

An Impromptu Christmas

And the True Christmas Feeling It Prompted

By EDWARD PIERCE

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The blizzard raced across the foot-hills and screamed down the ravines, exhilarating all trails that led to the Double Star ranch. It filled the air with another, flying flakes and glistered the sides of the bank house with a thick white covering. The windows of the ranch house a hundred yards distant were oblongs of light that diffused a sickly yellow glow into the flying snow.

Duclé Case tossed another log on the blazing hearth and surveyed the silent crowd with growing disdain. At last he could no longer control himself and broke forth into violent speech.

"Say, you mummified dummiest you long faced, solemn eyed, good for nothing cynosura, do you know this is Christmas eve?"

The moody circle about the fire straightened as by one accord and looked at the speaker with the first sign of interest that had been betrayed since the silent supper had ended.

"Do you know this is Christmas eve?" repeated Mr. Case impressively as he brought a pipe from his pocket and proceeded to clean it with the nervous energy that characterized his every movement.

"Of course we know it," growled Miller from his corner. "We didn't get any mail today, haven't had any for a week! Excuse me Christmas evening! Bah!"

"You've got a grouchy Miller. You're always kicking about the mail and I've never seen you get any letters yet, not even one of them picture postal cards that Frankie here gets so many of."

Duclé Case bustled out of his chair and noisily mopped the heavy table, where he looked down on his companions with a benevolent smile.

"Tonight's Christmas eve, boys, and I'm going to confess it's the milkiest Christmas eve I ever spent."

"Every one of you is downright humdrum. That's what's the matter with you. I expect you're homesick every time Christmas comes around, and you can't get home to your folks and find an old fashioned Christmas eve. I say let's have Christmas right here in the Double Star bunk house. All in favor say 'aye.'"

"Aye!" came forth a mighty chorus from seven throats.

"Good! Now, gentlemen, there ain't no tree within three miles of the ranch except the maples at the big house, and they're too large. Can we have a Christmas tree?" he asked sheepishly.

"Nix" was the laconic reply.

"Well, then, you've all got socks. Bring 'em up here along with the chimney. We might as well do this Santa Claus business up nice and brown."

The men scattered, laughing, to their several bunks to search their effects for clean socks. When they returned Mr. Case was ready with hammer and nails to fasten them to the long shelf.

The first to go up was his own, a huge blue woolen affair with a startling gold pattern on the sagging top.

"Now, what you going to put in 'em?" demanded Miller as he witnessed the hammering of the last nail into his own sock.

"Well, that's up to the rest of you in a way," drawled Mr. Case indifferent. "I've started this thing and got the ball rolling nicely. All you chaps has got to do is to find something to put in those socks. Seems as if you might find something to give each other just to remember the day and make things pleasant."

"Who feels like being very pleasant with no mail for a week and no prospect of any?" complained Frankie, rather peevishly. "I thought Christmas eve was the time for good things to eat and drink. I haven't seen the chick handing out any goodies yet."

"You go along and work that Christmas spirit business I was telling you about," commanded Mr. Case. "Sam Huh and me will take care of the eating end. Just watch my smoke!"

He disappeared behind the plank door that shut off the kitchen quarters from the living room, and the heard the sound of his strident voice mingled with the staccato objections of the Chinese cook.

Storrs stepped forward, a slight flush on his handsome face, and turned toward his companions. "I'm rather ashamed, boys, that Duclé had to remind us that it was the night before Christmas. It's certainly a dull time, and I believe we ought to do all we can to make it pleasant, even if the mail doesn't come at all. Suppose we make the best kind of a Christmas we can out of what we've got."

"Let's" agreed Miller boyishly.

"Suppose we begin with Duclé's meal sack here. He must expect an autograph in that. What do you say?"

"Let's give him one," retorted Storrs cheerfully. "I saw one a minute ago." He reached for a magazine and drew a knife from his pocket. He turned to the advertising section and cut from it the picture of a large touring car.

"What's the matter with that?" he growled softly as he slipped it in Duclé's stocking.

They got busy and searched their trunks and their pockets for treasures that might go to fill a comrade's stock bag. P. Ketchum, handkerchiefs, a watch, a pair of spurs, tobacco, cigars, a patent pencil, matchboxes—all changed hands deftly from pockets to one or another of the yawning stockings. When the little store of the magazine and lavished all sorts of thoughtless gifts upon each other.

They all entered into the spirit of the thing with an abandonment that was pathetic when one considered the barrenness of the ground upon which they tried to graft a Christmas. What ever else the occasion lacked, the Yuletide spirit was there.

