

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Ho for the yuletide merry,
The yuletide merry and gay!
When every face
Good will doth grace,

A CHRISTMAS DINNER.

You have invited Joshua Prouty in the
classification, Miss Rogers' son of Gideon
Prouty, born 1802; married—

"I took a fancy to it," said Mr. Prouty,
apologetically.

"Bestly, bestly!" Bub tapped his light
upper lip sharply, took an impatient turn
about the room, and bolted off towards the
secretary's desk.

Bub was generally understood to be an artist.
He had a high priced studio uptown,
patronized by the best models, and enriched the
art market at which he dealt.

"G. Lambert Robinson," he read, with
sternness. "Is it possible that you admire
that imbecile's boah?"

Mr. Prouty looked through the door to
where his secretary sat, well hemmed in
by his nephews. He was aware that their visits
had tripled in frequency and length during
the past seven months, and that the carpet
on either side of his secretary's desk had

Mr. Prouty had told himself that this state
of affairs was highly gratifying. He had
become attached to his pretty secretary; he
was fully conscious of it. What, then, could he
so much desire for her as an eventual comfortable
settlement? He was aware that, were his
showing hand withdrawn, a settlement with
Bub Todd or Selkirk Prouty would not be
comfortable; but he had no intention of with-

His bronze clock struck twelve; Bub
and Selkirk detached themselves slowly from
the secretary's desk.

"How shall you spend Christmas?" Mr.
Prouty inquired, accompanying his nephews
to the door, with his usual cheerful cordiality,
and quietly inserting an indorsed check into
the hand of each, an attention which Selkirk
received with a bow in which there was
an element of condescension, and Bob with
a nonchalant waive of the hand.

"I shall join friends at Old Point Comfort,"
Selkirk rejoined, adjusting his red silk handkerchief.

"Geoff Smith's going to have some of us
follow up the river somewhere," said Bub,
putting his hat on a corner of his head.

"I shall dine at home," Mr. Prouty replied.

"I have invited your Aunt and Uncle
Tribals to dinner and Miss Rogers. Her
boarding house dinner would not be a cheerful one,
you know."

"Indeed!" said Selkirk, with ironical
emphasis, closing the door with a snap. Mr.
Prouty, abashed and bewildered, turned
back. Polly was standing in the doorway
with his manuscript in her hand, her slender
form and peachy face and soft, light hair
charmingly outlined against the half drawn
portiere. Mr. Prouty forgot his perplexity
in the sight.

"I am so sorry I have not been able to
finish it," she was saying. "I will take it
home with me if I may." Polly's hours ended
at twelve; in the afternoon she copied in a
downtown office.

"No, no; I will not allow it, Miss Rogers,"
her employer responded, quite warmly. "It
is through no fault of your own; you were
interrupted," he added, with pleasant jocular-
ity.

Folly smiled in return.

"They are agreeable fellows—my nephews,"
Mr. Prouty pursued; "rather attractive."
"Mr. Prouty pursued; "rather attractive."

Mr. Prouty a highly agreeable idea. He went
upstairs and put on his hat and overcoat, with
a brisk step and a beaming face. He knew
nothing about buying Christmas presents,
having had small experience, but it had
struck him that it would be a very pleasant
thing to buy a present for Polly. It would
be—what he surely owed her—a token of his
esteem and of his appreciation of her services.

It was 5 o'clock when he got back. He had
walked down Broadway looking into win-
dows, in helpless indecision, at velvet bon-
nets, and satin candy boxes, and photographs
of actresses and royal personages, and long
gloves, and Japanese bric-a-brac and crowd
music. He had been drawn into the street
surging westward along Fourteenth street,
and been borne up Sixth avenue like a straw
in the rapids, yelled at by the proprietors of
booths on either hand, and gazing confusedly
over the sea of surrounding heads at five-cent
Christmas cards, five-cent cornucopias, five-cent
jumping jacks, five-cent green in alligators,
five-cent pinushons on clambushes and
five-cent plush monkeys on strings. He had
been carried round the corner and into
Twenty-third street, and been squeezed,
mused and fatigued through a shadowy suc-
cession of stores in which hundreds of pretty
girls had shown him millions of articles, and
in which cashboys had rushed and floorwalk-
ers had perspired, and seal-skinned shoppers
had chattered deafeningly; and in which he
had grown more and more hopelessly lost.

