

sound that made my heart jump with joy. I heard sleighbells and then father's voice shouting to the horse. "Father has come," said I.

Samuel made one leap and was gone, rushing through the kitchen and out the back door.

I ran and unbolted the south door, and there were father and mother, come home sooner than I expected. When I saw their faces, I just broke down and sobbed and sobbed and told them all about it in such queer snatches that they thought at first I was out of my mind. Father said afterward that he never heard such a jumble of popcorn balls and secret drawers and Samuels. When father fairly understood what had happened, he lighted the lantern and searched out in the barn and the sheds to be sure that Samuel was not lurking about the premises, but he did not find him. Father said he knew the man; that he belonged to a good family, but had been sort of shiftless and unlucky.

When we were all settled down again for the night and I felt so safe and happy with father and mother at home, I could not help feeling troubled about poor Samuel out in the storm. I hoped he would not die of cold and be found dead when the snow melted in the spring. There was quite a severe snowstorm. That was the reason why father and mother had reached home so late. They had been obliged to drive slowly on account of the gathering snow.

We were just sitting down to our Christmas dinner next day when we all stopped and listened. Then the sound came again, and we were sure that somebody was out in the storm calling faintly for help.

"It is the man!" said mother. "Do go quick as you can." Mother had been worrying about Samuel all day. She said she did not want him to perish if he had tried to wrong us, and father had been all around the farm looking for him. He thought, however, that he had gone down to the village the night before.

We opened the door, and we could hear the calls for help quite plainly. Father pulled on his big boots and started out. The storm was very thick. Soon we could not see father, but we could hear his shouts and the faint cries in response, and then we saw father coming back half carrying Samuel J. Wetherhed.

Samuel was pretty well exhausted, besides being frightened and ashamed when he saw where he was, back in the house of the man he had tried to rob. He tried to stop on the threshold of the outer door, spent as he was. "I guess you—don't—know," he began, but father interrupted him. "Come along in!" cried father in a hearty way that he has. "You have been good to my children, and as long as you didn't do what you set out to there's no use talking about it."

Samuel was pretty well exhausted. He had spent the night in an old barn on the other side of the mountain and had been floundering about in circles all day, trying to find the road. However, he was able to eat some Christmas dinner with us, though he hesitated about that, as he had done about entering the door, and all of a sudden he dropped his knife and fork, bent his head down over his plate, and we saw that he was crying, though we tried to take no notice.

Samuel staid with us that night and was present at the Christmas tree, though he seemed very sober and dashed his hand across his eyes a good

many times when his name was called out and he got his little presents.

The next day the storm had stopped, and father put the horse in the sleigh and took Samuel down to Lebanon to take the train. We never saw him again after he had shaken hands with us all and thanked mother in a voice that trembled so that he could scarcely speak and father had driven him off to the sleigh.

That day we girls pulled the corn balls to pieces and found the bills inside, not sticky at all. The next day father took the money to the bank, though he said he didn't know but corn balls were safer, since robbers knew that money was in banks, but he didn't think they had any suspicion of its being in corn balls.

We spent the next Christmas in our old home in Wareville, for father and Uncle William had made up and we had gone back there to live. We had a tree, and the day before Christmas a great box came by express with a handsome present for each of us. There was no name sent with them, but we always knew as well as we wanted to, and father and mother thought so, too, that they had come from Samuel J. Wetherhed, who, we had heard, had settled out west and was doing very well.

The Friendly Hand.

When a man ain't got a cent, an' he's feelin' kind o' blue,
An' the clouds hang dark an' heavy, an' won't let the sunshine through,
It's a great thing, O my brethren, for a feller just to lay
His hand upon your shoulder in a friendly sort o' way!

It makes a man feel curious; it makes the tear drops start,
An' you sort o' feel a flutter in the region o' your heart.
You can't look up and meet his eyes; you don't know what to say,
When his hand is on your shoulder in a friendly sort o' way.

Oh, the world's a curious compound, with its honey an' its gall,
With its cares an' bitter crosses; but a good world, after all,
An' a good God must have made it—least-ways, that's what I say
When a hand rests on my shoulder in a friendly sort o' way.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Tricks for the Tongue.

Try to read the following sentences aloud and quickly, repeating the shorter ones half a dozen times in succession:

Six thick thistle sticks.
Flesh of freshly fried flying fish.
The sea ceaseeth but it sufficeth us.
Give Grimes Jim's gilt gig whip.
Two toads, totally tired, tried to trot to Tedbury.

Strict, strong Stephen Stringer snared six sickly silky snakes.

She stood at the door of Mrs. Smith's fish sauce shop, welcoming him in.

