

LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN

By MARY WINTHROP

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THE man who said that a big apartment house was a village in itself didn't know a thing about it, or else he had never been in a village. Lord! I would say it was a collection of hostile camps, with a janitor as the only means of communication.

By way of emphasis for his words Frank Lane threw across the room the gayly illustrated magazine he had been reading to read. It landed with a crash, bringing with it to the floor a small vase which stood on the corner of the mantel. Broken bits of porcelain rolled in all directions.

The young man started to his feet. The vase was one of his childish relics. Every bit was precious. But he sank back with a groan. He had forgotten his sprained ankle.

The pain in it made him remember. It was almost intolerable for a few moments. But that was not what brought the tears to his eyes—tears of weakness and loneliness. He was remembering that it was the day before Christmas and that he was shut up in his bachelor apartment with a sprained ankle. A solitary dinner at the club

was never wildly festive for Christmas, but even that was to be denied him this year.

There was a rattling at the hall door. Lane hastily brushed aside the tears as the wife of the janitor came in. Womankind, she was compassionate. Her face beamed as she cried: "A package for you, Mister Lane. The postman just left it. It's a box of soap, I think it might cheer you a bit. His sure some present a lady friend's been sending you."

The invalid laughed shortly. From a lady friend? He had been related to an orphan asylum and as far as his knowledge went had not a living relation. His position in the business world was entirely due to his own pluck and energy. He had not had time to make lady friends.

When the woman had gone, he still looked curiously at the package in his lap. It was in bad order. The string was loosened and the wrapping paper torn. The address was blurred, but he could still make out faintly the "F. E. Lane" and the name of the apartment house. It was really for him.

His fingers trembled with eagerness as he slipped off the Christmas wrapper and disclosed dainty tissue paper and ribbons. It must surely be from a girl, he thought.

Inside was a creation of violet silk. He eyed it dubiously, but then his face cleared. He had seen similar curls in shop windows. It must be a handkerchief case.

But the name of the sender? He took hold of the case gingerly and shook it. He carefully turned it inside out. No card appeared. It must have slipped out on the way. He sniffed appreciatively. The case was strongly scented with violets. It almost seemed as if her fair donor herself was glorifying his room with her presence.

Yet the question of who had sent it still remained unsolved. He knew whom he wished had sent it—the girl in the flat above. She was the girl who, when she came in from the office on an evening, sat down at the piano and rattled off a jolly twosome—that was when things had gone well—or crumpled in a quiet and sang soothing lullabies—that was when the day's work had left her worn out and blue. Lane sympathized, for he had felt just that way himself.

"B-r-r-r" rang the electric bell. Lane frowned as he reached his hand back for the button. Why need common-places realities in the shape of the janitor break in upon his day dream? Then he straightened up suddenly. The figure standing in the doorway was not to be confused with the janitor. It was a girl with rebellious brown curls wandering down to obstruct a pair of serious dark eyes. It was the girl of the flat above.

The girl stood uncertainly a moment in the gathering dusk, then stepped forward with sudden decision. "I beg your pardon for intruding on you," she said apologetically. "I don't be-

lieve you can even see who I am in this semi-darkness. Won't you let me light up? I am the girl from the flat above." As she spoke she turned to the switch. In a moment the room flashed into a blaze of light.

"Yes, I know," the girl interrupted sympathetically. "The janitor told me. I am so sorry. The man found her pretty sweet."

"I don't want to trouble you," she went on, "but I am looking for one of my Christmas presents which is lost, strayed or stolen. It must have come, for my cousin writes that it was mailed some days ago."

Instinctively Lane spread his hands over the dainty trifle lying in his lap. Yes, the pillow hid it from view.

"It is a handkerchief case made of purple silk. As our names look something alike, I thought it might have come to you by mistake," she looked at him expectantly.

Now, Lane had been mentally planning how he might keep that handkerchief case. He was a thief in every thing but deed. But he could not answer those searching brown eyes with a lie. "Yes, I have it. I thought it was mine." And he held it out weakly.

