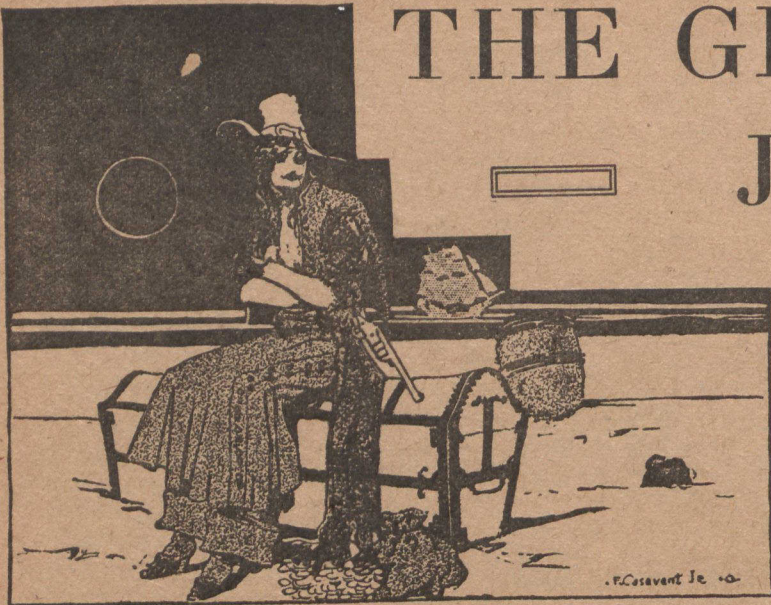


# THE GREED OF JOCELYN JEFFREYS

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE



"Old-fashioned Christmas dinner, I see, Archie."

"Worse than that," returned Bellamy. "Old-fashioned Southern Christmas dinner. Everything on the table, all at once. Virginia darkies by the score to wait on you. I've been South a dozen of times to get the local color for it, Rightie, and it's

*INVOLVING two Christmas Dinners, in which the art of a woman was strangely mixed up with the power of a woman to act, and the capacity of one man for being bamboozled.*

WAINWRIGHT MONROE, in his bedroom at the Barristers, had finished shaving and was grooming vigorously his heavy head of tawny hair, when there thundered on his door a most tremendous knock.

"Who's there?" he cried, expectantly.

"Bellamy," replied a voice. Whereupon the owner of the voice thrust open the door and stalked in, as he stalked down the centre aisle of theatres, or into the middle of big dining-rooms, with his massive pair of big shoulders first.

Archibald Bellamy was known to his friends as a gigantic game of bluff and in this game of bluff his shoulders played the major part.

Wainwright Monroe turned to him with a humorous grin of disappointment on his features. "It's only you, Archie," he exclaimed. "Too bad, I thought you were a box of Duodecimos."

Archibald Bellamy strode heavily about the room, making everything in it, except Monroe, who was long where Archibald was broad, seem small by contrast.

"Why did you think I was a box of Duodecimos?" queried Archie, with a grunt.

"Because," answered Wainwright, "I just sent out for some."

Bellamy placed his hat carefully upon the bed and tossed his stick beside it. "In that case," he announced, "I had better wait."

Wainwright tucked his military brushes into their case and glanced doubtfully towards his stout friend. "That doesn't explain it," he ventured.

"Doesn't explain what?" queried Archie, keeping up his interest in the door, through which, at any moment, the Duodecimos might come.

Monroe selected a waistcoat from his closet and returned. "It doesn't explain your presence here so early in the morning, Mr. Bellamy," he returned.

For answer Archibald thrust his hand into his coat and drew forth from his breast pocket a square white envelope. "I've come, sir," he remarked, passing it over, "to confer upon you a Christmas present."

"In-deed?" returned Monroe. He tore open the envelope, extracted its contents, and then presented a countenance filled with comical disappointment. "Is this all I get for Christmas?" he complained. "Why, what do you think I thought that this contained?—I thought it was a check for that five thousand that you owe me."

ARCHIE waved his hand. "It's better, much better, my boy," he remarked easily. "There are lots of checks for five thousand floating around town, but it's not everybody who can get an invite to one of Archie Bellamy's Christmas dinners, let me tell you that."

Wainwright studied the invitation carefully.

going to be great."

"Well," mused Monroe, "I suppose I've got to come. Who's going to be there, anyway?"

"A lot of people in general," answered Bellamy, "but one in particular—Jocelyn Jeffreys."

