

A Real Romance of Christmas '61

By Miles Overholt.

"S WING 'em around, purty's you can. Right hand to partner, right an' left grand!"

It was at Forest Grove Christmas eve, 1861, "Doc" Davy Rafferty, now residing at 569 East Eighth street, Portland, was playing with gussies "Turkey in the Straw," as only he knew how, and a hundred or more people, all of the town's population, and many families and their wives from the surrounding country, were "tripping the light fantastic" while Ike Meyer, now proprietor of a book store at 239 First street, Portland, "called off" and cracked jokes between times. Ike Meyer was the village wag.

"Fanny thing," Ike would say, "I'm open up to Campbell's store yesterday. Fellow came into the store and says, 'Gimme a dime's worth of single nails. Ain't got any single nails,' says Campbell, 'but I got the darndest best line of soda crackers south of Portland.' After a bit another fellow came in. 'Got any woolen socks?' he inquires. 'None,' says Campbell, 'but I got the all-fredest best allpice you ever see!' Then another dance was called and the would get busy with: 'Balance all purty as you can, Swing 'em around with the left an' mand.'

Lots of fun those days and plenty of hardships.

On this particular Christmas eve the ground was covered with several inches of snow. The Willamette river was frozen over so that stock was driven across on the ice. "Right from Jefferson street straight across to the other side," said "Grandma" Congrove, "and I was frightened to death for fear they would fall into the water. But the ice held them up all right. Goodness, but it was cold that winter."

But to get back to the main story.

"Along about 11 o'clock, I guess, it was," said one of those present at the dance, "but who does not desire publicly, 'I happened to be standing near the door when I heard a timid knock. I stepped to the door and opened it and, sir, there was a poor half clad girl of about 16 years of age."

"She was a stranger. I didn't know her and I knew most everybody those days. I asked her to come in, but she wouldn't do it. She seemed to be afraid of the crowd and the music. So I stepped out, followed by Harvey Mayhew, a young fellow who had come down from Portland with a load of freight."

"In a few short, jerky sentences the girl told us that she and her father and her little 7-year-old brother had started out from San Francisco to come to Portland, but had missed the road and had been traveling for two weeks with but little food. One horse had died, she said, and she had been helping to pull the wagon. Her father was too weak to help. She had managed to bring the outfit to the lower end of town and, seeing the lights at the dance hall, the only ones in town, she came there for assistance."

"I took Mayhew and myself about three minutes to get down to the wagon. The man was pretty much all in,

but we carried him into my house, which was near, and got him warmed up, and he was soon all right. We had a big turkey all ready for dinner next day, but my wife decided to cook it right then.

"Mayhew—he was a fine young fellow—went back to the dance hall and got Ike Meyer to open his store, and I guess he bought all the Christmas cheer there was left. Then he cut down a little tree and by the time the turkey was ready we had a dandy decorated Christmas tree."

"Mayhew told Ike about our discovery and he 'put in' with us and we fixed that family out with clothing and Christmas presents the best ever."

"There was candy and popcorn and shoes and coats and a sled for the boy, all kinds of groceries and most everything that could be bought that looked like Christmas."

"It was sure worth all it cost to see those people when we opened the door after the turkey had disappeared. The man and the girl broke down and cried, while the boy just naturally thought it was the grandest sight he had ever witnessed."

"The little family sold the horse and wagon and came to Portland shortly after Christmas, when the man, through the influence of his new found friends, secured employment."

"There's a little white house with green blinds and a pretty rose garden around it in north Portland," the narrator continued, "it isn't richly furnished and sometimes the occupants don't have all the luxuries going, but I'll bet it contains more real love than any other house in this great city. It is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Mayhew, and there are three children through the influence of his new found friends, secured employment."

"There wasn't any Christmas in Oregon till you came, sweetheart. Santa Claus overlooked us for quite a spell, but when he did come he made up for lost time."

