

THE FINNERTY'S CHRISTMAS



MA FINNERTY
GAZED LONG AT THE
BIT OF CRUMPLED PAPER

HERE were three of the Finnerty's.

First, there was Pa Finnerty. Pa was one of those men who lose their faith in things when they lose their grip. Pa had lost his grip on the top rung of a ladder upon which he was piloting a hod of bricks some years before, and since that time he hadn't had much faith in anything except the omnipotence of trouble—with a capital "T".

Then, there was Ma Finnerty. Ma was big and buxom. She had a face like a harvest moon, a face that made up in good-will what it lacked in beauty, and then had some left over. Ma had an arm that made the arm of Jim Jeffries look like a pulling infant's wrist; in fact, Ma had two such arms, and she used them daily, with a rub-a-dub-dub, to earn the family livelihood, or such livelihood as the family had.

Lastly, as the preachers say along about the time you have made up all your lost sleep and are placing mental bets that the dinner is burned to a crisp, there was Patrick Finnerty, Junior. Patrick Junior was aged six. He was a normal youngster, with a Celtic temperament and all that that implies.

Two nights before Christmas Mrs. Finnerty—that is to say, Ma—had received a letter. If Ma hadn't received that letter, this story would never have been written. No doubt there will be those who will fervently wish, then, that Ma Finnerty had not received the letter. However that may be, the fact remains that she did receive the letter.

"Through enough we have," Pa remarked, gazing wistfully up at a "God Bless Our Home" that hung defiantly over the place where the fireplace might have been if there had been any fireplace. "An' the Lord knows, Norah, ye have wurruk enough. But far be it from the likes av me to say anything agin it. Shure if the poor felly's widout any place to lay his head, an' it's Christmas an' all, shure now we'll have to do the best we can fer him."

"Arrah! Patrick, shure now an' I niver t'ought he'd come to this, an' him that smart. Why, at school he was that quick shure th' teacher had to shay up nights studyin' to kape ahead av him. An' such a broth av a boy he was entirely, that kind and good-natured. An' to t'ink av him this night widout any place fer to shlah an' turnin' to his old sister, Norah, shure, bliss him. An' us widout the makin' av a dacint male in the place, along av me havin' the rheumatiz, an' you, poor felly, down and out entirely. But jist to t'ink av him remimbrin' his ould sister: Ochone—"

Ma Finnerty's tears streamed down despite the punches she gave herself with her apron. She crumpled the soiled letter addressed to her in lead-pecillling in one big fist, and her huge frame shook with sobs. Pa tried to comfort her in the whining tone he had come to use constantly, and Patrick Junior, his dirty little face streaked with tear stains, looked from one parent to the other bewildered.

"Ah will," exclaimed Ma with a sigh and a final sniffle, as she arose and began to pile the few dishes one on top of the other preparatory to washing them. "he'll be here tomoray evenin', an' it's a welcome he'll git if there aint much else."

That night, after Patrick Junior had been tucked into his crib in one corner of the big room, Pa and Ma spent a long time whispering together at the other end of the apartment.

"No, Patrick, I musht till the poor child at wanst," Ma exclaimed at last, and waving aside the weak, crooning protests of her lord and master, she went to the little bed where the small Patrick lay sleeping. With a touch remarkably gentle, she roused the little fellow. "The thin, pathetic countenance

lighted up when the boy found his mother standing over him, bitter tears in her eyes. The wonder grew in the lad's face when his mother tried to speak to him and choked. At last she told him: Santa Claus had just sent word that owing to pressure of business he would be unable to get around to the Finnerty tenement with the pair of skates Master Patrick Finnerty had requested. But he hoped to be able to call some time during the early weeks of the new year.

The blow was a bitter one to Patrick Junior. And yet he had never really expected to receive those skates. Life to Patrick Junior was a state where one was encouraged to expect and not to receive. This had been the first Christmas he had dared to think of such a gift as a real pair of skates. The idea had been suggested to him at Sunday School, the idea of writing to Santa Claus. This relieved father and mother of the necessity of spending hard-earned money for such luxuries, and as Santa Claus seemed to be handing out gifts right and left with lavish hand, Patrick Junior felt that it would not be too much to ask for those skates, the very apex of all that was desirable. And yet, because he wanted them so much, Patrick Junior never had really expected to receive them.

It took him some time, with his wan face turned toward the wall, to accept the disappointment and put it out of his mind. Then he turned back to his sobbing mother. His face was smiling when he put out one small hand to pat the big red one, and he said:

"Oh, that's all right, Ma, I'd jist as soon."

