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The..... Laird's Secret

CHAPTER XXIV.

After the calm came storm. When Marjorie awakened in the morning, she heard the wind whistling angrily from the sea, and felt the old castle shake to its very foundations.

She lay for a while listening to the sound, thinking of the many occasions during her childhood when she had lain there quaking with fear while the storm raged angrily without. Then she sliped from her bed, drew aside the window-curtains, and looked out. The prospect was desolate, indeed; a second winter seemed to have set in, for snow was falling heavily.

But if the prospect without was dreary, the old castle could be made cosy enough within. When Marjorie descended to the dining-room, she found a fire blazing half up the chimney, a table holding the breakfast things standing close by, and near to the table, Donald respectfully awaitig her commands.

"Breakfast is ready and piping hot in the kitchen, Miss Marjorie," said the old man, when the girl apeared.

"All right; bring it in Donald," said Marjorie, smiling, as she went over to the fire, and extended her hands to the blaze.

The old man opened his eyes as he looked at her. When he reached the kitchen he said to his wife—

"Eh, woman! Miss Marjorie is her-sel again, for her face was just shining like the summer sun!"

And the old man was right. When Marjorie had finished her breakfast and was comfortably seated in an easy-chair before the sitting-room fire, she caught the reflection of her face in the glass, and started with wonder at herself. Never before had she seen such a light in her eyes, such a smile about her lips. In a few short hours she had blossomed into another being, because, forsooth, her spirit had been startled by the May-music of love. Yes, the tune was begun, and the dance of life was begining, although she herself was not aware of the fact. When on the previous day she had listened to the young man's audacious confession, she had done so almost without a blush, certainly without confusion. She had been stunned, as it were, by the novelty of the thing, and then before she had time to recover herself, he had left her, and now it snddenly awoke. At first she wondered why the young man's bold words had not angered her; now she ceased to think at all, but sat before the fire in a kind of a trance, looking into his face. Yes; for there it was, bright and bonnie, gazat her from the flame of the brightly blazing fire. After a long study of it, Marjorie turned to the window, and looked out over the barren moor.

"I am not sorry the storm has come," she said. "I must bide in the house."

For the whole day the storm continued, and during that time Marjorie never once left the Castle. There had been times—and not so very far back either—when during such weather she would have wrapped herself in an ulster, buttoned on thick boots, and braved both wind and snow; but now she kept to the house, wandering like a restless spirit from room to room, or sat dreaming by the fire. Not that she feared the storm, but she dreaded to go forth, lest by some unlucky accident she might be brought face to face with the stranger, whom she felt now quite ashamed to meet.

But much as she might try to fly from her fate, it pursued her. On the third day, when the wind had died down and the snow had ceased to fall, the young man came boldly up and knocked at the Castle door.

Marjorie saw him coming; for she was standing at the dining-room window. When he came up the snow-clad avenue, he saw her and took off his hat. At sight of him a chilly nervous feeling, which she believed to be anger, took posession of her; but she did not move, and the next moment the door of the dining-room was opened and the young man was ushered in.

He came forward with his old frank smile, and held forth his hand. When Marjorie gave him hers, it trembled, and was very cold.

"My personality is effaced for the time being," he said; I am Mr. Macgillvray's mesenger."

"Did he send you?"

"He did. At the same time I was very glad to come. I wanted to see you."

She withdrew her hand coldly, and he continued—

"Don't freeze up; I am not going to tread on forbidden ground; and that is to say, I won't wander over it too much. When I left you the other day, I promised not to open up one subject of conversation again. Well, I want to refer to it just once more, and then I've done. May I?"

"What do you want to say?"

"Only this. I want you to forget what I said that day, or, if you can't do that, just think of it as the ravings of a madman. Guess I wasn't quite myself that day. I had been dreaming among the hills when you came upon me, and I said things that I shouldn't have said if I had been in my natural state of mind. Men are queer cattle, and sometimes, when nature takes hold of them, I guess they do queer things. Well, nature had taken hold of me that day, and made a fool."