Then sudden inspiration came to him. "I wish you would let me keep it," he said pleadingly. "I will buy you anything else in its place that you like." Miss Lane's color deepened. "Why?" she asked wonderingly.

"Because," he said vehemently, "it's the only Christmas present I shall have. I have been lying here in the dusk thinking who might have sent it to me, and I can't bear to give it up. I would not care so much if I was up and around. You don't know how blue a fellow gets shut up here all alone. Little things come to count a lot."

He looked so helpless lying there on the couch that the girl's heart went out to him, and she had a fashion of following her heart more readily than her head. "You poor fellow," she said gently. "I know just how you feel. You shall keep the handkerchief case. Cousin Lane will never know, and I have several others. And you must count it as a real Christmas present from me. Only don't give me anything in its place except to wish me a merry Christmas when I come down to see you in the morning. I will bring some of the goods from my home box. They will make you forget all about the case you lost."

She hurried away. Lane did not know that it was because she wished to hide tears brought to her eyes by the dumb look of gratitude on his face. And he lay back and wished that the narrow night could count a lot.

Before another Christmas the two flats were empty. Mr. and Mrs. Lane were keeping house in a large flat on the ground floor. His wife always declares that he stole her heart and the handkerchief case at one and the same time on that memorable Christmas eve.

THE CHRISTMAS OF PRIVATE JACKSON

IN Company K of a volunteer regiment that was camped in Manila a year ago there was a soldier named Isaac Jackson. He was just a common, everyday sort of man, a good enough fellow to get along with, but one whose talents and personality never would attract any particular attention. Previous to his enlistment he had been a hostler in a lively stable, and in the village where he lived his social status was considered a minus quality.

The town of Falcoburn was a place of aristocratic pretensions, and the leading people of the municipality prided themselves on being up to date. Consequently when the whole country was interested in the sending of Christmas boxes to soldiers on foreign service the members of the exclusive set of Falcoburn resolved to do their share. At an informal meeting held one evening at the residence of Brewster De Kalb, the bank president, it was resolved to appoint a committee consisting of six fashionable ladies and a half dozen of the wealthiest men in the community to prepare a suitable Christmas box to be sent to "the heroes who had left their homes in Falcoburn to do battle for their country's flag in the far-off Philippines."

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When it became known that Jackson was the only volunteer of whom Falcoburn was proud, the committee members were somewhat surprised. They had expected to find a list of names of the town's leading citizens, but instead they found only the name of a common soldier.

It was the day after Christmas. Isaac Jackson and I sat in the butcher street, cursing the snowy, slippy weather.

"Hess! Hess! Mufson's come home sober!" he suddenly remarked as the bark of a dog came in from the hall.

"How on earth can you tell?" I marvelled for no sound of man's voice had been heard.

"Because his dog doesn't know him," answered my friend, with a gleam in his eye. "For a veterinary surgeon you let a great many 'jokers' get on you, old man!"

Another period of silence, and then Sherlock reached up his long white hand and took down the bottle of gin. "No more of this," he muttered aloud. "Now begins a period of hard work for us."

"Hard work?" I asked wonderingly. "Why? I haven't heard of any recent murders, robberies or disappearances."

"None of these things, old man. All mysteries. Every young man in town will soon be here to have me find out what the Christmas present his girl gave him is intended for, don't you know?"—New York Journal.

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES.

A Christmas Task For Homeless Sherries, the Detective.

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EVOLUTION OF CHRISTMAS.

It is said that Christmas was at one time quite a suitable feast and kept within the weather and circumstances permitted and that one of the early papers dated on Dec. 25. Gradually the custom of introducing cards and cards was introduced by the church in remembrance of those shepherds of the Galilean hills and sent them off in hot haste to find the wandering babe.

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THE NEGROES WORKED HAPPILY TO THE MUSIC OF BANJO AND FIDDLE.

They originated in Japan. Where They Are Now Obscure. In Japan originated the art of making and the custom of exchanging New Year cards. Today both are as obsolete in the Flowery Kingdom as is New Year's calling in the United States.

