

A CHRISTMAS FEE

It was 10 o'clock Christmas morning when John Campbell stood with his mother in the drawing-room of Mrs. Campbell's fashionable boarding-house on what had been but was ceasing to be, one of the most fashionable avenues in St. Louis.

About mother and son was the rumpled magnificence of furniture originally almost too fine for use, but, unrespected by irreverent boarders, now showing signs of wear and tear. Still, the room had an unmistakable air of what is called sentimentality about it.

The lace curtains at the window were dainty though darned, as the needle eye of an expert would have noted. The mirrors were bright, the pictures well hung, the rugs and waxed floors were alike immaculate and the whole room accurately reflected the dignified, careful, but faded state of its mistress, the impoverished, though spirited and refined widow of a famous judge.

The boarders were busy in their rooms conducting their annual "exchange" of Christmas gifts. Bluff and downright bankers and merchants were exhibiting unsuspected histrionic talents as they tried on impossible smoking jackets and slippers which might perhaps fit anybody, or hovered over boxes of cigars, while their wives examined with microscopic eyes new sealisks, or held up to the light the yearly offering of jewels.

There was but one child in the house and sofa pillows were being stuffed into his mouth lest he should get his hands on the toys which had come to him might rasp the ears of the bachelors of the house, who knew neither Christmas joys nor sorrows. It was a bright though not merry morning in a house where existed a number of a reputable class of human beings.

John Campbell had finished his morning coffee and was chatting with his mother, for those two were cronies—which is a beautiful and excellent thing as between a mother and a son, which was telling her that he was going to his office for the day, and at this the still graceful figure of the judge's widow dropped a little, and her face was, for the moment, sad.

"You will be home in time to carve for the Christmas dinner at 2 o'clock, John, will you not?"

"Mother," expostulated John, "old Cremerer will certainly be here, and you will not be asked to carve what would the dinner be to him? It would be a pity to cheat him out of the duty, and, besides, he performs it well."

"But it's the sentiment of it, John. Think of eating my Christmas dinner with you absent from the other end of the table—and then I shall all the time be thinking of you there in your dark study office. I know how anxious you are, but surely business will never come upon a holiday. All the other offices will be closed."

"That's just why I may get a chance—some floating thing, you know. And I shan't be 'stuffy'; you are mixing me up with the turkey, but neither mother nor son smiled at the poor attempt at a joke. John had the American habit—not a bad one—of appearing even trifling to conceal his feelings when they were not of the most satisfactory nature.

"I tell you, mother, I'll come home to tea," he said. "You find some corner under the stairs or somewhere. You haven't even a bedroom you can call your own, you know—and we'll have a little tea and a good time all by ourselves and that shall be our Christmas."

"Yes, dear," the mother assented eagerly, and, like children, the pair planned to hide away from such boarders as might remain in the house on Christmas evening. Each longed for an hour of

privacy and homelike seclusion in the big crowded place. The situation was, as a matter of fact, somewhat pathetic. Mrs. Campbell had really no space she could call her own. She slept on a sort of lounge bed, camping about wherever there was a vacancy. John, a trifle more fortunate, had a little closet of a room in the attic to himself.

The story was not an unusual one. Upon Judge Campbell's death the widow, left without property other than her beautiful home—as the widows of noted jurists are—had transformed the stately mansion into a boarding house. She had no other recourse. By reason of the fashionable tone she was enabled to give it. No. 1640 became the recognized place of abode for such members of the smart people of the city as were homeless as a matter of choice.

Everything at Mrs. Campbell's was of a high grade, even her prices, but, not being to the manner of business born, the unaccustomed landlady did not flourish as to her fortunes. She lodged and fed her boarders luxuriously and managed to educate her son and see him graduated from college and admitted to the bar, but she could put no surplus money in her purse.

Yearly she found herself slipping a little backward on the uncertain ground of financial standing and this year debt had been added to the load the widow carried.

John Campbell had nothing to be ashamed of. As a lad of 15 he had taken his full share of the burden of getting a living. He had worked during his entire school and college life, minimizing the amount his mother spent upon him. In one thing only he had yielded to her, that he should follow the profession of his father. And to this his natural instincts and mental make-up inclined him and carried him out.

It was three months, or would be in a week, since John had rented his office and had his one window lettered with this legend:

JOHN CAMPBELL,
Attorney-at-Law.