Marjorie did not answer. True, if she had been asked to decide the kind of speech which the young fellow should have made to her, it would have been couched in much the same terms; yet now that it came it did not bring her very much satisfaction.

"I want you to look upon me just as you look upon our old friend the Hermit," continued the young fellow. "To let me help you through with the work you've got to do, and carry your friendship with me right away back to the States."

"Are you going away?" said Marjorie.

"Well, yes; but I want you to be friends with me while I am here. Will you?"

"Yes, of course," returned the girl. "I hope we are friends."

"Well, that's all settled; and now for Mr. Macgillvray's message. He is very much concerned about you, and wants to know how you got on during the storm?"

"I got on very well," returned Marjorie, laughing. "What did he think could happen to me?"

"Don't know; perhaps he thought the Castle might come down. It's old enough, isn't it?"

"It is very old and it shakes a good deal when the wind blows; but it's quite safe."

"I suppose you have been shut up in it for the last few days?"

"Yes."

"And didn't you find it dull?"

"No, I like to be alone."

"It seems to agree with you at any rate. I can tell Mr. Macgillvray that."

But he did not seem in a great hurry to get back to the cave. He lingered for fully an hour, when, at last he went away.

This visit was only a prelude to many others. For some unaccountable reason, Willie the Hermit became strangely uneasy about Marjorie's health; and as Roberts seemed to be the only messenger he conld employ, the young man was seen to wend his way almost daily to Satle Linne. Indeed so regular had his visits become, that Marjorie had grown to look for them, and spent a very restless day indeed when the Canadian failed to appear. Constant intercourse cemented their friendship; and instead of biding him sit sedately in the room like an ordinary visitor, Marjorie would show him over the Castle, or, taking him to the library, give him free access to the few books left by the laird. He seemed strangely interested in all this, and at times, too, he would manifest no little cemotion when Marjorie talked of the departed. When the girl spoke of her dead friend, there was such infinite tenderness in her voice that it almost made the young fellow feel sympathetic towards him too. At any rate it was pleasant to listen to Marjorie, no matter of what she was talking; and these daily visits to the Castle soon became the one thing that to the Canadian made life worth living.

The forbidden subject had never again been broached, but Roberts thought of it night and day. Perhaps, too, it was the memory of that wan face the lake side which made these visits so pleasant to Marjorie.

So the time sped on, until one day Marjorie, who had taken no account of the flight of the days, was startled from her new-found happiness. A letter came from Edward Linne, announcing his speedy return, and expressing a hope that Marjorie would be glad to see him. Startled and pained, Marjorie suddenly remembered the relative positions of herself and Linne, and felt like a criminal.

She was truly on the horns of a dilemma, and she was resolved to carry her troubles straight to the only man in whom she dared to confide. The moment breakfast was over, therefore, she ordered Brawnet to be sadled, and mounting on his back, she rode straight to Willie's Macgillvray's cave. She found the old man at home, and he gave her a cordial welcome. He saw at once that something was the matter.

"Is there anything wrong, Marjorie?"

She shook her head.

"Nothing wrong, but I had a letter this morning saying that Mr. Edward is coming back."

"Weel, don't fash your head about that, lassie. It's the limmer's home."

"I'm not troubling about it, but about myself, Mr. Macgillvray."

"Yourself, my doo?"

"Yes; for I know what he will do when he returns. He will want to carry out my guardian's wish."

"And marry him?"

"Yes," said Marjorie with a sigh.

"Weel, it's easy to do."

"It is not so easy," said Marjorie, trembling. "I don't think I can marry Mr. Edward."

"Then leave the earle alone; that's easier still." But Marjorie shook her head.

"That's not easy, either," she said; and Willie lughed, and replied that women seemed to be ever crying for the moon, though they didn't want it.

Presently Marjorie went back to the Castle to think it over again, and to try if her own brain could not devise some means of getting out of the dilemma. Since Willie Macgillvray would not help her she had no one; for it was utterly impossible for her to discuss this subject with the younger man. So she puzzled her brains day and night. At last she hit upon a plan which she believed would give general satisfaction.

