a prayer-book.*



On his next day's march, across the Black Mountains, George Borrow met gipsies.

*Along with it I bought a leather strap with which to sling it over my shoulder; I got my boots new soled; my umbrella, which was rather dilapidated, mended; put twenty sovereigns into my purse, and then said I was all right."*

Thanks to Youth Hostels and good roads a Christmas rider can travel on 5s. or 6s. a day (less if he or she or they cook their own meals). An umbrella on the road is a curiosity: to George Borrow a bicycle would have been a curiosity, but I believe he

would have adopted it, as he did the train when the time-table fitted in with his.

With Chapter 64 of "Wild Wales" George took leave of his wife and adopted daughter at Llangollen, climbed the Allt y Baddy path, 1,272 feet, descended to Glyn, and followed the Ceiriog river to Llanarmon's old inn. Then over the pass, 1,374 feet, for Llanrhaiadr-ym-Mochnant. By this time it was dark, and George stumbled over hedges and plunged into quagmires which are not found in the road to-day. The distance is about 20 miles, mostly hills.

If you halt at Llanrhaiadr, you can easily reach Sychnant, where lived Owen Glendower (George's great leader-rebel-hero), and Llansilin, where Huw Morris, the Restoration poet, is buried.

George next contoured among the Berwyn sheep moors, and reached the Bala road. The hard rider must return to Llanrhaiadr and climb to the same point, the Milltir Gerrig pass, 1,638 feet. The hills on the Bala road are steep, awkward and twisty.

George walked in October darkness—daylight is much safer, though the track is now

(Turn to the Facing Page)

(Continued from the Facing Page)

"made up" and used by cars in summer. There are Youth Hostels at Llangollen, Llanfyllin, and at Rhiwargor on this road into Bala.

Bwlch y Groes, 1,790 feet, beyond Bala, is the highest road-pass in Wales. There is a long ascent, a wild crossing and breakneck sweeps to the Mawddwy river. The road drops 1,400 feet in two miles and, halfway down, there are pitches at 1 in 5 and 1 in 7, which must be walked. In winter, the surface is often loose, and mud, earth and stones are washed across the track.

Dinas Mawddwy once had fame—its Red-Headed Banditti murdered judge, sheriff and escort in a narrow defile in the mountains in revenge for sentencing some of their family to their deserts. Its Mayor and Corporation survived until 1886. George did not stop, however, until he reached the inn at Mallwyd. It was now October 31st, and he made a short day to Machynlleth, 12 miles, witnessing a prosecution for salmon-spearing in the river Dovey.

From this town, where Owen Glendower assembled parliaments for the government of all Wales, George took a lead-miner's path through the hills to Pont Erwyd on the Aberystwyth road. The rider must follow the coast road for eighteen miles, and turn inland for a dozen to reach the same point.

From Pont Erwyd to Devil's Bridge is merely "round the corner," though there used to be two shallow fords. If George's ascent of Plynlimmon, 2,468 feet, is to be repeated, ride forward to Eisteddfa Gurig farm, 1,350 feet, five miles from Pont Erwyd. The ascent, 2½ miles, is easy in clear weather; in storm it is inclined to be dangerous, the landmarks not being definite.

George has made Devil's Bridge, where he stayed until November 6th, a very sensational place in mid-winter, and so it is. Now we ride south into Wild Wales, where at the first inn George found unpalatable wormwood in the ale; he crossed the Ystwyth, and then followed the Teifi to Strata Florida Abbey. This was founded by the Lord Rhys in 1164; for 125 years the records of the Welsh nation were deposited in it, and its monks compiled the famous *Annales Cambrensis*. In 1284 the abbey was burnt out by Edward I of England; it was rebuilt and in 1408 was the winter quarters of Prince Henry of Monmouth while he besieged Aberystwyth castle. Now there are scanty ruins.

