



The Christmas Chef

By DAVIS TRACY.

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"Did you get one, John?" Mrs. Botsford spoke eagerly, almost hysterically. "Yes; I sent her round to the kitchen entrance." "Can she cook?" "She is neat and very nice looking." Mr. Botsford temporized defensively. "She says she can do every kind of housework from up garret to down cellar."

"But can she cook—fancy dishes, I mean?"

"She says that she had quite a reputation at home for plain, wholesome cooking, and she is willing to learn. I told her what you wanted."



"Oh, John," she ejaculated, "it's 11 o'clock now, and Cousin Edward's fiancée is coming at 3 o'clock to stay until Saturday, and she and Edward and some of her people will be here for Christmas dinner tomorrow, and you know I have never seen the girl or any of them. We must have things nice. The girl's worth a clear million in her own right. Oh, John, why need our cook get sick at such a time and—"

Mrs. Botsford was becoming incoherent, but John nodded comprehendingly. "But what else could I do? There's a corner on servants, especially cooks, at this season. The only suggestion of one besides Sarah was a ten dollar a day chef who commences on a regular job Monday. Of course you don't want a chef for two days."

Mrs. Botsford sprang to her feet, her face suddenly radiant. "The very thing!" she cried. "He can do the art work and your cook the plain dishes. A chef will be so—so chic, and you know Miss Lenox has been used to everything. He—a chef is he, isn't he, John?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. That has always been my impression, though I don't suppose there is any law about a girl filling the position. The manager in this case only stated that a chef could be had for two days."

"Well, it's a man, of course. Now, hurry to the telephone, please, before some one else gets him."

She waited until her husband returned from the telephone, nodding. "Says the chef will be up at 1 o'clock sharp, Julia. Now I'll go downtown and order the Christmas trimmings and things."

At 1 o'clock sharp a cab rolled up to the door, and a girl alighted. Mrs. Botsford's countenance fell a little, but rose as the girl opened the gate and went toward the side entrance. It was the chef, though but a girl, and the fact of her coming in a cab and being well dressed was significant of \$10 a day.

Mrs. Botsford did not wait for the second girl to answer the bell, but hurried to the side entrance. The occasion was too momentous for ceremony. As she threw open the door the girl was bending over a fine clump of late chrysanthemums that were smiling daintily into the very teeth of winter.



Mrs. Botsford's heart warmed toward her instantly. A girl who could bend over flowers with that look was not an ordinary workman, but an artist. As the girl smiled, nodded and came forward Mrs. Botsford almost caught her in her arms.

"Oh, my dear," she cried, without giving the chef an opportunity to speak, "you don't know how glad I am to see you! I will take you right into the kitchen, and Sarah will show you where everything is. I shall not make a suggestion, for I see you are perfectly capable. Only do make it just as— as comprehensive as you can. Miss Lenox is accustomed to everything, and—and I want to make her like me so much and to please Edward."

"She had been hurrying the chef through the hall to the kitchen. At the door, to her surprise, the chef pressed a light kiss upon her forehead."

"If you are as nice to Miss Lenox as you are to me," she smiled, "I think she will like you. Now you may leave me in charge. I will do the best I can."

Mrs. Botsford returned to the drawing room, rubbing her forehead thoughtfully.

"What's the matter, Julia," her husband asked—"another headache?"

"No," she doubtfully; "that's where the chef kissed me. I never had a girl kiss me as soon before. But I don't care if only she diffuses her artist soul through the cooking. She has an artist soul, John. I saw it in her eyes."

At 3 o'clock she was again at the window, but there was no carriage in sight. Two minutes later the telephone rang. She went to the telephone herself.

"What's that you say? Can't come? Why, that's too bad. But you will be here tomorrow, of course? What? Will send note? Yes. Well, come as early as you can."

An hour later the note came. Mrs. Botsford read it with a perplexed face, then passed it to her husband.

"I didn't know she spelled her name that way, John," she said, "though of course we never saw it spelled out. I'm afraid she's not so well educated as we thought. And of course a lover's opinion isn't always reliable. Poor Edward!"

Mr. Botsford nodded vaguely and opened the note, which read:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Botsford—Sorry I cannot come according to agreement. Imperative summons elsewhere. Will see you tomorrow. Faithfully, etc., M. LEHNOKS.

"Rather abrupt for good form, isn't it?" queried Mr. Botsford. "The name might masquerade almost any nationality that's foreign, but never mind, Julia. We must be as nice to her as we can for Edward's sake."

At 9 o'clock that night after the palms and mistletoe and holly had been arranged Sarah suddenly burst upon them with face full of consternation.

"The chef!" she gasped. "She's gone—left entirely! I was at the range, watchin' the turkey, an' she come in with her hat on an' said that everything was ready, so I could attend to it now, an' she left this note for ye."

"But why did she go?" gasped Mrs. Botsford. "I thought—"

"She said everything was all ready," Sarah repeated stolidly, "an' that I could attend to it now. There," as a clear car tinkle sounded outside; "that's her car startin' now. She said she wanted to catch the 9 o'clock."