He had even drifted, dazedly, into a toyshop
and looked at rubber dolls and wooden sol-
diers and tin horses and fanned dogs on wheels.
And he had come home weary, ruffled and
empty handed.

He sat down with his chin in his hands,
thoughtfully. He reflected that his impulse
had been a foolish one and that the abortive-
ness of his effort was not to be regretted.
Undoubtedly he should be able—possibly soon
—to indulge the fatherly warmth of his de-
sire in the presentation of a handsome wed-
ding gift. Mr. Prouty informed himself that
he was exceedingly happy in the contemplation
of this prospect; he smiled broadly and
rubbed his hands. He was obliged to keep
his mind faithfully upon the scrolls and the
attrition of his hands in order to continue
them, but he performed them with mecha-
nical regularity for some time.

At 12 o'clock on Christmas day Mr. Prouty,
in fine form clothed in holiday attire and
his handsome face flushed with eager antici-
pation, awaited his three expected guests in
his study.

Below, the parlors were thrown open, a
long vista of comfortable elegance, with
flowers in fancy baskets and leaping grate
fires; and the darkened dining room shone
with the bright array of silver and the
sprinkling of tinted fairy lights and the
scintillations of the laden sideboard; and the
odor of the little pig, patiently roasting in
the range mingled with the aroma of the plum
pudding steaming above it, and gently float-

The bell rang, and Mr. Prouty, pacing his
study floor with an irregularity of pleasurable
emotion, hurried downward.

Selkirk Prouty was removing his outer
garments before the hall mirror. He wore a
turn-down collar of some width, covered in
the rear by his falling locks, and joined in
front by a blue silk scarf; and he carried a
package. He greeted Mr. Prouty, standing
in speechless astonishment, with a gracious
smile.

"I altered my arrangements," he explained,
with benignity, "and resolved to join you at
your Christmas dinner. Ah; rather cozy,"
he admitted, rubbing his hands before the
grate, with an unbecoming complacent bene-
volence. "Miss Rogers has not arrived. I
have a slight token to present to her." He
unwrapped a volume of his poems and placed
it at a conspicuous point on the mantel.

Mr. Prouty opened his lips forcibly, with a
gasp, and strove to speak. He assured him-
self, strenuously, that nothing more gratifying
could possibly have occurred. It would be
an excellent opportunity for the furtherance
of his hopes regarding Polly; possibly the
occasion would bring about a happy cul-
mination. He reproached himself for having
omitted Selkirk from his primal arrange-
ment.

"I wish to see Miss Rogers privately, by
the way," Selkirk continued. "I have a mat-
ter to discuss with her which has been for
some time upon my mind, and it occurred to
me to embrace this opportunity."

"Certainly—certainly," Mr. Prouty an-
nounced. He looked at his nephew be-
forely. His well poised dignity, his self centered man-
liness, had never appeared to greater advan-
tage, surely. If there were a choice between
his nephews as regards their fitness for Polly,
Mr. Prouty believed that Selkirk was that
choice.

"If some little management proves neces-
sary for my seeing Miss Rogers privately,"
Selkirk added, spreading his blue scarf, "I
may depend on your assistance?"

"Assuredly, assuredly," Mr. Prouty re-
sponded, with hurried warmth.

"Ah, thanks!" Selkirk sank into a chair in
a languor of self recollection.

The bell pealed; Mr. Prouty hastened into
the hall with a beating heart—and stopped in
amazement.