The Bog of Tregaron which stretches six miles on the west makes a bleak road in winter. George Borrow came this way in darkness, and picked up for company an elderly man who, in pre-railway days, had driven cattle to London and at Smithfield had made the acquaintance of the Earl of Leicester, from George's own Norfolk. He regaled George with stories of Twm Shon Catti, the Welsh Robin Hood who robbed the rich, spared the poor and died Mayor of Brecon.

When he crossed into Carmarthenshire, the three innkeepers each wanted to stand him a pint of ale, but George promptly ready-reckoned that these three free pints would cost him the price of nine—and went on to Pumpsaint. He refused the amenities of a tramp's hostelry which had two beds—one for the housefolk and another for the visitors. "An illigant bed, too," said an Irish lass. Llanwrda and Llandoverly are on good roads, and the Castle Inn, which Borrow reached on November 8th, is still to the fore.

On his next day's march, to Gutter Vawr,

twenty miles across the Black Mountains, George met gipsies—Captain Bosville, his wife and children, whom he had not seen for thirty years, and who remembered the fighting Norfolk lad of "Lavengro" fame and Isopel Berners, the strange girl who had lived alongside him for a while in Mumpers' Dingle, in the Midlands. They were returning north, discouraged after fierce battles with Irish tramps and fortune-tellers.

The road to Bryn Ammon rises to 1,618 feet, and beyond it mining and industrial country stretches to Swansea. I should make for Neath and escape by rail. At the best the country by Swansea, Hirwain and Merthyr Tydfil is not good for pleasure riding.

My preference for route would be to pedal

east from Llandoverly, climbing a long hill on the road to Brecon. There is a string of Hostels down the Usk valley, and another at Chepstow on the Wye, where George took express train to London.

Try the route for a Christmas tour. I have indicated Hostels at various places, but the Youth Hostel Association is constantly opening out new quarters, and the gap about Tregaron and Lampeter may soon be repaired. With a night or two in cottage or farmhouse, the tour can be easily made, and to a fit person it must be enjoyable.

On such a tour, it does not do to make too much haste, or you will be merely driving, spinning, thrusting and braking wheels, and know no more of Wild Wales than you did at the start.

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By Noel Chanter

I HATE ghosts. I'm downright afraid of them. At one time I used to scoff at such things and treat them as a harmless form of imbecility, but now I realise that there may be danger in listening to ghost stories.

I'll tell you my experience. It may put you on your guard.

To go back a bit, these past years have been lean, anxious ones for me financially, as they have been for many others besides myself. Lately, however, things have looked up. Trade is humming again, and my own particular cloud suddenly rolled over and revealed a bright gold lining—as clouds do, if only you have the patience to wait.

Well, as it was nearly Christmas time, I thought I would buy Nessie—that's my wife—a really decent present. She's been a grand girl all through this difficult time; never once asked for a new hat, but scrimped and scraped along without a murmur.

I wanted to give Nessie something really good, something that would make her eyes shine (she's got pretty eyes, by the by). After a lot of consideration I decided to buy her a ring, to replace her engagement ring which had been sold to pay the rent in our bad days. I knew it had nearly broken her heart to part with her ring; these things mean a lot to a woman.

I went to a first-class firm and chose a beautiful ring with a solitary, magnificent diamond. I flatter myself that I know a good piece of crystal when I see one, and this diamond was exceptionally fine. I knew Nessie would be thrilled with it. After making the purchase I was not taking any chances with pickpockets, so I put the jewel case in my small attaché case, locked the outer case, and put the key in my pocket.

I had missed my usual train at Charing Cross, so I turned in for a drink, and then had to run like blazes for the next train. Tumbling into an empty carriage as the train moved off, I dropped into a corner seat and shut my eyes till I got my wind, for I am past the age and weight when sprinting for trains does one any good.

WHEN I opened my eyes I was startled to see that a man was sitting in the opposite corner, reading the evening paper. I could have sworn he was not there when I got in, yet if he had opened the carriage door and entered while I had my eyes shut I would have noticed a rush of cold air, for the train was moving quite fast.