Ma Finnerty, a few minutes later, still sobbing, tip-toed to the big chest, painted blue, and wid an "F" onto one ind av it, which Patrick Senior had brought across from Sligo with him when he first came. That was before Ma had left her native shore, and before Patrick Junior was born. Now her tears fell listlessly on the odds and ends that half-filled the chest, treasures every one. Much stirring about of a big red hand among the odds and ends brought to light a dark green, creased piece of greasy paper, with the figure "5" in each corner, a piece of carefully hoarded paper that had, in the weeks previous become associated in Ma's and Pa's mind with a certain pair of skates.

Ma Finnerty gazed long at the bit of crumpled paper. Pa, the pain in his legs having eased a bit, was snoozing in his deep chair. Ma turned down the light till it smoked. She looked long again at the crumpled greasy paper. Then she tip-toed softly across the room, and still sobbing, made her way down the rickety stair-ways to the white-lighted street where the shop windows lighted up gay holiday crowds and extended a flickering twilight into the region of squalor.

The letter from her one and only blood relative, a brother slightly younger than herself, had come to Ma Finnerty most unexpectedly. It was dated the same day it had arrived. Therefore, Ma inferred, the lad was in the city. It was written in lead pencil and much soiled, and it said simply that the writer was without work and without money and without a place to lay his head, and that he was coming to ask a bit of his sister this Christmas Eve.

The eye of the Great Feast found the Finnerty's room unwontedly gay. The table had a cloth to cover its cracks, and a cracked but gaily vase in its centre sported a sprig of holly with three berries glinting from it. Moreover, an extra bed, with a very brilliant curtain hiding it from public view, stood in the corner where the wash tubs had been. And Patrick Junior had discovered a most unusual array of parcels, along with two whole loaves of bread in the cupboard.

There was nothing extraordinary about the evening meal, however, except that, to Patrick's mind, it was delayed unnecessarily. It

was just as frugal and just as half-filling as ever, and it was dragged out. Ma seemed to be listening for some one that didn't come. The dishes were all put away and Patrick Junior had been asleep a long time it seemed, when a loud rapping at the door aroused him. He started up to hear the shrill voice of Mrs. O'Flaherty, who occupied the room under the Finnerty's on the floor below:

"Fer the love av Hivin', Mrs. Finnerty, they's a aytomobile ferminst the dure, an' th' Saints presave us, they do be a felly comin' up the stairs to see yez' this very minnit."

"Domn the luck," exclaimed Ma Finnerty, with more fervor than elegance. "It'll be that furniture-man, bad cess to him, an' me after tellin' him I'd pay him next month. Did ye now—"

At this point Pa's strident voice broke in demanding of Mrs. O'Flaherty how she knew the stranger was bound for the Finnerty flat.

"How did I know? Sure didn't the felly ax me where wuz it ye lived, an' didn't Oi fair run the feet off av me to get here an' tell ye av it?" The sound of heavy feet on the stairway below cut short the dialogue. Mrs. O'Flaherty made a rush for her own safety, and hid in the janitor's closet at the end of the hall. From this point of vantage she whispered, hoarsely through the half closed door:

"Divil th' bit would Oi let him set fut in the flat, Mrs. Finnerty."

And Ma Finnerty, minded to take the advice, shut the door gently and firmly, turned the key in the lock, and moved silently over to quiet Patrick Junior.

To the first firm rap at the door the Finnerty's made no response. After a pause there was a second rap, supplemented by a full, heavy voice inquiring:

"Isn't there any one at home?"

Ma Finnerty looked at Pa and Pa looked at Ma. Pa shook his head from side to side vigorously, as if to say: "Don't speak for the life of you," and as Ma never by any chance allowed her independence to be interfered with by Pa, she raised her voice harshly at once:

"Yes, we're at home to dacint folks, but to the loikes av yez, ye thaft av the wurrold, we're niver at home. So jist put that in yer poipe an' shmoke it."

Something suspiciously like a chuckle was waited over the transom of the door. There was silence for a moment, and then the chuckle, quite unmistakable this time, was repeated.

"So it's a joke ye t'ink ut is," bellowed Ma, boiling with rage, and striding to the door. She turned the key and opened the heavy door with one movement. The action was so abrupt that she almost collided with the stranger. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with laughing black eyes, but the rest of his features, and in fact, the greater part of his features, was lost in an immense fur overcoat, topped by an immense fur collar.

