

CHRISTMAS EVE

By
MAXIM GORKY

WE sat in a tavern, and as time hung heavily upon me, I asked my companion to tell me a story of his life. My companion was an extremely tattered and worn fellow. He looked as if he had all his life been squeezed through tight places; his clothes were in shreds and his body at certain points shrank away as if parts of it had been torn off in the struggle. The man was thin, angular and quite bald; not a single hair grew upon his yellow cranium. His cheeks were sunken, his cheekbones forming two bright points, and the skin covering them was so tightly stretched that it glistened and brought into greater prominence an expression, constantly in an ironic expression, and his talk came fluently out of his mouth, which was partly covered by a stubbly red mustache. It seemed to me that the story of his life would be very interesting.

"YOU wish to hear my story?" he asked in a hoarse voice.
"Well, yes."
"Then I'll tell it to you, since you desire it. But the whole story—that won't go. I have lived through an unusually long life; it would bore you to listen to it, and it is not altogether amusing to tell. But just one little thing, a sort of anecdote—that goes all right. Would you like to hear it? Very well. But you will surely order a couple of beer for my trouble. For you know it is sometimes as unpleasant for a fellow to go into his past as it is to go down into a sewer."

"This little story, my dear sir, will not strike you as being important and will hardly suit your literary taste, but to me it is like it. The matter, as you will see, is very simple; it happened in this way:

"It was on a Christmas eve, and I was—my comrade, Yashka Slav and myself—had been hanging around the street the whole day. We offered our services as baggage carriers to the ladies who passed with their Christmas bundles, but they didn't seem to hear our words, and would enter their carriages and ride off—from which you can see that we were not in luck's way. We also tried to collect some things. I got together about 25 copecks, out of which a 10-copeck piece, given to me by a gentleman on the Court-house steps, proved to be counterfeit."

"But Yashka—a fellow in many ways more talented than I—suddenly came toward evening really a rich man. He had 11 rubles and 25 copecks. According to his story, all this money was given to him in one lump by a lady who had suddenly become so generous that she not only handed him the money itself but her purse and her handkerchief as well. That sometimes happens, you know. A sudden impulse of virtue often brings a person into a state where he forgets all about his dignity and then does anything to get the goodness in order to get rid of it. As Yashka told me about the really Christian conduct of the lady, for some reason or other he glanced furtively at me. I suppose he wanted to thank the noble soul again for her generous gift. Suddenly he shouted to me:
"Hey there, run faster!"

"WE ran as fast as we could. Every part of my body seemed to be frozen, and I hurried on to warm it a bit. The wind blew fiercely, causing the snow on the streets to rise into a whirl and throwing it off the



roof in cold and pointed missiles, flying in the air and falling down my neck. My face felt as if it was being cut with knives, and my neck was so frozen that it seemed to have become as thin as a finger. I thought it would break at any careless movement I might make, and fearing to lose my head, I buried it as deeply as I could between my shoulders. Neither of us was suitably clothed for such weather, but Yashka felt warmer than I did, which made me, out of envy of him, feel colder still.

"You know I have never been a favorite of fortune—devil take me! Only once in my life was I presented with a samovar, and that was filled with boiling water, which, as I tried to get away with it, so scalded my feet that I had to spend a week and a half in the prison hospital. At another time—but that's another story. Well, then; so I ran on with Yashka, while he kept saying to himself:
"We'll celebrate the holiday in great style. We'll pay our rent—here, you old witch, here it is—a pint of whiskey and perhaps a leg of ham. Hm! A leg of ham wouldn't be at all bad, but it would be expensive. Do you know what the price of ham is in the market?"

