

Dave Arnold's Christmas

"Six years ago I, Dave Arnold, was in the ruck; just one of the great crowd who sweated away their days for a weekly wage that any one of you would give for a good dinner. My overalls were just as greasy, my hands as grimy as those of any toiler who turned out from the works at the clang of the bell. The difference lay in the fact that they, with a Union behind them that guaranteed work, were content with their lot, while I, with the excitement of something that dimly was shaping itself in my mind, was not. A happy inspiration had set my brain at work on the evolution of a labor-saving machine that, could I perfect it, would revolutionize an existing process and make me a rich man.

"Step by step, as I worked at the problem nightly in my garret, the way became clearer. Every hour made its possibility more apparent. Slowly the model grew beneath my hands until one night I went to sleep, successful and exultant. Theoretically it was sound. To prove it so in practice could only be done by actual experiment.

"I was a poor man. I had no means whatever of patenting the invention. But I was not to be deterred. The reward of my endeavor was at my finger ends, and I meant to grasp it. Seizing the first opportunity I approached the principal and requested an interview. My shopmates eyed me askance as I followed him to his office, for I was not popular.

"Inside his room I told him of my discovery. At first he was frankly incredulous. Was I not but an ordinary mechanic? It was impossible that such a man could have achieved this wonderful thing! I read his veiled distrust and my face flushed beneath the grime. I told him as much as was polite until an understanding had been arranged, and saw his expression change. My earnestness of manner impressed him. The possibility of success made him tolerant. Before I had finished he was half convinced of its practicability. I left him with the promise that he would place the necessary power and materials at my disposal, and I should have a corner of the shop partitioned off in which to erect the machine, conditionally that if it succeeded he had the option of acquiring it.

"Next morning the work commenced. From the first the men evidenced their feelings in no uncertain manner. It galled them to think that I, under the favor of the head, had climbed above them and that they were, at least for the time, at my beck.

"Regardless of it all I pursued my course. Day and night I labored on to perfect the machine. The fever that consumed me allowed me scarce time for sleep. As the idea took shape under my hands a growing anxiety kept me chained by it. The open threats of the men and the fear of its destruction bade me guard it zealously, and the chief, convinced by the manifest signs of discontent, gave me permission to sleep in the shop. For three weeks I never passed beyond the gates, and the only creature who entered my shop beside myself was the little chap who brought my meals.

"He was a bright little fellow—the son of a widow with whom I lodged. When the great works, save for that one bright corner, were wrapped in gloom, his signal at the window which overlooked the canal at the rear of the premises would gain him admittance.

"One night about the time I was anticipating his visit, a gentle knock came at the door of my room. Knowing that the works, save for myself, were deserted, my hand stole to the revolver I had thought it advisable to purchase.

"Who's there?" I shouted.
"Me!" came back the childish treble. Laughing at my fears, I unlocked the door and sternly bade him tell me how he had gained admission.

"I thought I'd surprise yer," he said, gleefully. "You see where the cut comes into the works there's a ledge under the bridge. I come round to-night."

"Gently I rebuked him, warning him of the danger of a slip. He protested his competence to do it on his hands, and the incident ended in a mutual laugh.

"During those three weeks two attempts were made to incapacitate me. The first, presumably an acci-

dent, I ignored. The second was so flagrant that I was compelled, for my own protection, to report it, and the perpetrator—my erstwhile foreman—was summarily dismissed. That afternoon—it was Christmas Eve—a deputation of the most violent among the malcontents called me out and delivered their ultimatum.

"Rumor of the purpose for which my invention was intended had leaked out; and the blind fools imagined that it would rob them of their means of livelihood. Deaf to reason, they showered upon me taunts and curses, and finally left after allotting me twenty-four hours in which to make up my mind.

"Twenty-four hours! Why, yes, I could have no objection to that, for by the Christmas night my work would be ended. The machine stood in the room merely requiring the finishing touches. An adjustment here, an alteration of the gear there, and it would be ready for the test. Oh, yes, they might come on the morrow night if they chose. I would desist willingly enough.

"All through that night and late into the Christmas Day I labored like a man possessed. Oblivious to everything but my work I strove on, and when at last I threw down the wrench and staggered back to feast my eyes upon its perfection before applying the power my trembling legs could scarce support my body. For the last hour my lips had been uttering foolish confidences to it. Reeling into the darksome workshop I started the gas-engine and, racing back, pulled over the lever. The belt slid gently on the pulley, and on the instant the machine sprang into being.