I came to the conclusion that he must have been in the carriage all the time, and that in my haste and the fuggy atmosphere of the smoker, I had failed to notice him.

Remembering the precious package in my locked attaché case, I looked at my fellow-traveller sharply. His appearance was reassuringly ordinary. He was a thin, sallow, rather saturnine-looking man, dressed in conventional City clothes. His pin-striped trousers were neatly creased, and his bowler hat rested on the rack above. The only odd thing about him was a deep round scar on his cheek, which gave him the appearance of wearing a perpetual dimple.

Engrossed in his paper, he paid no attention to me, and opening out my paper I very soon forgot him also.

THE journey seemed interminable. I was impatient to get home and burst my surprise on Nessie; for I had decided that she might as well have the gift at once, and not wait until Christmas. I longed to have another look at the jewel, to see if it were really just as beautiful and just as brilliant as it had appeared under the powerful white lights at the jewellers.

I looked at the man in the corner, and hesitated. It would perhaps hardly be wise to open the attaché case, yet I could appear to be merely examining some papers, and need not expose the jewel-case to view. The temptation to take a peep at the ring was too great. I

Suddenly, without a sound, he reached up and pulled the alarm signal

laid the attaché-case on my knees, unlocked it quietly and tilted back the lid. Under cover of the papers lying inside I snapped open the jewel-case. No, I had not been mistaken. In the murky light of the railway carriage the diamond appeared even more brilliant and beautiful than ever. I couldn't help gloating over it. You see, to me it represented more than a mere jewel. It was a symbol of hope and returning prosperity, of difficulties overcome, of new opportunities in life opening out before me—sparkling and intriguing like the jewel in its velvet setting.

With a sigh of satisfaction I gently closed the lid. As I shut and locked the attaché case I glanced up at the man opposite. It gave me a start to see that he was no longer engrossed in his paper. His eyes were riveted on the alarm signal above the door. He was apparently trying to make out the notice, which some schoolboy or half-wit had scribbled over with a lead pencil—so that it now read: "To stop the rain, pull down the chain. Penalty for improper use, 5 hounds."

After staring at the notice for a long time, he muttered something. I was not sure whether he was speaking to me or not.

"Beg pardon?" I said.

He started violently. "I'm sorry, I'd no idea I was talking aloud. A bad habit I have, I'm afraid. I was merely saying to myself that the penalty for improper use of the alarm signal seems a very stiff one. After all, one might be justified. . . ."

"In which case one would not be required to pay the penalty," I pointed out.



"But one cannot always tell what the railway company would consider justifiable circumstances," he persisted. "For instance, I once travelled with a man who jumped up and pulled the communication cord when the train whizzed through his station, instead of stopping as he had expected. It was a natural and pardonable impulse to try and stop the train—just the same as if you saw a crash imminent you would involuntarily put out your hands and grasp something. He had to pay the fine, of course."

"Hard luck. I expect he felt like kicking himself."

"Maybe."

We were silent for a while, then he gave a sudden harsh laugh.

"Pardon me," he apologised, "I was only thinking . . . the hundreds of times I have made this journey from the City, and every time I have been seized with an overwhelming desire to pull the communication cord. I doubt if I shall be satisfied till I do it."

"Rather an expensive hobby to indulge in," I remarked.

"Yes," he said, vaguely, "five pounds, but—I shouldn't pay it."

"You'd have to, if you were found out."

"You see"—he spoke hesitatingly—"there is a reason for this apparent kink of mine. You would perhaps be surprised if you knew how it came about."

"Oh?" I said, indifferently. It is not my habit to encourage confidences from strangers. And the man seemed odd, somehow.

"Five years ago," he began, dreamily, "in fact, it's exactly five years ago to the day, I was travelling alone in a compartment, as I would have been to-night if you hadn't got in at the last moment—"

"Oh, so you were in the carriage first," I interrupted. "Odd that I didn't notice you."