John's new law books and his father's really fine library covered every inch of the wall space not taken up by the door and window—it was a small room. A cheap desk stood in its center and in a chair at his desk John had sat all these weeks looking occasionally at two empty chairs reserved for callers and wondering how a client would really look if occupying one of them. He was a plucky young man, but he got a little nervous sometimes. They talk about the "elasticity of youth," but its doubtful if youth can stand the weary dray of waiting as well as elders. Young hearts can ache.

Furthermore, in this case, John, being a fine fellow with generous heart and brain, was in love. Across from his mother's aisle in the ivy-clad and fashionable church John saw weekly such a heavenly vision as fed his soul during the following six days as well as his mother fed her boarders. No matter what travail his heart went through on other days of the week on the seventh it rested as Ruth Gilmore came into its immediate neighborhood.

But—mark how plain a tale set forth John's situation—between Ruth and the aisle sat always adverse fate, fate in the person of a small man with white hair and side whiskers and pink face. It was Tobias K. Gilmore's father, known "on change" as Tobias K. Gilmore.

This prosperous man of middle age, prosaic as he looked, had intuitions. Perhaps that was why he had prospered on Board of Trade. Through the can-canmy outbursts of minor nerves and fancy, Tobias K. Gilmore knew, as well as he knew the price of corn, that John Campbell was in love with his daughter Ruth. And he did not like it.

John was all right so far as being a young man of good family could go, but John was poor. For him a struggle of eight or ten years was inevitable, and it was a question of how to struggle would end. "The law," said the wise old grain man, "is no what it used to be as a money maker."

M. Gilmore was a man of strong likes, dislikes and opinions and—here comes in a directing circumstance—he had one pet aversion which kept them from being John Campbell. This detestable foe of the grain man was another grain man and a brother varden of his church, known on this terrestrial ball as Ezekiel Middleshorts.

The main objection to Mr. Middleshorts was that he made money too easily and kept it with a grip of iron when he had made it. He was vain, however, and once in a while he threw his gold about in a manner which raked the nerves of his rival, Mr. Gilmore.

For example this successful man had just caused to be made a set of bells of most appalling value and brazen music and had presented them to the church with much impressive ceremony. The gift had been received most gratefully by the church and on the very Christmas day on which this true tale opens was to be heard for the first time the pious clamor of the chimes. An earnest old Scotch bell ringer was to control the pealing and much was expected of those who had ears to hear.

John Campbell heard the joyous pealing and singing of the new bells as he sat, in his overcoat, by his desk at the time for morning service. The young man opened his window the better to hear, for the church was at some distance from the downtown district. To him the bells, oddly enough, seemed to say: "Gilmore, Gilmore, Gilmore," as they ran up and down in their cherry Christmas changes.

For two hours he sat by the desk reading a little or working on an imaginary case, and then came a quick step in his outer hall and his door was opened by an impatient hand. "Good boy," said Mr. Gilmore, coming in with outstretched hand. "At last I've found one lawler where he ought to be, in his office."

"Good morning, Mr. Gilmore," said the astonished John, "I wish you a merry Christmas."

"Merry!" ejaculated the irate Gilmore to the surprised young attorney.

"See here," he continued, "what can



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I do to stop this internal racket of Middleshorts? I want an injunction—an order of the court, a mandamus—anything to stop the thing. It's an outrage. Here I am, right there under the steeple and my whole family is in fits with the frightful hullabaloo of Middleshorts' bells.

"I went to Grindstone, but of course, he is away somewhere cavorting around like a fool, and I went to Stevens, my other attorney, and even he—young Ruth Gilmore, he is—even he must be away on this day of all days, when the whole city is being ravaged—ravaged, sir, by those beastly bells. And, now, sir, I shall engage you as my attorney, and I do so now, and I want you to lose no time filing my protest, my petition, my everlasting denunciation of this outrage on a Christian people."

The old gentleman had turned from pink to purple, and now, out of breath, he sank down exhausted in one of the very chairs wherein John's imagination had so often conjured up his client.

"I will begin drawing up the papers at once," he said, taking up a pen and dipping it in the red ink, "but you know it is a holiday and the courts will not be open."

