

Herr Mayo's Christmas Formula.



AN OLD man, his fellow lodgers would have called him, had they not long ceased to speculate upon Herr Julius Mayo's activities in the three poorly furnished rooms at the top of the old converted mansion on lower second avenue. But he was not so old—barely sixty, in fact. Still, time is measured by its fullness, and the old German had lived through youth and maturity, marriage and parenthood, so that the future held nothing in store for him except what he had put into it; and of all life's riches he had held to one thing only after his wife had died.

That was his chemical researches. Interest had attached itself to him at first because he was suspected of being a counterfeiter. He had, in fact, been honored with a visit from the chief of detectives when he first took up his abode in the ramshackle old place five years before. But Herr Mayo had speedily convinced his caller that he was only a harmless crank, engaged on some obscure and apparently insoluble problem.

But the problem happened to be one toward whose solution a thousand brains were just then concentrated in several hundred laboratories. It was, in fact, the manufacture of synthetic rubber. To this end, which would mean fabulous wealth for the discoverer, Herr Mayo bent all his energies. A tiny patrimony supported him meanwhile. Once he had been well-to-do, and had had friends; that was when he was a lecturer at the Imperial university of Bonn, and before his reckless marriage with a notorious actress shocked and scandalized the puritanical society—but why should he be recalling this now, as he bent over his test tubes and weighed out imperceptible quantities of compounds from his tiny measuring scales? That was Herr Mayo's one chivalrous act, and he had paid in honor and wealth and friends when he plunged into the irrefragable because love proved stronger than prudence. And they had always been happy until she died, five years before, though often the lean hunger wolf howled against the threshold. But then there was their child, Ida, and she, too, had become a memory, and nothing remained, except the bubbling test tube and the spreading color beneath the surface layer of gold.

The old German shook his memories away and smiled at the changing liquid. What was past was past, but there was always the future, and just



Why Am I Thinking of Minna Tonight? now he felt very sure that he was on the track of his discovery. Then honor and wealth would be his.

Once in a million times the seeker of synthetic compounds may hit upon his goal by chance. But almost universally it is a process of elimination, of endless working round and round toward an objective point which seems to recede the more elusively as one approaches it. Nine hundred and forty formulae he had written down in

microscopic figures upon a large folded sheet of paper, and these were compounds of but a single form of carbon. Of these seven and twenty were the most promising, and he had grouped them together.

"Now why am I thinking of Minna tonight?" growled the old man impatiently, rising and pushing back the damp hair from his furrowed forehead.

But he was not thinking of Minna, except indirectly. He was thinking of Ida, their daughter. It was five years since his wife had died, and almost upon the first anniversary of her death he had driven his daughter from his home when in her agony and despair she confessed to him that she had married the name she bore. She had married secretly a worthless fellow who, it turned out, had a wife living. He had died since, but he could not forget the stigma. The Mayos had been of the old Junker families, who had held honorable records in East Prussia. He, Julius, had lost caste when he married the actress, but that, at least, was a legitimate union. And now, his daughter's involuntary offense would banish them both forever should he return with his discovery, to seek social recognition in his native land. The years of ostracism and loneliness, to be redeemed at the end by this triumph, had made the old man very bitter. When Ida left him the last link that bound him to humanity seemed to have snapped. He often told himself that he was glad she was gone. He had put the very thought of her away; it should not rise up now.

A tapping sounded at the door, and he rose up wearily to open it. Outside stood the postman. He was very late because it was the holiday season and his mail was large. The old man gave him a small weekly sum to bring his letters to his apartment instead of leaving them in the box beneath. His correspondence was too precious, just now, to trust to the mercies of those easily opened boxes. One letter that



He Tore the Papers into 20 Strips.

went astray might throw him back a week in his researches, and others were on the track, eager to anticipate him in his discovery. He took a thin envelope from the postman, glancing at it indifferently. No, this was not from the chemical works. Well, doubtless that one would arrive on the morrow. He voiced the hope unconsciously.

"Why, professor, there's no delivery tomorrow," said the letter carrier, cheerfully. "Don't you know what night this is? This is Christmas Eve."