HE smiled faintly, the scar on his cheek deepening grotesquely into a hole. "I guessed you—didn't see me," he murmured.

(Turn Overleaf)

# VITAL FACTS

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# PENALTY—£5

(Continued from the Preceding Page)

"On this other occasion I travelled alone until the first stop, when a man got in. I was reading my paper and never looked up, till suddenly a pistol was thrust level with my eyes. 'Turn out your pockets,' said a hoarse voice. I had a considerable sum of money on me, so I sat still, eyeing the pistol warily. I thought if only I could knock it out of his hand and grapple with the man, I ought to get the best of it. For I was in good form.

"I took a chance, seized his wrist, and tried to wrest the pistol from him. He closed with me; locked together we slithered to and fro in the narrow carriage. But he was stronger than I had thought, and I knew that in the end he would get the upper hand. If only, I thought, I could reach the communication cord. It was my one chance. As we struggled and swayed I managed to fling open a door, and tried to push him out. The communication cord was above my head, but I couldn't reach it. My God—if only I could have reached it...."

HE broke off and leant back, perspiration pouring down his face.

Something was tugging at my memory. Suddenly it all came back to me: "Why, of course!" I exclaimed, "I remember reading about it in the paper. Were you the man who was attacked?"

He nodded. "Yes," he said, faintly; "five years ago—to-night. I couldn't reach the communication cord, and ever since then I've been—trying to—"

"But—but," I stammered, "you were shot. I thought you were killed outright."

"So I was," he whispered. "Killed outright."

I stared at him, and felt the blood draining from my face. His pale face glimmered green in the dim light, and the scar on his cheek appeared like a gaping wound.

Suddenly, without a sound, he reached up and pulled the alarm signal. The chain sagged down.

"Ah-h!" he said, falling back in his seat with a deep sigh.

The train was going at forty miles an hour. Would it stop? I prayed that it would. That anything would happen to rid me of this ghastly passenger.

Frantically I tugged at the window. Scarcely knowing what I was doing I put my head out and shouted "Stop—stop!" Presently I realized that the train was slackening speed. I drew in my head and looked round.

The carriage was empty. There was no one there.

When the guard came running along the line he found me staring like an idiot at the opposite seat.

"What's all this?" he demanded. "What's wrong?"

I laughed hysterically. "Nothing," I said. "I didn't do it."

"Rubbish!" he said, brusquely. "You're alone in the compartment. I saw you get in at Charing Cross as the train moved out. It was an empty carriage. But I can't stop here talking now; we're ten minutes behind already. Name and address?"

"But—I didn't do it," I protested, feebly.

He looked grimly at the slackened cord. "Tell that to the company. Five pounds is the penalty."

He scribbled in his book and vanished.

FOR the rest of the journey I stared at the opposite corner, expecting to see again that pale face with the bullet hole in the cheek.

But there was nothing—no one. Only the slack cord to tell me that I hadn't dreamt it all.

It was not until I alighted from the train that I missed my attaché case. It was gone. I hunted all over the carriage, but the case containing the diamond ring had completely disappeared. It seemed impossible, for no human being could have alighted from a train travelling at forty miles an hour.

I was making for the telephone with the vague idea of ringing up Scotland Yard, when the stationmaster tapped me on the arm.

"Good evening, sir. Step in here a moment, will you?"

He took me into his private office. "I've just received a message from down the line. You've been lucky. Your case has been recovered."

I stared at him speechlessly.

"You've had a bit of a fright, no doubt," he said, kindly. "Your case was found in the tunnel, and the thief has gone to hospital with a broken leg."

"Thief?" I gasped.

He laughed. "Maybe you thought he was a ghost, eh? Well, you're not the first one to have been caught with his story. He's as clever and as silent as a cat: probably slipped in and out of the carriage without you seeing him, didn't he? I thought as much. But he's done it once too often. Even a cat burglar misjudges his distance occasionally, and this time he leapt off the footboard of the train just a little too soon...."