Delighted with her idea, she resolved to communicate it at once to her friend the Hermit. It was wonderful what satisfacaion the newly-discovered plan gave her. She hurriedly threw on her hat and cloak, and prepared to set out. As she opened the door, she found herself face to face with Roberts, who stood outside, and who was just about to knock.

He seemed astonished to see her; he was still more astonished at the state of the hall. All the furniture was piled here and there about it as if for a "lifting."

"Why, what is the matter?" he said.

"Mr. Edward is coming home."

"Oh, that's it, is it? And when is his lordship expected?"

"On Saturday," was the reply.

"On which date I suppose my visits here must cease. Well, all pleasures must cease some time, Miss Marjorie; but I shan't lose sight of you altogether, that is some comfort. Where are you going now?"

"To Mr. Macgillvray. I have something very important to say to him."

"Shall I walk there with you and leave you to the tender mercies of the old man, or would you rather go alone?"

Marjorie smiled quite frankly and replied—

"No; I do not wish to go alone."

Having thus obtained permission to accompany her, he walked along by her side.

(To be Continued.)

LEADING MARKETS

BREADSTUFFS.

Toronto, Dec. 19.—Wheat—Ontario—Steady, 79c to 79½c for No. 2 white at outside points, 78c to 79c for red and mixed, and 74c to 75c for spring and goose.

Wheat—Manitoba—Prices are 86c for No. 1 northern and 83c for No. 2 at lake ports.

Flour—Ontario—Exporters bid only $3.10 for 90 per cent. patents at outside points in buyers' bags. Sales for domestic use are made at $3.45 to $3.55. Manitoba—$4.50 to $4.80 for first patents, $4.30 to $4.40 for seconds, and $4.20 to $4.30 for bakers'.

Millfeed—Ontario bran in car lots firm, $14.50 to $15 at outside points, shorts $16 to $17. Manitoba $16.50 to $17.50 for bran, and $18.50 to $19.50 for shorts at Toronto and equal freight points.

Oats—Quiet at 35c to 36c at outside points.

Barley—49c to 50c for No. 2, 47c to 48c for No. 3 extra, and 45c to 46c for No. 3 at outside points.

Rye—Dull at 70c outside.

Peas—Firm at 77c to 78c at outside points.

Buckwheat—Quiet at 51c to 52c outside.

Corn — New Canadian 44c asked Chatham freights, bids 42c. American No. 3 yellow 51c to 52c at Toronto, and 2c to 3c more at outside points, according to freights.

Rolled Oats—$5.25 in barrels, and $5 in bags on track here, 25c more for broken lots here and 40c outside.

COUNTRY PRODUCE.

Butter—Quotations are unchanged.

Creamery	24c to 25c
do solids	23c to 24c
Dairy lb. rolls, good to choice	21c to 22c
do tubs	21c to 22c
do medium	20c to 21c
do inferior	19c to 20c

Cheese—13c for large and 13½c for twins.

Eggs—Fresh are quoted at 23c and limed at 21c.

Poultry—Fat chickens 8c to 10c, thin 7 to 8c; fat hens 7c to 8c, thin 6c to 5c; ducks 10c to 11c, thin 6c to 8c; geese 9c to 10c; turkeys, 14c to 15c.

Potatoes—Ontario stock quoted at 75c on track here, and 75c to 85c out of store; eastern stock 80c to 85c, and 90c to 95c out of store.

Baled Hay—$8 to $8.50 per ton for No. 1 timothy in car lots here, and $6 to $6.50 for No. 2.

Baled Straw—$6 per ton for car lots on track here.

MONTREAL MARKETS.

Montreal, Dec. 19.—There was a demand by cable for Manitoba wheat, but bids have declined, and are now about one cent out of line. Business this morning was very quiet. No change in coarse grains. No change in the flour market. The market for millfeed is firm, bran being particularly strong. Oats, No. 2 white 39c to 39½c; No. 3, 38c to 38½c; No. 4 37c to 37½c peas, 70c to 76c f. o. b. per bushel; barley, Manitoba, No. 3, 48c; No. 4 46½c.