When Duclé Case emerged from the kitchen with the thoroughly covered Sam Huh in his hand they were laden with plates of red apples and yellow oranges, plates of crisp, crisp, fresh from their paper boxes and a large dish of candy which Duclé placed in the middle of the table.

Bring in the coffee, Sam, when you have it, Duclé ceremoniously then he turned to the grinning crowd of merry faces surrounding the fire. "Let's see what Santa Claus has got for us, eh, boys?"

"You first, Duclé," they insisted, and they sat looking at him delightedly as he brought forth from the stocking a pair of his favorite tobacco which Storrs also coveted and a silver watch chain.

"That was a fine gift of yours," Duclé said after he had identified the gifts and thanked them warmly. "I have a feeling that this here is to be a kind of a merry Christmas, even if the mail don't get in."

After that there was no end to the fun. Each man found several surprising gifts in his stockings, and there was much merriment in identifying the gifts and more merriment of good feeling than the Double Star had known in some time.

Presently Sam Huh brought in a pot of steaming coffee and they gathered about the board and ate of the refreshments and toasted Mr. Duclé in the stimulating black liquid with much fervor.

When the meal was concluded Raymond Storrs sang a song in his tenor voice. It was a Christmas carol, one that they all knew, and they joined in the chorus with a vim. Frankie delivered an amusing monologue, and the merry Miller came an absurdly funny imitation of a fashionable lady buying a hat. There were other songs and recitations and the quaffing of a wordy contrived bowl of punch that Sam Huh had laboriously put together from several cookbooks and unlimited advice from the different members of the party.

"What's the matter with this Christmas?" demanded Frankie excitedly as it struck him struck on the tail stock in the corner.

"It's all right. It's been a bully one couldn't be better." Up to us to thank Duclé. There were some of the comments on the occasion.

"There was the sound of hoofs pounding in the snow outside and a loud shout. Every man was on his feet with interested faces.

"The mail at last!" cried Miller excitedly. "Now we'll see what's what!" They crowded about the door as Mr. West came over from the big house to open the mail bag. It had stopped snowing, and the stars were blazing in a cold, clear dark sky.

"Letter for you, and you, and you," rattled Mr. West as he tossed letters here and there among his employees. They grasped them eagerly and then tucked them away for private perusal. It happened that each one received at least one letter, and Raymond Storrs received several with a San Francisco postmark, as well as a wooden case that was dumped on the floor ere the letter carrier drove away.

Storrs ripped off the cover while they hung breathlessly over him. From numerous careful wrappings he drew first a large phonograph with a morning glory horn and a collection of wax music rolls. Deftly Storrs fitted the parts together and placed the machine on the table and wound it up. There was a cylinder in the machine, as if his sweetheart, who had sent it, had left it there that he might hear the continuation of a melody she had been singing.

There was a low, buzzing sound, and then there came forth from that instrument of wood and metal a sweet soprano voice singing with a delicate violin accompaniment.

"Oh, holy night, peaceful night." As the hymn rang out every hat was whipped off and the little group stood bareheaded in the open doorway looking out at the same brilliant stars that had shone down over Bethlehem that long ago holy night when the first Christmas was sung over one who brought peace and good will into the world.

Afterward, as they followed Mr. West across the yard toward the big house, where he said a feast awaited them, Frankie nudged Duclé Case with a razor-like elbow.

"I learned one thing tonight," admitted Frankie graciously, "and that was you can have Christmas cheer most anywhere, provided you've got the ingredients in your heart—eh?"

Duclé nodded. "Everybody has got the ingredients to make a happy Christmas in their hearts, only they don't stir 'em together to make 'em work properly. Haven't they, Norman?" He shot this question at the tall young man walking beside him with radiant face upturned to the stars.

Storrs pressed the phonograph that had registered the singing voice of his sweetheart close under his arm and smiled contentedly.

"You bet!" he cried emphatically.

Entertaining Royalty.

Nothing puts a bigger feather in the cap of a society business says a London Saturday Journal, or at the same time causes her more anxious cares and thought than mere expenditure than the presence at one of her dinners or dances in the huge Mayfair mansion of a member of the royal family most of all the king and queen. The entertaining of royalty is one of the most delicate triumphs the society woman, whether she be a duchess or merely a millionairess, can achieve. It has a code of etiquette all to itself a code which must be rigidly observed or no hope is there of ever securing another visit from a royal guest of the reigning house. The number of titled and untitled guests bidden to meet the sovereign at any a dinner party is strictly limited and of course highly select. On one occasion \$20,000 was spent by a hostess in entertaining a crowned head for a week and while another example is that of a certain baronet who had a marble staircase put in his house solely because of an approaching visit from the late king.

