

### A Christmas Declaration of Independence

"I'm going to turn over a new leaf this year, so I am, and it's not a New Year's leaf either, but a Christmas leaf, here and now," said pretty Mrs. Perkins to herself the 1st of December. "This giving of Christmas presents has come to be such a load that I can't carry it any longer, and I won't. I shall cut off from the list of those to whom I have been giving yearly Christmas presents all except the ones whom I wish to



THOSE WHO EXPECT SOMETHING. make happy out of sheer love and good will, and I will not give to these any further than I can easily afford." Pretty Polly Perkins' reflection in

the mirror nodded and smiled back at her like a second person giving encouragement, and she went on talking to it.

"Christmas giving has been degraded into a mere favor buying, present swapping, charity bestowing, fatiguing, rivalrous, extravagant show bazaar, and we dread the very thought of its approach. I'm going to throw the whole thing over. This year I will not strain myself to give extravagant presents even to those I love.

"And the first one I cut off will be my own husband. I love him, of course I do," she said energetically, "but I have no money of my own, not a cent. When I make him a present, I have to either have the bill sent to him six months afterward or skip the price off the housekeeping or have the store bills charged up to him larger than they are to squeeze out money to buy him something handsome, when he really has all he needs now. No; John M. Perkins, Esq., we strike you off first. Then there are those four Jones cousins. They give me a bookmark or a darned up pair of slipper tops or a horrid little water color painting and expect me in return to send them each—Sarah Ann, Jemima, Maud Mary and Jane—something worth at least \$5; that makes \$20. I herewith declare my independence. I will never do it again, and I don't care what they think.

"Then there's Mrs. Bunkum, whose husband was my husband's old schoolmate. Of course we are friends, intimate friends, but I know that every year Mrs. Bunkum goes beyond her means to send me an expensive gift—silver, lace or fur or china or something—just to show me how much better off Bunkum is than my husband. I've been fool enough to nearly beggar the Perkins housekeeping for a time only to show Mrs. Bunkum how much richer my husband is than hers. I'll never do it again. I'll send her a Christmas card, not too expensive.

"Then there's the whole breed of smirking creatures with the spirit of a mental who expect something in a really blackmailing way. This year I turn them every one down. I declare my independence of them too. There's that Tom, the caretaker at the White Glove club rooms. All the rest of the year he

is so lazy and grumpy he won't even bring urgent messages to the ladies, but as the 25th of December approaches he pushes himself into your presence on every trivial pretense, rubbing his hands, grinning from ear to ear, bobbing his head fairly down to the ground and saying, 'I wish you a very merry Christmas, ma'am,' so that always I've felt fairly forced to give him some money. This year I won't. I turn down the whole crew of waiters, maids, people too lazy and thriftless to earn a good living and the vulgar, greedy ones who are always trying to get something for nothing.

"Who are left? There are the children, bless them! They are the only ones who cannot pay you back, except in affection, for your gifts, the ones who are honestly selfish and have a right to be. I must be generous to them. Then I will give what I can really afford—not a cent more—in charity. Now who's left? There's dear Susie Snow, who is wearing her coat the fourth winter so that her sister Nell can have the last year in normal school. I'll give her a pretty bonnet to make the old coat look nice. And that's all, except a few Christmas card greetings."

Mrs. Perkins did exactly what she proposed to do and had the happiest, most comfortable Christmas she had enjoyed since she was a girl.

KATE SHARP.

#### Quince Pudding.

Peel, core and quarter six or eight large, ripe quinces and simmer them gently in sufficient boiling water to cover them generously till soft, then sieve and sweeten the pulp, flavoring it to taste with lemon, ginger or cinnamon, and when cool stir into it a pint of cream and the well beaten yolks of three eggs. Edge a pie dish with puff paste, pour in the quince mixture and bake about an hour in a moderate oven. Just before it is ready pile the stiffly whipped whites of the eggs, whisked with powdered sugar and lightly flavored, and let this meringue crisp for a few minutes in the oven.