Mrs. Botsford opened the note with trembling fingers. As she read she frowned, looked mortified, laughed and finally passed the note to her husband, with shining eyes. "She's all right," was her only comment. The note read:

Dear Mrs. Botsford—You really must forgive me. I had an errand downtown and so called at your house an hour earlier than I intended, thinking that I would stop there awhile, and then perhaps you and I would do the errand together. A sight of your lovely chrysanthemums drew me straight through the gate to the side entrance. Then you opened the door, and some way we drifted into the kitchen before I quite realized what I was doing. Then your strains and a remembrance of former triumphs conspired to do the rest. I really do love cooking and have taken a lot of courses in special things. I think I have excelled myself this time and believe you will be satisfied with the result. Sarah and the second girl can manage the rest very nicely. I shall do my errand now and will stay with my aunt at the Marlborough tonight. It will be more convenient. You may expect us quite early tomorrow morning. Lovingly, MARGUERITE LENOX.

In the Kitchen. Miss Ella (the cook)—Go 'long, now. Mistah Johnson! How dare yo' kiss mah ruby lips?

Mr. Johnson—Fo' de Lawd, Miss Jacksing. Ah jess couldn' er sist claimin' de privilege when Ah seen dat mistletoe.

Miss Ella—What mistletoe yo' all talkin' 'bout?

Mr. Johnson—W'y, dat hangin' 'fom de shelf 'bove yo' beautiful haid.

Miss Ella—Huh! Dat's nothin' but a bunch o' spinach!

For the Present. "I am very glad to learn," said the girl friend who had come to spend the Christmas holidays with her, "that you are on good terms with Mr. Smiley for the present."

"Yes," replied Miss Smiley, "just for the present, you know."

Inflated. Artist (indicating an exquisite marine view)—This picture is valued at \$50,000. Stockbroker—Well, well! There's a lot of water in it, isn't there? —Spokane Sportsman-Review.



An Xmas Mistake

By FRANK H. SWEET.

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ST. NICHOLAS was resting from his Christmas work at last. The gifts had all been given, the holidays were past, and, dozing in his armchair, with his cat upon his knees, the good saint smoked his honest pipe and took his honest ease. But something roused him quickly. He started from his seat. A soldier bold, a maiden fair, were kneeling at his feet. "St. Nicholas," the maiden cried, "Behold my fearful plight! These wounds have been inflicted since that dreadful, dreadful night when you left me in the stocking of a being I dare not name." She paused. The soldier raised his voice and said: "I blush with shame to stand before your saintship in the dress you now behold, but the way I have been treated makes my very blood run cold. I've been nursed and kissed and cooed; I've been rocked and sung to sleep."



A SOLDIER BOLD, A MAIDEN FAIR, WERE KNEELING AT HIS FEET.

Oh, were I not a soldier still I'd almost like to weep. "Ah," mused the good St. Nicholas, "I think I understand." And he smiled a merry little smile and coughed behind his hand. "Twas on that busy Christmas eve, when all was in a whirl, this doll was given to a boy, this soldier to a girl." And then aloud he gravely said: "I grieve to see your pain, but if you'll stay with me a year all shall be well again. Next Christmas eve, my children, when you are well and strong, I will put you in the stockings where you really do belong."

"I wonder where my soldier is!" Cried gentle little Moll, And Baby, gazing round him, sobbed, "Where is my baby doll?"

But, though they hunted high and low And searched both far and near, The maiden and the soldier bold Were seen no more that year.

Pay of Army Officers.

A glance over the army list shows that over two-thirds of the officers are receiving less pay per day than good mechanics receive in civil life. The officer has no home, but must be prepared to live in the arctic or the tropics and change from one to the other at short notice. He must have equipment for both, and while in one place the equipment for the other is stored and deteriorating. He is sent on long journeys to distant stations and must suffer banishment from his family or take them along. Either is a great expense—on one hand for travel and on the other for maintenance of two establishments. His changes of station are so frequent that he must put his children in costly private schools or see them grow up in ignorance. Because he is an officer of the United States service to use the respectability of his position to add to his income commercially is regarded as reprehensible, and if he makes an investment he must intrust his interests to an agent—Army and Navy Life.

Had His Revenge.

The rivalry was great at the annual cricket match police versus publicans, and many friendly bets depended on the result. When the last batsman, Police Constable Robinson, walked to the wicket the police required only two runs to win, and naturally great excitement prevailed. He batted with due care until a loose ball came, and, hitting this past mid-on, he started for an easy run. He got home comfortably before the wicket was thrown down, but to his disgust he was given out.

"Why," exclaimed the indignant constable, "I was a yard past the wicket!" "Mebbee," said the umpire in a supercilious tone, "but, yer see, it ain't what you say; it's what I say, an' I say you're out!"

"But"—began the irate Robinson. "Dyer remember," interrupted the umpire, meditatively scratching his nose, "sayin' to me 'bout six months ago, 'Don't argue with the law?' Well, you was the law that time an' I was run in. Now," he added, triumphant, "I'm the law an' you're run out!"—London Tit-Bits.

Men, Women and Adjectives.

Certain adjectives are reserved for men and others for women. A man is never called "beautiful." Along with "pretty" and "lovely" that adjective has become the property of women and children alone. "Handsome" and the weak "good looking" are the only two adjectives of the kind common to either sex. Even "belle" has no real masculine correlative in English, since "beau" came to signify something other than personal looks. It is singular that "handsome" should have become the word for a strikingly good looking person, since its literal meaning is handy, dexterous. But "pretty" likewise comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning "sly."