"May I come in, ma'am?" he asked, civilly, while Mrs. Finnerty glared at him. Ma Finnerty's hasty inspection of what could be seen of the stranger had convinced her that he was not the identical furniture man she had bought a bill of the day before, and she was rather taken aback. The delay and suspense worried Pa, and just as Ma was preparing to slam the door, shutting the stranger out on the principle that he was some kind of a bill collector, furniture or otherwise, Pa's advice reached her ears:

"Bad ciss, to him, Ma, shut the door in his faace."

"Will, ye may as well come in," chirruped, Ma, promptly swinging the door wide, and the stranger stepped over the threshold.

He seated himself and surveyed the room without turning back his greatcoat, while Ma and Pa waited in frigid silence for him to state his business.

"Weren't you expecting me?" asked the stranger nonchalantly after a bit.

"Expecting you! I was not," replied Ma

firmly, now fully convinced that it was the furniture man. "I told ye thot I would pay yez next month, and not a cint will ye get before thot toime."

This piece of gratis information seemed to worry the stranger. He stirred uneasily in his seat, but his eyes were dancing and laughing. Suddenly he stood up and whipped his collar back:

"I thought, Nora," he said, "that you would have got my letter."

The effect on Ma was that of a mild electric shock. She turned pale, then red. Then she screamed "Micky," and dove for the stranger, almost turning him over Pa's legs, while Pa, his eyes popping out of his head, kept repeating:

"Phwat the divil" over and over in a bewildered way.

"Can't ye see, ye ould omadhaun, it's Micky," Ma shouted at Pa, between hugging and kissing the laughing Micky half to death. "Can't ye see it's me own brother Micky, him as we t'ought wuz widout—"

Ma broke off abruptly, and held Micky at arm's length. Her tone changed to one of surprise and injured expectation:

"An' what does this mane? Didn't ye go an' write me thot ye were starvin' an' perishin' an' didn't Oi have t'ings all fixed up fer ye? What do ye mane be comin' lookin' loike th' premier at a Montheal carnival?"

Micky pushed her away from him into the seat he had just vacated. He gathered the bashful Patrick Junior, who had been lost in the excitement, up on his knee, and then followed the story of how he had struck it rich in the North, of how he was worth fabulous sums of money, and of how he had hunted and hunted until he found the Finnerty's address.

"But the letter, ye wrote, ye spalpane," interrupted Ma.

"Well," said Micky, guiltily, "that was the letter I would have written if I hadn't struck it that last time. I was jist about going to quit."

Then surprise followed surprise. The Finnerty's were to leave the tenement and go with Micky at once where he would set them up in a brand new house. They were to go that very night in the big automobile so as to be ready for Christmas.

"Good Lord, Micky, I can't," declared Ma, excitedly, wiping the tears of joy away with her old blue apron. "shure Oi've me washin' to finish up."

But, despite her protestations, despite Pa's bewildered muttering of "Phwat the divil," Micky, bundled the three Finnerty's bag and baggage into the big automobile, and all the belongings he let them take with them was the big chest of treasures "wid the 'F' painted on to one ind av ut."

Two hours later they were settled in the finest house they had ever seen. Patrick had a room to himself, sure, where he couldn't sleep for the wonder of everything. It was early Christmas morning, and Pa and Ma had whispered and whispered until their jaws ached. Sleep overcame at last even the greatest of wonders. Pa sank back with a deep sigh, such a sigh as he had not heaved for many a year, and whispered sleepily:

"The saints be t'anked, shure Patrick will be after havin' thim skates now."

And in the bliss of that moment Ma forgot to contradict him.

LUXURY IN SERVANTS.

Nothing is more indicative of the luxury-run-riot of this ultra-luxurious age than the present tendency towards the multiplication of servants of all kinds and classes.

One master, one valet, used to be the rule. There are men in society today who have a first, second, third, fourth, and fifth valet.

In great mansions, where one master of the boots used to suffice, there are now frequently three or four, each of them specializing in one particular kind of footwear. A mistress of the boots, too, has her appearance in certain smart houses, and her office is no insecure case, when she is employed, as is usually the case, by a hostess who entertains largely and lavishly.

Such a one will frequently have a round dozen or more of her women friends staying with her at the same time, and each of them will bring with her two or three boot trunks, containing from forty to sixty pairs of boots and shoes. Of course, not all of these are usually worn, unless the guest's stay is prolonged beyond the regulation "dine-and-sleep," or "week-end," visit; but to properly renovate, even the comparatively small percentage that are ordinarily used, is no light task.