A Remarkable Escape.
During the reign of terror in Paris one of the most remarkable escapes was that of M. de Chateaubrun. He was sent to execution with twenty other prisoners, but after the guillotine had fallen the guillotine got out of order and a workman was sent for to repair it. The six remaining victims were left standing in front of the machine with their hands tied behind them. A French crowd in very close and the people kept pressing forward to see the man arranging the guillotine. He degrees M. de Chateaubrun, who was in the rear of his own position, found himself in the front line of the spectators, then in the second and finally he found himself behind the guillotine. He had to see his head cut off. Before the men could get the guillotine in working order night began to fall and M. de Chateaubrun slipped away. When in the Champs Elysees he told a man that a wag had tied his hands and robbed him of his hat, and this simple incident set him free. A few days later M. de Chateaubrun escaped from France.

Our Precautions.
In a town in Georgia there was an old preacher whose knowledge of the world was not wide and deep but who conceived it to be a place where, if one should trust his fellow men, he should at the same time keep an eye on his own interests.

One hot day he pulled off his coat and proceeded a vigorous sermon under the pine tree in his shade. At the close of the open air service one of his admirers approached him and said regretfully:

"I don't suppose you know that the editor of one of the big New York Sunday papers was here when you pulled off your coat."

"I reckon I knew it well, for I'd been told of it," said the preacher calmly.

"I don't believe he's as bad as he might be, and anyway I put my coat on the chair close by and had it right under my eye all the time." Youth's Companion.

More Story of the Flood.
The legend of the flood as told by the Moros is as follows:

"When the forty days and nights of rain came No and his family got into a boat. One pair of each sort of bird and beast also came in. Men who were busy with their ordinary occupations and did not enter the box were overtaken by the flood. Those who ran to the mountains became morzaks; those who ran to the water, fish. The Chinaman changed to a hornbill. A woman who was eating the fruit of a seaweed and who did not stop was changed into a fish called a dugong, and her limbs can still be seen under its skin."

Mara's Voice.
Mrs. Mara had a voice that extended from middle G to E in alt and was one of the most facile and flexible ever known. She delighted in the florid music of Haase, Graun, Benda, Jomelli, Pergolesi, Porpora, Sacchini and others of that school and with the utmost ease executed passages that are now assigned to solo instruments, such as the violin and flute. She held the stage from 1771 to 1802, with an occasional appearance after the latter date.

His Bedtime.
"When do you wind your watch," asked the man with the bulging brow—"morning or evening?"

"Generally in the morning," answered the man with the bulbous nose.

"I always wind mine just before I go to bed."

"Well—er—so do I."—Chicago Tribune.

What She Would Do.
"Johnnie, dear," said his mother, who was trying to inculcate a lesson in industry, "what do you suppose mamma would do for you if you should come to her some day and tell her that you loved your studies?"

"Lick me a fishbone," said dear little Johnnie with the frankness of youth.

A Quick Return Business.
"You said you were going into some business that would bring you quick returns," said a young fellow to his chum.

"I did," was the answer. "I am sending manuscripts to the magazines."

A Nix Bull.
An Irishman, quarrelling with an Englishman, told him if he didn't hold his tongue he would "break his impregnable head and let the brains out of his empty skull."

Incapacitated.

"The fussy individual who always has a run in with the waiter never fares any better than the rest of us who are satisfied to take things as they come," said the homeless bachelor.

"I took breakfast with one of these fussers the other morning in a little cafe uptown that was new to both of us."

"All he wanted was a cup of coffee and a couple of boiled eggs. But you might have thought the universe depended upon those eggs. After having given the waiter minute instructions as to their preparation, he sat with his watch in his hands."

"Finally the eggs came, and there was a bit more powwow. As he cracked the shell of one he turned to the waiter and said, 'Are you sure these eggs are positively fresh?'"

"And the waiter, who had watered eyes and a very red nose, replied with all seriousness: 'I really can't say, sir! I have a frightful cold in my head.'"—New York Times.