"And then they sit there and hold hands until the kids get sleepy and go to bed and then they get out the presents and goodies and try to make the occasion so joyous that even the children will remember that Christmas eve is the happiest time of all the year."

And down at 239 First street, with a cheery smile for everyone, is Ike Meyer. Ask him if he remembers the Christmas eve of 1861 and he will say:

"Yes. Pretty cold then. One time down at Forest Grove there were two fellows arrested—one for stealing a cow, the other for purloining a watch. After they had served their sentences in the penitentiary and came back home, they refrained from saying much about their incarceration. It was a kind of a delicate matter. One day, however, the fellow who stole the cow said to the other fellow: 'What time is it, Bill?' And Bill, looking at the sun, said, 'Oh, about milking time, I guess.'"

End of the Story

By Virginia Tyler Hudson.

W HEN Grayson stepped into Billy Sutton's apartments the day after the Seraphim's society circus, he found that bright rising star of the legal profession arrayed in a bathrobe and a slouch hat, with his feet on the window sill and smoking furiously at a little black pipe.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Grayson. "What is troubling the judge?"

Sutton scowled.

"I don't wish to parry words with you, Grayson," he said. "In the mood I'm in, I might spoil your pretty face."

"Ah, quite serious—quite serious. I see," remarked the other. "You need immediate attention. Shall I feel your pulse?"

"You can pick yourself up and get out of here quick as you can," growled Sutton. "Don't you see I'm busy?"

"Ah, just so," reiterated the other. "Affairs of state, I suppose, or—ah, I have it! Affairs of the heart! Oh, you can't fool me, old chap—we have both loved Elise Bromley too long for me not to know the symptoms—and last night at the circus—Oh me! Oh my! But didn't the councillor throw sheep's eyes, or calf's eyes, or some kind of animal eyes? Worst than ever, eh? So bad you don't sleep any more and feel impelled to write all night?" as he cast a glance at the scattered papers about him and the unkempt appearance of his friend.

"If I felt like that, I'd marry the girl," remarked Grayson, imperturbably, as he flicked the dust off his arm.

"If I felt like you, I'd go soak my head," was the sharp retort. "You obligate me by leaving Miss Bromley out of this. What right have I," he added bitterly—"in my circumstances—"

Grayson's eyes sobered.

"What was that," he asked, "you used so to sport about rising superior to your circumstances?"

"Oh, that's all right in logic, Grayson," retorted Billy, fiercely, "but I'll tell you what—I've risen superior to my circumstances so much that I'm beginning to feel like a balloon! Besides, what chance has a man to rise who can't afford an airship? Now, with you—yes, even you have a chance! But I—Look here, fellow," he roared suddenly, "you get out of here! There are just two kinds of men I hate worse than all others. One is the man who has more money than he knows how to spend, and the other is the man who hasn't any. You're the first kind and I'm the second, so get out before we clash!"

"Not until the third assistant deputy councillor is ready to be taken down to work. My motor car is outside and I have a mission in life, as little as you might expect it! It's to get the judge down town in time for the opening of court," remarked Grayson, as he settled himself more comfortably in his chair.

"Poor old Bill!" he muttered. "He's got it bad! And she cares for him, too. God if she cared as much for me! She won't even look at my poor millions, see where he stands!"

"Looks like Bill hadn't slept much," yawned Grayson as he moved over to the desk and jumbled papers. "The great American novel is coming on, though, from the looks of this."

As he threw aside the dusty shoe, a written page struck his eye. After reading the page, he straightened up and looked furtively at the bathroom door. Then he hastily read the rest of the scattered sheets, as he heard reassuring splashes from the other side

of the closed door and at the end, folded and deliberately put them in his pocket.

"I have come to talk about Sutton," he told her. "So you needn't fear. This is one time I won't propose to you. Now, a lot of us fellows know that the boy has all kinds of ability and genius and all that sort of thing, you know, but he simply can't be made to use them. Why, would you believe it—he has cart-loads of the best magazine stories I have ever read—certainly I know good magazine stories—but he won't publish them, so we want your influence."