"I DID not, but I knew the real value of a leg of ham, and we decided to acquire it. We determined to go to the market where there were the most people. When the store is crowded with customers it's a sure sign that it sells the best goods; ergo, as the Latins used to say, it's just the place where one can pick up whatever one wants."
"A leg of ham, please," cried Yashka, pushing his way into the crowd of buyers. Show me a leg of ham—not big, but good—excuse me; you hit me in the side. I know very well which of us is not well bred, but I also know that it's not easy to be polite under present circumstances. I can't help being so uncomfortably close here. What's that? I've touched your pocket, perhaps. Oh, my wife, I took your own hand which met mine as it was crawling into my breast pocket. I buy for cash, so do you, therefore we have both equal rights."
"From Yashka's bearing in the market you would have thought he had come to buy a whole carload of hams, perhaps. Meanwhile, I took advantage of the confusion and, aided by what ability I had, lifted a box of marmalade, a bottle of olive oil and two leavened rolls."
"Now, we, too, will have a holiday," rejoiced Yashka. "It will be a great feast!" He slipped as he walked, and struck his big wide nose. His little gray eyes were bright with joy, and I, too, was rejoicing. A square, appetizing meal once in a while is no small pleasure for people like us, sir."

"AND now, with the wind driving us forward, we were nearing our home. At that time we lived at the ex-



reme end of the city, near the old clothes market, where we occupied a basement belonging to a very old woman. This part of the town was always deserted after 6 o'clock in the evening, and it was seldom that a living being was met with in this neighborhood after that time. If any one ever did make his appearance here after that hour he most certainly carried his life in his heels.

"So I eagerly invited the man to come with us.
"I'll come, I'll come with you, my beggar," he shouted with all the strength of his big lungs.
"We walked together three abreast, and the three of us sat around the table."
"WE sat in our cave and drank slowly, waiting to hear about the holiday. Our guest took off his fur coat and sat in his shirt sleeves without a vest. He sat opposite to us.
"You are evidently rascals, both of you," he growled. "You lie when you say you are beggars; and your eyes, are, it's all the same to me. I know that you are not ashamed of life—and that's the thing. And I—am ashamed. I ran away from my house to escape disgrace."
"You know, my dear sir, there is a nervous disease called chorea. Well, there are some people whose consciences are stricken with this disease. I and I saw at once that the inspector belonged to that class. "In my house," he went on, "everything is conducted in the most proper manner; and it gets fearfully tiresome to live according to the conventional rules. Everything is put away or hung up in its proper place once and for all, and everything has so grown to its place that even an earthquake couldn't move them—sofas, pictures and book-cases. They have shot roots into the ground and into the soul of my wife. These—those wooden and lifeless things—have become a part of our lives, and I, for one, cannot live without them. One gets so used to them—about them—them and troubles about them—the devil take it! The damned things grow, take up all the room, stifle the air until one can't breathe freely any longer. Now, for this holiday, this blessed army of hab-

its has decked itself out, has made itself spick and span, and it shines and glistens. It glistens disgustingly. It mocks me—yes, it knows everything. Once I had only three pieces—a bed, a chair and a table. Yes, and I had also a picture of Herzon. Now I have a hundred pieces of furniture. They seem to ask people to sit down in them—people who know their value. So people who are well-to-do come to us to use our furniture."

"Do you know who I am?" he asked. "I am a man who is running away from his holiday. I am the Dmitrievich Gontscharov—that's what I am! I have a wife and a home, children—two sons—and I love them. There are flowers in my home, pictures, books—everything is mine—it's all beautiful, comfortable and warm, in my home. If you had all the things that I have in my house it would long ago have gone for drink. You are swine, of course, and drunkards; but I am no drunkard—though I'm drunk just now. I'm drunk because I'm depressed. I'm always depressed and uncomfortable on holidays. You don't understand it—it's a deep wound—it's my great sorrow."
"I listened to him with intense interest. Whenever I see a big, strong fellow who is frightened by the weak, the puny and the petty. Put a sturgeon in a swamp and it'll certainly die; while frogs, toads and the like can't live in clear, flowing water. The man interested me very much.
"We had now brought him to our basement, and our landlady was not with you. I'll feed you and give you plenty to drink. Take me as your best; be friendly with me."
"Let's invite him," whispered Yashka to me.
"I had recognized in the great voice of the man the tones of a drunken man, but I also made out something else—that was sick and deeply wounded. I have a good instinct for the dramatic; I was for a time prompter in a theater

