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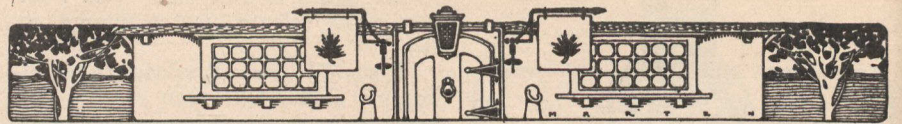
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AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

CHRISTMAS EVE.

THERE is that blessed old subject of High School debate, about the relative joys of anticipation and realisation, which always comes into one's head as December gets into the twenties. After all, looking back at the thrills one felt in the days of dolls or rocking-horses, was not Christmas Eve a much more exciting time than the great day itself? The chimney, that useful and uninteresting feature of the house during the rest of the year, suddenly took on a delightful mystery and the least swaying of branches or creaking of rafters made one morally certain that the reindeer must be near the roof. There was a delicious mingling of fear and hope in the childish forms which suddenly sat up "to listen for Santa Claus." One did so long for a glimpse of the old gentleman's rosy face and snowy beard—yet the very suspicion of a strange presence, over near the mantel-piece, sent curly heads cowering beneath the blankets. Ah, it's a great night—Christmas Eve—with all the subtle hints of the feast of to-morrow. There's a suggestion of sage, a faint odour of oranges and a curious mingling of all the spices that the Small Person loves.

Then the ghost stories, told by many an Old Country fireside, seem to be in the air on this thrilling Eve and the echoes of carols of long ago come across the sea. To all of us who have left the Peter Pan country, Christmas Eve brings ghosts indeed—"one mute Shadow watching all"—but to the trusting Small Person it is all a wonderful and magic night.

* * *

A WORD FROM OUIDA.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago the publishers of *Lippincott's Magazine* purchased from Ouida (Louise de la Ramee) three articles setting forth that novelist's views on certain problems affecting womankind. During the last quarter-of-a-century the manuscripts have been kept in a safe where they passed unsinged through the fire which destroyed so much of that publishing house in 1899. The title given the articles is the widely inclusive "What do Women Want?" Ouida wrote these sketches many years before the suffragettes began to cut the figure eight on the floor of the British House of Commons. It is, therefore, unlikely that the author of "Under Two Flags" has any intention of proclaiming the suffrage as the height of feminine ambition. Ouida was not fond of her sister woman and had even less tolerance for mere man. So, her views on problems which we women attempt to solve will be read with interest. Ouida's work was often marred by affectation and extravagance, but much of it is delicately wrought. Christmas never comes to those who have read "A Dog of Flanders," without bringing memories of good old Patrasche and his little master, Nello, and the bitter, pathetic words of the closing scene: "And so they had gone from a world which for love has no recompense and for faith no fulfilment."

* * *

THE PEARL AGAIN.

THE fashion in gems has lately turned to the purest of them all—the pearl. There are so many imi-

tations that we sometimes forget that the genuine pearl is a costly adornment. Among modern women who are noted for their collections of pearls are the Empress of Russia, the Queen of England, the Dowager Queen of Italy, Mrs. George J. Gould and Senora Diaz. The Duchess of Marlborough is also very fond of this gem and has ropes of pearl which are said to rival those of Queen Alexandra. Two distinguished scholars have lately written "The Book of the Pearl," giving all manner of curious and historical information on the subject. "Pearl Farming" has an attractive sound for the woman reader, who straightway begins to wonder if that would not be a poetic and paying industry. The jewel mysteries of the world have laid the foundation for an immense library of fiction, for which the diamond has no doubt supplied the bulk of thrilling romance.

However, the pearl, or imitations of that lustrous ornament, will be worn in every style of ear-rings and pendant this winter, often combined with the amethyst or topaz. The fashion of huge hatpins and buckles is said to be on the decline and we shall probably rush to the other extreme, wearing thread-like chains, and brooches hardly more than an exaggerated pin-head. The pearl necklace is an old friend which most of us will be glad to see again, for it possesses that invaluable qualification of "going with anything."

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THE CHEERFUL BORE.

THERE is a story to the effect that a woman, who was rather given to tears, once read, in a journal for women, one of those columns of advice in which such publications abound. This particular counsel was to the effect that cheerfulness is an admirable quality in the housewife, one that will surely cause the husband to cherish his beaming partner. The woman resolved to try a course of cheerfulness on her somewhat irascible husband and, on a certain evening, stationed herself near the hall-door, so that she might "greet him with a smile" on his return from that extremely trying office. The weary bread-winner, on his entrance, was somewhat bewildered by the spectacle of a broadly-smiling wife and proceeded to snap at her the question: "Well, old woman, what on earth are you grinning at?" This was more than flesh-and-blood could endure, there was a spirited retort and dinner was a doleful meal.

There is a kind of automatic amiability which is more irritating to the household on which it is tried than any ordinary outbreak of nerves or high spirits. This machine-made cheerfulness is like the little optimistic sayings which disfigure the walls of too many homes. Let us be frankly dismal once in a while—not on Christmas Day but on the second of January in the New Year, as we survey the fragments of the resolutions which were good and sound on the evening of December thirty-first. There is nothing like an occasional "Richard II." talk with oneself about "graves and worms and epitaphs" to restore one to comparative serenity.

CANADIENNE.