

GETTING the SPIRIT

ROSE ANN shook her head vigorously and surreptitiously drew her handkerchief from the folds of her peg-top skirt. Not surreptitiously enough, however, to escape the eagle eye of her co-partner in the notions at the Arcade Dry Goods Emporium. "Why the dew drops, sweet Rosie?" nagged Loretta of the skinkily hazel eyes and smooth Auburn braids above her too perfectly arched brows. "Oh, it's no use, Retta. Here it is Wednesday, only one more day to shop, and I've got no more Christmas spirit than a burned out fire cracker. What's ailing me? I've done without lunch the last week, trying to get it. Not a tingle down my spine, not a thrill when I see an express wagon. I've shopped my usual nickel's worth when the crowds were thickest, and I've done everything but write a letter to Santa Claus. It might as well be Decoration Day for all the excitement I can gather."

"Forget it, Rose Ann," said Loretta, shifting her Spearmint from biscupside to molar somewhere in the rear. "Oh," she added, seeing Rose Ann's hopeless expression, "go out and fell a pine or something. Get up a cantata, talk the weather man out of a snowflake. Hurry up, let's cover up these counters and beat it. There's the gong, and I've got a lead-pipe cinch on a table de hoty dinner with Mr. Fister to-night."

With leaden hands Rose Ann helped the nimble-fingered Loretta spread the drab gray covers over the notions. If one only worked in anything but notions at Christmas-time. Nobody bought 'em; if they did, one could never guess what they might be making. In ribbons or laces one might get lots of new ideas and even suggest a few to the interested buyer. But supporters and hooks and eyes, and hairpins and tape! Nothing red but elastic; nothing Christmasy but the dusty red bells, and artificial holly festooned above the tables.

In the tiny cloak room Loretta adjusted her lace veil over a green toque, and fastened her flowing jabot with a rhinestone bar pin.

"Sorry I can't wait, Rose Ann. But I promised Mr. Fister I'd meet him at six sharp. Anyway, I think the new shoe department head would cherish a walk home with you. G'night."

With which parting shot Loretta waltzed out of the room on her way to a real dinner. Rose Ann pulled her sailor down over her brown curls with trembling hands. How did Loretta know the new head man in shoes had even looked at her? 'Twas true, he had spoken to her once or twice, and he sometimes came down on the same car with her, but as to his attentions warranting an open jibe from Loretta—never! With head held high she

walked from the store with eyes to the front. She might have saved herself the trouble, for the new "poor but honest" as Loretta had dubbed him, was enroute home.

For blocks Rose Ann walked, darting between package-laden pedestrians, pressing her nose to shop windows, even venturing into some particularly gay places in quest of her earnestly sought Christmas spirit. Arrived home, she explained her lateness to her mother by pleading a headache, and the need of fresh air and a walk.

Long after her mother was asleep Rose Ann addressed her Christmas cards and cut tissue paper for her simple little gifts. Finally she threw down the scissors; her fingers wouldn't tie perky bows, her gifts all looked commonplace.

She dumped the lot into the box couch and dropped off to sleep, with a troubled heart. Was she growing old at twenty-three? No, that couldn't be it—people at seventy-five still had Christmas spirit when they were supposed to. Was she ill? No, not when she could eat seven hot rolls for dinner.

The next morning found her no nearer a solution. But she was a normal girl, and she loved her mother dearly, and the sun was shining. So for the time she smiled and was happy. But once in the whirl of shoppers she was again disturbed at the lethargic manner in which she executed sharp orders; at her absolute lack of spirit.

She could not bring herself to look at the "poor-but-honest." She could not let him see that she was calm and spiritless at this time of all the year. Again she forfeited her lunch to dash out into the cold, stinging air; to mingle with the gay, hurried throngs. But she came back at one-thirty a little disheveled, with one or two last-minute gifts, and—no spirit.

