The Christmas Chef

By FRANK H. SWEET

"Did you get one, John?"

Mrs. Botsford spoke eagerly, almost hysterically. Her husband drew off his gloves slowly.

"Why, yes; I brought one up, Julia, of course. I sent her round to the kitchen entrance."

"Can she cook?"

"She is neat and very nice looking," Mr. Botsford temporized defensively. "She says she can do every kind of housework from up garrent to down cellar. And she seems to be strong and willing."

"But can she cook—fancy dishes, I mean?"

Mr. Botsford looked embarrassed.

"Well, you see, she was brought up on a farm," he explained, "and hasn't had much chance at such things. She says, however, that she had quite a reputation at home for plain, wholesome cooking, and she is willing to learn. I told her what you wanted."

Mrs. Botsford dropped upon a stool, her eyes filling.

"Oh, John!" she ejaculated. "It's 11 o'clock now, and Cousin Edward's fiancee is coming at 3 o'clock to stay until Saturday, and she and Edward and some of her people will be here for Christmas dinner tomorrow, and you know I have never seen the girl nor any of them. We must have things nice. The girl's worth a clear million in her own right. Oh, John, why need our cook get sick at such a time, and"—Mrs. Botsford was becoming incoherent and seemed to recognize the fact herself, for she stopped suddenly. But John nodded comprehendingly.

"I see," he said. "But what else could I do? There's a corner on servants, especially cooks, at this season. The only suggestion of one besides Sarah was a ten dollar a day chef who commences on a regular job Monday. Of course you don't want a chef for two days."

Mrs. Botsford sprang to her feet, her face suddenly radiant.

"The very thing!" she cried. "He can do the art work and your cook the plain dishes. A chef will be so—so chic, and, you know, Miss Lenox has been used to everything. He—a chef is he, isn't it, John?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. That has always been my impression, though I don't suppose there is any law against

"YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GLAD I AM TO SEE YOU."

a girl filling the position. The manager did not state in this case, only that a chef could be had for two days."

"Well, it's he, of course. Now, hurry to the telephone, please, before some one else gets him."

She waited until her husband returned from the telephone, nodding.

"Says the chef will be up at 1 o'clock sharp, Julia. Now I'll go downtown and order the Christmas trimmings and things."

At 1 o'clock sharp Mrs. Botsford was at the window, expectant, anxious. But exactly as the clock struck a cab rolled up to the door and a girl alighted. Mrs. Botsford's countenance fell a little, but she as the girl, with a quick glance around, opened the small gate and went toward the side entrance. It was the chef, though but a girl. And the fact of her coming in a cab and being well dressed was significant of the $10 a day.

Mrs. Botsford did not wait for the chamber girl to answer the bell, but hurried to the side entrance. The occasion was too momentous for ceremony. As she threw open the door the girl was bending over a fine clump of white chrysanthemums that were smiling daringly into the very teeth of winter. Mrs. Botsford's heart warmed toward her instantly. She loved flowers, and a girl who could bend over flowers with that look on her face was not an ordinary workman, but an artist. As the girl looked up, smiled, nodded and then came forward, Mrs. Botsford almost caught her in her arms.

"Oh, my dear," she cried, without giving the chef an opportunity to speak, "you don't know how glad I am to see you. I will take you right into the kitchen, and Sarah will show you where everything is. I am so glad. I shall not make a suggestion, for I see you are perfectly capable and can do best in your own way. Only do make it just as—as comprehensive as you can. Miss Lenox is accustomed to everything, and—and I want to make her like me so much and to please Edward."

She had been hurrying the chef through the hall toward the kitchen, half laughing, half crying, but wholly joyous and anticipative. At the door, to her surprise and almost consternation, the chef suddenly bent forward, pressing a light kiss upon her forehead.

"If you are as nice to Miss Lenox as you are to me," she smiled, "I think she will like you. Now you may leave me in charge. I will do the best I can."