Christmas Eve! Good! That would mean less traffic in the street beneath his window to disturb him the next day. But stay! That meant a postponement in the letter's arrival. He grumbled something at the letter carrier, who went down the uncarpeted stairs, shaking his head at the strangeness of some people in not knowing when Christmas Eve came. But doubtless he had no friends to keep the date in his memory, poor old fellow!

Herr Mayo looked at the letter again and his face paled. His heart began to drum in his ears, and he cast it down on a table and sank into a chair, passing his hand wearily across his forehead. The letter was from his daughter.

After awhile he found courage to open it, and, when he had read the first line, he read it all, swallowing hard in his throat.

"Dearest Father" (it ran): "Don't think that I am writing to you tonight to beg your aid. But it is just five years since mother died, and a little more than four since I last saw you, and I cannot keep silence any longer. I want to tell you that a little boy was born to me. He is all the world to me. Indeed, we are very happy. I teach him to mention you in his prayers. We do not want money, for I can support him, and I would work my fingers to the bone for him. But I want him to know you, father. Will you not forget all the past and let me bring or send him to you, for mother's sake, so that he may grow up to feel that I am not the only relative he has on earth? He is named Julius, after you, and he has flaxen curls all over his shoulders. He is the dearest thing in the world to me."

The address given was quite near where Herr Mayo lived. No doubt his daughter had often passed his house; perhaps she had seen him sometimes when, pondering over his problem, he paced the streets, a curious, shabby figure, in that busy mart of men. Herr Mayo raised his head and set the letter down with trembling fingers. He was not by nature a hard

man; his marriage had proved that. But he had made his choice for once and for all. He looked toward the test tube on the table. The golden liquid was slowly cooling into brown. And he knew that that lay between them as surely as though each gleaming bubble on it were miser's gold.

His past should never rise up to disturb him now. It was to assuage his grief and disappointment at first that he had turned toward his researches. Now the hobby had become a tyrant, and he had sold his soul into its keeping. His choice was made. He tore the paper into twenty strips and hung them into the blazing stove. He had but glanced at the address, and already it had vanished from his mind. Now there was no turning back, though his daughter's words scorched his soul as the paper was scorching in the fire.

He turned to his work again. But he could work no longer. Phantasms of his past rose up to reproach him. There was his wife, Minna, looking at him with her steady eyes; he had never refused her anything, and he knew that, were she alive, he could not have treated her daughter as he had done. And the liquid in the tube was brown, burned out gold that had lost its power to charm him. He stopped and listened. Somewhere up the street the Christmas bells were calling worshippers to church. So they had called him once, long ago, in Germany, when he was a lad with the world before him and filled with the zest of life. The remembrances of his early days surged over him like a lava flood. He could stay no longer in that big, empty room, and, clapping on his hat over his gray locks, he rushed wildly down the stairs and out into the street.

A steady stream of persons was traveling in one direction, and he fell in with them perforce because he did not want to battle his way along the curb against them. Presently the stream began to pour into a church, carrying him with it. Herr Mayo did not know what denomination of church it was, and he might not have known had his wits been alert, so long it was since he had been inside one. But as he sat among the worshippers, hearing the organ peal and the words of eternal hope and mercy, something seemed to burst inside his shriveled old heart and the warm tides of pity and love leaped through the barriers that he had upreared against them. In that moment he knew that he was the worst of sinners; he had set up his pride, a cruel idol in his heart, and pulled down the Christ; and the idol was broken and only the tragical figure of the Son of God remained.

Children's voices were singing, upraised in sweet, clear carols of praise. He raised his head, the miserable old man, and listened. Why, that was a hymn that he had learned in Prussia when he was a boy. And the old faith remained for each generation, here too, across the wide Atlantic, and only he was shut off from this holy communion. He thought of Minna; her heart had been always his, and she had been quite true to him, in spite of the stories people told about her past, and they had stood before the minister in just such a church, with ruin before them, and knew only the joy of their own souls. Then suddenly through the gloom, and right across

the church, he saw Minna again. Her face was as it had been on that day of their marriage, surrounded with a halo of yellow hair; but when he rose, staring, and saw the woman stir, he knew that it was not Minna, but his daughter Ida.