So now you know why I'm suspicious of ghosts.

Take my advice, you who are reading this, and if any stranger spins you a yarn which works on your feelings—look out for the red light.

—\*—

THE curate objected to one of the lines he had to say in the Christmas theatricals.

It ran: "Good God! He's shot me!"

The producer altered the offending exclamation to "Good gracious!"

On the night of the show, the producer, to obtain greater dramatic effect, inserted an over-ripe tomato into the pistol barrel.

Feeling a blow, and seeing a red liquid coursing down his clothes, the curate exclaimed, "Good God! He has shot me!"

THE salesman who lost his temper and told the superintendent to go and boil his head was hauled before the managing director. Still wrathful, he invited that dignitary to eat coke.

The managing director was furious. "What is this man's record?" he demanded.

He learned that the man had increased his sales by 300 per cent. during the previous quarter.

"Oh!" said the managing director, in a changed tone. "In that case you had better make your own arrangements, but I shall send out at once for some coke."

A MAN out with his dog fell into conversation with a dear old lady, who eventually asked the man what breed his dog was.

"Spaniel," he said.  
"My!" said the old lady. "Isn't it a good thing he isn't over there now?"

# CHEERIO, EVERYBODY!

## GOOD IDEA

MRS. BROWN took her husband to a mannequin parade. An evening gown worn by an extremely pretty model attracted her attention.

"That would look nice at our Christmas party," she said, hoping her husband would buy it for her.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Brown. "Why not invite her?"

## ALL BUT

"Ah, old fellow," said a man meeting a friend in the street, "so you are married at last. Allow me to congratulate you, for I hear you have an excellent and accomplished wife."

"I have, indeed," was the reply. "Why, she's perfectly at home in literature, at home in music, at home in art, at home in science—in short, she's at home everywhere except—"

"Except what?"

"Except at home."

## RECOUNT

A MAN who had been celebrating with his friends a recent happy event in his family continued on to the Registrar's office, where he stood for a moment collecting his thoughts. Then he said to the Registrar: "Gentlemen. I've come to register my twins."

"Why do you address me as 'gentlemen'? I'm alone here," said the Registrar.

"Is that so?" said the newly-made father, rubbing his eyes. "Then I reckon I'd better go home and have another look at the cradle."

## HORIZONTAL

THE not very successful heavy-weight boxer walked into the artist's studio.

"Say," he said, "I'd like you to paint a full-length picture of me on canvas."

"Certainly," said the artist. "When is your next fight?"

"Every time I see you, Maggie, I think o' Ginger Rogers," said George to sweet-heart Maggie.

"Is that so, George?"

"Aye, but a chap like me has to learn to be content."

## TING-A-LING!

HE was a tall, square-shouldered fellow. His moustache bristled, and his steel-grey eyes gleamed when he recounted his army days.

"Yes," he said, looking down at his insignificant companion, "when I was in the Guards the drill was perfect. When we presented arms, all you could hear was 'Slap, slap, click!' Were you in any regiment, my good man?"

"Aye, sort of, ye know. I was in the Lancashire Fusiliers," he replied. "Drill wasn't so bad, ye know. When we was on parade and presented arms, all you could hear was 'Slap, slap, jingle!'"

"That's impossible," the Guardsman exclaimed. "How on earth did you get the jingle?"

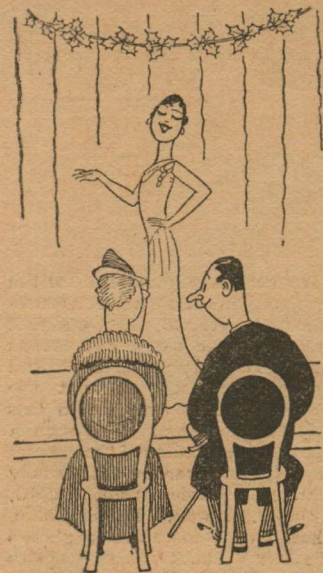
"Oh!" replied the man in a modest tone, "medals!"