Monroe started. "Jocelyn Jeffreys," he repeated, as though searching his memory for something that had escaped him. "Where have I heard that name?"

"Probably haven't heard it at all," returned Bellamy. "Most likely you have seen it in the theatrical columns of the newspapers. She's doing 'The Maid of Green Cheese' at the Gaiety."

Wainwright nodded. Some portion of his uncertainty had departed from him, for he recalled now, not only having seen the name of Jocelyn Jeffreys, but he recalled, also, having seen her at the Gaiety.

"She's the girl," went on Bellamy, "who introduced from the Fourteenth Street Burlesque House into Broadway that feature of kissing every man in the bald-headed row. Nobody could have done it and done it right except Jocelyn Jeffreys, and Broadway stood for it hard."

"I remember the girl," said Wainwright. "She does 'The Siren' and that business is in her kissing song, only she doesn't kiss anybody; she pretends."

"How do you know?" asked Bellamy.

"I've been in the bald-headed row myself," responded Wainwright.

"Well," went on Bellamy, "I'll tell you what. Jocelyn Jeffreys is just my kind, and I'm giving this little Christmas blowout just for her—just for her and you. Do you understand?"

"For me?" repeated Wainwright. "What terrible convulsion of your nature led you to give a dinner for me, I'd like to know?"

"It was no convulsion of my nature," responded Bellamy. "It was just a little idiosyncrasy of Jocelyn's. She wants to meet you."

"Wants to meet me!" exclaimed Wainwright, aghast. "Why the girl doesn't know me; she doesn't know who I am."

"Doesn't she," returned Bellamy. "I should think she did. You are one of the most distinguished Southerners in the Borough. She's from the South, and, what's more, she's seen you, and any girl in town, my dear young friend, who sees you, wants you. Not very remarkable, it seems to me."

But it was remarkable, somehow, to Monroe, and remarkable chiefly because the mention of the Gaiety girl's name, following immediately upon Wainwright's early morning reverie, had stirred something—some strange and intangible memory, that he could not account for. The mere fact that a Gaiety girl wanted to meet him, was nothing to him. He had grown weary of advances of this kind. But the fact that Jocelyn Jeffreys, a girl with a name that haunted him; a girl whose lips he had almost

met one night at the Gaiety, made him suddenly and tremendously anxious to know her. In the week that lapsed before the dinner, unusual impatience possessed him. Two or three times he was on the point of occupying a first row seat at the Gaiety again, to fall once more under "The Siren's" hypnotic spell; to see if he could not succeed where other men had failed—could not, across that narrow space between the audience and the footlights, succeed in wresting from The Siren the elusive kiss, for the performance of which feat, the vulgar Broadway manager was advertising on his billboards, the successful winner would receive an even fifty dollars. But he did not go. And so it happened that on Christmas night he found himself eagerly pushing his way through the crowd of common-places that always characterized Bellamy's dinners toward the girl in the far corner who was being monopolized by Bellamy himself. Bellamy did the honors, and, inasmuch as Wainwright's arrival had completed the list of guests, the doors were thrown open and the dinner began at once.

MONROE found, to his inward satisfaction, that though Jocelyn Jeffreys occupied the place of honor on Bellamy's right, he, Wainwright, was seated on the other side of the girl herself.

You give dinners, too, Mr. Monroe," she whispered, with a quick, confidential glance, that indicated somewhat that she preferred their converse to be overheard by no one, not even by Bellamy himself.

Wainwright did not answer at once. He looked her fully and frankly in the face. Glanced at her hair, her gown, her hands. She was a superb creature, without a trace of color on her countenance. A little above the medium height, perhaps, and with that strange bewildering combination of jet black hair and deep blue eyes. She was very pretty, and Monroe noted suddenly, to his satisfaction, that the girl wore no jewels. Her hair even gave no sign of fastening.

Ranged up and down on both sides of the long table were ladies of various ages and various stages of beauty, but the face of each bore evidence of art, not nature. It was small wonder with Monroe that over the top of the abundance piled in old-fashioned splendor on the table, every man in the room was watching Jocelyn Jeffreys.

"Yes," finally returned Monroe, "I do give dinners, now and then, but not like this; this is the kind of dinner that—" He stopped suddenly and something seemed to catch within his voice, and then he went on, "that my mother used to give."

The girl shook her head. "Never," she replied. "Archie Bellamy never could get up a dinner like your mother used to get."

Wainwright laughed. "How do you know?" he demanded. But the girl only shook her head and went swiftly on.

"Your dinners I have heard of, Mr. Monroe."