Flour—Manitoba spring wheat patents $4.90 to $5; stronk bakers', $4.40 to $4.60, winter wheat patents, $4.25 to $4.50; straight rollers, $4 to $4.10; do., in bags, $1.85 to $1.95; extras $1.65 to $1.75.

Millfeed—Manitoba bran in bags, $17; shorts $20 per ton; Ontario bran in bulk, $14.50 to $15; shorts, $20; milled mouille, $21 to $24; straight grain mouille, $25 to $27 per ton.

Rolled Oats—Per bag, $2.40 to $2.50.

Cornmeal—$1.45 to $1.50 per bag.

Hay—No. 1, $8.50 to $9; No. 2, $7.50 to $8; clover mixed, $6 to $6.50, and pure clover, $6 per ton in car lots.

Cheese—Ontario cheese are quoted at 12½c to 13c, and Quebecs at 12¼c to 12½c. Receipts 1,088 boxes.

Butter—Choice creamery is quoted at 23½c to 23½c, and 23½c to 24c in single packages, second grades selling at 23¾c to 24¼c.

Eggs—25c for selected and 21c to 22c for No. 1 candled.

BUFFALO MARKETS.

Buffalo, Dec. 19. — Flour — Quiet, steady. Wheat—Spring, nominal; No. 1 Northern, 91⅞c; Winter, unsettled. Corn—Dull and weak; No. 2 yellow, 50½c; No. 2 corn, 49¾c. Oats—Dull; No. 2 white 36½c; No. 2 mixed, 35½c. Barley, strong; malting, 46c to 58c. Rye—Dull and weak; No. 1 75c.

NEW YORK WHEAT MARKET.

New York, Dec. 19. — Wheat—Spot easy; No. 2 red 92⅞c elevator; No. 2 red, 94⅞c f.o.b. afloat; No. 1 northern, Duluth, 95⅝c f.o.b. afloat; No. 1 hard, Manitoba, nominal f.o.b. afloat.

CATTLE MARKET.

Toronto, Dec. 19.—A heavy run of stock was offering at the Western Market this morning, but a keen demand in all lines kept prices well up, while in some cases, notably export cattle, they were higher. Trading was brisk throughout.

Export Cattle—Choice are quoted at $4.50 to 4.80, good to medium at $4 to $4.40, others at $3.75 to $4, bulls at $3.50 to $4, and cows at $2.75 to $2.50.

Butcher Cattle—Picked lots $4 to $4.50, good to choice $3.75 to $3.90, fair to good $3.20 to $3.60, common $2.50 to $3, cows $2 to $2.75, bulls $1.75 to $2.25, and canners $1.75 to $2.50. Christmas cattle $4.75 to $5.25.

Stockers and Feeders—Short keep feeders are quoted at $3.60 to $4, good feeders at $3.40 to $3.65, medium at $2.50 to $3.30, bulls at $2 to $2.75, good stockers run at $2.80 to $3.50, rough to common at $2 to $2.70, and bulls at $1.75 to $2.50.

Milch Cows—Prices are quoted unchanged at $30 to $60 each.

Calves—$2 to $10 each and 3½c to 6c per pound.

Sheep and Lambs—$4 to $4.30 per cwt. and bucks and culls at $3 to $3.50. Lambs at $5.50 to $6.

Hogs—Selects are quoted at $6.37½ per cwt. and lights and fats at $6.12½.

HE HAD IT.

Pat—"The throuble wid Dugan is he has no backbone."

Mike—"Faith he has backbone enough if he'd only bring it to the front."

Christmas Dinner

Oyster Soup—Strain all the liquor from 2 qts. oysters, add to it 1 cup hot water, and let it come to a boil. Season to taste and add 2 tablespoons, butter and the oysters; cook until the edges of the oysters begin to curl, then stir in 1 qt. boiling milk, and serve at once with thin brown bread and butter sandwiches.