"I had done it! Intoxicated with success I danced irrationally around it, gloating over the wonder of its action. I can remember laughing aloud at the ease with which it accomplished its purpose; and then, with the laugh on my lips, came a stunning blow on the back of my head, and after that—darkness!

"I came back to consciousness to find myself in a strange position. My legs were tied together, my arms were trussed behind my back, and I stood erect, supported by a pendant rope which had been passed under my arms, looking down on the dimly-illuminated workshop from what seemed to me a raised platform beneath my feet. When I tried to move my swimming head, I discovered that a chain had been looped round my neck.

"Below me stood two men, whom I recognized as the discharged foreman and one of his deputation. Terror-stricken I stood, wondering at their intent, and involuntarily a great groan burst from my lips.

"A merry Christmas, Mr. Inventor!" burst out one of them, with a drunken laugh. "You hardly expected us, did you? Now listen to me, you dog. Listen to the mon you kicked out of the place he's worked at since a lad, for by th' Lord Harry it'll be the last speech ye'll ever hear on this earth. We come 'ere th' night to stop this thing gooin' on. We'm late. But, curse 'ee! we'm none too late to finish 'ee. That machine o' yours shall send 'ee to perdition!"

"Let me tell 'ee now how yo' stand," he went on, thickly. "Under thy feet, lad, is th' gas-holder, an' round thy neck is the chain o' the travelling crane. We'm agoin' to start the engine. . . . Yo' know what that means. When Jim 'ere cuts that rope which is about thy infernal body thee's three links of chain atween you an' the hanging yo' deserve. Yo' shall hear that machine o' yours a-runnin' merrily, an' know that ivery whirr of its wheels is tightening the chain round thy neck and draggin' 'ee nearer to death."

"For a brief instant, as I realized their horrible intention, my heart's pulsations seemed to stop. The next, I was straining at the rope like a madman.

"Cut it, Jim!" he laughed, "an' see the fool hang 'is blessed self!" His words arrested my struggling and, even as the rope was severed, I stood inert. The least movement now would tighten the chain and make an end. Springing to the engine the pair set it running, and the cogs in my machine started off with a whiff. The blaspheming wretches stood glaring up at me for a moment; then, as I shrieked aloud in mortal terror, with a final burst of mocking laughter they were gone.

"Again and again I shrieked, but only the echoes of my screams rang through the great workshop.

"I was on a telescopic gas-holder. The engine was absorbing the gas. The holder would gradually sink beneath my feet. How long would those links give me? How long would it be before I felt the chain gripping my throat, tighter, even tighter, until it lifted me from my

feet and strangled me? How long? Merciful heavens! How long?

"The inexorable whirr of the machine maddened my brain. The rhythmical explosion of the gas seemed to be ticking off my spell of life. I tried to calculate the capacity of four inches of the holder and check my minutes by the quantity necessary to drive the engine per hour. But it was useless. My brain refused to act. A jumble of figures swam confusedly in my head.

"My legs threatened to give way. The thought that if I lost control but for a second I was doomed calmed me. Gradually I dropped into a coma—the coma of despair—and one by one the loose links tightened on the chain.

"Wild-eyed and mad with the torture, I stood there waiting for death. Suddenly the last link jerked into line, and as I felt the pressure beneath my ear a hoarse scream burst from my lips. As the echo of it died away I thought I heard an answering cry. Surely my brain was fooling me! And yet . . . it came again . . . a childish halloo. . . .

"Great heavens! It was the boy. He had come by way of the ledge. Running into the shop he gazed around him bewilderedly.

"Willie!" I whispered, hoarsely. He could not hear me, and the chain was even then lifting my heels from their support. Moistening my lips with my tongue, I cried his name again. He looked up. He saw me and, with a startled cry, came slowly forward.

"The engine!" I whispered. "Pull that handle down, quickly!" He grasped my meaning and flew to the engine room. Clambering on to a box, he managed to reach the lever, and, pulling it down, shut off the inflow of the gas. The engine slowed; the explosions came less frequent, and, at last, the great fly-wheel stopped dead. Running back, he looked up into my face with wide, staring eyes.

"That piece of wood, Willie," I muttered. "Get up here, and push it under me." He understood. Clambering up with difficulty, he thrust it carefully beneath my feet.

