A CHRISTMAS MEDALLION

(By J. Alvin Dean.)

As darkness was settling rapidly over one of the humblest tenement districts of New York City John Sinclair climbed the front steps leading to the most insignificant looking building of the entire row and inserting his key was about to turn the lock when the door flew open, disclosing Mrs. Hickey, the landlady, very red in the face and dry-ing her hands on her apron. She grasped him by the sleeve and pulled him into the parlor before he could say a word.

"For the land sakes, Mr. John," she ejaculated, "what's ever goin' to happen to ye! I be a-cleanin' up my kitchen a bit, it bein' about noon, an' all to anc't there comes an awful knockin' at the front door. I be all scart at the f'rst, for I be thinkin' that somethin' be a-happenin'. But I gets m'self together and goes to th' door. Well, you know, I opens the door and there be standin' one of them little byes what runs all over the whole town with packages an' th' sech. He has on some nice blu' clothes with gold buttons all down th' front. Though I be a-thinkin' thet they be brass instid of gol'. Anyhow, as I be a-sayin', there he stands as big as life, an' he says to me real perlite like: 'Begs yer pardon, ledy, but does de 'onorabl' Jo'n Sinclair live her'?' Then he grins at me like all git out! An' I laffs at him, 'cause it ain't every little un like him thet can say it up so gran' like. Well, I tell him you be a'livin' here. Then he says thet he'll just leave the package anyhow. So down the step he goes and up he goes with a package he couldn't well carry. An' I must say, it be plum' past me how them big men down in them stores can send sech little chappies out with sech big, heavy packages, and be havin' any good feelin's in themsel's fur so doin'. But up he comes and lays the package, all puffin', at me feet. Then he says: 'It's dooc'd heavy! You'se gotter be awfullest kerful o' thet package. De boss, he say to m' he break m' neck if Ah break de thing, an' he shore do it.' Well, I tell the bye to wait. I goes into the kitchen an' I takes one o' them seed cakes, you kno' the kind I mean. I be mighty proud o' them, an' they be mighty good, as ye say yersel', Mr. John. Well, I takes one o' them cakes an' gives it to th' chapple, an' off he goes a-whistlin' like sin!" Then Mrs. Hickey took the first perceptible breath since she had begun to talk.

This brief lapse gave John Sinclair time to clear his throat and venture the question: "What of the package? What did you do with it?"

"Why, sure'n I tuk it right upstairs by mesel', not a-waitin' fur ye to lug it up when ye come home, as I kno' many a ledy wud! But it be so powerful heavy that I be thinkin' I might be lettin' it drop twic't. But I didn't. Well, I gets it to th' room. It be kind o' hardfee lin', just like it may be a dish or somethin' sech. But what a man like ye be wantin' with dishes be more'n I can see! But just as I be gettin' it on th' table I tears th' paper a bit; I does it mistakenly, an' it seems to be no more'n than a glass dish. Leastaways, it's somethin' glass, an' so must be a dish. 'Cause there ain't no glass usin' roundish shapes' ceptin' fur dishes, as near as I be knowin' of. But the thing be plum' past me, I be a thinkin'." Whereupon, having delivered herself of all that she knew Mrs. Hickey leaned back in her chair with a sigh of such evident relief that Sinclair smiled in spite of himself. Then he hastened to give his views.

"I think that my wonderful package which is so round and hard and weighs a whole lot will turn out to be something from the boys at the office. You know they all seem to like me awful well, and this is Christmas eve, and we don't have to work to-morrow. It's a holiday, you know. But I'm most starved and it must be time to eat, as it's as dark as a pocket outside."

"Sur', Mr. John! Now ye be a runnin' up to yur room, an' be right down. I'll be havin' supper all ready fur ye. But ye better be lookin' in the package to see what them office byes be givin' ye. It's something awful nice, I be sur' thinkin'."

