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SELDOM SEEN

Let me say right at the start that I am just devoted to Christmas—Merry Christmas—no time in the year like it! It's all brightness and light and Christmas trees with candles and holly berries—with little children dancing in a ring and everyone pretending to be a first class real fellow, and pretty nearly succeeding in it.

I was brought up on it, weren't you? It was a sort of family tradition—house all hung with mottos of Merry Christmas, and cotton wool and red flannel—You had all that in your family, too, didn't you? And your brother Jim always gave your brother Dick a necktie every Christmas just the same as the one Dick gave to Jim, and your mother paid for both of them, didn't she? so as to teach the children to be generous.

Quite so; and in that case you'll agree with me that of all the side issues and extras that go with Christmas and make it what it is, there isn't one that for warmth and character is in it with Christmas Shopping! The pleasure of anticipation, that warm glow about the heart, eh! That joy in generous giving far ahead of getting anything for yourself. That's you, isn't it? Yes, I'm sure it is.....

Doesn't it get you? Anyway I want to have my say and give my advice about it, even if it is largely made up of "don't", and of warning you what not to do.

First—Be very careful about that idea of starting Christmas shopping early in the year, right back in January or February when things are being sold off. I tried that out a year or so ago. There's nothing in it.

I went downtown in January and picked up a bird cage—and a pair of braces (boy's size). I admit the things were cheap. The bird cage was only 80 cents and it was worth eight dollars. The man in the shop admitted this himself. But it's been no good to me. I know no one with a bird. People don't seem to keep birds now. Yet this is a fine cage, big enough for a penguin, with a bar for it to swing on and little spaces where you put in food and water, and other little spaces where you take out whatever you take out. Too bad I can't use it. I may offer it in a raffle for a charity. However, let it go.....

The other item was the braces—60 cents and worth two dollars—suitable for a boy of fourteen, but with a little wheel to jack them up to a boy of sixteen. Boys grow so fast—all mothers and fathers will get the idea of that little wheel. But I want to speak about these 60 cent braces, and I want to speak seriously and especially to mothers and fathers. That's no present to give a boy, and you know it! You don't understand me? Oh, yes, you do. You've no right to give a boy something useful—something he's got to have. To give a boy for Christmas a pair of braces, or six collars, or an overcoat or a pair of winter mitts or anything that's useful and that he has to have and you've got to buy for him sooner or later, is just a low-down trick unworthy of the spirit of Christmas.

When a boy thinks of Christmas he knows just what he wants. I mean not the particular thing, but the kind of properties and qualities that it's got to have. It has to be something more or less mechanical, more or less mysterious, with either wheels in it or electricity, a something that "goes"—you know what I mean.

Those braces—I never gave them away. I have them still. As I stood with them in my hand thinking where to send them, my mind conjured up a picture of how I felt, long ago, over sixty years ago, when I opened my stocking one Christmas and found, all wrapped up in boxes and parcels that might have been filled with magic, just such junk as that. There was a little round hard box with a tight lid that might have turned out to be magic music, or God knows what—for a child's imagination outstrips reality—but it was only collars. I had hard work to choke back tears. And after that—flat and long and mysterious—was a box that might have held—why, anything! Derringer pistols. Cherokee daggers, anything—but did it? No. It had in it a pair of braces just like these, wheel and all. That broke me down.....

There is no blame; all parents do it, must do it, in such a crowded family as ours was, with a census that went up each year.

Give those braces away? No, sir. Give them to some poor child? No, sir. There is no child so poor that I should wish that evil gift upon him. I wear those braces myself, wheel and all, between the shoulder blades, as a monk wears a hair shirt, to remind me of the true spirt of Christmas.

But it is getting late—way after nine o'clock. I must start at once; the shops close at midnight.

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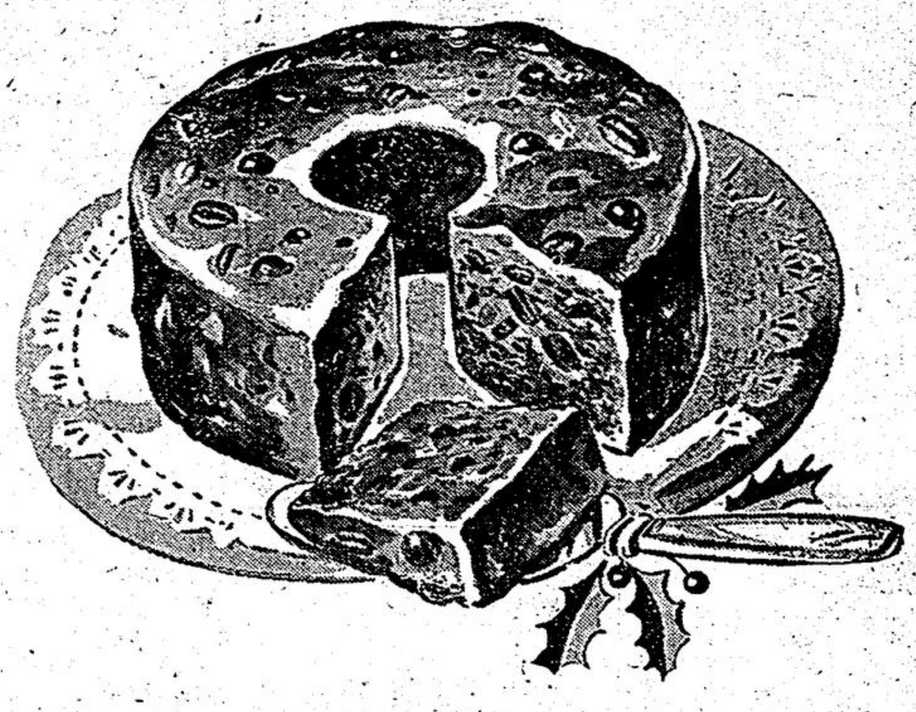
THERE'S STILL TIME --



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YORK F.W.T.A.O. MEET AT THORNLEA

The second open meeting of the York Association of the F.W.T.A.O. was held at Thornlea public school on Thursday evening, Dec. 8th.

It was reported that the Association had contributed $50.55 to the Exchange Teachers' Fund.

A sing song of the Christmas carols was led by Miss Stallwood of Stouffville. Mrs. Purcell of Newmarket reviewed the new booklet "We the Teachers of Ontario" a copy of which had been sent through the Association, free of charge, to each member.

Miss Stallwood played a piano solo. Miss Barnes of Newmarket introduced the guest speaker, Miss MacVicar of Victoria College, Toronto. Miss MacVicar held the audience spell-bound as she told of her experiences as a day-school teacher on an Indian Reservation on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Miss Hosie of Stouffville thanked Miss MacVicar.

It was decided to have the next open meeting in February, probably in Newmarket.

Miss Maxine Marshall, principal of Thornlea School, served a delicious lunch.

SCHOOL TRUSTEE FOREST HILL VILLAGE

Old Stouffville boy, Norman Borins, has been elected a school trustee in the fashionable Forest Hill village where the schools (public and high) are run on a standard of refinement above most of the province. That is the buildings and fittings. So far as the scholars go, they are no better than the general run.

Tribune readers from Montreal to Alberta scan the pages for Dickson Hill news. Any suitable items will be greatly appreciated by the correspondent. It is really amazing to hear of the number of homes who keep in touch with the community through this medium.

Despite post-war industrialization, agriculture is still the most important Canadian primary industry.

Natives of the West Indies, who regularly chew sugar cane, are said to have better teeth on the whole than Canadians.

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