Roast Turkey with Chestnut Stuffing—Prepare the turkey for roasting in the usual manner. Make a stuffing by the following rule: Cook half tablespoon finely minced onion with 3 tablespoons butter for five minutes. Add quarter lb. sausage meat stripped of the skin, 1 dozen finely chopped mushrooms, and 1 cup boiled and mashed chestnuts. Season with salt and pepper and 1 teaspoon minced parsley. Heat the mixture, add half cup bread crumbs, and two doz. whole French chestnuts which have been boiled and skinned. Let the stuffing become partially cold before using it. Stuff the turkey, truss it, rub it with soft butter, sprinkle with flour, salt and pepper, and pour one pt. boiling water into the pan. Have the oven very hot the first 20 minutes, then moderate the heat, and bake until tender and richly browned. Baste frequently with melted butter and hot water. The turkey will look much more festive if served on a bed of parsley and garnished with bright red cranberries. Serve the currant jelly in cubes (formed with a spoon), and the cranberry sauce in diamonds. At an informal, although very charming dinner, last Thanksgiving, where it was desirable to avoid trouble in serving, small plates at each cover held a block each of cranberry and crabapple jelly, a tender stalk of celery and a couple of olives. These were in place when the dinner was annouced, and formed a very pleasing note in the color scheme of the decorations.

Whipped Potatoes—Pare and boil the potatoes until tender, drain very dry, mash thoroughly, add 1 cup hot cream or milk, salt and paprika to taste, and the stiffly whipped white of 1 egg. Whip quickly with a fork until very white and light, and serve immediately.

Baked Squash—The squash may be baked the day before, and reheated for dinner. Add a little sweet cream if very dry.

Scalloped Onions—Boil the onions until tender in two waters, the last one slightly salted, drain very dry, season with salt and paprika to taste, and chop rather fine. Place with fine bread crumbs in alternate layers in a buttered pudding dish, having little bits of butter between each layer. Cover the top with buttered crumbs, pour over 1 cup milk which has been cooked until slightly thickened with 2 teaspoons cornstarch, and bake in a moderate oven for 20 minutes.

Apple and Walnut Salad—Mix equal quantities of broken walnut meats and diced apples (pared), marinate with a French dressing, place in rosy apple cups, put a spoonful of mayonnaise on top of each and serve on individual plates. The apples must not be prepared until just before they are to be served, as they will quickly discolor. If necessary to have them in readiness beforehand, put them in cold water, and put a plate over them to keep them entirely covered. When wanted, drain, and dry gently on a towel. Cover the wafers with grated cheese, dust with paprika, and place in a moderate oven for ten minutes.

Pumpkin Pie—Stir into 1 qt. boiling milk 1 pt. well stewed and strained pumpkin. Let it scald a minute, then add 1½ cups sugar, 4 well beaten eggs, half teaspoon salt, 1 even tablespoon each of ground cinnamon and ginger, a little grated nutmeg and 1 tablespoon molasses. Bake in a deep pie tin lined with good paste. This recipe will make rich, delicious pumpkin pies.

Cranberry Tart—Line a pie plate with good paste, fill with jellied cranberries, and twist narrow strips of the paste across the top to leave diamond shaped spaces. Put another narrow strip around the edge, and bake in a good oven to a delicate brown.

Iced Plum Pudding—Make a rich chocolate custard, and freeze as for any other ice cream. Steam half cup each of seeded raisins and currants until plump, mix with half cut citron sliced thin, half cup candied cherries cut in half, and half cup candied apricots cut in dice. Preserved fruits may be used if more convenient. Moisten the candied fruits with strong lemonade, and let stand until soft. Then drain, and mix with the frozen cream, turn the dasher a few minutes longer to thoroughly mix in the fruit. When frozen very hard, pack in a mold, and bury in ice and salt for at least two hours. Turn out carefully, and serve any rich fruit syrup, or with a half-frozen pineapple sherbet piled around the pudding. Have the dish for the pudding thoroughly chilled before turning the pudding out. This iced pudding will be found most delicious, and a pleasant variation from the plum pudding so generally served at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Cake—Four cups light bread dough, 22 cups sugar, 1 cup butter, 3 eggs, 1 cup raisins, stoned and well floured, a little grated nutmeg, half teaspoon each ground cloves and cinnamon and half teaspoon of soda dissolved in a little hot water; add 1 cup candied citron cut in thin bits and floured. Mix well, let rise a short time, and bake in a slow oven. Frost with boiled icing, and ornament with a tiny yellow candy pumpkin in the center and circles of soft red fondant molded in little balls to imitate cranberries.