The afternoon seemed cons long. When at seven o'clock the last shift came on for the Christmas eve rush, Rose Ann took off her black apron reluctantly. As she stooped to recover her pencil, Loretta remarked in no unkindly tone, "Even lookin' on the floor for your spirit, we little 'Rosie' say make a little more stock in things level with your eyes, and don't intensify so on the spirit, up or down! You'll find it sure as soon as you stop lookin' for it. Merry Christmas, Rose Ann, G'night."

Rose Ann hurried home to help her mother assemble some remembrances for the washwoman's children. The two of them made popcorn balls, and ginger-bread men with funny faces; filled stockings with candy and trinkets, and wrote rhymes for each child's Mother Goose book. Rose Ann's eyes glistened and her hair tumbled in riotous curls on her temples. At length they finished the

baskets of childish, sweet gifts for the kiddies, and Rose Ann opened the box couch and brought forth her unwrapped gifts. Her heart dragged; her mouth drooped. For fear her mother would notice her change of humor, she snatched up a sweater and ran onto the back porch steps. For a while she sat with chin in hand, glancing first into one lighted window and then another across the alleyway.

Suddenly she jumped up, catching the post, strained her eyes across the darkness into a room in the opposite house. She brushed her hand across her forehead, and looked again. There in his second floor rear stood the "poor-but-honest," struggling with an awkward package on a table. He tried first one way and then another, then gave it up, clutching his hair, and tangling yards of red ribbon in his despair.

Rose Ann had a wild moment of indecision. Then, dashing into the house, she pretended a mystery though he traversed the aisle oftener than his duties demanded, rushed out sped down the walk and knocked at the front door corresponding to the back window above. For a brief moment her heart pounded and she thought she must run home. But 'er she could suit the action to the thought, the front door was thrown open, and there stood the "poor-but-honest."

"Er—well—oh," gasped Rose Ann. "I didn't know you lived here until I saw you from my back steps, and somehow, all of a sudden, I just had to come show you how to tie up that package. And I'm sorry—I—that I haven't looked at you, and—oh, let's go fix up the Christmas package."

And then the "poor-but-honest," because he wasn't poor in the real sense, and because he was very honest, did not mince matters. He let her tie up the package very carefully, because next morning it was to be for her. And he went home with her through the still cold night, and let her tell him how she had suddenly "gotten the spirit," by wanting to help somebody else. "That's the whole secret," she said happily. "I was too intent on doing things for myself. To-night I had a real thrill, when I was helping mother fix the poor kiddies' baskets. Then when I came to my own thought—over gifts, my heart sank again, and I had to go out and make myself get over it. Then I saw you struggling over that maze of ribbon, and the spirit came over me in a flood; and—"

They reached the steps. He took her face between his hands. "Was it only the holiday spirit, Rose Ann, my dearest?"

Her radiant eyes answered his question 'er her lips could frame a reply.

In the distance the Christmas carolers were singing that sweetest of Christmas songs: "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."

"How thoughtful of Santa Claus to write!" said Mrs. Kennedy. "I suppose Donald has the motor boat, so will get the box of soldiers; and Charlie has the cannon, so will have the sailors."

"No; I have got the motor boat," said Charlie. "And Donald has the cannon."

Donald did not say anything, but he looked very, very solemn. "Oh, why did I change my motor boat for the cannon?" he thought.

He looked even more serious still when the parcels in the porch were opened, for the box of soldiers was the most splendid one he had ever seen. There were rows and rows of horse and foot soldiers, with shining swords and brightly-painted coats. The sailors were very nice, but nothing came up to soldiers in Donald's eyes.

"I think there has been some mistake," said Uncle Bob, noticing the piteous expression on his nephew's face. "I had a private talk with Santa Claus, and told him particularly that you were to be the gallant soldier of the Kennedy family, and Charlie the sailor boy. There has been a mistake somewhere, I am sure."

As the hours of Christmas Day went by the Kennedy children, with happy, contented faces, played with their new toys—all but Donald, and he looked more and more solemn.

