

BUYING A GIFT FOR HIS WIFE

This Man Had Plenty of Kelp While on a Shopping Tour.



HE male shopper walked up and down the aisle of the big store looking about him with an expression of despair. He knew what he wanted to buy all right. It wasn't that. But he kept wandering about looking at the saleswomen behind the counters with all the perplexity of a dog trying to recall where he had buried a soup bone.

He stood off to one side staring intently at a busy young creature with dark bay hair behind the ribbon counter, and at last walked up within talking distance.

"Don't suppose you can leave here for a few minutes, can you?" he began in a low tone.

"W-b-a-t!"

"I say—never mind. I mean wait a minute I'll be back."

And he rushed away to hide his confusion from the other shoppers. He did not return, but went over to another aisle and began sizing up people there, both in front and behind the counters.

Was the man boughouse? No. Just be patient and you'll hear all about it.

He kept looking and looking, and at last his gaze took in a tall young woman—reasonably young—with a bunch of small packages tucked under her arm. He walked up to her, hesitated, and then blurted: "Beg pardon, madam, but may I speak to you a moment?"

She gave him a look and started to hurry away, but he was obliged, hav-



"Don't You Suppose You Can Leave Here for a Few Minutes?"

ing gone that far, to make good and convince her of the innocence of his motives.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, catching up with her. "I'm not trying to flirt or get fresh. Honestly, now, I'm not in the habit of speaking to women I don't know. Look me over and you'll see that I'm well-meaning enough. But the fact is you-ah, you-ah, you're just the same size as my wife—apparently! And—"

The woman gasped. "I don't see—"

"Oh, but I want to ask a favor of you," went on the male shopper, more at ease now. "I've looked all over the saleswomen and the only one that would do me busy behind the ribbon counter, but you're just precisely what I need—oh, I beg your pardon, I mean you're just exactly my wife's size and can tell me what to ask for. You see, I came here to buy her a shirtwaist that she's been dropping little hints about, and now that I'm here it's just struck me that I haven't the remotest idea about her size. I'm the densest person you ever saw about such things—don't even know my own waist measurement. I'm positive, though, that whatever your size is would do for her. You may be an inch taller than my wife, but that's about the only difference."

"It's a little unconventional, isn't it?" the woman smiled not unpleasantly. "Still I don't see why I shouldn't tell you that my size is—that my shirtwaists are usually size thirty-six."

They had been walking down the aisle and were now right by the shirtwaist counter.

"I had a blue one picked out there," remarked the man, "that seemed to be about what I wanted to get, but I didn't know what size it was. See! That's lying over there on top of that pink outfit."

"Does your wife like that shade of blue?" the woman asked significantly, after biting her lips for a moment.

"Why—er—well, of course she hasn't—"

"A Christmas Plot.

She wanted some Christmas cigars and the dealer sold her a box of hay perfectos for 40 cents.

"Her husband will give you fits when he gets those," remarked a bystander.

"No," he told me to do it," explained the dealer. "Why, his wife would sue for divorce if she knew he pays \$5 a box for his cigars."

"Howdy, Uncle?

To keep the Merry Christmas from turning out a botch when the girls hang up their stockings poor dad hangs up his watch.

Always a New Lot.

About Christmas, consider this: There are at least four thousand kids who were too young to take note last year who are just old enough to be surprised when the tree lights up this year. Always there is a new bunch of Christmas come-ons.

That means she'll drop at bomb," a Tommy observed.

"Sure—they never hit anything," Captain Redmond jeered.

But this time Larry was mistaken.



BEST CHRISTMAS WISHES
May the music of the chimes
Ring you glad and happy times,
And their voices clear and sweet
Unto you my wish repeat.

seen it," replied the male shopper. "Do you suppose she'd like some other color better?"

"You see," pointed out the kind woman in a considerate, half-sympathetic tones, "that particular shade of blue doesn't go with any other color. Now, if I were receiving a shirtwaist for Christmas I should want a white waist. Of course your wife may have expressed a preference for some other color. No? Well, now you understand it's none of my affair—and this is certainly rather informal, me helping you to select something for your wife, whom I don't even know, to say nothing of not even knowing your name—but I should think any woman would be delighted with something like this one, for instance."