HERBERT and Hilda, humble honeymooners, were having dinner in a first-class restaurant.

"What do you think of this?" whispered Herbert.

"Why, I think it's superb," responded Hilda, gushingly.

"Darling, I know it's soup," said Herbert a trifle irritably, "and please don't call me 'Erb'ere."



## VALUE FOR MONEY

LAST Boxing Day a thrifty man entered a restaurant accompanied by his two small boys. He ordered a bottle of lemonade and three glasses. They were served and the father and sons sat around.

Presently the manager approached.

"Are you the manager?" demanded the father.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why is it that the orchestra isn't playing?"

## HANDY MAN

THE chief constable of a small town was also an expert veterinary surgeon. One night the telephone bell rang. The chief constable's wife answered it.

"Is that Mr. Jenkins?" asked an agitated voice.

"Do you want my husband in his capacity as veterinary surgeon or as chief constable?"

"Both, madam," came the reply. "We can't get our new bulldog to open his mouth, and there's a burglar in it."

## OBLIGING

"Yes," said the explorer, "I was once so hungry that I dined off my pet parrot."

"What was it like?"

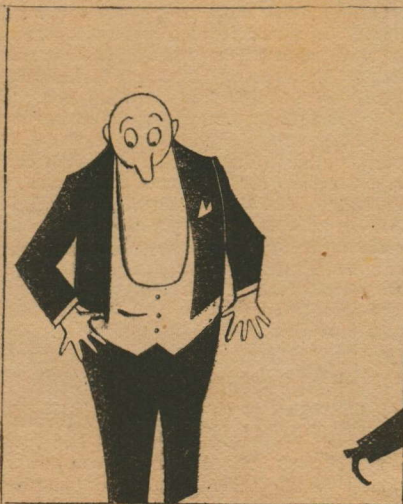
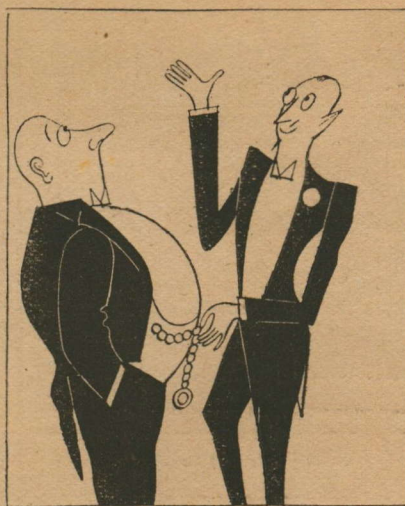
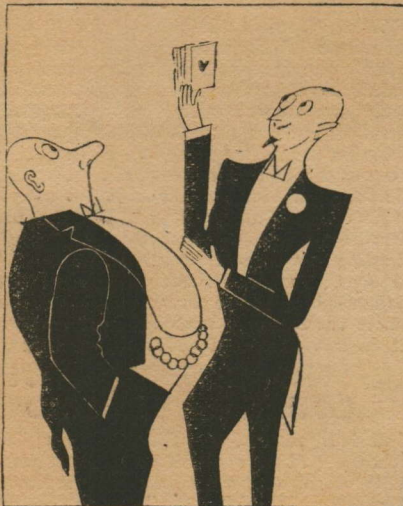
"Oh, very nice."

"Yes, but what did it taste like?"

"Oh, turkey, chicken, wild-duck, plover . . . that parrot could imitate anything!"

THE professors of a certain college met to consider an act of misconduct on the part of one of the students. One professor insisted upon punishment, saying: "God has given us eyes."

"Yes," said one of his colleagues, with a kindlier nature, "and eyelids."





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