

Evergreen and Holly.

Nearly two years ago (an eternity, and then some!) we celebrated Christmas. That statement is simple enough, but the word *celebrated* has a sinister meaning when it is used in such an expression.

The morning dawned—mornings *will* dawn, you know, just as fine as a Christmas Day ought to be. Even the advocates of temperance were feeling gay, and the looks of benevolence and goodwill that glimmered in the fishy eyes of the devoted followers of Bacchus, bespoke the advent of that day when Peace on Earth "reigns till it pours," and then the battle commences.

Those experienced old timers, accustomed to Christmasses, with uncanny foresight, predicted a dry day, and visited the fountain early, and therefore faced the approaching festivities with calm features. The celebration fared well to prove a success. Lovers of the heroic in poetry can find themselves "living" such thrilling moments as Tennyson recorded for us in the "Charge of the Light Brigade," but to have been there and watched the wild charge that swept down upon the tables as the S.M. flung wide the barrier, would have given you a thrill that would leave your knees permanently weak.

When all were seated, the sergeants, charmingly dressed alike in dainty khaki suits, came "tripping" in, bearing aloft heaped plates, loaded to the muzzle with real turkey, and all the other impediments to a perfect digestion. But even in the Christmas feast Germanic influence was discernable. How? Because Turkey only entered in order to reinforce the Central Powers, and the result was, as the tablets of History will tell us, turkey vanished from Europe, grease was wiped up, and a particularly strong offensive was launched in the champagne district!

Did we enjoy that dinner? Ask the survivors—the old contemptibles! They will tell you! However, the next act opened with a little number, entitled "Bubbles and Pops," and was a *howler*. Such an enthusiastic uproar greeted it that even the stolid Scot who was drawing the corks from the champagne bottles, grew excited and forgot which way to turn the corkscrew. But just to show that we *could* rough it, we had the priceless fluid served in common bowls, and as "Rabbie" said, "It's a good bowl that has a clean bottom," so we all agreed. All good things end, however, so with Good Will toward Men written largely across our faces in stray bits of turkey and gravey, we rose, as best we could, and permitted the relieving battalion to take up our front line position. Full? Yes, and No! It all depends, for there are many stages of fullness, and the night was a long way off.

Outside in the yard, presents were given to each one, and we knew that the "Hame Folk" were not unmindful of their stray lambs. Our stretcher bearers, up the line, were not forgotten, either, but received the same kind tokens as we who at that time were fortunate enough to be at the Main Dressing Station. After that splendid meal came diversion in the shape of an impromptu brass band, whose music greatly affected the feet of our elevated soldiery. Friends met, shook hands, and embraced, who had never before seen or heard of each other.

XXX., a short-sighted individual, mistook the Sergeant-Major's pocket for his own, and received alimony to the value of two Xmas packets and three cigars. Another convert to the Society of Friends evinced a strong desire to shake the Colonel's hand for a period of not *more* than five minutes—a privilege that was laughingly granted. Everybody was happy! Methinks I can yet see the rotund form of MacKay gracefully draped about his beloved soul mate, Andy, as they swooped majestically into the melee of tango, polka, highland fling, two step and lame duck wobble, which terminated the whirlwind performance of the band. It was touching!

To go further into the festivities of the day would mean a tour of estaminets, "homes" and alleyways, too painful to be interesting, but everyone arrived home all right. No, we did not say, *walked*, but they all arrived! No bones were broken, and casualties were less than at a successful *wake*, where everybody but the corpse has a broken nose. Thus, then, ended in musical slumbers, the joys of that day of days, Christmas, 1915.

Another year has passed. The same preparations were thoroughly made, in order that Christmas cheer might not be washed up on desert island shores, but a throng of new faces smiled across the bare board tables, and new voices rang lustily in the songs that we were wont to sing in the days gone on before. What Ho! There's a life in the old dogs yet! and it was proven satisfactorily in the hearty way that that dinner was permanently "polished off." This time, however, no sparkling bubbling champagne caused the laughter to rise high. No, no! Everywhere were brimming jugs of a dark brown liquid, with a froth that stared you in the face like the snow on the tops of the Rockies. "Hi! Sergeant, a little more of the hoo-be-jah right here, 's'il vous plait!" There, that's fine—O all right, only don't spill it all over the table!"

Nothing marred the gladness of the day. The spirits of the troops were excellent! During the evening one mishap threatened to dampen these spirits, for a deadly, new projectile, called the "Lindywerfer," filled with a particularly violent explosive liquid, came sailing over the parapet, and stretched one of our giants prone upon the chapel floor. Happily, however, he has recovered from this battle wound, and the usage of this terrible weapon was discontinued by the enemy.

Many a letter was written that day, and many a heart was made glad from the effort put into the writing. But the brilliance that was shown in the numberless discussions fell mostly on barren ground. William Jennings O'Brian would have had to revise his oration on the "Prince of Greece" had he listened to the learned discourses of S/S/M Mansfield (punctuated with pokes on the chest), and it would have made even Lord Byron feel *cheerful* to have shared in the farewell scenes of a certain S/Sgts. departure! Peaceful night! The stars shone like silver pin points: snow lay white and pure upon the ground: the cheers and laughter echoed and died away, and sleep, sweet and balmy, rested on all eyes. Our hearts were glad, for had not our Ideal promised us a refreshing route march, *with packs*, early on the morrow?

"Lucifer" C.