"Taking his knife from his pocket he hacked away at the bonds that secured my arms. Presently the ropes fell away, and, lifting them, I managed to remove the loop from about my neck, to collapse the next instant a shuddering heap at the boy's feet. He bent solicitously over me and cut away the ropes from my legs.

"And then, with a great choking cry of heartfelt thanks to Heaven, I twined my arms round his neck and kissed his face again and again."

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

Notwithstanding the fact that to the philosophical mind Christmas is a great comedy of errors in which the actors go about purchasing ornaments for those who want utilities, utilities for those who want ornaments, and both for those who want neither, there is something about the Christmas spirit that time cannot wither or custom stale.

The impediment, as Emerson says, lies in the choosing, and the holiday reform that is so devoutly desired by some Christmas sociologists ought to be directed towards the assistance of the chooser rather than towards the abolishment of the giver. To choose a gift wisely is to understand the human heart. The dark, unfathomed corners of closets and bureau drawers bear testimony to the number of gifts, the smoking jackets and shaving cases, for which the recipients blushed unseen and the oceans of perfume destined to waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Yet, in spite of this fact, the true gift giver is not to be daunted by misfits or misapplied extracts, and "some shape of disgruntled recipient. In giving, Emerson says, a ray of beauty outvalues any utility, though he admits that the necessity of the prospective recipient is an aid to the gift giver, "since, if the man at my door is without shoes, I have not to consider whether I shall give him a paint box." The holiday pessimist believes that modern gift giving consists in giving paints to the shoeless and shoes to the lover of paint, but the blessedness of giving shines through all such errors and makes the Christmas spirit more eager with the coming of each year.

And there are girls who dislike being kissed—by the wrong fellow.

Pound Cake.—One pound butter, one pound sugar, one pound flour, nine eggs, the grater rind and juice of one lemon. Beat the sugar and butter to a light cream; add the yolks (beaten light), the lemon, then the whites (beaten to a stiff froth), and, lastly, the flour. Bake slowly.

CHRISTMAS SECRETS.

You musn't look in corners,
And you musn't hear a sound,
Because a flock of secrets
Is flying all around.

They'll perch upon the Christmas-trees
When weary of their flight,
Or they'll build their nests in stockings
In the middle of the night.

But catch them Christmas morning—
For dear old Santa sends
In every one a sweet surprise
To his loving little friends.

YULETIDE WISHES.

We wish you a merry Christmas
While the joy bells sweetly ring,
With happiest hearts and voices
Praise we our Heavenly King.

Let us join in the song of angels
With its "peace on earth, good will,"
While the star which has shone for ages
Our hearts and our bosoms thrill.

May the peace which passes knowledge
All hearts this Christmas tide
Fill full, and its joyous message
For aye with us abide.

FOR CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS.

As Christmas approaches and you prepare your gift list, resolve:
To buy no present that you cannot afford.

To give no present that you would rather keep yourself.

To send no present that might as well be labeled at once R. R.—"Receive and Reciprocate."

To remember that the shop girl is human and not a machine.

To do your shopping as early as possible.

To shop only as much as you have strength for, so that when Christmas comes you won't be "just tired to death."

To make up your mind as far as possible what you want to buy, and about how much you can spend, before you enter a shop.

To keep your temper always.

To observe the law of suitability in giving of presents; why send the poorest of your friends a fifty-cent present and almost break yourself by spending as many dollars for a gift for the woman whose life is a regular cake walk of luxuries?

To remember that painstaking care exercised in the choice of a gift is an evidence of love on the part of the donor.

To be happy as you can and make others as happy as you can.

To remember your sick or sorrowful friend.

To realize that it is useless to expect a merry Christmas if you have to face the New Year in a financial condition verging upon bankruptcy.

To try, when buying the doll for your own little girl, to get one that some poor child can hug to its warm little heart.

To remember that children never forget their early Christmas days, and it is worth a sacrifice to make them so full of joy that in after years the memory of them shall be a precious possession gilding all their childhood.

To bear in mind and never lose sight of these facts:

That the keynote of Christmas is giving, not getting; that generosity is false when it is forced; that barter and exchange are not giving; that Christmas will be truly happy to us just in proportion that we bring happiness to others; that the very first Christmas gifts of all were laid at the feet of a child of the poor.