Mrs. Botsford returned to the drawing room, rubbing her forehead thoughtfully.

"What's the matter, Julia," her husband asked, "another headache?"

"N-no," doubtfully. "That's where the chef kissed me. I never had a girl kiss me as soon before. But I don't care, if only she diffuses her artist soul through the cooking. She has an artist soul, John. I saw it in her eyes."

At 3 o'clock she was again at the window, but there was no carriage in sight. Two minutes later the telephone rang. She did not call Mr. Botsford this time, but went to the telephone herself.

"What's that you say?" she questioned presently, leaning forward as though in that attitude she could make the receiver at her ear more intelligible. "Can't come? Why, that's too bad! But you will be here tomorrow, of course? What? Will send note. Yes. Well, come just as early as you can."

An hour later the note came. Mrs. Botsford read it with a perplexed face, then passed it to her husband.

"I didn't know she spelled her name that way, John," she said, "though of course we never saw it spelled out. One can never tell much from pronunciation. And—and I'm afraid she's not so well educated as we thought. She comes from the west, you know, and lots of families get rich quickly out there. And, of course, a lover's opinion isn't always reliable. Poor Edward!"

Mr. Botsford nodded vaguely and opened the note, which read:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Botsford—Sorry I cannot come according to agreement. Imperative summons elsewhere. Will see you tomorrow. Faithfully, etc.,

M. LEHKNOCKS.

"Rather abrupt for good form, isn't it?" queried Mr. Botsford. "And doesn't there seem a suggestion of Polish among the ancestors, or is it German or Irish? The combination might masquerade almost any nationality that's foreign. But never mind, Julia. We must be as nice to her as we can for Edward's sake."

At 9 o'clock that night, after the palms and mistletoe and holly had arrived and been arranged in the various rooms to their satisfaction, Sarah suddenly burst upon them with face full of consternation.

"The chef!" she gasped. "Didn't ye say she was goin' to stay tomorry an' the next day?"

"Certainly. Why?"

"Because she's gone—left entirely. I was at the range, watchin' the turkey, an' she come in with her hat on an' said that everything was all ready, so I could attend to it now. An' she left this note for ye."

"But why did she go?" gasped Mrs. Botsford. "I thought"—

"She said everything was all ready," Sarah repeated stolidly, "an' that I could attend to it now. There," as a clear car tinkle sounded outside, "that's her car startin' now. She said she wanted to catch the 9 o'clock."

Mrs. Botsford opened the note with trembling fingers. As she read she frowned, looked mortified, laughed and finally passed the note to her husband, with shining eyes. "She's all right," was her only comment.

The note read:

Dear Mrs. Botsford—You really must forgive me. I had an errand downtown, and so called at your house an hour earlier than I intended, thinking I would stop there awhile, and then perhaps you and I would do the errand together. A sight of your lovely chrysanthemums drew me straight through the gate to the side entrance; then you opened the door, and some way we drifted into the kitchen before I quite realized what I was doing. Then your straits and a remembrance of former triumphs conspired to do the rest. I really do love cooking and have taken a lot of courses in special things. I think I have excelled myself this time and believe you will be satisfied with the result. Sarah and the chamber girl can manage the rest very nicely. I shall do my errand now and will stay with my aunt at the Marlborough tonight. It will be more convenient. You may expect us quite early tomorrow morning. Lovingly, MARGUERITE LENOX.

Red and Green Snow.

At various times it is recorded that there has been "blood on the face of the moon." Some old chronicles tell of showers of blood, which, however, are not well authenticated. The "bloody snow," on the other hand, is an actual thing. Snow is sometimes found in polar and Alpine regions, where it lies unmelted from year to year, and the annual fall is small, colored red by the presence of innumerable small red plants. In its native state the plant consists of brilliant red globules on a gelatinous mass. Red snow was observed by the ancients, a passage in Aristotle referring to it, but it attracted little or no attention until 1760, when Saussure observed it in the Alps and concluded that it was due to the pollen of a plant. It was also noticed by the arctic expedition under Captain Ross on Baffin's bay shore, on a range of cliffs, the red color penetrating to the depth of twelve feet. Less frequent is a green growth of snow.