It was Bub Todd and a messenger boy
carrying a large and very carefully enveloped
burden.

"Didn't look for me, eh?" said Bub, remov-
ing his pale gloves. "Well, changed my
plans and concluded I'd drop in. Just put on
another plate, Molly," he remarked to the
retreating girl.

"Two, Mary," Mr. Prouty faltered.

sight of the two masculine figures within.
Selkirk rose hastily from the chair in which
he was half dozing. Bub bounded from the
sofa upon which he was unconventionally
reclining. They hurried forward simultaneously,
and Polly bowed to them each, with a
sweetly impartial smile. Bub looked at Sel-
kirk frowningly; Selkirk returned the look
with haughty coldness.

"It is a delightfully beautiful day, Miss
Rogers," he remarked, drawing a chair near
to her.

"It is very pleasant," said Polly.

"The glad Christmas-tide—who does not
welcome it?" Selkirk demanded. He looked
suggestively and severely at Mr. Prouty, and
Mr. Prouty, with a sudden startled remem-
brance, turned hastily to Bub.

"I—I have some engravings I think you
have not seen, Benjamin," he said. "They
are in the back parlor."

Bub had slipped down a chair at Polly's
vacant side.

"Jolly day, Miss Rogers?" he observed.

"They are from recent French paintings,
Benjamin," said Mr. Prouty, anxiously.

"I'm awfully glad you're on hand, Miss
Rogers," said Bub, turning upon Mr. Prouty
with an amused and threatening glare.

"It is a day of bright associations and
blessed hopes," Selkirk proceeded.

"I have not shown you my new edition of
'Carlyle,' Selkirk," Mr. Prouty faltered,
struck by a wave of confused recollection.

"If you will come upstairs for a moment to
the library?"

"It is a season of peace and love," said Sel-
kirk with a stern gaze of wrathful consterna-
tion at Mr. Prouty.

"You're looking tip-top, Miss Rogers," Bub
put in.

"They include some Bonheurs and Meis-
sieurs, Benjamin," said Mr. Prouty, dazedly.

"If you will come into the back parlor"—
"Bub rose to his limited height with a vio-
lent jerk. Mr. Prouty wiped the perspiration
from his forehead.

"There is a portrait and biography, Sel-
kirk," he gasped, with Bub's fierce eye upon
him. "Shall we go up to the library?"

"What do you mean by not going, sir?"
Bub demanded, eyeing his tail cousin fore-
sternly.

"To whom are you speaking, sir?" Selkirk
rejoined, rising with stern dignity.

CHRISTMAS THEN AND NOW.

We used to hang up our stockings
When I was a child, dear me!
Nor ever thought for a moment
Of having an Xmas tree.

We went to bed in the twilight,
To waken ere yet it was dawn,
And empty with trembling fingers
The stockings on Xmas morn.

But then, pray where is the stocking
Could hold all the wonderful things—
The triumphs of human invention
The modern St. Nicholas brings!

"I reckon this is goin' ter be er taster,"
said old Uncle Billy Botsworth as he came
into the family sitting room of the old farm
house with a great load of wood on his
shoulders. With a crash he deposited his
burden on the spacious hearth, where a huge
fire was already blazing, and began to pile
on the long, dry sticks of beech and hickory
until in a few moments a perfect sheet of
flame was roaring up the wide throated
chimney.

Grandma Botsworth, who sat in her ac-
customed corner by the "jamb," busy with
her knitting, made no reply, while Uncle
Billy proceeded to remove his coat, hat and
boots, and, having filled and lighted his pipe,
sat down to enjoy himself. Outside a furious
snow storm was raging, and already the
earth was heavily carpeted with white. Pres-
ently his two sons, Jacob and Milton, came
in from doing up the chores, and, like their
father, were soon divested of caps, coats and
boots, and seated before the rousing fire talk-
ing over the events of the day.