And she reached over to pick up one with a lot of lace and mosquito netting on the front of it.

The male person inquired the price. It was \$4 more than the blue one he had selected, but he said he would take it, and no questions asked.

"Send it out to number so-and-so Such-and-such street, and—oh, that won't do. It might be delivered when she was at home and that would queer the whole thing. Better send it to my office. Thomas J. Wingett is the name, in the Pretentious building. I'd carry it, but I've got a lot of stops to make."

"Wingett," repeated the woman after hearing his name; "there's a Mrs. Wingett in our card club. You don't happen to be Mrs. Alice Wingett's husband, do you?"

"I sure am," grinned the man. "She's the girl that's going to get that shirtwaist off the pine tree next Monday."

"Well, of all things," gasped the kindly disposed woman. "I don't know Alice Wingett so very well, but I've met her at the club, and it does seem funny that I should be helping her husband to pick out a Christmas present for her. My name is Cummins. I don't suppose you know my husband. He travels most of the time."

"Seems to me I've heard Alice speak of a Mrs. Cummins," says Wingett. "Er—by the way, mebbe you'd better not say anything to Alice when you see her about—about how informally we were introduced. She might think it funny. Like as not she'd think I'd been walking up and down the aisle staring at folks."

"I have a notion to tell her what you just said," gurgled Mrs. Cummins. "I guess I won't though. Seems to me the joke would be partly on me. Well, I hope Alice likes the shirtwaist."

"If she doesn't she hasn't good taste," grinned Wingett. "I certainly am obliged to you. If you can't make up your mind what to get your husband, let me know, and mebbe I can help you out."

And he bowed gracefully as his new acquaintance gathered up her packages and tripped on her way.

"That's a pretty good bluff, captain! . . . Don't let him fool you!" Larry cautioned the English officer. "Drop that telephone!" he shouted, as Streetman resumed his conversation with headquarters. And as a last resort Captain Redmond shot the instrument from the spy's grasp. Then, under cover of the hubbub Larry leaped inside the trench.

"D—n you, Redmond!" Streetman swore. For the moment his hatred betrayed him.

"Redmond!" Larry repeated joyfully. "You hear, captain? He knows who I really am! He called me Redmond!" And as Streetman edged nearer the outlet to the trench the Irishman cried, "Don't let him get away, sergeant."

Several men grabbed Streetman then.

"Captain—here's my revolver!" Larry held his weapon out to Montague.

"Put me under arrest till you investigate," he said.

"Thank you, Redmond!" the enlightened Montague replied. He was vastly relieved. "You've done us a great service; and he nearly fooled us. . . . My God—he nearly fooled us!" he repeated, as he realized the disaster that Larry had so narrowly averted. "Now he'll pay for it!" he cried. "Sergeant—stand that man against the trench!"

"Don't shoot me like that! I tell you I'm innocent!" Streetman was begging for his life now.

But even had Montague been disposed to spare him, his doom was sealed. An enemy aeroplane had darted out above their lines. One of the British privates spied it when it was almost above them, and as they paused to watch it the plane swooped visibly.

"That means she'll drop at bomb," a Tommy observed.

"Sure—they never hit anything," Captain Redmond jeered.

But this time Larry was mistaken.

Streetman was already asking headquarters to connect him with General French or one of his staff, when the approaching form gained the English trench. The man climbed up the face of the earth embankment, and shouting, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I'm not German—I'm Irish!" he peered down at the alert faces turned up to his.

It was Larry Redmond—that disheveled man who clung to the top of the bomb-proof shelter. He was still in the German uniform, but without hat or coat, which he had cast aside, while he ran, for greater safety when he should reach his goal. He had no desire to stop a bullet intended for a German. And that uniform was damning.

"Stay where you are!" Montague called to him. "Boys, if he moves, fire!" he told his men.

"I'm Redmond!" Captain Redmond of the Irish Guards! Larry cried. "I've been on special service inside their lines, and they d—n near got me. By their maps this is Trench 27, isn't it? I'll explain in a minute."

"You'll have to do a lot of explaining," Montague told him.

"Tell me—has anyone been here—someone you don't know—a passin' himself off perhaps for a Britisher, bringin' you some news—some word—"

"Some word of what?" Captain Montague asked.