Sinclair acted upon his landlady's suggestion and made his way hurriedly up the stairs. Once in the room he lighted the gas jet and glanced in the direction of the table upon which rested the package. There it was, large and plate shaped. Moving to the table, he lifted the package to ascertain its weight and muttered: "Mighy heavy! No wonder it was a load for the kid!" Then throwing his coat upon the bed he began to remove the outer wrappings of heavy brown paper. Underneath the outer covering was a thick layer of brilliant blue tissue and he was about to tear this off when he heard Mrs. Hickey call to him from the foot of the stairs. Not wishing to delay her, he left the partially unpacked object upon the table and made his way to the dining room, where, beaming with good will and expectancy, Mrs. Hickey was awaiting him.

About the table were seated the other seven young men composing the "private boarding establishment."

"Hear you've got a present, Sinclair," ventured one of the boarders, with a good-natured grin. "Sweetheart send you something?"

"Yes, tell us about it," added the red-headed man who sat at the end of the table. "We've heard all about you geating a big package to-day, and we've been betting nickels to dimes that it's this, that or the other thing. We'll all be——"

"Ho! Hi tell ye," interrupted Mulkins, who sat opposite the speaker. "Hi don't be carin' so blamed much what's hinside th' bloomin' thing as Hi'd like to kno' who's the gel, anyhow! Hi didn't kno' ye had a lady frien'; leastways, ye never tol' me about hit!"

"Lump it, Mulkins," interposed the first speaker, "you're always daffy when you talk about girls. It's none of our business who it is. But you ought to let us know what's in the package, Sinclair."

"If you'll just give me about a minute to explain you'll be saving your breaths! Mrs. Hickey called me down stairs to supper before I got the thing unwrapped. So I don't know any more about it than you do." John stopped talking, took a swallow of water and continued: 'If you'll let me eat a bite of supper in peace I'll take the whole outfit of you upstairs and let you watch me unwrap that package. Then you'll know just as much about it as I do."

"But Hi be thinkin' ye might tell we uns who the ledy is, anyhow," whined Mulkins. "Hit won't be hurtin' no one, an' we'll all be bloomin' glad to 'ear.'

"I don't know. Wish I did. I don't know a girl in the whole burg, outside the stenographers in the office. They wouldn't be sending me anything. It's the boys down at the office, I tell you."

"She wouldn't have to live right here in New York, would she?" questioned the red-headed individual. "I'll bet you that I ever knew or that I ever cared a rap for went off west. The Lord knows where. I bet she's dead or has a man and six children."

"Beastly shame for ye," ejaculated Mulkins. "Didn't ye 'ave a likin' for her?"

"Did I? Why, I'd have given my—but—hang it! You see, her mother died a while before I came to the city and then the old man pulled up stakes and hiked out for the west. He had some mining interests somewhere. Of course, I made a strong pull for the girl to stay. Wanted to marry her and all that. But, Lord! I was too young. Just got out of school. I didn't make much of a crush on the old gentleman, anyway. My folks passed away, then I struck out. I've always had it in mind to hunt her up when I make my pile, but it looks like all day for me. Twenty per—don't cut any figure in little old New York, you know. Still, I liked the girl, and I know that she wasn't so sour on me."

"Ye don't want to be so beastly down in yer luck," consoled the little Englishman. "Yer likely t' take a turn for the better most any time."

Further discourse was stopped by the appearance of Mrs. Hickey bearing a steaming dish above her head. She placed it in front of "Reddy," and with an imperious wave of her hand said:

"There, me byes, if I do be sayin' it meself', thet's as fine a Laermiek pudding as ever ye be eatin'. I be thinkin' thet I be not lettin' ye taste it till to-morrow, then bein' Christmas, ye kno'. But bein' thet Mr. John won't be eatin' with us to-morrow I be thinkin' I'll be givin' ye some to-night."

"I'll not be eating with you to-morrow!" exclaimed John Sinclair in surprise. "Why, where will I be eating? You're not going to chase me out, are you?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the landlady, her homely face transformed with good humor. "No, I be not throwin' ye out, but it's eatin' ye'll be with the one thet sent th' package. I be clean forgetful of tellin' ye. After the little chappie goes off this mornin' by an' by there comes another one of them little fellers an' he be askin' fer ye. Then I be tellin' him thet ye be not at home an' he gives me one o' them dirthy yello' telegraphy message things. Well, I be puttin' my name down on th' book thet he be havin', just like he be tellin' me, an' off he goes. I be knowin' thet ye'd be wantin' me to be openin' it so'd I'd be sendin' fur ye ef it be needin' fur it. Well, I opens it an' cuddn't be readin' it without me specs. So I be gettin' them, an' —— Here, ye can be readin' it fur yerself'."

