

ONE CHRISTMAS TIME.

WHAT CAME OF KILLING A RICH UNCLE.

By MARK LEMON.

"Dance with me, Letty Green," said George Poynter, to a pretty girl with blue eyes and hair that shined like moonlight.

Her ample bell dress was of the purest white muslin, fastened at the shoulders round the waist with blue ribbon—bluer than her eyes.

"Yes," answered Letty, "I want to dance with you."

"The dance at an end, Letty tried to smooth her golden curls into order with her little hands, and then, opening her pretty blue eyes to their full, said:

"George Poynter, I should like some oranges."

"Yes, Letty," said the young gentleman, addressing her with a smile and a nod, and such a sponge cake.

"I like dancing with you better than any one, Letty," said George, to his pretty partner.

"Do you? Why?" replied Letty, her voice rather obstructed by the sponge cake.

"I think it is because I like you—you are so pretty," replied the young gallant.

"You mustn't say that, or mamma will scold you, George." She scolded every one who told her she was pretty.

"But the words had been spoken, and from that night until the end of the Christmas holidays, George and Letty said they were sweethearts.

Some four or five years had passed and Letty Green and her mamma were sitting together under the veranda of their pretty cottage, working and talking of a pleasant day they had spent at Mr. Poynter's, when Master George came, he said, to bid them good-by, as he was returning to school on the following morning.

"And I want to ask you a favor, Mrs. Green, and Letty a favor," said George, coloring slightly.

Mrs. Green would grant it, of course, and so would Letty, if she could.

"I want Letty to ride Rufus, my pony, whilst I am at school. Papa has no use for it, and it carries a load beautifully."

"But to accept this proposal would give so much trouble."

"Not in the least, Tom—that's our groom—says it won't, and papa says it won't, and I say the same; so please say you'll use the pony. Rufus, the harness maker, will lead a side saddle."

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Before we pass on to the events of the next few years, we will introduce Chauncey Gibbs, a friend of George Poynter. Chauncey—his patronym of Gibbs was

JACK TAY'S CHRISTMAS.

The remarks of the Chinese sailor enlisted aboard a United States man-of-war, "Merry Christmas, me no sobey he!" as he came down from the foretop-sail yard, where he had been lending a hand to furl the remnant of a topsail, blown almost to ribbons by the fierce winter's gale that was howling one Christmas morning, and began blowing on his frost-bitten fingers and rubbing them in the snow which covered the vessel's deck, is a very good exposition of the practical side of our universal Christian holiday, as frequently seen by the hardy toilers of the sea. It is a necessity sometimes demands that the work must be done and done before the ship made safe and snug before a crack. You can think of bean soup or Christmas pudding and other fixings, and not infrequently, as the sea remembers nothing and pays no homage to customs, no matter how ancient, imagination of a grand banquet can alone be relied upon to appease the appetite; as "hot water and spoons" are very apt to be about all that can be obtained in the way of a square meal, and even the luxury of the hot water is often omitted, as the tossing, restless lurching about from side to side, makes it impossible to keep anything on top of the galley stove, if, indeed, it be a practicable thing to keep up the fires at all. In such a case the cud of discontent, so to speak, must be represented, as the song, "The rat goes to the starboard side of an' east'ward,"

Christmas away from home is, however, always kept in some way or another, even under such adverse circumstances as these mentioned; as a little something to warm him up is quietly given to the half frozen man by some kindhearted officer as he comes down from aloft, and before drinking the man's, as a rule, to top of his cap and to say, "Merry Christmas," which is about all the circumstances of the case will admit of. Wind and weather permitting, however, only the absolutely necessary things are done, and the Christmas dinner is made as sumptuous as the paymaster's stores will permit, or the foresight of the mess caterer in laying in something extra before the ship left port has provided. The ration gives more or less variety of things that put up to keep during the cruise, but Jack prefers the things that are not made to keep, and being proverbially imprudent, the day generally finds him depending on plum duff as the grand piece de resistance, and no matter how much of the resistance there may be about the ship, it is not always in its ability to take the place of other possibly more digestible articles. The lags containing the sailors' personal effects are piped up and the men given an opportunity to overhaul their clothing, write letters or do whatever the limit of the ship will admit. Smoking is permitted outside the daily regulation hours, and everything is done to make the men as comfortable and the day as merry as possible, having, of course, due regard for the handling of the vessel.

When, however, the ships are in port, and it happens to be one where there is a good market, all that affords is brought off to grace the board, and the scene presented on the berth deck of one of our men-of-war on such occasions is lively and picturesque in the extreme. The mess tables are screened off with canvas and bunting, and very often evergreens are used to complete the ornamentation, each mess vying with the others to see which can make the prettiest show. An extra dollar or two apiece is usually served out, "to put in the mess," the aggregate sum making great possibilities in the way of procuring the good things which are to be had on the day ration. The tin pot, pan and spoon which form Jack's cover are made to shine like polished silver, the mess cooks taking a pride in getting the brightest of polishes for the occasion. Some more stylish, though perhaps less thrifty, messes, get crockery from shore, which sets off the table very prettily, and possibly to some extent seems more like a dinner in the air of paying a little more attention to the observances of the day; one might say, I suppose, a little better relish, perhaps, to the feast. But whoever knew of a sailor's not being ready for a good square meal at any hour of the day?