"I don't know—I can't make out!" Larry shouted desperately. "But there's mischief ahead for Trench 27. I've seen their maps; and one of their spies—"

He paused as Streetman's voice caught his attention. The disguised German spy had at last succeeded in getting someone in authority to receive his message. And now he was delivering his false information.

"Who's that speaking?" Larry asked the English captain sharply. And immediately he answered his own question. "It's Strassman, captain! I know him. He's a German spy! Don't let him telephone! It's a trick!" In his eagerness to stop that disastrous message he forgot the warning that Montague had given his men, and the wild-eyed Irishman rose to his feet.

The British fired point-blank at him. But Larry sensed his danger just in time. He dropped flat upon his face on the top of the bombproof and the bullets whistled over him.

Captain Montague was impressed with Larry's news, and he ordered Streetman to put down the telephone. He thought the matter worth further investigation.

"Strassman, don't you remember me?" Larry asked the man at the telephone.

But Herr Strassman's iron nerve did not desert him even then.

"By God! It's Captain Karl of the German army! And in our very trenches!" he exclaimed. "He's the man whose plans I overheard!"

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Under Fire

By RICHARD PARKER

Based on the drama of ROY COOPER MEGRUE

Author of "Under Cover" and co-author of "It Pays to Advertise"

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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

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But this time Larry was mistaken.

As he spoke, something came hurtling down to earth.

"Look out, boys! For God's sake look out!" Captain Montague could no more keep back his involuntary warning than he could stay the death that threatened them.

In another moment there was a terrific explosion. Trench 27 rocked with the force of it. The bombproof shelter fell as if it were made of cardboard, burying them beneath it. The heaped-up dirt at the top of the trench was scattered like so much sawdust.

There was no longer any light in that little inferno except what came from the starlit heavens. Men—or what had once been men—lay motionless where the powerful explosive had flung them. Others had vanished as if into thin air—never to return. And for a few brief moments all was silent.

Then someone stirred in the shambles. It was Captain Montague. One of the timbers from the roof of the shattered bombproof had fallen upon his left leg; and, weak as he was from his injuries, he could not release it.

"Boys, take that beam off my leg!" he called faintly. "I can't move! Take it off, I tell you!" He called several of his men by name. But no one answered. He groaned then, as he struggled to rise, and fell back fainting.

The telephone buzzer began to call insistently. And there was one man who heard it. Larry had been stunned for a few seconds. How he might be wounded he had not the slightest idea. But that he was hurt he had not the slightest doubt. He could barely move, as consciousness returned to him. But until the call of the telephone roused him further he had been content to lie where he fell—and rest. That signal, however, spurred him to dogged effort.

"The telephone! It isn't smashed!" he cried. "Oh, God! Let me get to that telephone! If they attack us now we're done for!" He dragged himself along the littered floor of the trench for a few feet, then sank down with a groan. "Oh, my God! My leg!" he moaned. And then he drifted into a delirium. His mind wandered back to Ethel Willoughby. And once more he found himself in Sir George Wagstaff's house in London, pleading with her to marry him. . . . Soon he gained control of his befuddled brain again. "I've got to get to that telephone!" he told himself desperately. "Come on, Larry! You can do it!" he told himself fiercely. "D—n your Irish heart! Come on! It's only five feet more!" So his undaunted spirit lashed his broken body to its bidding.

At last he gained the phone. At the other end headquarters was still trying frantically to learn the rest of that interrupted message that the German spy had started to relate.

"No, no! I'm not Lee! I'm Redmond!" he gasped. "Captain Redmond of the Irish Guards! Special service! . . . Major Drayton, you remember me!" Larry said almost joyfully, as he discovered to whom he was speaking. "Listen! Bomb aeroplane—Trench 27

in France, not many miles from Paris. It was only the wreck of a church now, for the German shells had swept it, leaving ruin in their wake. Even the statue of Christ on the Cross which surmounted the altar had not escaped desecration, for the upper part of the crucifix had been snapped off like matchwood and now rested against the lower part of the figure of the Savior.

Re-enforcements had reached Trench 27 in time—thanks to Larry's heroism; and though he knew nothing of what had happened after he had fallen close by the telephone, the British troops had stemmed the gap in their defenses.