Date Creams—Measure the white of an egg in a glass, add an equal quantity of sweet cream, and mix in enough confectioner's sugar to make a dough stiff enough to mold. Select fine large new dates, remove the seeds, and fill the cavities with a seeded raisin and an English walnut meat. Cover with a thin layer of the fondant, and dip some of them in melted chocolate. The fondant may be divided and delicately colored if preferred. Figs are delicious when cut open, a thin layer of the fondant spread over the inside, the fondant sprinkled with chopped almonds, the fig pressed together again cut in halves, and entirely covered with another thin layer of the fondant. Serve the mints with the coffee.

The Christmas Tree....

The Christmas tree, of whatever size, should be symmetrical in outline, if possible. The first step to be taken is to thin the branches somewhat, without injuring its symmetry, that the decorations may have full effect without any appearance of being crowded.

The next step is to fix the tree firmly to a base. To this end saw the trunk off squarely, and with nails secure it to the bottom of a wooden box (a soap-box will answer) by placing the tree on the floor, holding the base up and driving the nails through the bottom of the box. Now stand it upright, holding it straight the while, and fasten four strong slats (previously prepared) across the top of the box, crossing each other, so that the trunk will secure it absolutely.

Next provide for safe lighting, a most necessary factor in the enjoyment of the tree. This is best accomplished by radiating-rods, conbranches (varying from six inches at forming to the outline of the the top to three feet or more at the bottom, according to the size of the tree). Bore holes with an auger at six-inch intervals spirally up the tree-trunk, from base to top, and shape the ends of the rods to fit into these holes closely. These rods should be about one-half an inch in diameter, substantial enough to not only be a firm rest for the candle-sockets, but also to hang upon. Paint them green, and they become an integral part of the tree; or if noticeable, it is to add rather than detract from the general effect. Do not imagine that this rod feature is difficult of accomplishment. It is not; and being an absolute safeguard against accident is worth the little extra trouble involved.

After covering the box neatly (white muslin will answer, covered with sprays of green left from thinning the branches, and loosely tacked on) the tree is ready for trimming. Of course, it must be bright and gay in its final appearance, but it should not be inharmoniously so. Select a color scheme, and while not confining yourself to it absolutely let it predominate strongly. Yellow is very effective.

There should be nothing on the tree that could not be classed as "Christmas fruit," but a wise exception is a scattering of paper flowers. Place a red rose (or other flower easily made at home) where each rod enters the tree, and a yellow one at the tip of each large branch.

Make a number of little yellow silk bags, which fill with sugared popcorn, dates and raisins. The same filling will also answer for cornucopias, of which there should be quite a good supply in varying sizes and colors.

Clear candy rings and others of crystallized sugar may be slipped on the end twigs of the large branches by the dozen, each to be plucked with delight at the proper time.

Gilded walnuts are indispensable, and even more effective are those wrapped in copper-leaf (which looks like gold-leaf), the ragged ends hanging down. First wire the nuts so as to hang them on the tree, touch them over with mucilage, lay each one on a copper leaf, rolling it up loosely, leaving it ragged, not neat and even. These nuts are very gay and pretty. The leaf costs but a trifle.

Some fine red apples and perfect oranges must be distributed judiciously, and any normal child will declare there never was such fruit.

Stick-candy, large and small, tied in bunches with yellow baby ribbon is another effective feature. The old-fashioned sugar hearts, grotesque figures, wind-mills, chickens, etc., must have a place.