Swan swam over the sea; swim, swan, swim; swan swam back again; well swum, swan.

A haddock, a haddock, a black-spotted haddock, a black spot on the back of a black-spotted haddock.

Susan shineth shoes and socks; socks and shoes shineth Susan. She cooseth shining shoes and socks, for shoes and socks shock Susan.

CHARITY itself changes its character when it becomes the subservieney of wrong; it is right to rampant wrong.

THE ORDEAL BY GIFTS

A CHRISTMAS STORY BY PETER M'ARTHUR.

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BECAUSE Jean was born on Christmas day no one was surprised at her many little peculiarities. She certainly was "not like other girls," and, although it may seem like making too great a concession to the superstitious, it must be admitted that her most

striking peculiarities were due to this accident of birth. Of course it had nothing to do with her unlikeness to other girls in being more beautiful than any of them, but it certainly was the cause of a strange moroseness that seemed to overwhelm her every year when her birthday came around. It was first noticed when she was a child, and wise people said she would outgrow it, but they were mistaken. Every year her birthday brought a period of discontent, and because of a strain of Scotch reticence in her nature she would not explain what was weighing on her mind. It is true that as she grew older she changed somewhat, but it was in a way that made this peculiarity more marked. When she was old enough to have admirers, it was noticed that she almost invariably broke off with them at Christmas, and when asked to explain her conduct she quoted from an ancient ballad she had read at the seminary:

Who on Christ his day is borne
Shall rede aught both love and scorn

"Because I was born on Christmas," she used to say, "I have a power to know which of my friends are true and which are false, but if I explain this power to any one I shall lose it."

Of course this sounded very absurd in the last years of the nineteenth century, but it was finally demonstrated that her power had a thoroughly reasonable foundation. But it compelled her to weed down her friends and admirers to a pitifully small group and might have destroyed her life's happiness when the real Prince Charming came to woo but for the fact that Cupid always looks after his own.

From the time she was 17 till she was 22 Jean dismissed from one to a dozen admirers every Christmas without explanation, and people were beginning to believe that she was doomed to die an old maid. In the November of her twentieth year she became engaged to an attractive young man, and some thought the spell was broken, but she dismissed him so contemptuously at Christmas and with such outspoken scorn that it became a saying among her friends that she would never get married until a young man appeared who could hold her fancy through the Christmas season. She admitted the truth of this statement and continued to wait the coming of the right man.

When Harry Finlay came to the town to act as cashier in the local bank, he immediately struck up a warm friendship with the beautiful but decidedly peculiar girl. Well meaning friends warned him of her Christmas habits, but in his eyes the touch of mystery only added to her charm. He paid court to her ardently and with such success that toward the end of autumn she consented to be his wife. But when he asked that she wait for a year until he received an expected promotion to the position of manager she showed signs of uneasiness, and when, in addition, he asked her to be patient with him until he could afford to get her such an engagement ring as he thought should be placed on her finger she was almost moved to tears, but would not explain why. The truth was that she reciprocated his love so warmly that she would gladly have married him out of hand and avoided the

Christmas test, but now he was laying himself open to it. Indeed he was approaching it with even worse prospects than any of his predecessors. Harry suspected the cause of her uneasiness



WELL MEANING FRIENDS WARNED HIM OF HER CHRISTMAS HABITS.

and asked her to explain, but much as she would have liked to warn him of the snare into which all her previous admirers had fallen she could not do so, for she had registered a vow to keep her secret. She did promise, however, that if he escaped the danger she would explain everything to him after Christmas.

"If you love me truly and are the noble, generous soul I believe you to be, there is no danger," she said to him.

"I am not so sure of my nobility and generosity," he said, "but I am very sure that I love you, and I will walk as circumspectly as I can."

As the Christmas season came around Jean's anxiety increased; but, like the healthy, big hearted soul he was, Harry practically dismissed the whole matter from his mind and went his way as if he were not undergoing a test on which his whole future happiness depended.

As the little jeweler in the town did not have a very large assortment of presents Harry found it difficult to select a suitable one for Jean. He wanted to give her something out of the common run, but as he felt that in view of the necessity for saving money toward housekeeping he must not spend more than \$10 his diffi-



"WELL, I CALL IT A SKIN GAME."

culty was greatly increased. In order to help him out the jeweler gave him an illustrated catalogue and told him to select the design he wanted and he would send to the city for it. Harry acted on the suggestion and worked over that catalogue for almost a week. He marked at least 20 designs of pins, brooches, bracelets and such trinkets before he decided on a brooch that took his fancy. He then took a rubber and erased the marks he had made before designs he had re-