One Dog, One Maid.

It seems only the other day, so to speak, since the kennel-maid made her appearance, and when to retain the exclusive services of one such for perhaps half a score of toy dogs was thought the high water mark of extravagance in that particular direction.

Now, a head kennel-maid, with at least one, and very likely two or three assistants under her, is considered the correct thing. Indeed, the tendency seems to be in the direction of one dog, one maid, as witness, for instance, the almost infinitesimally tiny toy terrier which the Princess of Thurn and Taxis takes with her everywhere.

Not even the dinner table is exempt from its dear delightful presence. Hall or mansion

or palace, it is all the same, alike to dog and mistress. It is even to be seen—alert in her lap—inside that gastronomic holy of holies, the principal salle a manger of the Carlton Hotel. So small is it, that it can be, and has been stood on all four feet upon a single sheet of ordinary notepaper, balanced on a solitary peche Melba. Yet for it are retained, year in and year out, the exclusive services of a highly skilled and highly-salaried maid, whose knowledge of toy dog lore is said to be, and probably is, altogether unrivalled and unique.

Modern Hunting Fashions.

Take the hunting field, again. How the old-fashioned riders to hounds of forty or fifty years back would have stared at the modern fashions of second horsemen, motor-cars to the meet, and such-like "fads and fancies," as they would most certainly style them if they were alive today.

Sturdy fellows they were, a bit coarse, but they didn't have a groom following them all over the country with spare mounts. If a horse couldn't stay out a day's hunting, they sold him or shot him. Those were the days when a M.F.H. could hunt his pack four days a week for £400 a year. It costs him £4,000 now, and it is doubtful whether he gets so much sport, or so good.

Dining Up-to-Date.

Probably, however, it is in connection with our eating and drinking that the difference between the service of yesterday and today is most marked. Contrast the modern maitre de bouche and his scores of dozens of appetizing and dainty confections, with the old-fashioned cook, often a woman, whose soul seldom soared beyond plain roast and boiled, with perhaps an occasional—a very occasional—supreme or noisette, produced with a vast flourish of trumpets for some extra special occasion.

The difference is as marked, the gulf is as immense, between the two as it is between the up-to-date wine-steward of today, with his intimate knowledge of brands, vintages, and prices, and the old-fashioned butler of old forefathers, who knew the taste of a good glass of port, sherry, or claret, and little else besides.

Palatial Kitchens.

What, too, would those self-same forefathers of ours have thought of the present-day fashion of having, not one kitchen, but half-a-dozen, each with its separate staff?

How they would stare, could they but visit some of the stately palaces that modern wealth has been able to rear in our midst, to find there a hot kitchen and a cold kitchen, a soup kitchen, a fish kitchen, and a vegetable kitchen, to say nothing of separate accessory departments wherein the coffee is roasted and made, fruit and flowers dealt with, salads mixed, pastry prepared, and so on!

The result of all this multiplication and subdivision of the labor incidental to gastronomy is, of course, to greatly increase the staff of domestics in this direction, and incidentally in all others.

Twenty or thirty years ago, from twenty to thirty servants were thought ample for even quite large sized mansions. Today, staffs numbering considerably over one hundred individuals are common.

HE WAS EXCUSED

Judges listen to all sorts of excuses from men wishing to avoid jury duty, but seldom to one the pathos of which is as touching as in the case of a frontiersman who rode four hundred and twenty miles to state it. The incident occurred in California several years ago.

When Clerk Neale was calling the roll of the grand jury, in department No. 1 he came to the name of Joe Mandevill. At the sound of his name Mr. Mandevill stood up. Tall, with slightly bent shoulders, and with an air about him that bespoke the hardy frontiersman, he made a striking figure in the court room.

"Your honor," said he, "I should like to make a statement."

The Court signified permission, and Mr. Mandevill continued, "I live away on the Colorado river, a long way above Picacho Landing."

A few dapper young men about the court room smiled audibly, but the frontiersman ran his hands through his hair, and continued:

"Fact is, it's four hundred and twenty miles the way I have to come from my home to the city, and when I received word that I was summoned, I didn't have the money for the trip, and was compelled to borrow fifty dollars at two per cent, a month to pay my fare."

"I've gat three little children out there in the desert, and they're all alone, for my wife died three months ago, and I ought to be home looking after those kids now."