After a short search in the expansive bosom of her dress Mrs. Hickey produced a very rumpled yellow envelope and handed it to Sinclair. With all eyes fastened upon him in breathless attention, he drew forth the small sheet of the Western Union Telegraph Company's communication and silently scanned the following:

"Take dinner with me to-morrow at 5. Cab will call. Betty."

John leaned back in his chair and breathed so heavily that the sound of crunching teeth and clattering table utensils suddenly ceased. Eyes rolled and jaws fell apart in astonishment. "Reddy" muttered an oath under his breath and Mulkins choked on his last mouthful. The strained silence was soon broken, however, by the irrepressible landlady:

"Oh, come now, Mr. John! There be no use of bein' scart like that. It be an invitin' to a good dinner, now, an' a much finer dinner than I be havin', I suspects. Though ef I do be sayin' it, I be havin' a mighty fine one to-morro'—a mighty fine one. Still, ye can be havin' one again, an' there be nothin' like ye havin' a change even ef ye don't be needin' one!"

For reply John straightened himself in his chair and made an attack upon the steaming dish that had been placed before him. He was too much occupied with his own thoughts to give much attention to his companions, who with jests and witty sallies about the "girl" endeavored to stimulate his flagging interest.

The meal well over, John arose, pushed his chair back to the table and with a half-hearted tone of voice said:

"Come on, boys; I've promised to let you in on this package business and now's the time to go after it!"

Mulkins and "Reddy" started to their feet, but there was a stern cry of "Sit down, you fools!" and Smith from the head of the table called out: "Leave him alone!" He had better unpack this parcel himself. It's probably got something in it that he don't want us to see. At any rate, there's no use of buttin' in where you're not needed."

With a look of earnest thanks Sinclair walked out of the room and they could hear him climbing the stairs and shortly afterward enter the room directly overhead. Then for nearly an hour the group of men at the table discussed and argued upon the probable contents of the big package. They expected every moment to hear Sinclair's voice summoning them to his room to examine the present. But as time passed on and not a sound was heard uneasiness began to creep over those at the table. What could it mean? Was there anything particularly significant or threatening about the package? Did a simple invitation to dinner, although sent in a telegram, hold any dark meaning? These unexpressed thoughts having become pretty general, it was not long until the nervous individuals of the group began to pace up and down the dining-room and the adjacent parlor, while the more conservative ones merely twirled their thumbs or moved restlessly in their chairs. Still there was no sound overhead. Finally, when those who had been walking back and forth resumed their seats such an ominous calm pervaded the house that it seemed as though the nervous tension of the watchers must soon give way. Thrise sixty measured ticks of the mantel clock had alone broken the silence, when suddenly springing to his feet Smith shouted: "Hang it! I can't stand this any longer! We don't know what's going on up there and we'd better find out! Come on!" And striding out of the room he was followed by the others.

Up the stairs and across the hall to the closed door rushed the impetuous leader, with the other young men at his heels. With a push and a kick the door flew open and in they stumbled. Sinclair was lying face downward on the bed, perfectly still! On the little table at the window stood an exquisitely painted medallion of large size, framed in a heavy circle of velvet gold. A human head, life size, was dimly outlined by a mass of tumbled dark hair and a face of surpassing beauty and sweetness looked frankly up at the astonished intruders.

"Gad! It's th' ledy!" gasped Mulkins.

The others merely acquiesced with nods. know a whole bunch of girls where you came from. You're too good-lookin' not to."