III.

It was Christmas night, Donald and Charlie were in bed. Charlie was asleep, but Donald lay awake. Presently manly footsteps passed the half-open door.

Uncle, uncle—is that you?" called Donald.

"Yes; why aren't you asleep, young man?"

"I can't sleep; I am worried, uncle. Please sit on my bed, quite close to me. I want to confide in you."

Uncle Bob smiled in the dark. "Speak on," he said.

"Uncle, you seem to know more about Santa Claus than the rest of us; you are friends with him, aren't you?"

"Yes; Santa Claus and I make little plans together sometimes. What is the matter?"

"Well, it is like this. I thought that Santa Claus had made a mistake when I saw the motor boat in my stocking and the cannon in Charlie's, so I thought I'd put the mistake right. If I had left them as they were, I should have had the soldiers; and I do want them."

"I thought something odd had happened," said Uncle Bob. "Another time you must leave Santa Claus to rectify his own mistakes. I am sorry about the soldiers, but you must be content with the sailors."

"I am awake," came from the other bed. "Donald can have the soldiers. I'd really rather have the sailors, but I did not like to say so," said Charlie.

So Donald had the soldiers and Charlie the sailors, and everyone was pleased.

And Donald has made up his mind not to interfere with Santa Claus' plans another Christmas.

Celebrating the Day Anciently and Now

On Christmas eve the bells were rung; on Christmas eve the mass was sung. That only night in all the year. Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear. The damsel donned her kirkle sheen; The hall was dressed with holly green. Forth to the wood did merry men go To gather in the mistletoe. Then opened wide the baron's hall To vassal, tenant, serf and all. Power laid his rod of rule aside, And Ceremony doffed his pride. The hall, with roses in his shoes, That night might village partner choose.

Christmas with us is a day of giving and receiving, of good cheer and good feeling, and essentially it is one of religious significance. Hence it will sound strange to many to be told that a number of our Christmas customs come down to us from pagan times. Yet such is the fact. Traces of some heathen rites are found in England as well as here, and the cause of their survival lies deeper than theology. Where the mother country, so called, was converted to Christianity the priests found her people wedded to many old customs. Not all of these were what they would have had them, but they had a practical work to perform and went at it in a practical way. The more revolting of these customs they properly uprooted altogether; the better of them they preserved, only in grafting the rites of the church upon them.

Thus it came about that festivities which had their origin in the old Roman Saturnalia and had come into use among the druids survived in the grim mythology of the Saxons and are a portion of our inheritance to-day. Conspicuous among these are the burning of the Yule log and the hanging of the mistletoe bough.

Among all people who celebrate the day at all it has always been a day for eating and drinking, for singing and dancing and merriment of all kinds. Indeed, this has been the criticism of the church against the manner of observance—that its spiritual meaning was too often forgotten in the

general tide of worldly cheer. In England its observance is universal. The chroniclers tell us that in Cheshire no servants would work on this day, even though their failure to do so resulted in their discharge. The richest families were compelled either to do their own cooking on Christmas or eat what had been prepared beforehand, while dancing and merriment reigned.

And the games that were played number nearly legion, the most of them, though, on Christmas eve. Running in sacks, ducking for apples, jumping at cakes suspended by a string and trying to catch them between the teeth, drinking hard cider mixed with egg and spices, and a score of others—these claimed and still claim in Devonshire the time of old and young, the children themselves being allowed on this one night to sit up until the midnight bell tolls.

What has been aptly called "a beautiful phase in popular superstition," a very old belief, was that all the powers of evil lay dormant and harmless on Christmas Day.

The cock crowed through the live-long night to drive all evil spirits away; the bees sang in their winter hives; the cattle, half human at all times, became wholly so at midnight and talked like human beings.

Bread that was baked the night before Christmas could not possibly become moldy. The streets in many places were filled with numbers in fantastic garb.