In that moment he wanted nothing so much as to enfold her in his arms, to lay his gray head upon her bosom



"You Are Looking for Somebody, Sir?" He Asked.

and sob out his wretchedness there. Minna lived in her again, for motherhood had wrought a miracle on the pale, listless girl, who had cringed before his anger four years before and at last gone sullenly from his home, penniless, into the darkness.

But she had not seen him, nor would she. Mayo saw now the cause of that maternal light in her eyes, bright with the love that he had denied her. They were bent upon a little, yellow-haired boy who sat restless beside her, fidgeting, as boys will fidget in church. And the boy, in turn, was a replica of Ida's infancy.

He must take her home. They would be all to one another, the three of them. His heart yearned over these two generations of his own flesh and blood. And when the service ended, he rose eagerly to cross to where they were seated. But the people, moving out of their pews into the aisle, obstructed his passage, and he was compelled to make a circuitous detour in order to reach his objective. He saw her, lost her; and at last, when he reached the pew where she had sat, Ida was gone. He hurried frantically hither and thither. The church was empty now; and yet it seemed incredible that he had lost her for ever. Somebody touched him on the arm. A clergyman in a long black gown was speaking to him.

"You are looking for somebody, sir?" he asked kindly.

"My daughter," the old man mumbled. "She must have gone home. No doubt you will find her at home. There is nobody here." The old man turned and began

stumbling homeward through the thinning street crowds. Once he had gained the street which led to his house he began running like a madman. Truly it must be as the clergyman had said. Ida was at home, of course, with her little boy. She had never left him; all that had been a bad dream from which he would awake when he entered. He let himself in and switched on the electric light. The room was empty and almost bare, and it had never looked so forlorn and miserable before.

He realized that she was lost to him forever. She would accept his silence as final; she would never write to him again. And her address had vanished from his memory utterly. He had barely glanced at it once and purposely refrained from looking at it again before he tore the letter into fragments and flung them into the stove. He had chosen his miser's gold, and it lay like a dead weight upon his heart.

A scrap of paper on the floor caught his eye. He picked it up; it was a morsel of the envelope and bore his name, Julius Mayo, and the first figure of the house number. Perhaps other morsels might have fluttered out of the fire—perhaps just the one which would give him the clue to his daughter's address. Instantly he was down upon his knees and raking among the dying embers, turning over the coals, begriming his hands with the clinker ash. Another scrap rewarded his efforts. This was the upper corner of the envelope, bearing a portion of the canceled stamp, with the benign features of Washington. There was no more; he could not find so much as a single charred fragment.

The old man rose slowly and stared at his white face in the little glass that hung above the mantel. His eyes were feverish and his gray hair hung in a disordered mass over his forehead. He remembered the old German legend that on one day in the year the souls in hell were permitted to stand outside the gates of Paradise and to look in. This was his day; this was Christmas Eve, the anniversary of Minna's death, the one day in the year on which he might save his soul. The pride and greed were there, only dominated for the present by the influence of his mood; if he gave rein to them again he would be lost irrevocably. And the mood must pass because he could not find the letter. Tomorrow, he knew, his work would absorb him again, his heart would harden, as old men's hearts do. The gates of Paradise stood open wide for him—and he had lost the key.

He walked slowly across the room. His mind was made up; he would destroy all the fruits of his experiments, batter down that idol which he had set up to wean him from his own. He raised his arm to sweep everything to the floor—test tubes, bottles, papers. He hesitated. Could he let the fruits of all those years of experiment go? He might at least save the formulae. Or was that sacrifice necessary if he was to save his soul from hell?

Suddenly his roving eyes rested upon the test tube which he had left on the table.

He shouted aloud with joy. The mood had passed; the idol had reared itself again. Ida was forgotten. Something had happened during his absence that he had never managed to bring about before. The liquid in the tube had passed from gold to brown, and from brown to a streaky, flaky mass of creamy, jelly-like fluid. It was almost artificial rubber.

He was upon the track at last. His composition, in cooling, had coagulated as rubber coagulates. This was not rubber, but it was not far from it. It was a compound which contained all the elements of rubber. But somewhere, in the building of it, two or three molecules had gone astray, or fastened themselves to the wrong elements, just as one may put a picture puzzle together and not quite fit the pattern. He was very close now; he must try the next formula, and the next, and the next; it might be only a matter of a few days before success crowned his efforts.