More than a hundred years the designing and coloring of New Year cards occupied the attention of the foremost draftsmen and wood engravers of Japan. They were made at the command of the noblemen of the emperor's court. In size they were from six to eight inches, and each was inscribed with a poetic sentiment dictated by the noble giving the order. They were printed from five or six blocks, each color requiring, as in modern color printing, a separate block. The blocks were the property of the noble who retained or destroyed them at will. No reprints for another were ever permitted. A nobleman's New Year card was like his coat of arms or his sword. The surimono, as Japan's New Year's cards were called, were designed specially to please some lady.

NEW YEAR'S IN OMAR'S DAY

It was celebrated in the Springtime Nine Centuries Ago. Now the new year reviving old desires. The thoughtful soul to solitude retire; Ah, my beloved, all the cup that clears Today of past regrets and future fears.

So sang old Omar, the Persian poet, nine centuries ago, and we of today can but echo his thoughts at this New Year's season of resolution and festivity, though kingdoms have risen and fallen, old nations have decayed and new ones sprung up and we live in a country where sentiments of freedom and justice abound, for the human emotions remain much the same whatever the time or clime in which we live, whatever the religious influences which govern us. Of course in the time of Omar in most countries the new year was celebrated in March, that being the beginning of the vernal equinox, and as it is the season when everything in nature is given new birth the ancient probability for this reason considered it a suitable time to begin the new year also. Christianity, however, made a distinct break, and finally in the sixteenth century Jan. 1 was settled on by common consent in all continental countries.

Those New Year Resolutions. Every 1st of January that we arrive at is an imaginary milestone in the turnpike track of human life, at once a resting place for thought and meditation and a starting point for fresh exertion in the performance of our journey.

The man who does not at least propose to himself to be better this year than he was last must be either very good or very bad indeed.

And only to propose to be better is something. If nothing else it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment.

But, in fact, to propose to oneself to do well is in some sort to do well positively, for there is no such thing as a stationary point in human endeavor. He who is not worse today than he was yesterday is better, and he who is not better is worse.—Charles Lamb.

HER NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

Opelia Phillips May Sincerely resolved to make folks glad Upon the New Year's day, A basket filled with dainties rare With her own hands she bore And laid it without word or sign Before a poor friend's door. "It did not even bear my name," Would quite eclipse the gift itself, She murmured modestly.—Joe Cary.

NEW YEAR'S ON THE OLD PLANTATION

CHRISTMAS was never celebrated to any great extent in the south back in the good old days "befoh de wah." New Year's day took its place among the masters, and the prolonged, rollicking "con shuckin'" supplied the slaves of Kentucky and Missouri especially with all the jollity they desired. It was an institution peculiar to the south, peculiar not in being confined to those sections, but peculiar in the manner in which it was conducted, for hunking bees have been known in New England since the mind of man remembers and Indian corn has been gathered.

When a "con shuckin'" was decided upon notices were sent out to the slaves of all adjoining plantations stating that on a certain night Judge S. or Squire T. would give a corn shuckin' of so many thousand bushels and that all colored people, male and female, were invited to attend. Great preparations were made by "ole massa" and "ole missus" for this event, for, while they expected a good night's work in the shape of wagon loads of yellow corn, pleasure was to be the main part of the programme.

Supper was always provided on a large scale and generally consisted of two or three roasted pigs, turkeys and chickens, with side dishes of vegetables, in equal proportion. Bushels of sweet potatoes were baked, boiled and fried, and hundreds of rich, golden pumpkin pies were turned out of the ovens, done to a mouth watering brown.

A hand of muskies was engaged, for no "con shuckin'" would be complete without it. On those nights negroes worked not happily save to the twanging of the banjo and wailing of the fiddle.

A corn shuckin' always lasted three nights continuously on one plantation, and then the negroes moved on to the next, where three more were devoted to the corn of the owner, and so on until all the maize of the neighborhood had been husked.