Just imagine these rich colors decorating the landscape near our large cities! Country house parties would have a new attraction which would appeal to the artistic and aesthetic sense.

A Matter of Holly

A Christmas Story.....

By T. Blair Eaton

They sat before a blazing fire on the hearth. Thurlow, leaning forward in his chair, toyed idly with a pair of brass tongs, and Miss Wentworth industriously arranged chestnuts on the fire shovel. They were quite alone in the room. One after another the other guests had sought the dining room, where now Freddy Carver's comfortable voice could be heard stridently demanding candles to wax the floor with.

"I hope I'm not overselfish in keeping you here to toast the chestnuts," said Thurlow to the girl. "Perhaps you prefer to dance."

"There'll be time enough for that," she replied. "Freddy Carver will keep them going until midnight."

"They're off," said Thurlow as the labored notes of a violin, a clarinet and a piano floated in to them.

A gust of wind whistled sharply outside, and the fire answered it by

SHE WAS STANDING BENEATH IT, HER EYES UPTURNED.

leaping up defiantly. The girl listened and smiled.

"Doesn't that sound Christmasy?" she said.

"It seems to me the 'peace on earth' spirit and all that sort of thing thrives best in a low temperature," the man suggested. "Christmas without a shiver or two isn't Christmas."

"It needs that and a house party here at the Oaks and Freddy Carver to start the dancing," she supplemented.

"That we may have the fire and the chestnuts all to ourselves," he hastened to add.

She laughed and flushed in the shadow of the ingle nook.

"Selfish," she chided.

"Of your society," he explained.

The hand with which she held the fire shovel over the log trembled a little. One of the chestnuts dropped into the flames and sputtered merrily. Thurlow settled back in his chair and for a time gazed steadily at the fire, seemingly lost in reverie.

"She was all in white," he declared with sudden irrelevance.

"Who was 'all in white?'" Miss Wentworth asked.

"Eh?" said Thurlow. "A girl I was thinking about, a nice girl, one Christmas eve like this."

"Oh!" said Miss Wentworth.

"She was standing beneath the library chandelier," Thurlow went on. "There was a bunch of mistletoe just over her head."

"Careless little girl," she commented.

"Then he came along," said Thurlow, "and saw her standing there."

"Did he see the mistletoe?" Miss Wentworth asked.

"Eh? Yes, he saw the mistletoe," said Thurlow.

There was silence between them for a moment. Freddy Carver's voice was proclaiming in tones of resignation, "Well, the Virginia reel, then, if you insist."

"He was very young," Thurlow said at length, "and the combination made him feel very strange."

"The combination?" she inquired.

"Yes—the girl and the mistletoe, you know," said Thurlow. "Made him determined to go out and lay the world by the heels, and some time—some Christmas eve under the mistletoe—to bring it back to her and lay it at her feet."

"And?" she said encouragingly.

"And," repeated Thurlow, "he went, but the world was thoughtless. It refused to be laid by the heels according to his plans. But through it all—even when he had to save his cigars to smoke before possible clients and content himself with a cob pipe at other times—he conjured up the picture of the girl and the mistletoe and went at it. He's at it yet, poor devil!"

The fire shovel lay on the log and the chestnuts were scorching. Miss Wentworth was looking straight at them, but made no attempt to rescue them.

"Was he sure one world would satisfy her demands?" she asked ironically. "Perhaps she wanted two or three."

Thurlow was silent.

"Perhaps she didn't want even one world," Miss Wentworth said gently.

"It's good policy to bring one world at least," said he.

"Good business policy," she mocked.

