When The Clan Kept Christmas

The Dinner of 1890

CHRISTMAS, for nearly all of us, has always had two climaxes. Remember how to you, as a child of the 90's, waking Christmas morning to find a Christmas tree in all its magic mystery right there in your very own house, it seemed that the season's excitements had reached their pinnacle right then and there?

Remember that when somebody reached up into that tree and pulled down from its highest branches and laid in your arms the sleeping doll with real hair for which you had implored Santa Claus and mentioned more times than a few to Mother and Father, it seemed to you that Christmas could hold no greater rapture?

Remembering that great thrill you see yourself again, a happy little girl retiring, with the hubbub of tree and breakfast over, to your sunny play corner of the bay window, content to inspect again your spoils from the Christmas tree, and to caress this loveliest and newest member of all your big doll family. Your own particular concerns just now are Christmas gifts and their turning over and over again; but somehow you sense that insofar as the elders of the household are concerned, the climax of Christmas is yet to come.

Ready for the Big Day

The coast has been cleared early this morning for excess activities with which the kitchen has already begun to hum. By the middle of the morning they are well under way. Mother is in command in the kitchen with Hilda helping—Hilda, the hired girl, devoted to the children and beloved by them in her long term of service to them, and devoted to Mother not only for her own sweet self, but because she sees that her wages have a magnificent edge on those of the rest of the hired girls of the town. Does she not get each week the generous sum of $4, and is she not kept comfortable in her pretty warm room and does she not work for the best cook in town?

The approach to noon finds them both rushing around, organizing the last-minute preparations for Christmas dinner. This will follow the longtime family tradition and be served at noon, of course, to all one's kinfolk close enough to come by sleigh, carriage or steam train to partake of it.

Dinner preparations have been begun weeks before with the making of the mince meat and the boiling of the puddings. This dual ritual annually involves the collective energies of a group of feminine relatives or neighbors and commandeers the use of the deep copper wash boiler for the hours and hours of pudding steaming. For days the pantry has been in the stocking, flour and sugar barrels filled to brim, molasses and vinegar jugs, spice cabinets and extract shelves "full up", cinnamon sticks and wooden nutmegs, tiny scarlet cinnamon drops and striped paper bags of caraways covered with colored sugar added to the year-round staples with papers of colored sugar itself—all of these latter now lending their gay adornment to the tops of the many dozens of little "cup" cakes and frosted cookie animals. The great cookie jars—vast wells into which go dozens of ginger and sugar disks, are filled to the top, and one remembers with watering mouth the little tarts of sugared pie-crust and their little scarlet mounds of currant jelly that are ranged in row upon row—Mother's special treat for the children's table.

And now here has come Christmas morning, and Christmas noon is fast drawing near. Hilda is in her glory out there in the kitchen. With a sense of great importance she rattles the dampers and drafts of the cook stove, opens the door at its front to cram in another stick of split cord wood, seizes the black tin scuttle and rattles in a bit of coal, juggles the dampers of stove pipe and oven, and the fire cracks merrily and blazes away for dear life.

She jerks open the door of the oven and bastes the browning turkey and the goose. Their heavenly smell of sizzling juices and sage and onion stuffing mingle with the delicious blend of steaming fragrances rising from beneath the palpitating lids of the kettles on top of the stove. Deep whiffs inform the nose of the sniffer that turnips, onions, cauliflower are in the boiling out there, that the coffee is beginning to simmer in the great tin coffee pot sacred to such gatherings of the clan, and that the mince pies are out of the oven and set to cool.

Tantalized, one abandons the Christmas doll for a minute, and goes to the kitchen door to take a peek for oneself. Mother does look beautiful! Her frizzes are spit above her flushed and burning cheeks so pink and pretty now. She is brave in her best Sunday dress of gray serge with its tight waist meeting its full gored skirt over the smart little bustle at the back, its cascade of lovely lace ruffles down the front of the waist, and its long skirt trailing just a little on the floor at the back. Crinoline makes those sleeves stand out so large and fulsome above the tight lower length of leg-o'-mutton cut, and brush binding protects the hem all around the bottom of the skirt. She has donned a "dressy" apron of fine white lawn with a wide band of hand crocheted thread lace; she has pinned a little cap of lace like that on her waist above her frizzes, and over the snowy apron, gathered into its band and strings about her middle, she has tied a second apron of checked gingham—this for protection, the other for fashion.