"I suppose that's a compliment. But you're away off, old man. The only girl

On account of her excessive plumpness Mrs. Hickey was the last to follow the daring leader, and it took her nearly five minutes to recover sufficient breath to elbow her way to the bed. Here Big Smith, contrary to his rough vocation of freight "rustling," had passed a brotherly arm around Sinclair and was endeavoring to find out what it was all about. The latter's face bore tear stains and he blushed like a boy who hated to be caught crying when he saw Mrs. Hickey enter the room. She, in turn, comprehended the situation at a glance and contrary to her usual custom departed without a word. Returning a few minutes later with a small-sized flask and a little pot of hot water she forced down the young man's protesting throat a whisky concoction which instantly livened him up. But in reply to the many questions put to him Sinclair merely pointed to the beautiful medallion upon the table and then at the white card which inclined against the golden frame.

"Thine—at last!—Betty," it read.

Although unused to situations of delicacy, the young men of Mrs. Hickey's establishment were, nevertheless, possessed of that true gentlemanly instinct which forbade a too extreme questioning after facts. Consequently, with muttered apologies for their abrupt intrusion and hearty expressions of sympathy for Sinclair, they trooped out of the room, the good landlady bringing up the rear.

Christmas morning dawned with a bright sun piercing the city haze and even penetrating to the depths of the rumbling streets and turning to glitter the lazy shift of flake and frost. And a true Christmas feeling had dawned within the heart of John Sinclair, expanding and warming it until he fairly radiated good cheer. Thus with happiness in every stride and with the day free from office grind, Sinclair made his way into the street for a morning walk. Then back to his room, a friendly chat with the "boys," a bit of lunch, a half hour spent in getting "some clothes on," and he stationed himself in the parlor to wait for the cab. To himself he kept saying:

"Betty is wise. She's a coy little thing! She will have things arranged just so. She didn't give me any address and there isn't any chance to see her until she's ready—just like her! Wonder what she's doing here in New York? Probably those mines have—Gee! there's the rig!" John raced into the hall, threw on his overcoat, caught his hat from the hall tree, nearly ran over the smiling Mrs. Hickey and dashed down the front steps.

There were two men on the box of the stylish barouche. One of these quickly dropped to the ground and managed to throw open the carriage door just as John hurled himself inside. The door slammed, the carriage began to move, and then——

"Gracious sakes, John! If you don't stop I'll have to call for help. Why, I won't be fit for dinner. You've kissed me too much already!"

"Darling, I could just eat you alive!" fairly shouted the ardent youth.

"You'd better not, though, or you'll since poor papa died I'm worth over a million. So there, now!" And the blushing Betty nestled closer within the loving arms.

"You're not worth a penny more to me than if you didn't have a cent."

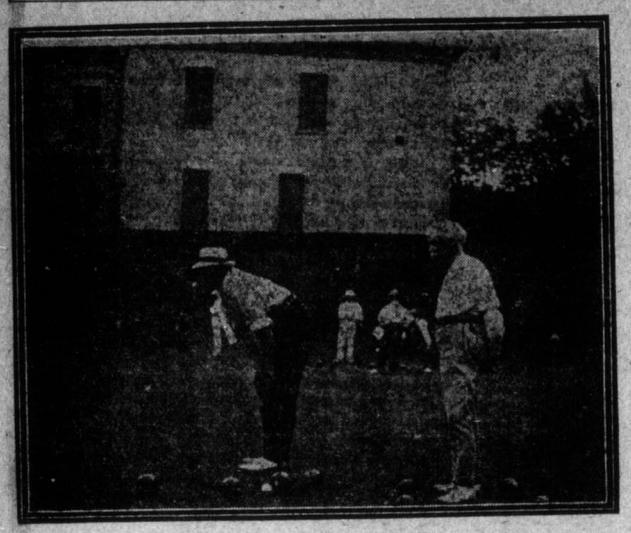
"Oh, yes, I am. What did you think of that medallion Wasn't I good to get it made for you, and isn't it sweet?"

"It's not half as sweet as you are. Why, you're sweeter'n—sweeter'n—sweet—than——"

"Oh, please don't, dearie!"

"Bad case in there!" hissed the indomitable John of the box through his set teeth.