"You see," he explained, "she had wealth and 'position' and every eligible man in the county at her feet, and"—

"And the memory of a Christmas eve and a bunch of mistletoe," she interrupted.

Thurlow made vicious jabs with the tongs at the burning logs. He succeeded in upsetting the fire shovel and spilling the chestnuts into the blaze. The girl had turned her head from him, but he had a glimpse of one little ear flushed red.

Thurlow suddenly laughed harshly.

"Goodness!" he said. "Just imagine his coming back to her on Christmas eve, with no worlds, no anything, save his worthless self! Imagine that! How ridiculous it would seem to her! She would laugh!"

She turned to him. Her eyes blazed, and something suspiciously like tears glistened on the lashes. Her hands were clinched.

"She'd be a wicked girl if she did," she said hotly.

Thurlow turned his eyes to the chandelier. In the flickering light of the fire he studied it carefully for several moments. Then he turned to the fire again.

"Thank heaven, it's holly up there on the chandelier! If it were mistletoe I'm afraid—I'm afraid he might come back—tonight—without his world in tow."

Miss Wentworth rose. She, too, looked thoughtfully at the chandelier.

"Oh, you foolish boy!" she said, laughing softly. "Did you ever see holly with leaves like that and—and—white berries?"

She was standing directly beneath it, her eyes upturned, her face glowing red in the firelight. "Dear, it's—it's"—

Thurlow sprang from the chair.

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Some minutes later Freddy Carver pulled the portieres apart.

"Aren't you dancing?" he inquired. "Come on out. And for heaven's sake stop scenting up the whole house with burnt chestnuts!"

A Harmless Idiosyncrasy.

Mrs. Compton looked at her old friend with a slightly defiant gaze. "So you heard I'd married into a peculiar family," she said slowly. "Well, I won't deny but what the Comptons have got some ways that aren't just like everybody else's. But my husband is just about the same as other folks most o' the time."

The old friend gave her the smile of one who is open to conviction, but said nothing.

"He's got one little peculiarity," said Mrs. Compton, moved to confidence by the smile. "It's known in the family, but I don't speak of it outside. However, you being an old school friend and living way out west, I feel different."

The smile grew more encouraging and sympathetic.

"It's nothing that worries me—not really," said Mrs. Compton hastily. "It's just a little habit Silas has got into. When he's riled, instead of saying much he goes up to the garret and takes everything out of my old piece bag and puts it on over his head and ties it round his waist good and hard and sits there till he feels better. I suppose some folks would call that a kind of a peculiarity, but I never take any notice of it, only I tell him he's got to put the pieces back, and he does."

The Hymn Suited.

The unfortunate young man had moved his hat from place to place in the pew, but always had to move it again. His pew seemed particularly popular, and there was no abiding spot for that piece of headgear, which happened to be a shining silk hat of the most approved shape. Finally, when he was tightly wedged into one corner and there seemed to be nothing for him to do but to hold the hat tenderly on his lap for the rest of the service, he had an inspiration. The pew in front was still empty. He leaned over, gently deposited his cherished head covering on the cushioned seat and gave himself up to pious reflection. By and by the owners of that pew made a late entrance. The youth gazed at them with interest. A pretty young blond led the way, and in looking at her fair hair and blue eyes he forgot his hat. She, conscious of his gaze, blushed properly and cast down her eyes in a maidenly way. Then she sat down and there was a crushing, grinding sound. She shot up again, and so did the young man, and together they surveyed the ruins of that shining silk hat, while the choir vociferously sang "Cover my defenseless head."

The Face of Rossetti.