"Please see if you can't do something with him about having them published, he'll probably take your advice. Here is one of the precious stories I purloined from his home this morning. I want you to read it and see if I'm not right."

He thrust the manuscript in her hands and made a hasty goodbye before she could protest.

"Oh, Billy," she sighed. "Why can't you see—why can't you know—"

She curled herself up in her favorite

chair to read. Almost at the first paragraph, she started and sat erect. Why, this story was about her! It began with the incident of her first meeting with Billy upon the occasion of the Junior Prom, then followed their first ride through the park, the chafing dish party, the auto trip with Grayson when Grayson had proposed three times and Billy had seemed a disinterested onlooker—that was with her but a clerk with ambitions in his uncle's office. So the story proceeded until last night—the night of the society circus. Why, this must have been finished, last night—or was it finished? Still, the story ran on, telling of his love, his hopes, his fears. At the last part, it was word for word what she and Billy had said to each other the night before, but the written conversation did not stop—as had the real one at an interruption. Was this what he had intended to say?

"The girl hesitated a moment before answering his last bitter words," she read, "then—"

"Perhaps she might think for herself, though," she answered, pointing to herself.

"But she could never think so!"

"Are you sure?" she questioned with a downward glance.

"Do you mean it, dearest?" he asked ardently, reaching across the table to gain possession of both her little hands.

"Do you know, really, that I love you with my heart and soul—have loved you since the night of the Junior Prom, years ago—that I have never had the courage—do you realize all this—"

The story came to an abrupt close.

"So good of you to come," she declared, giving him her warm hand clasp.

"I have been waiting ages for this call—some and hear a secret! I have, but I hadn't the chance. Awful crush, wasn't there? But they say the circus was a success."

"It seemed so to me," answered the man, adding, "you were there."

"It's something more than pretty compliments I want from you, Mr. Billy Sutton," the girl went on. "And I'm going to satisfy your curiosity right at the start—before we talk about another thing. Here is the great secret—and don't you dare laugh! I'm going to be an authoress! I have actually written one story and want your opinion as one I can rely on. You'll give me your answer right, won't you?" She dimpled as she thought of her story.

As she held out her manuscript, she added, "I forgot to tell you that my first attempt is a sequel. I want to be original, you see, and I thought that would be unusual. You'll have to read the sequel first, then the rest."

Without preface the story started:

"—Haven't I realized for a long time," and the man's eyes looked unutterable things into her own, as she continued, "that you're an absolute idiot not to know how much—or how long I have known I loved you—"

"Then you do, sweetheart," he said, reaching out his arms to her.

"I loved you—have loved you," she answered, "despite any barrier—any money, relations—anything—Oh, why must I say it all!"

"I didn't have time to go any further," said the girl, as Sutton looked up bewildered at the sudden stop. "Perhaps, though, if you looked at the original—"