"Blamed lucky dog!" retorted his stalwart partner in livery, through his pressed lips.



TOO LIGHT; TOO LIGHT!

A lawn bowling scene at Thistle Rink, in the Times Trophy series.

SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM.

Do the picturesque contortions of the bowler effect the ball after delivery?

COMIN' A WE E BIT STRONG!

Lawn bowling scene at the Victoria Rink in club tournament.

ONE? NO, TWO!

A scene at the Tournament of Victoria Lawn Bowling Club.

A DOG SANTA CLAUS.

A Pretty Story of New Hampshire Life Many Years Ago.

(Helen M. Richardson in December St. Nicholas.)

Many years ago, in the State of New Hampshire, there lived two young girls named Dolly and Prue. They were great friends. They went to the same school, attended the same church and Sunday school, and during the summer were almost constantly together.

But in the winter a whole week would sometimes go by without their seeing each other. They lived on the banks of the same river, but on opposite sides of it. And during that season of the year the river was at times swollen very high at places where in summer the little girls could often cross barefoot by jumping from one stone to another.

Dolly and Prue used to think it great sport to cross it in that way; in fact, they did not mind if there was considerable water in the river, for that only made it more exciting. In winter when the river was frozen solid they could walk across it on the ice, and those were happy times for these two little friends. But the current at that point was very strong, and it was usually after Christmas before the children were allowed to venture on it.

Now, on this Christmas that I am going to tell you about, Prue had made Doly a pretty white apron for a Christmas present. Her mother had cut it out, but Prue had done every stitch of the sewing herself, and her mother assured her that she had done it very neatly. There had been a great deal of rain all through the fall, and Roaring River was swollen very high, so that there seemed no way of getting the gift to her friend except by the road, a distance of more than three miles.

"Why don't you let Duke take it across?" suggested Prue's brother, Ralph. "He enjoys nothing better than a swim in the river, and he likes to carry things, you know."

At first Ralph's proposition was laughed at by both Prue and her mother. The idea of letting a dog swim across that leaping, dancing water with an apron in his mouth,! — for usually that was Duke's way of carrying packages.

"I don't believe I want to send Dolly such a wet Christmas present as that would be," Prue rejoined, with a toss of her head.

But when her brother produced some rubber cloth that had been used on a camping expedition and offered to cut off a small piece for Prue's benefit, she decided that boys were sometimes wiser than girls, and joyfully accepted his aid.

On Christmas morning the apron was carefully wrapped in the oilcloth, with a string tied tightly around it, and this was fastened to Duke's collar and the dog led to the bank of the river, which was leaping in little waves, instead of lying placid and serene as on summer days. He enjoyed a swim, however, even if he did have to struggle against odds for it. So when Prue led him by his collar with the words: "In, old boy! Carry my Christmas present to Dolly!" with one straining wrench he freed himself and leaped bravely into the turbulent water.

Prue watched him until he reached the other shore; saw him shake the water from his tawny sides and then dash up the bank. Then she wandered slowly along the shore, waiting to weel come him on his return journey.

Half an hour passed before a sharp bark from across the river announced that Duke was on his homeward way. Dolly was with him and waver her handkerchief at her little friend, and Prue waved hers back, while Duke plunged into the water again and was soon dancing around his little mistress, shaking the water from his body until Prue laughingly declared that she might about as well have swum across herself, she was so wet.

But Duke was uneasy, and fawned persistently around Prue until she discovered that he still had, tied to his collar, the bundle with which he had started.

"Why, Duke! what made you bring it back again?" she cried in a tone of vexation.

"Open it! open it!" the dog's impaient tail seemed to be insisting as it wildly lashed the air.

Eager-eyed, he watched his little mistress as she untied the string. And when out from the protecting folds of the oilcloth covering there fell a pretey neck chain made of beads and a pair of warm mittens, gifts from Dolly and her mother for Prue herself, Duke barked joyously, which was the dog way of saying:

"I hope you see now that I am a dog that can be trusted."

Prue, fair, but no longer young, still fondly cherishes the necklace that Duke brought to her on that Christmas morning so long ago.

