

# How They Shopped For Christmas

# SOME of the Queer Folks Who Sought Presents and What They Got.

The cowman—he was surely too old to be called a cowboy—leaned over the plate glass counter of the great jewel emporium. The clerk who stood there was of the blasé, tough-me-not variety. He was so accustomed to pick up diamonds by the

worthy the attention it excited in its short stay. Two stout women stood in front of it a long time. Either would have tipped the scales at 180. They wore shirt waists, short walking skirts, muffs, boas and velvet



HE HIT THE TOWN AT THE WRONG TIME.

handful that he felt himself entitled to a good deal of manner, which he made as impressive as if he were in truth a king of finance.

The cowman had white locks, which straggled over a worn looking coat, the far away expression of the plainman, deep alkali wrinkles, a striped shirt which might have lost color but would have gained distinction by a visit to the wash-bub, in which glistened diamond studs of assorted sizes and yellow tendencies. He took a small bit of rolled paper from his pocket and rapped it reflectively on the glass in front of him.

"Them's mother's earrings, they weigh nearly a carat and a half together. The clerk's eyebrow took an upward twist of disgust, but the cowman mistook the expression for one of deep interest.

"I want you to make 'em into a sunburst."

"Sunburst!" emphasizing the last syllable. "Want to give it as a Christmas present."

The clerk looked at the shop, at the crowds of well groomed men and women examining costly jewels as if they were pebbles, at the silver and gold, the priceless brio-à-brac, then:

"I'm very sorry, but it's too late in the week to get it done for the holidays."

"Too late! Why, there's three days."

"There are a good many orders ahead of yours. It would be impossible."

The syllables were cold as icicles but they did not freeze the cowman's enthusiasm.

"He unwrapped a corner of the paper and allowed the clerk a glimpse."

"Something like, ain't they? I guess that'll make a sunburst that looks like the real thing."

"If you care for sunbursts, they're not in style any longer."

"Style? Huh! You can't fool me on style. He felt in his capacious pocket and drew out a large silver watch attached to a slender gold chain.

"Now that chain's been in the family for ninety-five years; mother had it, grandmother had it, and great-grandmother. Just as good to-day as ever. They didn't junk you with filled gold them days."

He replaced the watch and the expression of artificial interest on the clerk's face deepened.

"No, you can't fool me on style; them diamonds of mother's gave me a air to anything. Sorry I can't give it to you to make up; but, say, I like the look of this place. Is there another in the neighborhood as good that you could recommend?"

The clerk again shook his head frostily. The civility demanded of him by unknown managers forced him to say:

"I am afraid you will find it hard to get that done before Christmas."

"You don't say? Look's as if I'd hit the town at the wrong time!"

The cowman folded his diamonds, like the Arabs their tents, and silently sped away. The clerk breathed a sigh of relief.

This is only one of many such pre-Christmas experiences in the shops.

In the rear of the same establishment a small room, curtained with velvet portiers and hushed into an art atmosphere by careful attendants, held two of Gêrome's last masterpieces in marble Bellona, the goddess of war, and the Corinthian. Even in the rush and roar of the last few days of shopping many a woman found a moment's respite to step inside and gaze at these treasures, imported to tempt the purse strings of a millionaire.

The Corinthian is a life size statue of tinted marble, that wonderful flesh tint, the directions for which Gêrome left for others to follow out. Possibly the classic face, the lifelike pose, the gracefully disposed limbs may be responsible for the feminine visitors, but, judging from the remarks overheard, this interest is due more to the bizarre jewelry adorning the lady than to intrinsic worth. This jewelry is copied from world famed collections in art museums abroad and is fastened to the statue by plaster of paris, the rings, bracelets and anklets being semicircular only.

There are serpentine decorations with strange eyes, a coronet on the bronzed looks, long earrings reaching to the shoulder, the dainty toes are each outlined with rings, the ten fingers likewise decorated. It is a strange Oriental production quite



TOQUES ON CAREFULLY WAVED AND ARTIFICIAL COIFFURES.

Anything less Oriental it would be difficult to imagine.

"John asked me what I wanted and I told him that I must have some Oriental jewelry. I love the barbaric things. I think I must have a foreign strain in me somewhere."

"You'd look too subtle for anything," cooed the other. "I think it would make you most alluring."

"John says he's afraid I'd look too much like Mrs. Pat Campbell. You don't think I will? Not that I'd mind so much, but she does attract so much attention on the street with her low cut gown and those strange hazaar things about her neck."

"I wouldn't mind if I did," cooed the other.

"You get him to get the jewelry. It's just your style."

The stout lady with Oriental proclivities took a jag, lingering look at the Corinthian and made another faint protest.

"I shan't let him give me a thumb ring like the pendants and the snake bracelets, but I never could get used to the thumb-ring."

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ONE OF THE CHRISTMAS DRAGEDIES.

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gazed into the eyes of Bellona, the war goddess, with a strange, cryptic smile.

Over the copper casseroles in another department the economical woman enthuses ecstatically. "Only \$35? You don't say. It's a perfect dream, and only \$35!"



IS IT WORTH IT?

