

### No Room at the Inn

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tears. And Laura found it difficult to wait for a suitable chance, when evening came, to regale him with choice bits from the experiences of the day. After a few desultory attempts to locate a satisfactory boarding-house for their unexpected guests, the Dillons, resigned themselves to the situation, with a good grace that was nothing short of miraculous. After the first night, Mrs. Dillon slept, partly from sheer weariness, and partly from relief at discovering that very few things are really impossible. She asked to be released from their Christmas dinner engagement and began to plan a holiday feast of their own. If only the Funk family would take themselves off in good season every day to shopping and sight-seeing, she felt sure the preparations she had in mind could be carried out.

On the second morning, Mrs. Funk dropped a bomb on these calculations. She paused long enough over her fourth slice of toast and her third cup of coffee to remark that it was simply too much for Artie to be dragged about the stores all day, and that she had decided to leave him at home—she knew he wouldn't be a bit of trouble.

Mrs. Dillon, who had expected to devote the morning to the making of peppermint wafers and other confections suitable for the young, saw her plans go glimmering. The care of Artie looked to her like an exceedingly confined task. However, that young gentleman proved to be a pleasant disappointment. After a few loud-voiced objections, meant for the ears of his departing relatives he smiled up at his new guardian confidently and proceeded to make himself at home. With the fur rug on his back he crawled happily about the floor all morning, playing he was a cat. Moved by a sudden impulse, Mrs. Dillon entered into his game by giving him his morning cup of milk in a deep saucer in front of the fireplace, and laughed until her sides ached over his antics as he tried to lap it up. When he went to sleep with his chubby fingers clinging to hers, after she had given him his noonday meal, Laura Dillon found it very hard to tip-toe away and leave him. Really it was a lot of company to have the little fellow in the house. For the first time in months she sang softly to herself as she went about her work.

That evening, Warren, with an air of mystery, summoned her to the garage to inspect something which he had brought home. It proved to be a good sized Christmas tree. "I thought it wouldn't do to have one of those table affairs we usually have, now that the kids are going to be here," he apologized, "so I got this one and here's a box of trimmings and a string of colored lights. They will make it quite safe. We'll send their fond parents off to a show tomorrow night, put the boys to bed, and let little Gwen help us trim it. She'd have to know about it anyhow on account of her sleeping arrangements. She's a great little girl—did she show you the things she's been buying for the boys? She's spending all her money on them, not a cent for herself. Couldn't we get her something nice?"

"Yes," said Laura, "I'd thought of that, too, but how can I go down town if I have to be nurse-maid for Artie again tomorrow?"

"Well, you decide on something and I'll see what I can find."

Under cover of the darkness, Laura pinched herself to see if she were in her right senses. Here was Warren, who would have preferred to serve a prison sentence than enter a department

store, nonchalantly promising to hunt up a Christmas gift for the appealing eyed Gwen. Laura made no comment. She had not stopped to analyze her own emotions in the matter, but she felt an unusual pleasure in trying to surprise the children.

The day before Christmas resolved itself into a perfect orgy of belated preparations. Fortunately Mrs. Funk thought best to take all the children on their daily shopping excursion. There were some things which she wanted to try on Artie, and she had discovered that she could put him to bed in the immaculate nursery of the "Criterion" and leave the uncomplaining Gwen to watch over him when life became too strenuous with him in the party. They had not yet returned when Warren arrived that evening with his arms full of mysterious packages. He plumped them down recklessly on the nearest chair and drew the pink-cheeked Laura into his arms.

"Say, little girl!" he beamed. "We're sure going to have some Christmas, and you could never guess in a thousand years what I've got for you."

"Why, Warren," she said with a tired little sigh, as she nestled happily against his shoulder. "I'd completely forgotten about us."

As soon as dinner was over that evening the reluctant Mr. and Mrs. Funk were hustled away to the movies. The boys, almost too weary for their customary evening hate, went off to sleep with only one or two protesting howls.

It was the most wonderful tree they had ever seen, the three conspirators agreed, when its last twinkling silver star had been fastened in place. They put out the lights and sat before the grate fire, with the gay colored little globes winking at them from the fragrant green branches.

"I shall keep my eyes open and watch it till I go fast asleep and dream I'm in fairy land," murmured Gwen drowsily when at last after rapturous kisses from them both she had been tucked in on the davenport. Outside the snow was falling softly. It crunched with a pleasant sound under the feet of an occasional passer-by. Warren and Laura sat for a long time in silence before the fire, their fingers intertwined. At last he cleared his throat huskily.

"This anniversary of our engagement is one of the happiest we've ever had, isn't it, dearest?" he said, drawing her closer.

"Yes," whispered Laura tremulously. "I guess it's the children. Do you know Warren, I've been thinking how nice

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### The New Year

is not very far distant and immediately after that the shipments of fertilizer begin to go out. Many of our customers handle their carload on the snow while the roads are good, others want to have it on hand and delivered before the planting season and others to avoid the delays which may come with a later order.

While it is too early yet to have any fixed idea of business next spring the general conditions appear favorable for a much better fertilizer trade than a year ago. There is a distinct shortage of potatoes in Western Canada and United States which under usual conditions results in advanced prices. The shortage is much greater than two years ago when potatoes reached the high mark. However other conditions do not favor marked higher prices but merely a steady demand seems to be assured.

In the apple growing sections of Nova Scotia the shortage of apples in other sections has opened new markets. This had made a free movement of a large crop at reasonably good prices.

These improved markets compared with last year and the reduction in price from five dollars a ton in the lower grades up to a reduction of fifteen to twenty dollars in the higher grades will probably cause a larger demand for fertilizers with an earlier placing of orders.

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**Tinsel Cord,** 12 cents a spool.

**Paper Garlands** for decorative purposes. Two styles. 7 cents each, 3 for 20 cents.

**Japanese Hanoki Rope,** made in Japan from wood fibre. Glossy finish. A very attractive decoration. Colors red and green. Price 3 cents a yard.

**Christmas Tissue Paper Balls,** red and green combination. 10 cents each.

**Christmas Bells,** 5c., 10c., 15c.

**Tinsel Christmas Tree Decorations.**

**Santa Claus Snow,** 15 cents a package.

**Christmas Paper Napkins,** 15 cents a doz.

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