But there is another little Prue that once in a while is allowed to wear the precious chain around her own neck, and who often wishes that she had a dog as brave and faithful as her grandmother's dog Duke.

Henry Gladstone's Courtship.

Mrs. Gladstone is well known to be wrapped up in her husband and his career. He was 47 when he first met Miss Paget. He became Home Secretary soon after their marriage, and though he is in print perhaps the most abused man in the Government he has to those who know him personally both charm and humor, a "glad eye" and a delightful singing voice. He has an extreme reverence for his father's memory and gave to his wife for her engagement ring the same great emerald circle that the "G. O. M." gave to his wife when they became engaged.—From the Bystander.

—THE—
MERCHANTS BANK OF CANADA

ESTABLISHED 1864
HEAD OFFICE, MONTREAL

President, Sir H. Montague Allan.
General Manager, E. F. Hebden.

CAPITAL PAID UP $6,000,000
REST AND SURPLUS PROFITS $4,600,000
TOTAL DEPOSITS $46,000,000
TOTAL ASSETS $63,000,000

This Bank has 139 branches in Canada extending from Quebec to Victoria, B.C., and has unsurpassed facilities for making collections throughout the Dominion.

Also issues TRAVELLERS' CHEQUES in convenient denominations payable at par throughout the world.

Also allows interest at current rates on Deposits in the SAVINGS BANK DEPARTMENT.

Hamilton Branch, G. V. J. GREENHILL, Manager.

Buy
Aylmer Preserves

Every glass jar or package of "AYLMER" Jams or Jellies is guaranteed absolutely pure, put up from FRESH FRUITS when in season and FINEST GRANULATED SUGAR.

The flavor and high quality of "AYLMER" preserves cannot be obtained in preserves made from pulp.

No Preservatives No Coloring

At every process cleanliness is reduced to a science.

Fresh Fruits Fine Granulated Sugar

Cleanliness Up-to-Date Methods

Canadian Canners Limited
Hamilton, - Canada

MADE ON HONOR SOLD ON MERIT
A Perfect Bag of Perfect Flour---All Grocers Sell It
GOLD MEDAL
FLOUR
GUARANTEED BEST FOR ALL REQUIREMENTS
ASK US ABOUT FEED
WOOD MILLING CO. TELEPHONE 118

THE SILVER BIRCH.

Back from the highway, my lady of dreams,
Murmurs a roundelay tender:
Silence and fragrance, and flowers and streams,
These do you sing of, my lady of dreams,
Standing so stately and slender!

Silvery white where the lone shadows brood,
White where the starlight is streaming,
Silvery white through your virginal snood,
Silvery white through your veil and your hood—
Yea, with your singing and dreaming!

You, with a cloak of the loveliest green
Draping your whiteness over!
You, with the breath of the forest, I ween,
Mosses and briers with lilies between—
Haunts of the poet and lover!

Back from the highway, my lady of dreams
Murmurs a roundelay tender:
Silence and fragrance, and flowers and streams,
These do you sing of, my lady of dreams,
Standing so white and so slender!

—Jean Blewett, in the December Canadian Magazine.

CHRISTMASTIDE ON FIFTH AVENUE.

Frou-Frou of silk and of satin,
Visions amidst veiling and fur!
There on the curb a swart Latin
Preff'ring his boots, connoisseur.
Flutter and jesting and dimples,
Topcoat and meshed ankles slim—
A foreigner vending his staples?
Who has a moment for him?

Rhythm of feet on the paving,
Rhythm of joy in the air;
Perfume and sensuous craving,
Carnival radiant and fair.
Beauty free-limbed and full-throated,
Wealth purple-clad and full fed—
A rose lying draggled, unnoted,
Crushed by the hurring tread.

Windows with luxury seeting,
Thresholds that eddy and stream;
Equipage lined and in waiting,
Varnish and cushion and gleam.
Frou-frou of silk and of satin,
Topcoat by sealskin enticed—
At the marge the sade face of the Latin
Patiently preff'rtaz Christ.

—Edwin L. Sabin, in December Smart Set.