Gilt-paper bands, cut like lattice work, holding figs; tinsel and colored paper slippers, boxes or other designs (these latter can be bought) filled with goodies, nuts and wholesome candies; peppermint canes and the bonbons, large and small, holding paper caps—indeed, anything pretty may be added that has some meaning, can hold "Christmas fruit" and is not merely a meaningless gewgaw.

On the topmost branch the little wax angel, or Christ-child, may be attached, the size appropriate to the size of the tree. These little figures generally come very shabbily dressed, a matter easily remedied by changing the soiled for a fresh skirt, or by taking off the skirt entirely and tying a pretty ribbon with ends about the waist or over the shoulder.

The above material, in quantities suited to the size of the tree, will give a beautiful result. The candles should be yellow, if that is the predominating color of the tree's trimmings.

Do not make the mistake of hanging gifts on the tree. The tree is from Santa Claus, the gifts from family and friends—a distinction which should be made clear to each little mind. And label each gift before placing it under the tree—the proper place for all Christmas gifts. Santa Claus is sure to be given credit for anything anonymous.

The writer once received a shock not easily forgotten. After much shopping, supplemented by work at home, a beautiful tree, with numerous gifts beneath, gladdened the heart and eyes of her one and only Christmas morning. Everything was duly enjoyed throughout the day, but in the twilight two little arms were slipped about mother's neck, and a soft voice asked: "Mother, why is it that everybody gives me pretty things on Christmas but you and father—Aunt Mary, Uncle Edwin, Eloise, Mamie, all the rest of the family, and even my friends—all but just you? I would rather have something from you than anyone, even Santa Claus."

Think of it! After so much effort, and no explanations possible! Santa Claus still gets credit for the tree, but mother's and father's gifts are plainly marked.

As for Santa Claus, may he not be regarded by the Christian as typical of the giver of good gifts? Santa Claus needs no apologist. He has made lives better and brighter since his first coming.

Do not regard the Christmas tree a "bother," even if fatigue and sacrifice are its price. Remember how rich you are in having some one in your heart and home who is expecting Santa Claus. And remember the splendid privilege of conferring so much happiness.

HOW TO DISTRIBUTE GIFTS.

A pretty way of distributing Christmas gifts is to make a huge stocking of turkey red cotton or white drilling; run a wire in the hem around the top to keep it open and suspend from a hook in the ceiling by red ribbon. Provide a light step ladder, decorated with ribbon and holly, and stand by the stocking. Hang it up a day or two before Christmas. All unbreakable presents are dropped into this capacious receptacle until by Christmas morning it is full to overflowing. Light parcels and letters are pinned to the out side. At breakfast table on Christmas morning lots are drawn for the honor of unloading the stocking. The step ladder is mounted and the gifts distributed.

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PEASANTS BESIEGE

A despatch from St. says:—Warships have been Riga from Libau to quell lion there and recapture the This action was taken in resp an urgent despatch from the nor, who asked for a cruiser torpedo-boats, besides troops. Rein forcements can be sent by sea. Communication by land is interrupted. Couriers are stopped. According to unofficial reports the anarchy at Riga continues. The rebels hold everything. The troops were powerless or unwilling to attack the rebels. It is added that the Government buildings are burned.

The situation is most serious in the country, which is practically abandoned to the revolutionary bands owing to the concentration of troops in the cities and towns. On some of the estates, where some of the landlords, aided by a few faithful adherents, are attempting to protect their property the revolutionists are conducting regular military operations. They reduced the garrison of the estate of Baron von Loewis to submission after a majority of the defenders had been killed and plundered, and burned the buildings and carried off the Baron. The survivors were made prisoners.

The reports from the provinces indicate that the country generally remains close to the boiling point. The situation in the Caucasus is again serious. The Tartars and Armenians are murdering each other as of yore. At Elizabethpol especially there has been a savage exhibition of race hatred.

From Kharkoff an agent of the New York Life Insurance Company, who fled, brings the story of the establishment of a republic there. He says the military forces have gone over to the revolutionists, and the latter have full possession of the city.