Oh, yes, I know that everything is copper this Christmas. Silver and gold are not in it at all.

She turns to her companion. "Would you get him the casserole or a silver pencil? Of course the casserole is just the thing; but a silver pencil is so useful, and there's just this about it, I believe in always combining sentiment with a Christmas present. Now, every time he used the pencil he'd think of me; but a copper casserole—there isn't much sentiment in a copper casserole, is there?"

The clerk has turned to another customer. When a woman jumps from \$35 casseroles to the silver pencil question, he sees his finish, whether the excuse be sentiment or its frequent parallel, economy.

At the counter where rings are flagrantly displayed a young woman hands out three violet velvet boxes which, opened, display a triplet of rings of varying designs.

"Tell me, she coaxes to the imperturbable clerk, "what these are worth? I had three to choose from and I want the"—she hesitates a minute—"the least expensive."

"Can't do it, miss. It's one of the most stringent rules of the house."

"You don't mean that you won't oblige a customer?"

"If the rings were bought here, I could tell you how much was paid for them, but not how much they are worth. As they were not bought here, I can tell you nothing except as to the genuineness."

He explains this seeming harshness.

"We must protect ourselves. It would be impossible for us to answer these questions, especially after Christmas, when it used to be a favorite trick for women to bring in their gifts and price them. I'm sorry."

The young woman moves away and her place is taken by some giggling school-girl.

"Oh, I wouldn't have anything that wasn't my birth stone. I'm so glad that I was born in October. You know, diamonds for October, and I told father that I would not wear anything but my birth stone, and he said 'All right' before he knew what it was."

"The simple life has its Christmas victories. A spinster of the New England school who has started out early in the morning in place, her bonnet at it accustomed angle, speckless and spotless, lands late in the afternoon in the literature section of a department store, looking like a first cousin to the Metropolitan Museum Bacchante.

"She gasps her order to the bald headed clerk.

"Have you a copy of the 'Simple Life' in cut?"

"All out of calves, ma'am; we've got the 'Simple Life' in an edition d'éluxe, portrait of Mr. Wagner, the house where he was born in mezzotints and wide margins for \$15."

In another shop a small girl, whose attire speaks strenuously of the existence made simple through necessity rather than choice, is lost in admiration before the glass case containing a doll of the type which flourishes this season. Miss Doll is gowned in blue satin and point lace; she has an automobile, a dressing case in which every implement from the pot of rouge to the nail file is apparent; she has a trunk, a bath tub and changes of lingerie enough for a chorus girl.

On the stairs in this store—one where children's toys are a specialty—a man sits. He has promised that if he were allowed to take Tommy out to look at the toys he would take good care of him. He had laughed at the directions of his wife. He guessed he could look out for his own child. If he couldn't, whose child could he look out for? That argument seemed to him very telling, and he and Tommy had gone off triumphantly. Now Tommy has disappeared—how, when or where, he knew not. He was absent from his allegiance but a moment while he looked at an elephant playing a guitar, and when he turned to call Tommy's attention to it there was no Tommy. Children were more a care than he thought.

He did not dare go home. He had wandered up and down the store in vain. Every body was too busy to attend to his loss. There was nothing but a wait at the police station fronting him. He sat and thought the situation over. If he were a small boy and got lost, where would he go? He tried to remember once when he was lost in a big store. What did he do?

Out of the films of misty memory he recalls some vague thoughts. Of course there must be guns somewhere, and of course Tommy, who is the perfect image of his father—he swells at the thought—would naturally find out where the guns are.

A few minutes later a small boy fingering some air rifles is touched lightly on the shoulder by a white-faced man, who says, as man to man:

"Pretty good sort of rifles, Tommy, ain't they?"

Even instruction, given gratis, is not absent from Christmas shopping incursions. An old gentleman who is plotting a young woman about from toy to toy is talking to her of the importance of these fragile emblems from the point of view of the teacher.

"If cold December gave you birth. The month of snow and ice and mirth. Place on your hand a turquoise blue; Success will bless whate'er you do."

The salaried guardian of the gems, who has the look of the connoisseur in his eyes, gives a stray bit of information to them as well as the other customers who are at that fine state of indecision which marks ne shopper in holiday week.

"The old superstition in regard to opals seems to have entirely disappeared. It originated from a French novel of the



THE GIRL WHO NEEDS A "CHAP BOOK."

"There was an educational report made a few years ago," he remarks, while a small crowd gathers about, interested even in the exigencies of the occasion, and pretends to look, while in reality listening, "who said that the nations which had the most toys had more individuality, ideality and heroism. The nations which have been made famous by their artists, artisans and idealists supplied their children with toys."

Then he points out the different nationalities of the toys on the counters and in the boxes round about.

"You see the French toys include nearly all the soldiers, all the little swords, all the flashy uniforms, all the Punch and Judy shows, the little theatres, the little tea sets which have dollies and finger bowls, the lace trimmed lingerie and the kid boots for the dolls. The British doll, on the contrary, is usually of the rag variety, for while they send us lots of books, we do not import many toys from England.