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"I mean—you see, once for all—out with everything."
"You are a fool."
"You shook his dashed head and then, letting it sink on his breast, he said simply:
"I'm frightfully disgusted with it all; and I've crowded out of life by little things and petty details. They weighed me down, pressed out my soul and everything else that was in me. I yearned for something just at you are both scamps and cannot understand what I mean."
"I understand very well what the matter is," I said to the inspector.
"You're wrong," he asked.
"I am also a man who was once respectable," I said. "I, too, enjoyed the happiness of a quiet, peaceful life. I, too, was crowded out of life by little things and petty details. They weighed me down, pressed out my soul and everything else that was in me. I yearned for something just at you are both scamps and cannot understand what I mean."
"The inspector stared at me and examined me closely out of the corner of his eye with apparent satisfaction. Then I saw his thick, red lips twitch in disgust under his bushy mustache, and the way he sneered wasn't at all complimentary to me."
"Is that really so?" he asked suddenly.
"It is, Omnia mea mecum porto," I asserted.
"Who are you, anyway?" he asked, still looking at me.
"A man," said the inspector, "is a man and a very much of a vagabond. I once knew the art of speaking in epigrams very well."

"VERY wisely put," said the inspector, without taking his eyes off me.
"You are also, an educated people," said Yashka. "We can converse with you perfectly well. If we are plain people, we understand a thing or two; if we're too, did you see elegant furniture. Why we, too, did you care about it? We don't sit with our faces on the chairs. You should make friends with us."
"It was the inspector. He had suddenly become sober.
"Yes, sir, you. Tomorrow we'll show you such secrets of life—"
"Hand me my coat," demanded the inspector. The coat of Yashka, and he stood up. He stood very firmly on his feet.
"Why, where are you bound for?" I asked.
"Where? He looked at me with pain in his large, calf-like eyes, and then shivered as if a sudden chill had run through him. "I am bound for home."
"I looked at his face, which had suddenly grown very long, and did not say another word.
"Fate has prepared a barn for every kind of animal, and no matter how that animal may kick with its hind legs it still remains in its allotted place. Ha, ha!"
"And so the inspector departed. Outside we heard his big, heavy voice crying:
"My companion grew silent and began to drink his beer with measured sips. After finishing his glass he commenced to whistle, tapping on the table with his fingers.
"And what then?" I asked.
"What then? Nothing. Did you expect something else?"
"Yes, the feast—"
"Oh, yes, we had the feast all right. I forgot to tell you that the inspector had made Yashka a present of his purse. There were twenty-six rubles and some copecks in it. We had the feast all right."
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TEN MINUTES WITH THE FUNNY MEN

SOME of the QUIPS and TESTS FROM PENS of the NEWSPAPER HUMORISTS.

Terse Tales From Humorous Pens

THE STONE AGE.
The Masse.
Two men saw a certain stone in the road impeding traffic and that it was a manifest duty to clear it out of the way at once.
"This great boulder must be moved," said the first, "that is clear. Let us work side by side in this noble task whose accomplishment is to bless coming generations in order to get rid of it."
The second clasped his hands ecstatically. "Oh, happy day! Oh, thrice delectable hour! For years I have been seeking a helper in my gigantic task of tidying up this road. Comrade, I greet you. Together we will lever this stone out of the rut."
"Lever it! Lever it!" repeated the first, gently, though apparently with some surprise. "Why, you poor ignorant fool! You malleable of an old woman! You dull, stolid kowtowel to custom! I shan't lay a hand to the job unless we use dynamite."
"Indeed!" commented the second, a note of displeasure evident in his voice. "Indeed, you unmitigated jackass and agent provocateur! You flat-headed thug of an informer! You—with your corrupt maskot-ridden brain! You—for sale body and soul to the highest bidder!"
"Yah, white-livered spy," returned the first. "Yah, labor fakir! Blood-stained, fawning hound! Despicable lick-spittle! In black-headed traitor! Everlasting disgrace to our glorious movement!"
The second drew a long breath and began.
"You miserable, contemptible, pathetic—the stone is still there."