The Old-Time Menu

One observes all this as Mother pauses for a minute or two in her nervous darting about the kitchen to scan again the menu pinned inside the open cupboard door. She found it in her November issue of Harper's Bazaar that winter of 1890, and it reads like this:

Raw Oysters
Giblet Soup
Boiled Fish, Caper Sauce
Roast Turkey, Chestnut Stuffing
Cranberry Sauce
Olives Celery Salted Almonds
Salmi of Duck
Grape Jelly
Sweet Potato Patties
Mayonnaise of Chicken
Browned Turnips Lima Beans
Potato Croquettes
Stewed Tomatoes Cauliflower
Cheese Wafers
Christmas Plum Pudding
Mince Pie Orange Sherbet
Christmas Cake Assorted Cakes
Coffee
Nuts Fruits Bon Bons
Creme de Menthe

She counts on her fingers:

"Oysters . . . weren't we lucky, Hilda, to get the last of those from Bradley's? Everybody in town must be going to have oysters today . . . Celery! Oh, yes, Hilda, get that out of the entry and put it in the tall glass dish with the standard and the low boat celery dish . . . Almonds . . . You salted those so nicely! . . . Oh, how's the goose coming? Dear me, I did want to try that new duck recipe that's here, but Grandpa Hutchinson would never forgive the lack of a goose on his Christmas table. That's the English for you, Hilda . . . Too bad we couldn't buy ice cream in this town. Nobody ever hears of it here in the winter . . . But they love my snow pudding and they'd miss it if I didn't make it . . . Oh, dear no, none of the big crackers out of the wooden box, today, my dear. Don't you remember those Long Branch wafers there on the shelf in the pasteboard boxes . . . yes, those . . . And oh, Hilda, get out the napkins . . . we forgot those . . . twenty of the big square white ones for the big table and ten of the red and white fringed ones for the children. . . . Oh, here's, Em; she'll help you . . . Hello, there!"

Now Come the Guests!

A bevy of arriving aunts swarms into the kitchen. One is kissed and hugged and pinched, and Mother flutters out of the kitchen and into the sitting room where all the hand-shaking and greetings are going on, with uncles and cousins everywhere, all seeming to have arrived at once. The smallest of the cousins cling close to their elders' skirts, and you are shoved towards them and instructed to show them "where to put their things". The men are shooed to the spare room upstairs, crisp with its clean white fluted ruffled counterpane and pillow shams. Mother leads the women and children into her bedroom off the sitting room where the snowy crocheted bed spread soon disappears under the pile of winter wrappings.

While the confusion is on, explanations as to how this one narrowly escaped tipping over in the cutter with the horse so skittish on so cold a morning, offering help in the kitchen, joking and teasing of the youngsters, Mother slips back kitchenward, doffing her gingham apron as she gives the table in the dining room a last survey.

Setting the Table

It has been set since early morning, drawn out to its farthest length, all the extra leaves put between in rounded ends of walnut, and two of the very longest white linen damask cloths brought out to cover it. These join in the center where a large round white linen doily embroidered in colored silks conceals the seaming. So appropriate to the day is the cheery color of the green holly leaves and red berries of the silk embroidery, and so sweet are the little wreaths about the tumbler doilies that go with it and are set at each place. And my, how handsome is the new Christmas gift vase of cut glass holding the spraying red carnations—a whole twe dozen of them—and the smilax wreathing about the base. Every place has its silver—spoons and spoons and spoons, the "set" eked out with the souvenir spoon collection. Every place has its pretty little pat of embossed butter in its little round butter dish. At each end the silver castors shine, their etched glass bottles in the silver frames filled with the condiments—salt, pepper, vinegar and so on. High bowls of lacy "milk" glass on standards hold apples, bananas, and a few oranges.

Dinner is Ready

Mother rushes back into the kitchen and fills the tallest of the glass pitchers from the water pail, baling it up with the floating tin dipper. Back into the dining room she darts, fills the gay array of glasses — amber ones in basket weave, blue ones of hob nail, ruby ones of thumb print, and the precious new half-dozen of cut glass ones sacred to the back of the sideboard except for such occasions. Pie plates, fruit plates and fruit knives, sauce dishes and vegetable dishes, silver dishes of bon bons and bowls of cracked nuts, range themselves thick on the sideboard. Frosted cakes stand on high glass cake dishes, and slices of frosted fruit cake fill silver cake baskets. With the last wild hope that none of "the girls" will have read the dinner menu in Harper's and miss the liquor off the end of it, she helps Hilda put the hot foods on the table, comfortable in the assurance that no respectable household like hers would ever dream of having liquor of any sort within its doors, even on Christmas.