A Quiser Freak.
Mireux, who was said to have been connected with some of the best families in France and to have possessed considerable means until ruined by the Panama canal disaster, was one of the best friends the beggars of Paris ever had and to obtain funds for helping them he became a systematic thief. He used to frequent the fashionable streets during the day and pick pockets and by night dressed in ragged clothes, he dispensed the spoils to the first beggar he met. For years he continued the practice without being suspected and it was by pure chance that he eventually fell into the hands of the police. When his belongings were found to be full of empty purses, he was made clear that he had stolen hundreds of dollars and scrippies, while he had been picking and con-trying to live a respectable man on a few francs a week saved from the ruin of his fortune.

The Literary Man.
When I get home where I live at I will remove my wife's new hat from my desk and my daughter's socks and my baby's building blocks, three specks of thread, some tating frames, a box or two of cut out games, some scissors and my wife's new waist, a box of tacks and some tooth paste. I will take a sewing kit, some letters that my wife has writ, some apple cores, the kids put there, one or two yards of hand-made hair, a bottle of baby shoe, some stockings that are worth a dime, a skin of two of darning yarn, a picture book or two, of three, a picture base, has drawn for me, a rubber ball, a piece of gum, some picture post cards and a drum. I'll do all that when I get home and then write an insubstantial poem that will have Swinburne tumble crossed if all my pen is there next lot. Houston Post.

Wrecks and Cats and Dogs.
There is an old proverb in the English law on wrecks. It used to be that wrecks, like pretty nearly everything else, belonged to the king. Sometimes, if a vessel were only partly wrecked and it could be raised, an owner was averse to surrendering it but it was generally seized for the king in accordance with the law until the question came up as to just what was a wreck. It was generally admitted that when all hands were lost that was a wreck, but as they wanted to get an narrow a definition as they could they got parliament to establish a law that in future nothing shall be considered a wreck out of which a cat or a dog escapes alive, and from that time until the present day no vessel coasting about England without carrying a cat or dog.

Canvas Currency.
Banknotes appear in much the same form throughout the world and have always done so except in China, where the earliest note was made of canvas, some six centuries before the Christian era. It was more like a tablecloth than a banknote, its length being about two meters, or six feet six inches. This form of note was not very convenient when large sums were concerned, so later the note was printed on parchment, and all other forms of money were suppressed. One emperor issued notes representing more than three thousand millions. But the money was never popular, and gradually the notes were retired.

Charlotte Cushman's Warning.
One icy night Charlotte Cushman and Lawrence Barrett came out of the theater together. The steps were dangerously slippery, and it was with difficulty that they kept their feet at all. As they totteringly descended the great actress said to her companion quite in her Lady Macbeth manner: "Take a good grip on my arm, Lawrence, and if I slip hold on like grim death. But if you slip in the name of heaven let go!"

Bad Manners.
The two women stepped in front of a dentist's showcase.

"There, mamma," said the younger woman, pointing, "I want a set just like that."

"Hush, my child!" commanded her mother. "Don't you know that it's vulgar to pick your teeth in the street?"

A Bright Youth.
She (archly)—Whom should you call the prettiest girl in the room? He (looking about him)—H'm! Well, to tell the truth, there isn't a pretty girl in the place.

Some will always be above others. Destroy the inequality of today and it will appear again tomorrow.—Emerson.

HOLIDAY DIAMOND SPECIAL
1-4 K Diamonds \$25
1-2 K Diamonds \$50
S. D. BURRITT
104 STATE ST.

Lunch Room Repartee.

The young man with the iron cheek entered the quick lunch room and seated himself at the third table.

"Belinda" he called familiarly "you look fresh this morning."

"Not half as fresh as some others" retorted the pretty waitress with an elevation of her nose.

"Well, well! Have you all brains?" "If I did you wouldn't order them, for you have an oversupply now."

"My, but you are getting good for the matlins!" With the high price of meats eggs come on heads these days don't they?"

"No, they come in rates."

"How? Did you ever hear the story of the incubator chick? It's not out yet."

"That will do, sonny. Did you ever hear the story of the cold partridge? Well, it's on you."

There was an unexpected tating of a dish, and the young man with the iron cheek was showered with salt.

Consolation.

A little girl of thirteen or so found herself one day possessed of a new emotion—a desire to be pretty. She struggled with it but finally went to the long mirror in the hall and for the first time in her life looked at herself critically from head to foot. She saw what most girls see at thirteen—a lanky creature, mostly legs and arms, hands and feet. It hurt her, and she went out of doors to think it over. Thought resulted in tears and in tears she was found half an hour later by her particular aunt, a lady near her own age. Anxious inquiry as to why she was crying induced her to speak.