Indeed, there were numbers in the days when Saturnalia reigned over even the Roman emperors, but they were not necessarily of the Christmas time. The love for masquerade is almost as old as the human race itself.

But as to the day itself, it was then, as it is now, a very merry day, with good fellowship bubbling even from hearts where theological nonbelief dwelt—a day sacred to the family, to the eating of roast turkey and cranberry sauce or roast beef and plum pudding and wabuts and the drinking of beer, ale and wine.

It has changed to some extent since the old day, but it is still the happiest day of all the year—at least where the shadow of misfortune does not cloud the sky.

GAMES TO MAKE CHRISTMAS MERRY

AFTER all, there are no new games more amusing or fun-giving than the old-fashioned ones, such as progressive conversation, pass the button, twisting a word to make as many other words as possible, guessing contests and forfeit games. Though there is "nothing new under the sun," one of these herewith suggested may aid a distracted holiday hostess.

Gathering Snowballs.

For the littlest tots this game will prove very enjoyable. To each one give a fluffy cotton snowball, which should be attached to one ankle with a narrow elastic, just to hold it lightly. One child sits on the floor while the others join hands and dance around him. Without moving from his seat, the one in the centre reaches for the snowball on the ankle that seems easiest to reach. The players must not let go of each other's hands in endeavoring to dance out of his reach. When one is caught he is deprived of his snowball, and must take the other's place in the ring. As the contest narrows down to the last two or three who still have their snowballs the game grows quite exciting. After everybody has served his turn in the centre, they may have a lively "snowball fight" with the trophies.

Novel Ways to Choose Partners.

To avoid the "twosomeness" which is so apt to exist in the average towns, the wise hostess plans to have her guests choose partners at least once during the evening. Two entertaining ways are given.

1. Cut a large circle of white cardboard, dividing it with red ink into as many sectors as there will be girls present. Write a girl's name in each division. Make a large red arrow and attach to the centre of the circle with a brad. Lay the circle on a smooth table and have each boy come up in turn and spin the arrow, thus

choosing his partner. Of course, if a girl's name has been chosen, the boy must again take his turn. The hostess may avoid the embarrassment of there being a last choice, by refusing to be chosen until all her guests are accounted for.

2. Another very pretty method is to have a large holly wreath suspended in a doorway. Present the girls, who are in one room, with a piece of mistletoe to which is attached a long red ribbon. The ribbons are all put through the holly wreath and the boys in the next room each choose an end from the maze. The wreath is cut, and the girls wind up the ribbon, thus "drawing" their partners.

Charades.

Old-timey, but what is more fun than this game of guessing? The charades may be arranged for beforehand, or may be impromptu.

A littl girl with her arms outstretched, a star on her forehead, and draped with popcorn and tinsel would make an easily-guessed tree.

A boy might place a can on a table in the room, and in leaving, say "Ta-ta" (Cantata).

A boy wearing a Turkish fez, or an imitation one (cap with tasse!) holding a key (Turkey).

One person might take aim with a small missile at another's foot. The answer is obvious—mistletoe.

A word which has to do largely with the modern Christmas might be suggested by one person calling the roll, and others in the picture answering "Present" (Presents). This is not as easy to guess as it sounds. Those who are guessing are looking for a catch-word.

Any number of words appropriate to this season may be enacted, and many may be thought up in the excitement of the game, which will cause much merriment and much competition between the opposing sides, which are chosen at the outset of the game.

Santa Claus' Mistake

IT was very early Christmas morning; it would have been quite dark in the bedroom if it had not been for the street light outside the window.

Side by side against the wall stood two white beds. In one slept Charlie Kennedy, aged five; in the other, Donald Kennedy, aged seven, lay awake.

From the foot of each bed hung stockings.

"It looks like night out of doors," thought Donald. "But I have it is really morning, and it is morning I shall just have to peep into my stocking to see what Santa Claus has brought me."