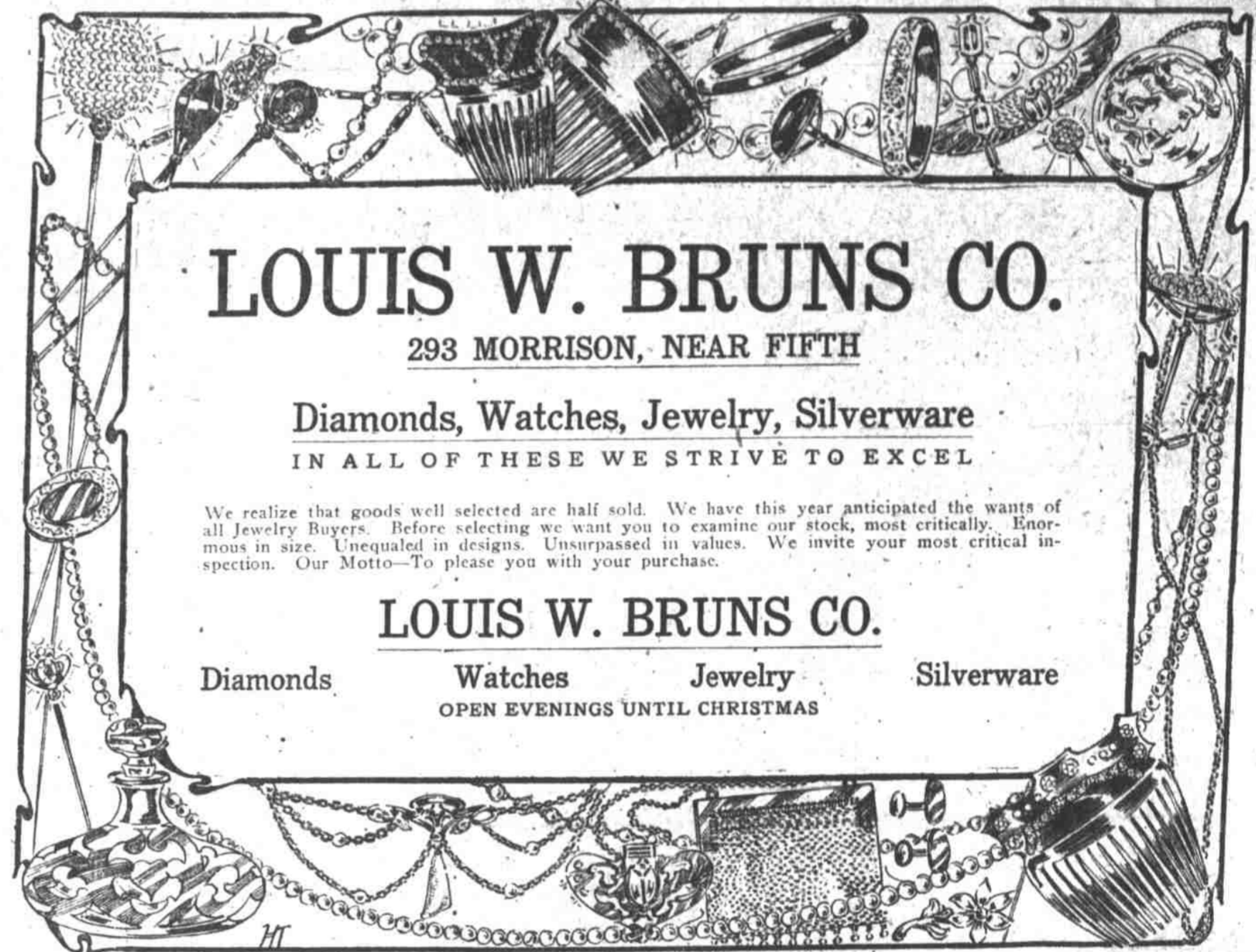
She handed him his own story. As he read and the full consciousness of the meaning of her "sequel" broke over him, a smile spread over his features. He rose and stretched out his arms to her, as she stood beneath the altimeter of soft lights. She came to meet him with a glad little cry. Some time later, he thought of the miracle.

"How did you get that story?" he demanded suddenly.

"Why, you see," she answered dimpling, "Mr. Grayson—"

Then Sutton remembered Grayson's morning visit.

"So!" he exclaimed. "Well, all I can say is bless old Grayson for a meddling fool."



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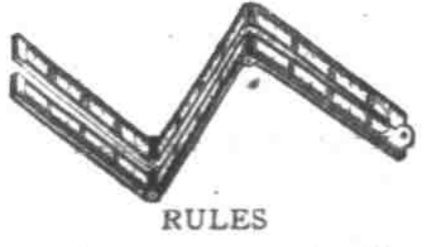
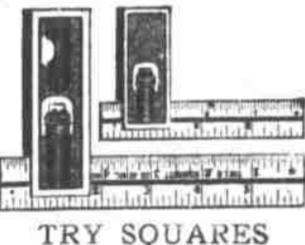
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