A little later Mrs. Botsworth joined them,
and then the family circle was complete. No,
not complete, either; a daughter was missing.
Three years ago this Christmas eve she had
gone out from the parental roof to marry the
man she loved, but whom her father had for-
bidden some time before to enter his doors.
But Mary had gone, and she and her husband,
a poor mechanic, went out west to build up
for themselves a home and fortune. After
they were married, a day or two before they
were to start for Dakota, Mary and her hus-
band drove to the old home, where she got
out of the buggy and started to go into the
house to say good-by. She did not ask nor
expect forgiveness from her father for what
she had done; but she knew her mother and
her brothers still loved her, and would gladly
have her come to see them. So she just
held her hand on the gate latch, and, with
tear filled eyes, was taking in the dear and familiar
surroundings, when her father, coming round
the corner of the house, saw her.

"Don't yer come in here," he yelled, hoarse-
ly. "Don't step your foot inside o' that gate,
Mary Ellen Botsworth. You're no darter o'
mine. Take yer hatchet-faced paint-slinger
an' git."

For a moment she stood as if stunned at
his words; then, without a word, turned and
went to the buggy. Her husband helped her
in, and then, standing up and shaking his
whip at Uncle Billy, said: "Bill Botsworth,
if you wasn't my wife's father, I'd thrash you
till you couldn't walk for a week. You ob-
ject to me for a son-in-law only because I am
poor; but I'll see the day I can buy an' sell
you's if you was black, darn you."

Here Mary laid her hand on his arm and
said, "Stop, Will; it won't help things any to
quarrel; let's go."

It was well that Will heeded her advice,
for old Uncle Billy had started for the buggy
with murder in his eye; and there is no tell-
ing what might have happened had not Mil-
ton and Jacob at this juncture made their
appearance and urged him to be quiet.

So Mary went from home an outcast; and
as the buggy disappeared around the bend in
the road, Milton turned to his father, and,
with tears in his eyes, said, reproachfully:

"Papa, you oughter have done it."
And Mrs. Botsworth, who had come to the
door just in time to take in the affair, echoed
her son's words:

"No, papa, you was too hasty," she added.
"Mary Ellen was allus a mighty good girl; an'
though I'd ruther she'd not a married
Will Kenney, yet I hope the Lord will pro-
per them both."

"You are right, mother," said Jacob, the
elder of her sons, "you are right, mother.
'Fisley' (the nickname the boys had bestowed
upon Mary when she was a tottler) was the
best girl in Indiana; kind an' lovin', an' a
sister worth the havin'."

As for Uncle Billy, seeing his whole family
up in arms against him, he vouchsafed no re-
ply, but turning, strode rapidly in the direc-
tion of the barn.

From that time on he had never spoken his
daughter's name. And although he knew that
mother and the boys got occasional
letters from her, yet he never by sign or in-
quiry showed that he ever thought of her, or
had the slightest interest in knowing whether
she was dead or alive.

But on the Christmas eve that I have in-
troduced him to your notice, he sat by the
fire thinking; and his thoughts were of her.
He had long ago admitted to himself that he
was too hasty when he drove his only daugh-
ter away from his home; but he still re-
mained silent. At each family reunion, al-
ways held on Christmas day, he had missed
her. And as the coming one was to be held
at his house, and his brothers and sisters
with their families would be there, he, with
some bitterness of feeling, was brooding
over the fact that, through no fault of his,
he reasoned, the pleasures of the day would
be marred. Everybody missed Mary; the
children of his nephews and nieces would ask
for her and talk about her, despite the ad-
monitions they had received to the contrary.
As he was busy with his thoughts, gazing
the while moodily into the fire, and now and
then punching up the fore sticks in a spiteful
sort of way, Grandma Botsworth suddenly
spoke up and said:

"Tomorrew'll be another white Christmas.
This makes two on 'em right hand runnin'.
Three years ago was a mighty mild winter,
and we had a green Christmas that year."