About twilight the darkeys began to arrive from all over the country, the "boys" clad in their suits of jeans, with that pride of the darkey's heart, his "long tailed clawhammer blue."

Every negro who made pretensions to being "anybody" possessed one in more or less condition of wear. The female portion of the gathering was equatorially dressed in lines

wooly frocks, with their heads tied up in flaming red handkerchiefs, their reds, the redder the better, and with a white handkerchief crossed upon their breasts.

They came in groups, and each party of hunkers from a neighboring plantation was announced long before it arrived by the well known tunes prevalent in those days floating down the road and over the fields as the happy boys and women hastened to the gathering. A favorite tune was this:

Yea, we's gwine to de shuckin', Yea, we's gwine to de shuckin', We's gwine to de shuckin' de corn, An' we'll be dar in de mornin', An' we'll be dar in de mornin'.

As soon as the darkeys were all assembled the oldest slave present went to "ole massa" and begged a piece of silver money. This was always expected, and a plantation owner would as soon have thought of having a "shuckin'" without corn as to be unprepared to produce the bit of silver on the first evening.

Taking this piece of silver, the ancient darkey returned to the fire, and there performed a ceremony the exact meaning of which has not come down to us. Whetting his jackknife upon the silver, he solemnly pronounced an invocation for a bountiful crop of corn the following year. And it is doubtful if "ole massa" would have been any more willing to allow the hunking to proceed without this kindly prayer than would his white haired servant, who by his means thus once a year stood in the attitude of high priest to the family he served.

After the preliminary prayer the "twelve wise men" were chosen, and

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

From the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chapter II, Verses 7-20. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

"And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from the heavens, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them.

The Druids always sought the mistletoe by the full moon and, when they found it, rejoiced and worshipped. After Christmas in the year 1814, the mistletoe was used in the churches, because of its heathenish origin; consequently it was hung only within the private abode and usually in the kitchen. Any maid caught standing beneath a branch had to forfeit a kiss to the gallant eagerly availing his opportunity. With each kiss a berry was plucked, and when all of the berries disappeared the bare branch was useless to the young man who wished to claim the privilege of thus saluting the fair damsel thereafter.

The mistletoe was said to have been the original source of straw or forbidden tree in the garden of Eden.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Christmas at Ninety in the Shade. Christmas in the West Indies is very well observed. To meander about among palm trees or orange groves and fields of sugar cane on Christmas day, with the thermometer at 90 degrees in the shade, certainly has the zest of novelty to a northerner. If you are in the British West Indies on Christmas day your attention will be most attracted in all the Christmas gatherings of which you form a part, whether in the streets, the home or the church, by the close association of whites and blacks. The "color line" is not a live question.

Books as Stockings. German children do not, as a general practice, hang up their stockings Christmas eve, but use their father's big boots instead.

On the Christmas Tree. The old-fashioned stockings and beads and crosses and animals cut out of tinsel outlined with seaweed and then filled with that candles and tied on the tree are always popular ornaments. Sugar figures bought in the confectionery store will serve to break the monotony. The baker at Christmas time usually has his windows filled with horses, dogs, cats and men and women made of delectable cake dough and artistically ornamented with colored sugar curlicues. These are toothsome and attractive to the small boy and girl.

Candles in small candle holders are always scattered over the tree. It is a wise precaution to keep a pan of water in which is a wet sponge in case of accidents. When a spark falls upon a branch, the sponge quickly applied to the spot will check the spread of the fire.—Washington Star.

Christmas in the West. Deadshot Dick—Any fun in Far Creek on Christmas, Bill? Grizzly Bill—Waal, we had a purty big Christmas tree. Deadshot Dick—Anything of much account brought on it? Grizzly Bill—Three horse thieves and two Chinamen.

Suitable Gifts For Women. Silver or silver and glass toilet articles are always acceptable to women. Some of them are brush, comb, powder box, cold cream jar, buttonhook, curling iron, glove stretcher, atomizer, perfume jar, vasoline bolder and balm-in-case.