The Albion, a popular old London inn, if I remember rightly, was a favorite resort of Dickens. I never saw him there or indeed anywhere else, for he died before my arrival in London, but one heard of him in such resorts. I saw there but once that weird, beautiful, wayward genius, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. My recollection of him is as of a man who looked very much like a priest or a lay brother. I recall him as dressed almost entirely in black, and the black of what I may call the clerical cut and material. His sallow face, his ink dark eyes, his expressive face—all these things I recall as well as the steak and mashed potatoes over which he leaned as he talked vividly, but quietly, to his friend who was supping with him. I was struck by the face, but I had no idea who it was. It was only years after, when I saw a portrait of Rossetti, that I recalled the face that had so much struck me as it leaned over steak and mashed potatoes and knew that it was the face of one of the inspired artists and poets of my time.—London M. A. P.

POPHAM'S LITTLE FEE IS $700

Report Places It at $50 a Day, for Fourteen Days.

Fifty dollars a day, fifty great, big, hard, glittering cartwheels, was the insignificent little fee charged by Attorney G. M. Popham of Chicago for his professional services in connection with the Gebhardt murder case, if information from a seemingly reliable source is correct. This was paid by the Gebhardt brothers, who had retained him.

Popham's services for the brothers of his murdered friend extended from December 2nd until the indictment, December 16th, just two weeks, so that he carried away with him a roll of $700. Just what was paid him by the Citizens' committee before his engagement by the Gebhardt brothers has not been learned.

Christmas Trade Good.

Christmas trade this year in New Ulm has been very good, although perhaps not as large as in some former years. Some of the merchants report a better business, but others say there has been a slight falling off. The general excitement over the murder and the trial has doubtless been responsible, in a measure, for the difference. The stores this year have lines which have been better than ever before and the public has had a chance to make selections to suit any taste. The window displays in many of the stores this year have also been in advance of anything seen here before, showing taste and skill.

Bowling News.

There have been no league bowling games this week, but last week there were two games. Tuesday the Pioneers and Company A played and the former won all three games. The scores being as follows: Pioneers—730, 796, 856; Company A—701, 786, 716. Thursday the Buengers won two out of three games from the Pioneers, the scores being as follows: Buengers—811, 784, 729; Pioneers—731, 773, 819. The standing of the clubs is given below.

	Won	Lost	Percent
Haubrichs	17	10	.630
Buengers	15	12	.555
Pioneers	13	17	.433
Company A	6	12	.333

GREAT FULLBACK AS HONOR GUEST

Company A Gives Social in Honor of Current Tonight.

Earl Current, all-western fullback and captain of the Minnesota university football team for the year 1905, will be the guest of honor at a smoker and social given by company A at Turner hall tonight.

Current is a member of the company, and although he does not drill with the boys, of course, being away at school, he attends the annual encampment at Lake City every year and keeps in touch with the military spirit.

Now that he is home for the holidays his old friends wish to show him honor. There will be a brief program consisting of music and speeches, which will include one from the football player, and the evening will be given up to cards. Refreshments will be served at the proper time.

It had been planed to have a dance but it was impossible to secure the large hall.

New Ulm Stone on Exhibit.

The New Ulm Stone company is planning on an exhibit of its crushed stone product at the Good Roads convention which is to be held in St. Paul in the month of January. Manager W. C. Miller will have charge of the exhibit. The company has ordered a half dozen extra fine boxes in which to place the stone put on display. These boxes are divided into four compartments and in each one is placed one of the four grades of stone sold. The New Ulm crushed rock makes one of the finest macadamizing materials on the market and has been highly praised by engineers, contractors and others. Being a new product it has not a very wide sale yet but orders are coming in fast to be filled next year. The company expects to run its plant in full force all winter.

Wants Citizens to Keep.

The Eastern Construction company has made a proposition to the directors of the Duluth, St. Cloud, Glencoe & Mankato to build a portion of the line from Albert Lea to Mankato, a distance of fifty-two miles. The work is to be completed in one year from 1st.

The construction company proposes that citizens interested take up $200,000 of first mortgage gold bonds, and in return furnish $115,000 cash for right of way and terminals. The directors have called a meeting of persons interested to meet in Mankato Dec. 28th and will submit the proposition for their approval or rejection.