

His Christmas Caller

By Anna S. Richardson

THE store fairly radiated the Christmas spirit. Crimson bells swung from every chandelier. Ropes of evergreen draped all the shelving. The counters were strewn with Christmas cards, booklets and favors.

The man who had dropped in to buy lead points for his pocket pencil remained to pore over a stack of gift books bound in rare leather. Then he heard the voice. After that only his gaze was on the books. His interest was concentrated on the possessor of the voice.

"But you said such things were in great demand around the holidays, and



"I SHOULD LIKE TO TAKE A LOOK AT THOSE CARDS."

I have taken infinite pains with these. Please, please tell me what is wrong with them."

There was a note of tragedy in the rich contralto tones which, together with a beseeching glance from wonderful violet eyes, put to rout the rules and regulations of the astute buyer of Christmas novelties. His was a smart shop, and he had never vouchsafed explanation to struggling young artists whose work he declined to sell on commission, but now he picked up the little packets of plate and score cards, gay with holly, Santa Claus heads, etc.

"Let me explain," he said. "These are not novelties. They are the same style of cards used in the past twenty years, with the same decorations. Women who can afford to pay the prices demanded for hand painted novelties want something new. See this poinsettia blossom—not painted on a card, but cut in the shape of the blossom itself—and this funny, bulging stocking, overflowing with faces of pretty girls, for a bachelor. They are catchy, the sort of things my customers want. Your work is neat, but not novel."

"Thank you," the girl said bravely, "understand now, and it is too late for me to try my hand at novelties. But perhaps you will keep my cards, and I—well, your novelties might not go around, and then perhaps some late customer might buy mine after all."

"Certainly. I will be glad to keep them in reserve. Your name and address—oh, yes, I remember—Miss Sylvia Leigh, the Grant studios. I will do my best for you."

Nevertheless as the girl slipped through the door he opened a deep drawer under the counter and dropped the cards out of sight. It would never do to display those old fashioned bits of pasteboard among the novelties which appealed to his fashionable trade. And then very suddenly the man who had been engrossed in leather bound gift books stepped up to the counter.

"One minute, please. I should like to take a look at those cards you just bought from the young lady."

The astonished manager of the store glanced from the well groomed man with fine brown eyes and iron gray hair to the more expensive novelties in the showcase.

"The ones you just bought from the young lady," repeated the customer severely.

"Certainly," responded the manager hastily, and he spread forth the despised bits of pasteboard. The work was dainty, but utterly commonplace.

"Just what my sister would like—conservative sort of woman my sister is—don't go in for newfangled ideas. I'll take those—three dozen. Not enough! Do you suppose the girl could do two dozen more by the day before Christmas? If she can, send 'em to me, James Macy, at Marquette. I'll take these with me."

And almost before he could realize what had happened the manager was actually gazing, open mouthed, after this eccentric customer whose sister was to give a dinner party of sixty covers on Christmas day and entrusted the buying of such important articles as dinner favors to an obviously inexperienced bachelor brother.

Christmas eve was frosty and starlit. James Macy, coming home from his office, smiled somewhat grimly at the holiday preparations made.

Holly and evergreens there were in plenty, great wreaths with massive

bows of satin ribbon, a bowl filled with scarlet poinsettia blooms, and on one table an orderly stack of parcels evidently sent by express, mail and messenger to the popular but elusive bachelor, for elusive he was dubbed by matchmaking mothers.

"A young lady to see you, sir," remarked his man impassively.

James Macy took the card. "Miss Sylvia Leigh," ran its legend. She came to him, looking taller than the day in the shop, for her head was held high.

"You will pardon my coming here on Christmas eve and unchaperoned. I could not leave town without seeing you." The violet eyes had turned almost black; the contralto voice was a bit too even in its tones.

"I am honored," replied James Macy gravely, and he offered her a chair, which she declined with a wave of her gloved hand.

"It was hard enough to know that the man who bought my foolish little paintings did it through a sense of pity, but to learn that he was also the man who wrecked my mother's life—that—that was too much. I have come to return your money and ask the return of my cards if you have not already destroyed them."

"My dear girl," expostulated the man, who had turned strangely white.

"Please do not interrupt me," continued the girl passionately. "My mother's brother—perhaps you remember him—Henry Johnson, is here. He went to the shop and found out where my cards had gone and— Oh, it is such a miserable little farce to you, a successful man! I thought I could be an artist. They told me so at home. Against uncle's wishes I came here to make my little fight and failed. When you bought those things I thought perhaps—but uncle, who wanted me to go home, sifted the story to the bottom and found you. I am going home with him tonight."

"Miss Leigh, I want to beg a favor of you. This is Christmas eve, and I am a lonely, desolate man. If ever the Christmas message of peace and good will means anything it is tonight, and I want your good will. Those little Christmas cards you painted are the only touch of real Christmas that has come into my life—and I want to keep them—and tell you why I want to keep them. Will you be seated?"