POLLY HANGING HOLLY

WITTY Polly I chanced to be hanging With Polly the roguish, with Polly the shy, With Polly who's brimming with Polly and folly. A quip on her lip and a jest in her eye.

The wind it was grieving, and shadows were weaving, The dark web without o'er the face of the sky, Within it was merry with green leaf and And Polly, close by, with a gleam in her eye.

"This holly, I know, sir, you wish mistletoe, sir?" Cried Polly o'er us a wreath we hung high. I looked at her, laughing, to see were she cheating, And oh, what a glint there shone out from her eye!

How like the rose petals on which the bee settles Her cheeks were! Her lips were the holly fruit's dye. "Be it mistletoe, dear, a minute or so," "A minute!" breathed Polly, with mirth in her eye.

So it's, oh, to be handling the holly with Polly the mischief-maker, Polly the shy, With Polly, the genius of all that is jolly. A lure on her lip and with love in her eye!—Clinton Scudder in Smart Set.

ORIGIN OF XMAS GREENS.

They Were Used at Christmas Five Centuries Ago. The use of evergreens at Christmas time is older than the Christmas tree, the Christians seeming to have copied it from their pagan ancestors. In a very old book we find this reference to the use of evergreens at Christmas time: "Against in the year 1114, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green. The counsils and standards of the streets were likewise garnished, among the which I remember in the year 1114, by tempest of thunder and lightning, to ward the morning of Candlemas day, at the Lendenhall, in Cornhill, a standard of tree, being set up in the midst of the pavement, fast in the ground, nailed full of holme and ivie, for disport of Christians to the people, was torn up and cast down by the malignant spirit, as was thought, and the stones of the pavement all about were cast in the streets and into divers houses, so that the people were sore against at the great tempest."—Leslie's Weekly.

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A LONG CHRISTMASTIDE.

Holidays That Extend into the New Year. While in this country, as in England, Germany and other parts of Europe, the joyous spirit of the Christmas festival is by no means limited to Dec. 25, but finds expression in many ways in the life and amusement of the people both before and after that day itself, comparatively little attention is paid here to the observance of the numerous designated holidays which in other lands go to make up Christmastide. The period opens with St. Thomas' day, which falls on Dec. 21, and closes with St. Stephen's day, on Jan. 7. The first named festival is known in some parts of England as "Dolling day," on account of the distribution of the bounty of charitable individuals, and in most English cities at the present time the day is given up largely to the anniversary of charitable societies and the distribution of benefits among the poor and needy. It is also the day chosen for the election of church officers, a custom adopted here in some denominations, and it appears also from the old rhyme that certain public officials were elected at the same time:

My masters all, this is St. Thomas' day, And Christmas now can't be far off, you'll see, And when you to the ward mates do repair, I hope each good man will be chosen there, As constables for the steeple, and as will not grudge the watchman good service to wear.

As for St. Stephen's day, which closed the merry round of Christmastide, its anniversary is now rarely observed anywhere, but in the good old times in England it was not the least among the happy festivals of the year. It takes its name from the fact that on this day it was the custom for women to resume for a few hours their labor at the distaff or the spinning wheel. It was sometimes called "Loch day" in honor of the rock, which is another name for distaff.—Leslie's Weekly.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS. From the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chapter II, Verses 7-20. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

"And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

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And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them.

The Druids always sought the mistletoe by the full moon and, when they found it, rejoiced and worshipped. After Christmas in the year 1814, the mistletoe was used in the churches, because of its heathenish origin; consequently it was hung only within the private abode and usually in the kitchen. Any maid caught standing beneath a branch had to forfeit a kiss to the gallant eagerly availing his opportunity. With each kiss a berry was plucked, and when all of the berries disappeared the bare branch was useless to the young man who wished to claim the privilege of thus saluting the fair damsel thereafter.

The mistletoe was said to have been the original source of straw or forbidden tree in the garden of Eden.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Christmas at Ninety in the Shade. Christmas in the West Indies is very well observed