Books of an educational character are borrowed by 54.6 per cent of the readers using the West Ham (England) public libraries.

### The Giving Of Christmas Presents

THE library in the home of Mrs. Richly might easily be mistaken for a department store. It is neatly filled with all sorts of objects from a Louis XV. miniature costing a thousand dollars to a mechanical pony for little Tom Richly and half a dozen aprons for the cook. In the midst of this confusion Mrs. Richly's secretary wanders, pencil and paper in hand, trying to bring order out of chaos. Mrs. Richly herself lounges in a chair and lazily surveys operations.

"There now," she remarks, "do you think you have them all straight? I really have a score of things to attend to—and can't waste any more time over Christmas presents. What a bother Christmas is anyway! Now see that they are wrapped up nicely in that white paper and tied with pink baby ribbon. You'll find a ball of it in that piece of brown paper. And, above all, don't forget to erase the price marks and to inclose my cards."

So much for Christmas in the Richly house, a mere matter of driving around to a few shops, of having a few things charged and sent home and of making the intelligent secretary do them up and inclose the proper sentiments.

It's a little different matter in Mrs. Stingybody's household. That lady, had she been of a different sex, would doubtless have been a successful financier. Christmas with her is purely a business proposition. It means the smallest outlay possible with the largest results. For weeks Mrs. Stingybody has haunted bargain sales, where things were to be found almost as good as certain other things which they resembled and which cost twice as much. All these \$1.98 and \$2.09 articles she carefully frees from all identifying marks and then sends them out beautifully done up in pink or blue cotton batting, which costs next to nothing, in boxes bearing the names of well known "swell" stores. I forget to add that one whole closet in Mrs. Stingybody's house is devoted to these boxes, which she collects during the year. She has the list of her friends carefully marked out and each one graded according to her future usefulness. The gifts are sent accordingly.

This sounds pretty bad; but, take my word for it, there are a great many women who, consciously or otherwise, follow Mrs. Stingybody's method. Mrs. Largefamily's large family has resolved itself into a committee on



FLOWERS TO THOSE WHO CANNOT AFFORD THEM.

ways and means. Money is scarce. There is always a pair of boots or a dress to be bought when least expected, or, worse still, doctors' bills. Still family pride makes the Largefamilies give out the same number of presents every year. If they did not, they have the firm idea that their position in their little circle would be lost forever. So each of the Misses Largefamily exploits her particular talent, or, rather, the talent she fondly believes she has. Amelia paints lopsided calendars, Bessie embroiders (?) impossible centerpieces, and even little Mary steals the time from her lessons to make wabbling pin cushions. These works of art cause more than one pang of anguish among the recipients, for of course they have and kept there for a couple of months at least. However, no one has the courage to acquaint the Largefamilies with the fact that their friendship would be just as much appreciated without their gifts.

Take it all in all, I think Miss Bachelorgirl's way is the best. Her income is small, and so she doesn't try to give presents to all the people she knows in town. What she does select, though, while inexpensive, is in good taste and sure to give pleasure to the one who receives it. If she has to choose between a poor and a rich friend, the poor friend gets the present every time, and it doesn't take the form of the ugly serviceable things so many women make the mistake of giving to their less fortunate sisters. No, indeed! Miss Bachelorgirl's presents are meant to be rays of sunshine. She sends a bunch of violets to the struggling typewriter who can never afford flowers and a print of some fine old painting to make beauty in the little teacher's gloomy hall bedroom.

That is Miss Bachelorgirl's way. MAUD ROBINSON.

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WEIGHT OF THE BRAIN.

The Masculine Organ Heavier Than That of Woman.