"Oh, of course not!" burst from him tortured Gilmore. "Of course the courts are not open and I know we must endure that infernal row again this evening, but, young man, the courts will open, and when they do you be there! Be there with the strong arm of the law to threaten and destroy those chimes of Middleshorts! And, see here, there's \$50, and your fee, if you succeed, shall be what you say. Lose no time! Be vigilant, be watchful, spare no pains! We'll have those yammering brass tormentors silenced in a jiffy—in a jiffy, or my name isn't Gilmore!"

"Rest assured that we will," said Pohn without any qualifying "ifs." He felt sure of it as he spoke. So did Mr. Gil-

more. "You're a fine fellow," he said. "After you've drawn up your what-do-you-call-it come over and bring your honored mother, sir. Come to tea and hear those bells! Then you can go home and sleep—if you can! My daughter will be proud to meet her deliverer from torment. The poor girl has a nervous headache now."

"I have an engagement this evening," he said. "I thank you for your invitation. I'll come to you when I've really done something for you."

"Well said," the pleased old gentleman declared, shaking John's hand heartily. "You are your father's own image. I know him well."

And so they parted for the time. John reached his home that evening rather early. He found the tea table set in a corner of the big dining-room. It was close to the grate fire, with screens about it and with its shaded lights and dainty appointments presenting a pretty picture. The young man when he met his mother tried to preserve his usual expression of face, but when did a young man ever deceive his mother in that respect?

"Something has happened, John! I know it," she declared. "Tell me all about it. Tell me quickly, dear."

And then the astonishingly pleasant truth came out.

One Mr. Dickens of lovable memory has described some wonderful Christmas dinners, but he never described one more wonderful than that of mother and son at the little tea table.

Of course, a Christmas story founded cheerfully upon a difference between church members may seem an incongruity, but the difference was only an amusing thing, while its results brought joy of the sort which was of the Christmas kind. In the two beaming faces was deep thankfulness expressed, as well. That means Christmas.

The Husband's Christmas Present

"I want to buy a Christmas present for a gentleman—for my husband, in fact," said a lady, addressing one of the shopmen in a large fancy goods emporium.

"Certainly, madam. About what price may I ask?"

"Well, about fifteen shillings, perhaps."

"Thank you. Perhaps the gentleman might fancy a meerschaum pipe. Here are some beauties at fifteen shillings."

"I don't like that, but I'll take a pipe."

"Not for this particular kind of pipe, madam. But we have some fine pocket-books upstairs. Just excuse me for a moment."

The lady begins a tour of inspection round the shop.

"I see," she says, when the shopman returns with the pocket-books. "You have those new Parisian belts."

"Yes, madam, straight from Paris. Here is one just your size; and only seven and six."

"Is that all? They are very cheap. One would go so well with my new costume. Yes, I'll take one. Oh, are those the pocket-books? They are very nice, but have you nothing cheaper—about ten shillings, perhaps?"

Messiah's Great Name.

"To be sure, madam. Here is one which looks like a real malacca."

"Thanks so much. How much will that be altogether?"

"Well, seven and six for the bag, five shillings for the gloves, and one shilling for the gentleman's walking stick—twenty-one shillings. But, seeing that this is our Christmas sale, I will put the stick in for nothing, so that will be twenty shillings."

"Oh, thanks, you are so kind. Good afternoon."

"Thank you very much, madam. Good afternoon."

And he makes a mental resolve never to marry.—By Jeanie B. Youl, Stirling, in New York Scottish American.

Trouble in the Doll's House.

"Oh, dear! I'm in such trouble I don't know what to say!"

I heard somebody talking of a Christmas doll in for nothing, so that will be twenty shillings."

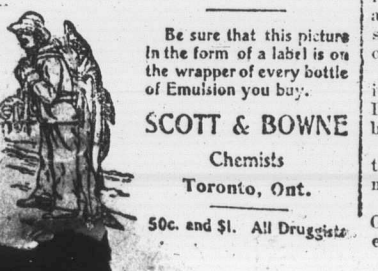
"Oh, thanks, you are so kind. Good afternoon."

All Run Down

THIS is a common expression we hear on every side. Unless there is some organic trouble, the condition can doubtless be remedied. Your doctor is the best adviser. Do not dose yourself with all kinds of advertised remedies—get his opinion. More than likely you need a concentrated fat food to enrich your blood and tone up the system.

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