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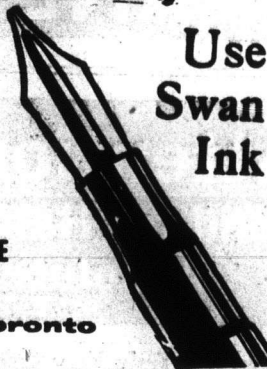
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that pop-corn was Mrs. Freddy's coup
de grace. She planned it for a week.

"You haven't forgotten to send for it?"
demanded Marion.

Mrs. Freddy choked over the answer
and looked appealingly at her husband.

"Why did you let me forget it?" she
asked.

Freddy turned to strike a match and
get a firm grip on his expression before
he replied.

"Is it so important?" he asked finally.

"A Christmas tree without pop-corn!"

She intended the look to be tragic.

Freddy was so entranced that the match
nipped his fingers.

"We'll go and get it," Jane announced
after one glance at the moon.

"You're a darling," Mrs. Freddy mur-
mured, making a mental note of the

"we." "Sidney knows the place, so he
can go with you."

Jane bit her lip, but her expression
was admirable, and Sidney reluctantly

climbed down the ladder. Mrs. Freddy
gave him a keen look from under her

lashes. He was really clever. He did
not once glance at Jane, who stood, still

looking out at the moon. Mrs. Freddy
had her suspicions of Sidney. She was

sure the handkerchief belonged to him.

She discovered a shortage in the rib-
bon supply as ingeniously as she had

managed the other little affair, but she
had been predicting that for an hour,

leading up to the denouement with easy
grace. The village was a convenient three

miles, and one of its two stores boasted
ribbon. The question as to whether the

ribbon was really needed hung fire for
a moment. "I won't have my tree spoiled

sweetly, "but I told Leigh to drive Sir
Walter."

"He did," Marion answered. She look-
ed at Sidney. "I don't know how it

happened except that Freddy handed
Jane in behind Sir Walter, and natural-

ly Leigh drove him because you said so."

Mrs. Freddy understood, and she gave
Freddy a crushing look. Way-laying

Cupid in any such manner was nothing
less than high treason. Freddy return-

ed the look with a bland smile.

"We don't object to the slow horse,"
said Sidney cheerfully. "He covered dis-

tance in great shape."

Mrs. Freddy let one hand fall lightly
on his coat sleeve.

"I'm glad you don't mind being im-
posed upon," she said.

"We don't—by you," he replied.

He looked over Mrs. Freddy's shoulder
at Eleanor, who was standing in the

doorway, and—and winked.

* * * * *

Mrs. Freddy vacillated between the
dining-room and doorway until she

heard the tinkle of sleigh bells.

"I was afraid something had happen-
ed," she remarked to Freddy with a look

of relief.

"I hope it has," he replied promptly.

"Not they," she returned with a smile
that had just the faintest tinge of sar-

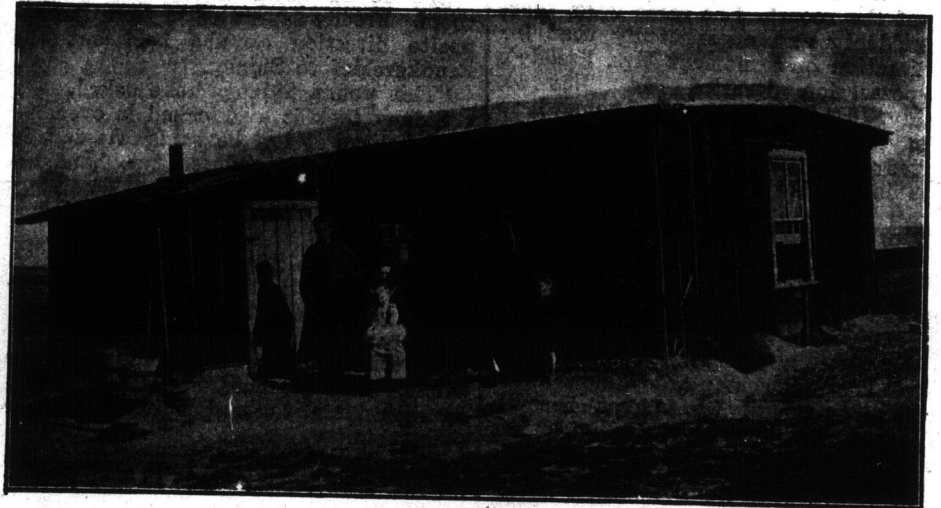
casm in it. "Something might have,
if you hadn't mixed them up, I'm tempt-

ed to punish you."

Freddy bowed in that evening dress
manner of his and accepted his punish-

ment unflinchingly.

"Not another word," he declared in a



A Prairie Home.

for a little extra trouble," Mrs. Freddy
pouted.

Freddy gallantly came to the rescue
with a decisive word. She was afraid

in his enthusiasm he would offer to go
for it and spoil everything; so she

hastily clipped off a piece of the ribbon
and dangled it in easy reach of the other

two girls, talking meanwhile to keep
Freddy's mouth shut. Marion held out

her hand for the sample. Then, of
course, Leigh must go to drive Sir Wal-

ter. After thinking it over, Mrs. Freddy
was more positive than ever that no one

could be trusted with Sir Walter but
Leigh. She said so.

So two sleighs were ordered, and four
unsuspecting persons were thrust un-

ceremoniously into the hands of Cupid?
Mrs. Freddy had, too, a well-developed

scheme requiring Cupid's assistance at
home. John should make a punch with

Eleanor to help him. And that is just
what they did.

An hour or so later the front door
banged and some one came down the

hall.

"They're back," exclaimed Mrs. Freddy
in an excited whisper.

She started for the door and met
Marion followed by—Sidney! Marion

delivered the ribbon and began to extri-
cate herself from her wraps.

"Where's Leigh?" inquired Mrs. Freddy
in surprise.

"They have gone for the pop-corn."

"But I thought Leigh went with you
for the ribbon?"

"Sidney went with me."

Mrs. Freddy looked at them in charm-
ing exasperation.

"Does it really matter?" asked Sidney.

Mrs. Freddy came to and beamed upon
them.

"Why of course not," she answered

tone of finality. "Take your punish-
ment." She swept past him into the

dining-room with her nose in the air.

Jane's rosy face appeared a moment
later.

"It was just lovely," she said, punctu-
ating her words with little gasps of de-

light. "The country is beautiful."

Leigh had stopped to deposit his things
in the hall, but he came in time to nod

vigorous assent.

"Where is the pop-corn?" asked Mrs.
Freddy.

Jane looked at her uncomprehendingly;
then she opened her red lips to answer

but no sound came. Leigh went white,
then red, and looked first at Jane, then

at Mrs. Freddy.

"We—we didn't get it," he managed to
say at last.

"We forgot it," confessed Jane.

Mrs. Freddy folded her arms, and
everybody knew what was coming to

them.

"Are you?" she demanded.

"We are," said Jane, desperately.

Leigh sat down suddenly.

"Upon my soul," exclaimed Mrs.
Freddy, and she sat down, too.

"We can't be married for a long time,"
Jane said finally, "because you see

Leigh's only starting." She reached out
one hand to him, and Leigh took it

gently. Mrs. Freddy felt as if she were
intruding.

"I just had to tell her," said Leigh. "I
saw it coming when you asked us down

here."

"Why, I never dreamed—" Mrs. Freddy
began.

"Neither did I, until—" Jane paused.

"Well?"

"Until he kissed me."

It was out. Mrs. Freddy took a mo-
ment to readjust herself. She being so

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