COSMETICS.
Little Tommy, at the "movies," saw a tribe of Indians painting their faces, and asked his mother the significance of this, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.
"Indians," his mother answered, "always paint their faces before going on the warpath—before scalping and tomahawking and murdering."
The next evening after dinner, as the mother entertained in the parlor her daughter's young man, Tommy rushed downstairs wide-eyed with fright.
"Come on, mother!" he cried. "Let's get out of this quick! Sister is going on the warpath!"

A POBO.
Kansas City Times.
Here they are again, men. Our old friends, Weary Willie and Dusty Rhodes. Thinking that perhaps the last time you saw them they took some

and good book salesmanship is a rare thing.
"There's a concern in England that runs about a million stables. These stables are manned by poor little boys of 9 or 10 years—poor little shabby, dirty-fingered boys who earn about 40 bob, or \$2.50, a week. And what a job they make of book salesmanship, to be sure!"
"I once went up to a stall and said to the little boy who was lurching behind the counter on cold cocoa and bread:
"Have you got Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' here?"
"Setting down his cocoa cup, the little fellow advanced with a voluble and pathetic attempt at smart book salesmanship:
"No, sir, we ain't got it—that is, sir, we ain't got it at this stall, sir. You see, we're tryin' it out at a few of our larger stalls to see how it goes. If it makes a big hit, why, then we'll have it here, sir."—Exchange.

A PUZZLE.
Head Coach Howe told at the Yale training table a football story.
"The English," he began, "are crasier over football than we are. Why, there will sometimes be nearly 100,000 English at a single football game."
"Two Englishwomen of the lower class were drinking 'four-ale' in a 'pub' one afternoon.
"What's the matter with 'ee, Bess?" said the first woman.
"Ah'm puzzled," said the second.
"What about Bess?"
"Well, ye see, my Garge's on the football team, an' when the team wins he treats me to fried fish an' a movie, but when it loses he gives me a beatin' up."
"Well, Bess, I know all about that. But what's your puzzle then? That's what I asked."
"Well, ye see, today's match ended in a draw."—Washington Star.

THE PROOF.
Governor Dix, apropos of the milk bill that he recently vetoed, said at a dinner party in Albany, according to the Washington Star:
"We don't want New York's milk, you know, to return to the condition that once characterized it."
"An Albany maid once said to her mistress in those past days:
"Madam, there's something radical wrong with this here milk. A very thick, yellow scum has gathered on the top of it. I'm afraid it's spoiled."
"Where were you brought up?" smiled the mistress, as she regarded the rich coal.
"In New York, ma'am," answered the maid.
"I thought as much," said the mistress quietly.

SALESMANSHIP.
Sir Thomas Lipton in an interview in New York praised American salesmanship.
"The excellence of your salesmanship," he said, "is doubtless due to the high salaries paid, these very salaries drawing into the work a high class of men."
"Even your book salesmen are good

Quips and Flings

Poet—All my life seemed to go into that poem. I was perfectly exhausted when I had finished writing it.
Sporting Editor—I can sympathize with you. I was in exactly the same condition when I had finished reading it.—Pathfinder.
"By George, I call this rubbing it in," declared a Pittsburg poet.
"How now?"
"I sent this magazine two poems and they sent me back three."—Pittsburg Post.
"She worries every time he takes the car out."
"Yes, I don't blame her. They had to save a long time to get that car."—Houston Post.
Poet—I called to see if you had an opening for me.
Editor—Yes, there's one right behind you. Shut it as you go out, please.—Sattre.