BUDGET CUT DOWN.

The budget of 1906 has been cut to make the best possible showing to the National Assembly. The only items increased are the salaries of the railroad and postal employes. The personnel of the army and navy, and the naval programme are reduced, and an item of $19,000,000 for new construction is struck out.

The outbreak of the mutinous spirit in the Manchurian army is partly atttributed to the failure to pay and properly feed the troops. The latter problem is especially difficult, owing to the impossibility of forwarding adequate provisions from Russia, on account of the practical paralysis of the railroad to Siberia, compelling the purchase of supplies from the Chinese, for which adequate funds are not available. The authorities have now hurriedly forwarded $12,000,000 to the army in Manchuria.

MANY FAILURES.

A despatch from St. Petersburg says:—Announcement is made of numerous commercial failures, including those of a leading tea importer at Moscow, and a private bank at St. Petersburg. At a meeting on Wednesday in the Produce Exchange, attended by 1,000 business men, to consider the commercial crisis, a resolution was adopted declaring that the first necessity of the country is

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ment of a secret re ernment in the Baltic Government has appointed nor-General with plenary powe administer martial law. Accord to reports received here, the situation is dangerous and chaotic. Twelve thousand Cossacks have been sent to the scene, but it is stated that they can only get there by marching along the roads, the railwaymen having struck to prevent their transportation. The continuance of the telegraph and postal strike prevents reliable news being received. In addition to enforcing the order, the Governor-General is empowered to convoke local representatives to discuss reform legislation.

Reports of mutiny and disaffection among the troops in various centres multiply.

The seceders from the telegraph and postal strike have not yet succeeded in restoring the service, the strikers having again cut many wires.

The Government has taken an important step towards establishing martial law in the whole empire. It has invested the Governors-General, Governors of towns and prefects with powers, if disorders are threatened, to impose compulsory regulations, inflict summary punishment, and forbid the importation of arms.

RIOTING IN WARSAW.

A despatch from Warsaw says:—Hoodlums rioted in the commercial district of Loiz on Wednesday, attacking stores and plundering them. The workmen in the factories organized a defence force. Fierce fighting followed. It is stated that many were killed and wounded.

AN UPROAR OF ANARCHY.

A despatch from London says: Reports received here, none of which can be authenticated, represent the rebellion in the Baltic provinces of Russia, is being successful beyond the most sanguine hopes of the revolutionists, who, however, do not seem to be imposing any law, with the result that the whole district is an uproar of Anarchy. It is stated that the red flag flies from the Government at Riga, where there has been severe street fighting. The railroads are wrecked in all directions, and the telegraph lines cut. The only possible communication is by sea. The Czar is reported to have ordered the new Governor-General to strangle the seditious republics at all cost, but the completeness of the revolutionary coup, the double attitude of the troops, and the impossibility of conveying others to the scene are said to make the order laughable. The Ministry of War has ordered the commander-in-chief at Vilna to send every soldier that he can spare, but sympathizers with the revolution say that none can be withdrawn owing to the dangerous situation at Vilna itself. Practically all the peasantry in the revolted provinces have risen and seized the land-owners' estates and houses unchecked.

TO SANTA CLAUS.

Here's Baby's tiny little sock,
The last one in the row;
But it's not the least important,
Santa Claus, I'd have you know,
The toe it has a tiny hole,
'Cause Baby wore it through,
But the little sock's the dearest in the row.

We want that little sock filled full,
As full as it will hold;
Tho' what the baby wants put in
I'm sure she's never told!
But I think a lot of nice smooth toys,
A ball, a ring, a doll,
Should fill that dearest stocking in the row.

Susette and John and Prue and I
Have hung our stockings, too,
Please don't forget them either,
Santa Claus, whatever you do;
But first of all fill Baby's up,
And fill it to the brim,
That dearest little stocking in the row.

HIS CHRISTMAS HOPE.

"Whatcher goin' to git for Christmas?"

"Par promised me a lickin', but I've prayed Santa Claus to make him forgit it."