"No one thought of laughing. Even those well-dressed youths sobered up most surprisingly, and all listened intently while the widower finished his story.

"I've had a little trouble lately," he said, simply, "and a lot of assessment work on some mines needs to be done. I ought to be there to do it, and I'd like to be excused."

"I guess you may be," said the Court, and so Joe Mandevill went home to his three motherless children out on the desert.

A major in a certain regiment has a great contempt for incapacity of any kind, and is also somewhat impatient. A sergeant, once complained to him that he could get no man to undertake the duty of barber to the company.

"Is there no gardener in the company?" asked the major, testily. "See if you can find one, and send him to me."

The man was duly sent, but on receiving orders to act as barber, ventured to expositulate.

"Why!" cried the major, "if you can cut grass you can cut hair! Go and do it!"

AN

nsive to keep. As an antidote to tions Mr. Gilbert says: nothing better than Epsom salts. out all impurities from the droop- and reduce the fat. It is quite re- now beneficially they act. Half a l every other day for two weeks in- duces good results. Mix a little izing food, add the salts, in propor- number of fowls, and let them take hungry. Another sure way of dis- the salts evenly is to dissolve them then mix the meal in. I find this so useful that I give salts to the and then, whether they seem to re- or not, as this acts as a preventive

RUBBISH PROBLEM SOLVED.

rubbish barrel should be hidden from yet be easily accessible. The fol- an avoids the cost and delay of ever- requires a minimum of space. It y one vine and this can be lifted aside gate whenever it is necessary to re- empty the barrel.

o posts firmly in the ground, one on of the barrel and close to the fence, tops be slightly higher than the top rel. Make the soil at the base of one posts deep and rich. With the barrel between two posts, fasten some com- nized poultry netting, whose width to the height of the barrel, to one ten securely fastened bend the netting the front of the barrel until the sec- is reached, and cut off the surplus

a second post screw three or four and over these loop the meshes of the

be base of the first post set a good honeysuckle. Within a season the n be completely screened by training ghest shoots horizontally on the net- e screening can be readily removed at e, by simply unlooping the netting hooks and pulling it back toward you. t as easily replaced when desired. three bricks at regular intervals on and rest the barrel on these in order its bottom, and bore a hole about two from the bottom to keep the barrel n water, and from injury by freezing r. In summer cork the hole and allow at water to collect to prevent the barrel ying out and going to pieces.

ooden fly-screen cover will keep out f a stiffer netting with coarser mesh ed other fence wires will be found suit-

TIMELY SUGGESTIONS.

ittle lime sprinkled over the potatoes p to keep them from decaying or ng.

ite to your nursery firm now for a cat- , so as to place your order for nursery for spring planting.

ep an eye on the cellar. Vegetables ut ought not to be stored there, if there e other place for them; but if there are things in the cellar, be sure that they e decaying. It is better to spend a little time in sorting fruit and vegetables a week or two under the doctor's care.

very cellar ought to be ventilated. A e method is to remove a pane of glass e one window, and replace it with a e L-shaped tunnel made of light boards ding about a foot from the window, and for two feet pointing up. By this simple ating device, the foul air is removed the cellar, and very little cold air gains nce, being kept out by the upward cur- of air.

his is the time of the year to make plans the coming season's work in the garden about the grounds. There are a multi- of valuable hints and suggestions to be d in the various magazines and papers a publish articles on such topics. It is a bad plan to have several scrap books lippings, one to be devoted to the flower- n, another to the vegetable garden, one poultry, and so on.

All shrubs and trees should be inspected the purpose of locating injurious insect

plants kept in the living room require y of water, but it is far better to water oughly at intervals than to make a light- ication of water every day. Wait until plant is dry, and then water it abundantly. Cold water should never be used for wa- g house plants, and in the case of calla s, the water should feel warm to the hand.

The mission of horticulture is to clothe earth with loveliness, to co-operate with re in her most beautiful function, to in- into the affections of the people an ap- ation of the art and a zeal for its pro- s. And to serve and gratify this desire the mission of the horticulturist. The ma- ls in which he now deals were once class- among the luxuries of life, but the world is coming to recognize them as necessities healthful and rational living, and as this timent grows, so also will grow the im- tance and influence of horticulture in the lic eye.

A TURNIP FOR GREENS.

The Seven-Top Turnip is a true turnip, but root has not been developed as in other nips. The leaves are large, dark green, es grow flat upon the ground. It is grown for greens and is used only in the South-