"Burglars broke into our house last night."
"That so? Did they get anything?"
"Nothing except my husband's nerve."—Detroit Free Press.
"Look at this beautiful castle."
"Don't bother me. How can I read the guidebook if you keep pestering me to look at rocks and castles?"—Kansas City Journal.
"Courageous, isn't she?"
"Very! Why, she is engaged to marry a man named Triplett!"—Judge.

Important Poet (with a lofty air)—This, sir, is my last poem!
Tired Editor—Thank goodness.
"I believe in man with news censorship," declared the man with sad eyes.
"What is the matter now?" asked the friend.
"I haven't had any peace since my wife read of the arrival of a \$1,000,000 cargo of sealskins at Seattle."—Buffalo Express.

"He's quite regular in his habits, isn't he?"
"Oh, yes! He drinks a quart of whiskey a day, smokes eighteen cigars regularly and has a regular habit of never getting to bed before 2 A. M."—Life.
"Have you anything laid by for a rainy day, Mr. Bookly?"
"Indeed I have. It's one of the best novels written in a decade, and I can

Among the Poets of the Daily Press

MARCHING THROUGH TURKEY.
Bring the good old bugle, boys, we blew at old Tchotchok.
Also at that place named like the ticking of a clock—
Also at the table whose name will cause your jaws to lock—
While we were marching through Turkey.
Hurrah! Hurrah! Set Zhagubites free, Hurrah! Hurrah! We sound the jubilee. Karahassakolon was as easy as could be.
While we were marching through Turkey.
Tcherkeestak was baffling, but we hung on for a spell;
When we struck Moschopolis we got on very well—
And we've found another town just like a college yell
While we were marching through Turkey.
Hurrah! Hurrah! Our jaws refuse to break.
Hurrah! Hurrah! It is no trick to take Old Trebovitshte with a gurgle and a shake.
While we were marching through Turkey.
Vlahcolivedon we won—it was a long campaign—
Syllable by syllable we counted up our gain;
Old Kovahobete we even now recall with pain
While we were marching through Turkey.
Hurrah! Hurrah! Tcherkeestak waits us yet.
Hurrah! Hurrah! Pokasokol we will get.
In another week we'll rise and fight the alphabet
While we are marching through Turkey.
—Exchange.

RENUCINATION.
His Letter.
"Dear Madge—Of course you've noticed by the papers
That I've eschewed the joys of single life.
Renouncing all my former merry capers.
I shortly take unto myself a wife.
My stage-door days, I feel have found an ending—
Most circumspicious from now, must be my lot!
But, as you see, for old sake's sake I'm sending
An au revoir—and this forget-me-not."
Her Letter.
"Dear Jim—Accept a friend's congratulations.
I hope your luck will be the bestest yet.
Although I fear you'll miss your old flirtations,
Unless you've changed a lot since last we met.
Be good to her—and, ere this letter closes,
One friendly word—it's quite the best I've got.
Your marriage, Jim, will not be strewn with roses,
Unless the lie's a real forget-me-not."
—Stanley Quin, in Judge.

THE PROUD FLY.
The Fly looked around at her progeny
As they swarmed up the walls and
stairs,
And promptly smiled, "Well, it seems to me
That I am a sort of Carme-pie,
For I rank with the million-hairers!"
—Harper's Weekly.

A POEM-LETTE.
I hold it truth, whatever the cost,
'Tis better to lose what we love as lost,
Than loved and won a suffragette.
—Puck.

Among the Poets of the Daily Press

Life it ain't no celebration.
Trouble, I've had mine —
But today is fine.
It's today that I am livin'.
Not a month ago,
Havin' lovin', takin' givin',
As some wills it, I
Yesterday a cloud of sorrow
Fell across the way;
It may rain again tomorrow,
It may rain but say,
Aint it fine today?
—Douglas Malloch.

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