"Oh, Harold," she wailed, "I've just looked at myself in the glass, and I'm so homely!"

The boy was puzzled but sympathetic and made an effort at consolation. He looked at her a minute, then awkwardly patted her, saying soothingly:

"Not homely, Alice; just funny looking 'n'—New York Times.

Doesn't Know Her Age.

There is a glaring phase of unfairness in the position of the two sexes, despite all our struggles for the surface. A woman still dreads to tell her age, no matter how youthful she may look, while as long as a man looks youthful he is generally willing to admit and even to boast of how many milestones he has passed. There is at least one father who understood this problem in time and who gave his daughter a fair chance in life by never letting her know how old she was. He realized at her birth that a time would come when she would not want to tell her age, and he spared her the humiliation of having to prevent, so she was never told either her age or the place where she was born, and there were no birth records preserved in the family.—New York World.

Tearing a Proverb to Tatters.

One of our correspondents, to whom so far as we can remember we never did any injury, sends us the following:

Carlyle said that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains. We venture to think this definition appropriate to a clerk.

But in a doctor genius is an infinite capacity for slaking pains. In a commercial traveler, for taking trains.

In a literary man, for raking brains. In a sanitary engineer, for making drains.

And in a Don Juan, for making Janes.

Oscar Wilde's emendation of the proverb was at once briefer and more obvious. "Genius," he said, "is an infinite incapacity for taking pains."—London News.

Shopping Troubles.

"Tomorrow is my wife's birthday, and I want to buy a present that will tickle her."

"We have a nice line of feather boas."

"No, no. I mean something that would make a hit with her."

"Anything in hammers?"

"You misunderstand. I want something striking that."

"Ah, you wish a clock."

"That's all."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

TEMPLE THEATER

Mme. Adelaide Norwood The Gifted American Grand Opera Artiste

Pat Rooney & Marion Bent In "At the News Stand." Valerie Bergere & Co. In "His Japanese Wife."

Victor Niblo's Wonderful Taming Birds Kitamura Japs

Best Equilibrists on Earth Charles Olcott Monologues and Songs Al. White's Six Jolly Jiggers Eccentric Dancers Throe Navaros Comedy and Acrobatics

Mooreoscope Best Motion Pictures in Town Opportunity.

There is a story of a sculptor which once showed a visitor his studio, who was full of gods, some of them very curious. The face of one was entirely concealed by the hair, and there were wings on each foot. The visitor asked this statue's name.

"Opportunity," was the reply. "And why is his face hidden?"

"Because men seldom know him when he comes to them."

"Why has he wings on his feet?"

"Because he is soon gone and once gone can never be overtaken," was the reply.

We all know the story of the man who sold the old farm which had barely been able to get a living from during his entire life and his amendment and chagrin when the new owner discovered gold upon the land the first week of his ownership. A great many of us are in that very condition with regard to our opportunities if we did but know it.—Washington Star.

Pampered Pups.

The dog doctor was making out a bill for the month's expenses of a Japanese spaniel. The items were room rent, board, medical attendance and electric light.

"Electric light?" exclaimed his secretary. "What on earth does a dog need with electric light?"

"He doesn't need it at all," said the doctor, "but his owner has ordered it, and he has been supplied with two eight-candle power lights every evening he has been in the hospital. He is one of those spoiled pups who were put to bed in a light room in their infancy, and now he cannot sleep in the dark. We always have two or three of that kind on hand. They occupy a special ward where the lights burn all night long."—New York Sun.

A Tenant For Life.

"Have you boarded long at this house?" inquired the new boarder of the sour, dejected man sitting next to him.

"About ten years."

"I don't see how you can stand it. Why haven't you left long ago?"

"No other place to go," said the other dully. "The landlady's my wife."

The Family Scrap Book.

Mrs. Sauters (to "Willy" as minister calls to see Mr. Sauters)—Willy, is your father in? Willy: Yes; he's upstairs looking over your scrap book. Mrs. Sauters (puzzled): You mean my family account book? Willy: Well, it's all the same. He and you always have a scrap every time he goes over it.

Portrait of a Gentleman.

The Professor: "Can you define a gentleman, Miss cutting?" The Suffragette (with certainty): A gentleman was a young man with the old masters, who often painted his portrait.—Examiner.

Quoted His Temperament.

"George is a very grouchy sort of man, isn't he?"

"Yes, wasn't better in anything but a sulky."—Baltimore American.

Seek knowledge as if thou wast to be here forever.—Herbert.