Here the old lady paused and heaved a
sigh. "No one said anything and she contin-
ued; "I recollect now there was more burry'n'
that year in the Bald Hill burry'n' groan'
than there has been since all put together."

lently listening and wondering who could be
their visitors. They had not long to wait;
for a minute later the sitting room door was
flung open and Jacob strode in, bearing in
his arms a bright and lusty two-year-old boy.
Almost snatching the wraps from about it,
and holding the little fellow up, he shouted:

"Pap, look at your grandson; Fisley's come,
an' this is her boy."

"The devil it is," roared Uncle Billy,
springing to his feet, with a face as black as
a thundercloud. "Take him away; I don't
want ter see him."

"Hold on a minute," shouted a clear, strong
voice in the doorway. It was the son-in-law
who had spoken, and who stepped into the
room, his figure erect and eyes blazing with
anger. "Hold on a minute, I say," he con-
tinued; "I want a word Bill Botsworth, I
can buy and sell you. I am a rich man, but
you don't have to own me for a son-in-law
on that account. As for me, I can get along
without you. But Mary here wanted to
come back and see her mother and all, more
than that, I said you should treat her and
batty right, or I'd make you; and, by thunder,
I'll do it! Understand me, I ask no fav-
ors for myself, but for this poor girl here,
that you've treated so mean, and who still
loves you, but who wants to come home
lovely for a little while, I will speak for, and
fight for, too, if necessary." Even while he
was talking, mother and daughter were
weeping in each other's embrace, and Grand-
ma Botsworth, rising with difficulty from
her seat, laid her hand on her son's shoulder.

"William," she said, "now's as good a time
to give in as you'll ever have. If Mary an'
Will can afford to forgive you, I don't see
how you can help forgive 'em. Come now,
son, do right."

For an instant he stood struggling with his
passion, then love conquered. Extending his
hand to his son-in-law, he said: "Billy, I
knock under; I've made a mistake an' am
sorry for it. Daughter, come here."

With a glad cry Mary put her arms about
his neck and kissed him again and again.

"There, there, child!" the old fellow mur-
mured, in a voice husky with emotion, "it's
all forgot now, an'—"

But he did not finish the sentence. And,
while Mary was kissing grandma and all were
silently crying for joy, he began to hustle
round and get on his boots to go out and "see
about the horses." But, as Will and Mary
had come to the station, only two miles dis-
tant, by rail, and had there hired a man and
team to bring them over, his services in this
direction were not needed.

He did, however, build up such a fire in the
old fireplace as it had not seen for many a
day, and, as they all sat around it and talked
until long after the stroke of twelve, it was
indeed to them a happy Christmas.—Ed. R.
Pritchard in The Arkansas Traveler.

FOOD FOR REFLECTION.

Yes, Mister Turkey-cock, I own
You make a gallant show
As in full fig you strut about
Majestically slow.

But would it, in your puffed out state,
Give you too great a shock
To know 'e'en awake look down on you,
Vain Mister Turkey-cock?

Yet so it is; for by their eyes,
And guttural parts of speech,
I know they sould you for your pride,
And humbler thoughts would teach.

"You silly bird (they seem to say),
Pray don't make such a chatter,
You're kept so well that you may look
Well on a Christmas plate."

Romance and Facts.

Swipesy—What did Santer Claus
bring yer, Misery?
Misery—Oh, I got a brand new warm
overcoat, and a pair o' dandy pants, and
a lot o' candy and s'm'other little things
I can't jest remember. Whaju git?

Swipesy—Oh, I got a sealskin cap, an'
some warm cloze as goes on under these,
an' fourteen dinner tickets, and lots o'
candy an' things. Now, Misery, straight
—wha'd yer git?

Misery (voice just a little shaky)—Say,
Swipesy, I hunged up my stockin' all
right, and do yer know, I never got a
bloomin' thing!

Swipesy (also shaky as to voice)—Nor
me, neither.—Smith, Gray & Co.'s Illus-
trated Monthly.