M. Marchand has investigated the brains of 1,173 persons immediately after death. The weight of the brain is influenced by the disease. Diphtheria, for example, increases the weight. The brains of newborn boys weigh on an average 371 grains, of newborn girls 361. At the end of the first year the figures are: Boys, 967; girls, 893. By the end of the third year the weight of the brain has tripled, and from this epoch it increases very slowly, especially with girls. It attains its greatest weight at about nineteen and one-half years for men and at about seventeen for women.

The average weight of the brain of an adult male is 1,400 grams, of an adult female 1,275 grams. The reduction of weight due to senile atrophy commences with men about the eightieth year, with women about the seventieth year. We may recall for comparison the following facts: The heaviest brain on record is that of the novelist Turgenieff, 2,129 grams. One of the lightest is that of Gambetta, 1,160 grams.

The weight of the brain is thus one factor, and only one, in the comparison of different men and of different sexes.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS

Teach Them That Christ's Birthday Is Not Merely a Selfish Feast.

Is it to be all a question of gain? Is the child to grow up with the idea that Christmas means a well filled stocking, a well filled Christmas tree and often, alas, an overfilled small stomach? I am afraid that is the idea most children have of Christ's birthday. Tell the myth of Santa Claus to your children or not, just as you please, but try to instill into their young hearts a little of the true Christmas spirit. Urge them to think of the poor.

You hesitate to fill the child's mind with the sorrows of this world? Yes, but those sorrows will have to come before the little ones notice sinner or later, and why not begin right?

They have a very pretty custom in France. The children of a well to do family will have as protege a child of their own age, or perhaps several children, belonging to a deserving poor family. Long before winter sets in the more fortunate little ones begin to put away sums of money which they have earned by denying themselves goodies or for meritorious conduct. The week before Christmas the toy bank containing this is opened, and the lump sum, saved cent by cent at the cost of so much sacrifice, is devoted to buying oranges, nuts, candies and toys for the other children who otherwise would have no Christmas cheer. The elders on their part purchase warm clothes and necessities. Then the children go to the home in the tenement, accompanied by their mother or nurse, and give their presents with their own hands.

In such a manner the true spirit of Christmastide is taught to them, and they grow up, like their fathers and mothers, generous, pitiful and tender toward the poor.

HELEN CLIFTON.

Street gowns are stitched in conventional patterns.

SOME RAPID TRAVELERS.

Light is the Record Holder, Electricity Second.

The fastest traveler known is light, which flashes through space at the rate of 186,300 miles a second. It covers a distance equal to seven and a half times the circumference of the earth while one can count four.

Electricity ranks next in speed to light. Under the most favorable circumstances its velocity is the same as that of light, but in practical telegraphy, says a writer in the Philadelphia Record, owing to resistance which it has to overcome, it lags a little behind light.

Comets sometimes travel pretty fast. When they are at a great distance from the sun, toward which they are drawn by its attraction, they jog along rather leisurely, but as they approach the sun they move faster and faster, like a wheel which is rolling down a hill, and if they pass very close to the sun they may whisk by it at a speed of more than 300 miles a second.

The earth travels in its orbit round the sun at the rate of over eighteen miles a second. Meteors sometimes plunge into the earth's atmosphere with a velocity of over forty miles a second, and many of the stars are known to be traveling in various directions even more rapidly than that.

Sound travels in water 4,900 feet in one second, in air 1,090 feet. A mine ball leaves the muzzle of the rifle with a speed of 1,200 feet a second. A cannon ball may start on its flight with a speed anywhere from 700 to 2,000 feet a second, according to the size of the gun.

Rainwater Good if You Like It.

"When a man gets used to drinking rainwater," said a New Orleans man to the Washington Post, "there is no other water in the world that tastes so good. Most of the people in New Orleans have cisterns in their yards which hold an abundant supply of water caught from the clouds, the purest and best in the world, according to my notion. The winter rainfall alone is used, the summer catch not being desirable. It is somewhat curious that in northern latitudes the cistern water does not keep wholesome and sweet as it does in our country."

SAVED CENT BY CENT.