Coffee and Black Cigars!

Reserving the coffee to make a delicate, if uncustomary ending to the feast, and compromising again with Mr. Harper by serving it in regulation coffee cups, Mother sighs finally that the end of the meal has come. Then such a scraping of chairs and confusion as follows! You children have broken table ranks some time ago and are fully reacquainted, romping about the tree. Heavy black cigars are lighted and tables set out for cinch. Only the men will play for a while, for Mother's effort to keep the aunts out of the kitchen is futile. All hands set to and "do" the dishes, the while they banter about the choicest tidbits of family and neighborhood gossip. Stacks of dishes go in and out of the tin dish pan and kettle after kettle of water heated on the top of the stove supplements the water from the reservoir. The silver crumb tray and soft brush go swishing round the table, and silver is sorted, the "every day" from the "best". The planks and saw horses that had improvised the table for the children repose now on the cold porch and order is restored in the sitting room. The men smoke and clip down their cards in the parlor and the room becomes thick with smoke. The untouched mounds of fruit, the bowls of nuts and candy which even the greediest could hardly manage after what went before them, repose on the orderly table, inviting the growing lad with quick-returning appetite who will steal in pretty soon and begin to "piece" on the stem raisins and nuts. Crumpled napkins have gone into the willow clothes basket in the store room. Order is restored along the snowy front of the long table. The scarlet of the carnations is vivid against the whiteness and cheerfully speaks that it is a day of special festivity. The short winter day begins to end and the gray dark to creep in. The Christmas climax for grownups is over for another season.

Christmas Customs come from Many Lands

TRADITION — that strongest link in any chain that ties the human race to any of the customs that its many lands and people share in common—has been since time immemorial the cornerstone upon which has been built the whole structure of Christmas.

Back 2,000 years before the birth of the child Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, there are historic evidences of the keeping of a season that was in spirit much like the essential character of the Christmas season that tradition has brought down to us, despite the natural inclination of the Christian world to date the great festival from the birth of Christ.

Authentic record of the actual date and season of the year in which the Christ was born has never, however, been established, and historians disagree as to them both. It was many years after his life on earth, however, before December 25th was fixed as the date for celebration of his birthday, and from that time on Christmas united in accepting the day as sacred to his birth and to his service—the Christ-mass.

Forerunner of Carols

Going back before the Christian era students of the festival have found traces that most of the nations of ancient times recognized the period of that which we know as the winter solstice as a season of rejoicing. The return march of the sun up into the heavens, and the season's turn from short days and long nights to days of lengthening light and warmth, impelled a natural demonstration of pleasure that it was so. The Roman Saturnalia, which fell at such a period, was such a festivity of rejoicing, marked by privileges and hailed as exempt from ills, with the spirit of mirth and unbounded license abroad everywhere. The hymns of this time to the sun were forerunners of our Christmas carols. Presents were passed from friend to friend. Gifts were made to the poor, quarrels forgotten and feuds ended.

In the northern countries of ancient Europe the God Thor was the object of similar celebrations at the same season, the song, dance and feast universal and mingled with the savage religious rites. Some authorities find the origin of the word "Yule" in the name of this celebration — "Yule", "Jule", "Iul", or "Iol".

Origin of Festival

The Christian festival of the Nativity has incorporated the character of these early celebrations and appears to have been appointed very shortly after the establishment of a new religion. It is first definitely recorded in the history of the second century, although there are indications that it was in order even earlier. Students of Christmas, while disagreeing upon the exact time of the birth of Jesus, agree that in the early years of the Church there was a union celebration of the Nativity and the Epiphany in the belief that the birth of Jesus coincided with the appearance of a star in the East which revealed it to the Gentiles.