TWO CHRISTMAS CANDIES.

To make opera creams take two cups of sugar, three-fourths of a cup of sour cream, three-fourths of a cup of broken walnut meats, one teaspoon of vanilla, a pinch each of cream of tartar and salt. Mix sugar, cream of tartar, sour cream and salt. Cook on the back of stove, stirring carefully to remove all grains. When the mixture is perfectly smooth, move to the front of the stove and boil about five minutes, or until a soft ball is formed, when a few drops are put into cold water. Remove from the fire and beat until a cream is formed, then add nuts and flavoring. Pour, cool, and cut into squares.

For Sultana Chocolates.—Soak over night a small amount of the best sultana raisins in a little French Brandy. Work plain fondant with the fingers until it is soft and creamy and flavor slightly with vanilla. Mold the fondant into small round balls with a raisin in the middle of each. Let these centres stand until the outside is dry and firm, then dip into melted bitter chocolate and drop on wax paper.

CHRISTMAS "DONTs."

Woman Tells of Pitfalls to be Avoided by Sterner Sex.

A woman correspondent to the London Daily Mail gives the following advice to men:

"Why should Christmas depression be monopolized by men," she asks, "when women are troubling their hearts about the harrowing surprises which await them on Christmas morning in the shape of presents from their menfolk?"

"The following don't should be learned by heart:

"Don't go into a fashionable milliner's and order the most expensive hat she can make. A woman would rather have a 30 cent model that suits her than a \$25 one that does not.

"Don't buy gloves of the size 'she' confesses to. Be on the safe side and order half a size larger.

"Don't buy her a jet necklace because your grandmother used to wear one. 'She' is not your grandmother, and she likes something that sparkles.

"Don't buy your wife an improving book on 'How to Keep House on 50 cents a week.' The house-keeping bills will increase if you do.

"Don't buy the baby a new frock and call it a Christmas present for your wife. She intended to make you buy that frock after Christmas.

"Don't get 'something useful for the house.' She cannot rid herself of the impression that it is six for her and half a dozen for yourself.

"Don't buy your fiancée a mistletoe brooch, and then be furious if other men endeavor to follow an ancient custom.

"Don't buy 'her' skates if she can't skate. She will expect you to teach her.

"Don't be too proud to take these 'don'ts' from a mere woman."

THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

Far back in the mists of antiquity, historians find various nations that celebrated the birth of the new year with feasts and adornments of evergreen, holly and mistletoe. The early Christians adopted some of the customs of the early ages, this among others. It is wise to keep the birthday of the Prince of Peace as a festival, that around it may cluster our most halloved associations. It is the time for all that is good and beautiful to be cherished anew; for the giving of good gifts and good wishes. It is the time for broken links to be mended, for strife to be forgotten, for kind words and deeds, and for sweet forgiveness. It is the time for those who have wealth to think of the poor and needy; of the homes where the Christmas guests will be only want and care; where there is no hope in the heart and no light in the house.

Those who are in sheltered homes surrounded by all that makes life beautiful and glad, upon whom rich gifts are lavished, should think deeply of these things this Christmastide.

The coming of Christmas to the children is an event looked forward to with undisguised delight. Their belief in Santa Claus, and a host of other juvenile myths, recalls our own juvenile interest in bygone days. It is a beautiful belief, and there is no need to destroy it. The practical duties of life will all too soon dispel the illusion. The romantic, the fairy-like, the unreal Christmas lore of all nations has furnished substance for brush and pen from time immemorial. It lingers with us of adult years like a pleasing dream, and serves to keep our hearts younger and fresher, and more alive with human sympathy.

On Tuesday the Christmas chimes will peal from ocean to ocean, and will fill this great continent with one grand swell of melody. Glad ringers will pull the ropes, and Christmas with its wonder, its sweetness, and its mystery, will burst upon us once more. The full choir and the organ's diapason will fill the churches with triumphant beauty and harmony. The choral melodies pealing far and near bring to humanity the force of the meaning of the word Christmas—"Christ-mas." How blessedly ring out the strains "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," most beautiful and blessed because it is everywhere the Day of our Lord.

Christmas is here. Heart touching, joy-bringing Christmas, day of days, natal day of the Saviour, and our tempestate pulses throb with quickened life and the promise and potency, of the future, when to the ends of the earth will be felt the "Good-will" in the sacred promise.