

ANTICIPATING CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS is coming. Shall we ring the joy bells? No: that may come later. Just now we feel otherwise—very much otherwise.

I scowl We scowl
Thou scowlest Ye or you scowl
He scowls They scowl.

I scowl because I have to write a Christmas page. Indeed, there should have been a regular Christmas number of this paper—you know the kind of thing, all the magazines have done it since your earliest infancy! There should be a 3-color picture of smiling children and holly, on the cover, a page devoted to the very dainty and utterly useless articles that can be made out of ribbon, ditto out of handkerchiefs. There should be a list of suitable suggestions for Christmas gifts not of home manufacture, and in this the editor should co-operate with the advertising department. He may add a few suggestions of his own, and these vary according to the tastes and incomes that the editor of the publication attributes to his readers. If he visualizes you reading it in your carpet slippers around the kitchen stove, he may suggest: For Mother, a shawl; for Daughter, a pair of gloves; for Son, a top. If, on the other hand, he imagines the butler handing it to you on a silver salver, he may suggest a diamond tiara and a touring car.

Of course these are mere samples. There are usually 63 articles deemed suitable as Christmas gifts for Mother and Daughter, but poor Father comes at the end of the list with little but a pipe and a pair of suspenders.

Gloating over the things you might get in the Christmas list and checking over the simpler articles that you might give, you are apt to overlook the Christmas stories, but don't. They are sure to remind you of happier years. There is always one about a snow-bound train, the little golden-haired child and the grouchy old passenger who turns out to be a long-lost uncle and miraculously develops the Real Christmas Spirit. Then there is one about a Christmas tree where a sharp contrast is drawn between the rich little girl and the poor little girl, and there is sure to be an article about the good old days or about Christmas in other lands. That is the one we would prefer to write, if we could choose some nice, peaceful land, where none of our readers have ever been and where they have no relatives who write to them. Then we could ramble on unchecked. But writing about the Christmas spirit now while everyone is talking volubly either about the elections or the war—well, it can't be done—not convincingly, at least. So the readers of the Courier must seek elsewhere for their suggestions for Christmas decorations. I could easily fill my page with some helpful hints for a Christmas party—but I won't. I merely scowl.

THOU scowlest, too. Why thou doest so is best known to thyself, but money, or the absence of it, is sure to play a part in thy scowl.

HE scowls for obvious reasons. He is the Provider of the family. The Father, whose name, at the bottom of the list of Christmas suggestions, is coupled

'TWAS the week before Christmas, and all through the house

The folk were too thrifty to harbor a mouse.

'Twas the week before Christmas (now, please do not sigh;

I know you're not ready yet—neither am I!)

The stockings were waiting en masse to be mended,

While Mother, the patriot, meetings attended.

The cook in the kitchen was trying to make

An eggless and milkless and butterless cake—

The menu would not be especially good

In deference to the Controller of Food.

The shopping was somewhat delayed in its action,

Till Father had finished his war loan subtraction.

The holly was dry and the mistletoe yellow,

The evergreen wreaths were quite crumbly and mellow,

The turkeys were tough—indeed, nothing was nice,

If you couldn't afford an exorbitant price! . . .

Oh, really, this story is getting too sad—

I declare I can't finish it—so let's be glad!

Let's smile like real heroes and try to be gay

For it's but once a year—we are thankful to say.

with the present of a pipe or a pair of suspenders. It is not because he minds your giving him these presents. He can't think of anything he wants more. If he did he would buy it for himself. He is used to receiving books that his daughters want to read, drawing-room furniture that his wife fancies, fowling pieces that his son will permanently borrow. It is not so much the getting that he dreads as the giving, in spite of the popular belief that it is more blessed to give than to receive. But whether he gives or whether he gets it is apt to be Father who, directly or indirectly foots the bill.

So that is why He scowls.

WE scowl—you know we do, the week before Christmas! Wait till Christmas eve and we will achieve a smiling countenance, but just now, at the mention of the proximity of Christmas, We scowl.

YE or you scowl, also, for various reasons. You don't want to be stingy, but . . . If you only knew whether she was going to give you something! People say they aren't giving presents this year and then, when it is too late to retaliate, you are apt to find. . . . Even toys are dreadfully expensive, but of course you mustn't disappoint the children! . . . You can't ask people to a Christmas dinner and feed them on beans, but the prices. . . . And not only the food, there's the

decorations. . . . No, I don't wonder ye or you scowl.

THEY scowl—no, they don't, not if "they" are children. Quite the contrary! That's why we persist in keeping this silly old Christmas festival. They don't scowl!

SANTA CLAUS, the children's friend, is apt to be regarded by the Father of the Family as an elderly pirate, skilled in his trade, who yearly robs him of all his spare cash and more, also. He is invariably successful, and it was suggested to the canvassers for the Victory Loan, who preceded him in his rounds, that they should wear a disguise of white whiskers and go about in sleighs drawn by reindeer. You may think you are not going to hand over your cash to him this year. You may be quite certain of it, but remember, there are seven more shopping days before Christmas, sixty-three more hours in which you can buy. I have known people to hold out during the whole 62 and then dash down town on Christmas Eve with a suit-case and buy lavishly. I have even known them to go down early in the morning of the day after Christmas and buy return presents for those allotted them in the Christmas exchange, and then basely pretend that they posted them the day before! The only man who is really safe from the insinuating wiles of Santa Claus is he who possesses neither cash nor credit. Even without either of those attributes, no woman is secure. She is quite capable of removing the labels from her own Christmas gifts as soon as they arrive and distributing them amongst her friends. This is really a very sensible proceeding, but one is apt to get found out, for it is the custom in some households to leave Christmas gifts outspread on the drawing-room table, and if Mabel, who has sent you a pin-cushion, finds the same pin-cushion on Dora's table, there is apt to be trouble.

The moral drawn from these observations is: Be selfish! Only give things you want to give to people you want to give them to, or don't give at all. If your gift does not please you, it will hardly please the recipient. If you do not want to give him anything, the chances are that he is equally loath to receive it from you. In Christmas entertainments, too, be selfish. Offer food only to those to whom you wish to give it to. Do not share your Christmas board with friends or relatives you do not like; the chances are that they do not care for you, and you know the quotation that begins: "Better a dinner of herbs where love is . . ."

(Concluded on page 26.)



This experienced highwayman can extract money from fathers more readily than the most eloquent war loan canvassers.