He sought feverishly for the paper with the microscopic handwriting, the result of years of research work and endless experimentation. It was not in its accustomed place, and he began turning his notes over, hunting for it. It must be on the other table, then—yes, there lay a folded sheet under the blotting sheet. He reached for it and picked up—his daughter's letter.

Mayo stared at it without understanding. How had this paper, which he had torn up and thrown into the furnace, come back to him? At last the staggering truth burst in upon him. He had destroyed the formula in place of the letter, and all the work of years had gone for nothing. He could never begin all over again. Even if he had the enterprise, there

upon the scent.

He sank back into his chair. All his life was ruined now and the last illusion had come toppling down. He sprang to his feet and rushed into his bedroom. From its case he extracted his razor. He would end everything with one swift, merciful sweep.

As he stood before the mirror with the open razor in his hand he heard a soft tapping at his door. He frowned impatiently. Why could not the fools leave him at this juncture? He stode across the room and turned the key. Outside there was a whimpering—a child's whimpering. Impetuously he turned the key again, opened the door, and found himself looking down at a little child of four or five years, with flaxen curls, and the look of Ida upon his face.

"Who are you?" demanded Herr Mayo with sudden tenderness. "I see Julius," sobbed the child. "I want my grandpa."

"Who is your grandpa?" asked the old man, stooping and raising the boy in his arms. "My grandpa lives here an' you're my grandpa. Mamma saw you in church an' I followed you, but you went so quick I lost you and my mamma, too. But I knew you lived here, 'cause mamma often showed me when we used to pass."

Herr Julius Mayo carried the child into the room. He put back the razor in its case. Then he went into his laboratory and began pitching the tubes and bottles into the stove. The crashing glass alarmed the little boy. "What are you doing, grandpa?" he asked.

"Just tearing down an idol, sonny," answered the old man. "When you are grown up, maybe, you will re-



"Who Are You?" Demanded Herr Mayo With Sudden Tenderness.

member this, and tear down your old idols, too. Come, sonny, we're going home to mamma."

He picked him up again and carried him downstairs with infinite tenderness. At the street door he stopped and imprinted a kiss upon the nodding head that rested on his shoulder. And outside the clocks were striking midnight.

Santa Claus Was Good To Her

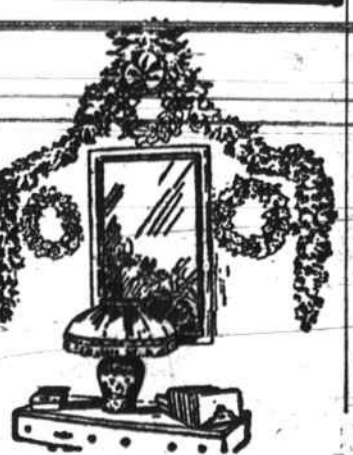


Bethlehem Star

THIS old sobbing world of ours is one year older than it was when the last Christmas carol was chanted. It has had another twelvemonth of experiments and of experience, of advancement on many lines of human research and acquisition. But it has not

outgrown Jesus Christ. For Him it has discovered no substitute. The star of Bethlehem is the only star that never sets. Jesus Christ alone can satisfy all human necessities and the loftiest of human inspirations. Christianity is the only universal religion, the only one adapted to all ages of life, to all human conditions, to all races and all nationalities. Other lights have arisen, waned and vanished forever. The Greek mythology is as utterly shaken to ruin as its own splendid Parthenon. The chief religions of Asia—Brahmanical, Buddhist and Moslem—are all limited and local; they are all moribund. While they make no inroads on Christianity, the religion of Bethlehem and Calvary makes constant inroads upon them. The systems of error which Paul and Peter fought have vanished out of sight, and the whole East is catching glimpses of the star that first dawned over Judea's sky. In spiritual dynamics blood tells, and God has trusted His gospel of salvation to the most powerful races on the globe.

A Gay Holiday Design



The living-room mirror, lamp and table are included in the composition of this decoration.