"The German toys are entirely different from the French, just as different as the two nations are wide apart. You don't find any Noah's Ark with stained glass windows among the Teutonic importations, and no smirking ladies with yellow curls and coquetish eyes that languish on a wire. As a general thing the German toy is rather heavy in style, especially after one has dallied with the Parisian novelties, but it is vastly more useful morally.

"We get most of our doll toys from there, and this year is added little stores, groceries, with everything that a boy could think of, little weighing machines, boxes filled with sugar, salt, boxes of pepper, mustard, spices, the entire outfit. These doll houses and shops from Germany are typical of the nation, their heavy furniture, tiled floors, stiff, straight backed chairs, porcelain stoves and even the little pot of artificial flowers. The idea throughout the German doll house seems to be to keep the child's mind on the home life, for the girl, just as the butcher's and baker's outfit makes the boy, no matter what his class in life, familiar with the rudiments of the domestic life.

"Germany is primarily the land of the Christmas tree, and so many of the tree adornments are imported from there, even the tinsel and the bright colored balls, Santa Claus with his little pack and his reindeer are of German origin also.

"Dolls' trunks, on the contrary, are of American make, and that in turn seems just as representative of the restless spirit of our people as the wooden cattle, sheep,

the heavy faced shepherds and shepherdesses are of the land of the Swiss, where they are made.

The Japanese toy has nothing of the present moment in its make-up. It is not designed to be broken, thrown aside and forgotten."

"You see," says Mrs. Youngbride to her older friend, "I have solved the problem of Christmas shopping. I don't bother to wait for change and to have the things done up. All I do is just say 'o. o. d.', and walk out. It's a funny thing, too; you get parcels so much quicker this way. I suppose 't's because the shops are afraid that you will not take the things after you think it over."

The older woman says nothing, hating to destroy these illusions of youth.

The o. o. d. packages begin to arrive while bride and husband are at breakfast. Of course bride hasn't her purse and husband pays for them philosophically. He is afraid perhaps he was not quite so pleasant as he might have been about it, for it



A CHANCE FOR THE EXCHANGE COLUMN, OR, CHRISTMAS JUDGMENT.

is hard for a man to get up much enthusiasm about paying for mother-in-law's Christmas presents at breakfast, before he has had the stimulus of a cup of coffee. So he comes home early as a sort of amendment.

He arrives just as more packages are being taken from the big delivery wagon. Bride is out finishing up her shopping, so he has the pleasure of paying for these, too.

He never knew before that married life was so complicated. He had been accustomed to send a check to one or two poor relatives and let it go at that, but bride, it seems, remembers the cousins to the third and fourth generation.

He hands the bundles to bride when she returns and she gazes at them and then at him, a little apprehensively, then puts a brave face upon it.

"I knew you wouldn't want a Christmas

concludes that it is not. He makes a firm resolution never to subject himself again to any such experience unless at a football or baseball game, and is quite irritable at dinner about the why women act when shopping, until patient wife turns on him and inquires sharply who it is that owns and manages the system called shopping and if he thinks women would make such banal work of the scheme if it was in their hands.

After that he is silent and figures out that no one can get the typewriters 'o take a day off and go uptown for the machine. Then he smokes his cigar in peace.

"They make a lot of fun of typewriters on the stage," he says the next afternoon, after he is informed that a sewing machine, one of the best and cheapest of its kind, has been bought, "but I guess many a wife wouldn't be so satisfied with her Christmas present this year if it wasn't for the typewriter girl."

Schoolman, on Christmas eve, to a select circle of friends, suggested that she could open a bureau of exchange with the gifts from loving pupils, of which she had a strange and weird collection. There was a box of gloves, green, green, the girl had given when she was in deep mourning; a salmon colored worsted fascinator adorned with biggles, a large canvas painted by a street artist, an immense family Bible with colored illustrations, where the prophets for whom she had hitherto cherished feeling of reverence leered at her knowingly; a gilded dust pan tied with yellow and red roses made of tissue paper, and many other evidences of childish reverence and grace as exhibited on this one occasion in the year when they could do justice to their feelings of reverence a respect."

This Christmas she had expressly stated to the committee sent to find out her wishes on the subject in the peculiarly subtle way of children who have a mystery to keep intact that nothing but a silk umbrella would really please her. The children, according to their own story, had started out with the intention of finding just such an umbrella as she had minutely described, but had fallen victims on the way to a specious salesman who had induced them to buy a large pipe-rack of burnt wood ornamented with a huge Indian head. When they told him the present was for a lady, he had insisted that it was just the thing, for she was sure to get married, and that would be a good start for housekeeping. This touch of sentiment carried the day and explains why the schoolman is now looking for exchanges.

There are those who say that with the increasing demands made on the purse, fire and vitality at this time of year all the old joys spirit had permitted a view of some of the misplaced presents which lead a calf-chant air to the most respectable household. The crocheted slippers that come to Thomas, the bull-pup to Aunt Miranda, the progressive presents which pass on from year to year, doing duty in one home, only to pass on the only thing new about them being the excision in which they are wrapped, the only thing genuine being the wish that they may be found useful.

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