Donald slipped a bare pink foot cautiously out of bed, then the other followed, and in his blue and white striped pyjamas he peeped to the well-filled stockings and emptied the contents on the floor.

In the dim light he could see a knife, a Chinese puzzle, an orange, and a box of sweets, also blockwork motor boat.

He put the things carefully back, then looked longingly at his other's stocking.

"I'll just peep at Charlie's. That'll be no harm," he thought.

He had much the same as

work motor boat, there was a cannon. Donald handled it lovingly. "Santa Claus ought to have known that I mean to be a soldier. He should have given me this cannon," he muttered. "Charlie is to be a sailor, so the motor boat would be just the thing for him. Santa Claus has made a mistake—that's what he has done."

Donald put back Charlie's presents and crept into his warm bed. But he could not sleep; he kept thinking of the cannon and the motor boat.

"I am sure Santa Claus has made a muddle about us. I shall set things right."

And so saying, Donald got out of bed once more, and put Charlie's cannon in his own stocking, and gave his brother the motor boat.

Having done this, Donald once more got into bed, and this time he soon went to sleep.

II.

It was Christmas Day and breakfast-time. Around the breakfast table in the dining-room, decorated with evergreens, sat Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, Donald and Charlie, and their sisters, Doris and Rose, whilst Uncle Bob was placed between Donald and Charlie to see that they "behaved themselves," as he laughingly remarked.

As they were all chattering, Ellen, the parlormaid, entered with a tray. On the tray was a letter. "I wonder who that is," remarked Mrs. Kennedy. "I am sure the letter is from Santa Claus."

"It is addressed to Master Donald and Master Charlie, and I found it in the drawing-room grate, ma'am. It looked just as if it had fallen down the chimney," said Ellen.

"What a peculiar place for a letter! Do let me see who it's from. Shall I read it out to you, boys?" asked his mother.

"Yes, please, mummy. I expect it is from Santa Claus. I dare say he dropped it down the chimney in passing," said Donald.

Mother and father smiled at this suggestion, whilst Uncle Bob grinned broadly.

"Why, it is from Santa Claus, as you said," remarked Mrs. Kennedy, looking very surprised. He writes:

"Dear Donald and Charlie,—A line in great haste to say that I have just found I have made a mistake about the things I put in your stockings last night. I did not know before which of you had settled to be the sailor and which the soldier, or I should have given the presents differently. Now I know, and, to make up, please look in the porch, and the box of soldiers you will find there is for the boy who had the motor boat, and the box of sailors for the boy to whom I gave the cannon. I hope this will please you both. I should have left the soldiers and sailors in your bedroom, but it is nearly light as I write this, and I am of a nervous disposition, and should not like you to see me, as I am so shy.

"Your loving friend,
"Santa Claus."

FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Make your Christmas tree ornaments.

Get ready plenty of glittering things.

String popcorn, cranberries and gilt paper balls.

Cut five-pointed stars of cardboard, and cover with gilt paper.

Make tiny paper dolls and dress them like fairies to hang on the tree.

Use white popcorn freely on the tree; with pin attach a single piece of popcorn to the tip of each branch or twig. It takes a little time, but repays the effort, giving the tree a beautiful snow-rusted appearance.

Little peanut dolls dressed in gay colors make good tree ornaments.

Use yellow tulle or netting to make small bags and fill the bags with popcorn.

Pink and white popcorn, wired in different shapes, is very nice for the Christmas tree.

A Realistic Picture.

A still life by Jan van Huysen in the museum at The Hague was injured, but it is believed that the perpetrator was neither thief nor vandal. The picture represents a basket of fruit on which a number of insects have gathered. On a pale yellow apple, which is the centrepiece in the cluster of fruit, is a large fly, painted so true to nature, the officials of the gallery say, that the canvas was injured by some one who endeavored to "shoo" it and brought his cane too close to the canvas. "A tribute to the painter's genius," says the letter recording the fact, "for which the work had to suffer."