The word Kris' mas is held to be "Christ's mass", however, and the word Noel is from the French word "nouvelles" meaning tidings. Druids, Romans, Saxons, Jews, Anglo-Saxons have all kept such a festival, marked in the days of the Romans by temporary equality of slaves and masters, of the Druids by the use of evergreens and the mistletoe in temple rites, by the Jews with a dedication of their temples, and in the days of the Anglo-Saxons by the elaborate customs which have long endured and which marked the Middle Ages.

Then the great "halls" of the nobility offered hospitality and entertainment to the poor. Then were the splendid pageants and banquets such as those King Arthur's court knew well, with minstrels and gleemen, harpers and jugglers, pipers and dancers, log fires immense and of long duration within, hunting, wrestling and jousts without. Intemperance was prevalent, and the ale and mead flowed widely while there was the lighting of the Christmas log, the bringing in of the boar's head, and the games—dice, chess and backgammon.

Crowned on Christmas Day

A succession of Roman emperors than began with Charlemagne was crowned on Christmas Day, including Alfred the Great (whose defeat by the Danish host is held to have happened because he would not interrupt himself and court in their twelve-days' celebration of the season even with the enemy horde at the gates), the Danish king Edward, and Edward the Confessor and his son Harold, whose coronation took place together with the consecration of Westminster Abbey in 1066.

The next Christmas day saw William the Conqueror crowned there, but it was in the days of

(Continued on Page 7-B)

Gathering All His Courage
HE SPOKE . . . .

"THESE sweets aren't half so sweet as you," he said softly. She lowered her eyelids. The pink mounted into her cheeks. What a gentleman! What eloquence! In 1930 a fellow comes right out with it. He says, "These chocolates are bitter-sweet, and plenty delicious." What a man! What candy!

Special
LATCHSTRING CHOCOLATES
2½ lb.
Box of Delicious Candies, Assorted
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Over the river and
Through the woods,
To Grandmother's house
We'll go,—

WITH a jingle and a jangle, and a screech of dry snow,—back in the days of 1890,—they drove up to Grandma's house in the family sleigh.

We're just out of bob-sleighs, but there is still the same thrill to Christmas family reunions, only today you can make the trip without hardships in a comfortable closed automobile,—and what an added pleasure it will be if the ride is taken in one of the new DODGE BROTHERS models.

The surge of power furnished by the high-speed Six and Eight cylinder DODGE BROTHERS motors will glide your twentieth century vehicle over the roads as smoothly and noiselessly as the bob-sleighs of old slid over the glimmering snow.

Between Dances on December 6
Drop in and See Those New
DODGE BROTHERS
Sixes and Eights
Our Showroom is Right Opposite the Flag Pole Where the Old Time Fiddlers Will Be Playing

Paull & Murray
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The Beaux of The Barrel Cuffs

THOSE were the days preceding the style-consciousness of all men. If he was really dressy he was a "dude" or a "la-te-da." Nowadays no man who expects to get anywhere socially or commercially dare wear anything but the smartest. That is why men prefer Christmas gifts of things to wear and purchased in a man's store. May we suggest:

Fine Wool Lined Silk Ties ..... $1.00 to $3.50
Attractive Broadcloth and Madras Shirts ..... $1.95 to $5.00
Beautiful Beacon, Flannel and Silk Lounging Robes....$6.50 to $17.50
Good looking Silk, Wool or Wool Mixed Socks ..... 50c to $1.50
Quality fabrics in Pajamas ..... $1.95 to $5.00
Lisle, Linen and Silk Handkerchiefs ..... 10c to $1.00
Cloth and Leather Dress or Driving Gloves ..... $1.95 to $5.50
All Wool or Silk and Wool Sweaters ..... $3.50 to $10.00
Sweater Coats..... $4.50 to $10.00
Golf Sox to Match .... $1.00 to $3.50
Stetson Hats ..... $8.00 and $10.00

HART, SCHAFFNER and MARX SUITS $27.50 to $50
OTHER SUITS, ...$18.00 up

AND SCORES OF OTHER HAPPY SUGGESTIONS

SANDY & SCOTTY
The Most Pleasing Gifts for Men
1325 Sartori Avenue Torrance, California

Your Christmas Dinner

Years have not altered the "table for two" but time has given Earl's Cafe an added banquet room that will seat 100 diners. At Earl's, many sweet old words will be repeated amid the elegance of a Christmas dinner, priced at $1 per plate. It will be a dinner worthy of your choice, prepared and served as only Earl can do it —at

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