Along with others of the injured, Captain Redmond had been hurried away from the front as fast as was possible, until at last he had been received into the field station for the English wounded for which purpose the Red Cross had pressed that tiny church into service. When Larry reached that place it had been far to the rear of the British first line. But now, alas! those heroes in khaki had been forced back until the boom of their guns was plainly audible in the violated sanctuary.

Captain Redmond lay upon a heap of straw on the floor. About him were many other men, swathed in bandages, as he was, and among them there moved a soldier with the Red Cross insignia upon his arm; and a French priest knelt beside the stricken and prayed for the welfare of their souls as well as their bodies. It was early morning, three or four hours past midnight, and the cluttered nave was only dimly lit by a few lanterns.

A doctor strode through the doorway. "I want to see Doctor Charles," he announced, and to the man who rose from one of the altar steps, where he had been examining charts of the wounded, he explained that he was Doctor Aubrey of the Second corps, sent to relieve the medical officer stationed there, who had been ordered to join the ambulance forces at the front.

Doctor Charles handed over his charts at once and prepared to leave.

"I see Captain Redmond is still here," Aubrey remarked as he scanned the records. "How is he?"

"Still out of his head!"

"Will he pull through?"

"He ought to."

"Brave chap, wasn't he?" said Doctor Aubrey—"to get us that information about Von Kluck's flanking movement!"

"If it hadn't been for Redmond they would have captured our entire army," the departing surgeon replied.

"Pretty big things for one man to do!" the newcomer exclaimed.

Doctor Charles agreed with him, and after saying a hurried good-by he passed on into the gray of the approaching dawn.

As Aubrey set about his duties it seemed to him that the roar of the artillery became increasingly distinct. And it was not long before the blare of a bugle sounding retreat was wafted unmistakably through the open doors.

At the sound of that order one of the men lying upon the floor raised himself upon an elbow and listened.

"I tell you—retreat! Retreat!" he cried. "Right to the very gates of Paris! . . . Oh, Ethel—where are you?"

"Who's that?" Doctor Aubrey asked of one of his Red Cross assistants.

"Captain Redmond! He goes on like that most of the time," the man answered.

"The telephone! I've got to get to that telephone!" Larry shouted. "Come on, Larry! You can do it! It's only a few feet more!"

The doctor knelt beside him.

"There, there, old man! Take it easy!" he said. It was plain to him that the wounded man was living over again those tense and terrible moments in the trench.

All at once a dazed look came over Captain Redmond's face. He looked at the doctor curiously.

"What place is this? Who are you?" he asked. He had at last regained his senses.

"You're at an English field hospital," the doctor said.

"Then they got me, didn't they?" said Larry. "Did I telephone headquarters in time? I can't remember. There was a bomb. I tried to crawl to the phone. Was I too late? Tell me!"

"Your information came in time to prevent their flanking our whole army," Doctor Aubrey told him.

"Thank God!" Larry murmured. "And Miss Willoughby? She was at Tourville? Where is she? . . . No, no! You wouldn't know," he said, as the doctor shook his head. "And Strassman? He didn't get away?"

"Strassman? You mean the German spy who was with you in Trench 27?"

"Yes, yes!" Larry said eagerly. "Their bomb got him," said the doctor. "He's dead."

"That's one good shot they made," Captain Redmond replied. "Tell me—we've turned them back? We've saved Paris?"

"I fear not," the other said, and his grave face revealed the anxiety that he shared with all his fellows. "We're only ten miles from Paris now. We've been retreating for over a week."

"But that was part of the plan!" the wounded man cried. "To retreat, and then—"

"I know," the medical man interrupted. "But we haven't been able to cut their lines. Even the government has been moved to Bordeaux. The German's aren't five miles from here. Last night they shelled this church. They're four to one. I'm afraid we're done for."

Larry grasped at the arm of the man who knelt beside him.

"Don't say that!" he begged. "It

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The Sweetest Girl I Know."

For almost ten days Larry Redmond had lain, delirious, in a little church

in France, not many miles from Paris. It was only the wreck of a church now, for the German shells had swept it, leaving ruin in their wake. Even the statue of Christ on the Cross which surmounted the altar had not escaped desecration, for the upper part of the crucifix had been snapped off like matchwood and now rested against the lower part of the figure of the Savior.

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