"You say I wrecked your mother's life. Well, then, know that hers was not long. My season of regret and penitence has lasted longer than you have lived. I loved your mother, but I did not understand her. I went out into the world to make a fortune, not for myself, but for her, and I thought that the fortune must come first and love's dream afterward. With women it is different. The dream must come first—the fortune is a secondary consideration. Your mother (God bless her memory) thought I had forgotten—that I did not care—and so she passed out of my life and into your father's."

"But she had you. I had nothing, nothing but money and the memory of one happy summer of her life. I never expected to know what peace and happiness meant again until that day in the store, when your eyes, your voice—I thought it was the other Sylvia, my Sylvia, come to life. And I bought those cards because you painted them."

"And now you come to me in anger and take from me my one Christmas

"I AM HONORED," REPLIED JAMES MACY

happiness—the work of your hands. Sylvia, haven't I paid my debt of repentance? Can you not extend forgiveness—Christmas forgiveness—in your mother's name?"

Sylvia turned toward the door. "I must go now. We are leaving on the 9 o'clock train. Uncle is waiting for me downstairs in a cab. We are going home."

"Home!" The man echoed the word mechanically, dully.

The girl hesitated, then held out her hand.

"Yes, back to dear old Hestonville. Why don't you come too? Why don't you run out tomorrow—for dinner?"

"Sylvia, child, do you mean it? Do you understand that if I come it will be—to see you?"

Bravely the violet eyes were raised to meet the searching look in the brown ones.

"Is it peace and good will for me, Sylvia?"

"Yes—and merry Christmas if you come tomorrow."

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THE THREE AGES OF CHRISTMAS.

By ROBERTUS LOVE



WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

With Dolly sweetly sleeping
Before the blazing grate
The little ones are keeping
Their vigil very late.
With many chirographic flaws
They write their wants to Santa Claus.



CHRISTMAS EVE

Now long abed is Dolly,
Because 'tis Christmas eve,
But little Paul and Polly
Are wide awake, believe!
They cannot sleep nor dine nor sup
Before they hang their stockings up.



CHRISTMAS MORNING.

'Tis Christmas morning early,
Yet these expectant tots
(Now, don't you love them dearly?)
Have risen from their cots,
And even Dolly's eyes are wide
To see the toys of Christmastide.

Poultry Wanted!

Any and all kinds of old or young Poultry wanted. Would prefer birds Dressed in a special way.

Also want

Rabbits

in any quantity. Write, or telephone

A. R. Rigby, Hartland.

for price and written instructions how to dress the poultry.

The Store formerly operated by W. H. Drake at Coldstream has gone under new management.

We still carry all lines usually found in a

First Class Country Store

Call and see us

Drake & Belyea

Coldstream, N. B.

WINTER is NEAR

Prepare for the cold season with good warm clothing. Our stock of

Foot Wear

especially

Felt Goods

Shoepax & Co.



consists of everything that can be desired.

Under-Clothing

is large and varied. We look specially to the comfort of men who work out of doors.

Don't forget Nixon's SPECIAL Tea and Coffee.

They have stood the test of years and are selling better than ever. We have other Teas if you want them.

H. R. NIXON

The Peoples Shoe Store

A New Real Estate List.

24. A farm in parish of Brighton, 61 acres, 75 cleared balance in spruce, fir and hardwood. Seven miles from Hartland. Good new buildings, cement cellar under house.

25. A farm in parish of Simonds of 150 acres, 80 cleared balance well wooded with hemlock and hardwood. A fine new 2½ story house, 13 rooms finished throughout. Good cellar with new furnace. Carriage house, Well house, Summer Kitchen. A new hip-roof barn 45x76 with 24ft. posts. A good well and spring near house, spring brook across farm. Situated on St. John river. Convenient to school, Post Office, Church and station. Easy terms.

26. A farm of 150 acres within 2½ miles of Fredericton, 80 acres cleared balance woodland with some timber. A good 10 room house well finished with cellar. A spring near the house. A large barn, woodshed and wagon house. Near school and church. Quite level and in a fair state of cultivation. An orchard of 50 trees. Part cash, balance with yearly payments.

27. A farm of 200 acres in parish of Simonds on St. John river, 35 acres cleared balance heavy lumber land. In fair state of cultivation and fair buildings including house and three barns. Never failing well in woodshed. A spring brook crosses the farm. Has a small orchard. Convenient to Post office, School, Church and Station. Farm Machinery included. Good terms.

28. A house and lot in centre of Perth on Main St. (lot 70x50 ft.) used for offices and tenement overhead. Yearly rental \$188.00. Water in house. In good repair and well painted. A bargain if taken at once.

29. A fine home on Main St. Hartland. Well finished large house with large lawn in one of the best locations in town. A very desirable property on easy terms.

30. A good business stand in central location in busy town. Two story building. First floor can be used for store, etc. The second floor and third finished for large dwelling flat gets good rental. A good investment on easy terms.

31. A fine large two story house with cell well furnished inside and out with bath room hot and cold water, in good location in village of Hartland. A fine property at a low price.

32. EIGHTEEN LOTS on Main St. Hartland on the well known and desirable location on McMullin's Flat. Price from \$200 to \$300 each. Secure one at once or write for particulars.

33. A nice home of house and stable and lot of 8 acres in country. A nice little home with a good chance for gardening in a nice location very cheap.

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