

XXIX.

Miss Ackermann's Christmas.

By Mrs. MOSES P. HANDY.

MISS ACKERMANN opened her eyes to the sunshine with a startled feeling of having overslept herself, then closed them again at the sound of the chimes from the church around the corner, for it was Christmas day, the one day, during Sundays, in the year which she could really and truly call her own. She was that overworked individual, a popular dressmaker, going out by the day, and she sometimes wished, with E. P. Roe's old doctor, that people would send for somebody else sometimes and let her rest. On the last Fourth of July she had been in the country sewing for dear life in order to finish a belated bridal trousseau, and on Thanksgiving she had worked until dark to accommodate a customer who wished to outshine her sisters-in-law at a family gathering at the house of her husband's father, but on Christmas day not even the most exacting customer could ask her services.

And yet—was she glad it was Christmas? The associations which cluster around the season make it a sorrowful one to those who have nothing left of home excepting its memories, and, saving for one brother, Miss Ackermann was alone in the world.

Recently, Miss Ackermann told herself she had no business to be low spirited; she was a very fortunate person; think how many people were starving for lack of work, and all that she could do vaguely as she finished her breakfast. The tea, which she made in her room, heating the water on a gas stove, was excellent. She was hungry



BE FOUND HERSELF FACE TO FACE WITH A BRONZED AND BEARDED MAN.

about tea, and she felt better after drinking it. Altogether she was in quite a cheerful mood when the little daughter of her landlord came to wish her a merry Christmas and bring an invitation from her mother to eat her Christmas dinner with them. Dinner would be at half past 2. Miss Ackermann thanked them very much and would dine with them with pleasure. Then she gave the little girl the present she had ready for her, a stylish young lady doll dressed in the latest fashion, with coat and hat complete, a gift which made its recipient radiant, and sent her off to exhibit it at once.

The sermon "God's Christmas Gift," from the text "Wait upon the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart," made her homesick again, the desire of her heart seemed so exceedingly far off. Miss Ackermann was not one of those who forget, hard as she had tried not to remember. She found her thoughts straying back ten years to the seaside, to her old home and Jack. Their parents were neighbors. Her father and mother lived in the fishing town and took board in the season. His father was the farmer who supplied them with vegetables and fruit. Jack drove the wagon which brought the daily supply to the cottages. They would have known each other in any case, but the morning interviews over lettuce and strawberries, melons and tomatoes brought them closer together.

Every one approved of their engagement, and the day was set, when a great misfortune happened—her mother and oldest sister were killed in a tragedy which they were drinking by a train at a railroad crossing. This was bad enough surely, but "troubles hunt in couples," and the blow seemed to affect her father's mind. He became almost childish, took to his bed and would have no one but her wait upon him. To complete the roll of disaster her brother suddenly brought home as his wife a girl whom none of his friends would have chosen, and the old man would not let his daughter-in-law come near him. To tell the truth, she had no desire to help Miss Ackermann in her duties. She had married for a step up and said plainly that she did not mean to slave to please anybody.

"You see how it is, Jack," Miss Ackermann said, with streaming eyes. "I cannot leave father, even for you." "Bring him to our house with you," replied Jack. "There is plenty of room, and father and mother won't mind." "No, Jack; thanks ever so much, but that wouldn't do any good. Father wouldn't be satisfied. Besides, he takes up so much of my time that I couldn't do my duty by you." And Jack had to submit with the best grace he could muster.

Unfortunately he consulted the doctor who attended Mr. Ackermann as to the probable duration of the old man's illness. The doctor assured him that the trouble was chiefly psychodria and that he might live for years in the same state or might possibly recover as suddenly as he had collapsed. At all events the patient was in no immediate danger. The inquiry would have done no harm had it not been that the doctor

and a talking wife, to whom he told everything, so before long the whole neighborhood was saying that Jack Halston had been asking how long old man Ackermann could live. Of course the story came to Miss Ackermann's ears, to her intense indignation and still greater grief. Jack could not deny it to her, and short of positive denial she would listen to no explanation. There was a quarrel, a broken engagement, and Jack Halston went west, leaving his sweetest well woe-broken hearted, with only duty to console her, and sometimes duty is the best consolation one can have.

If he had been less impatient there would have been no trouble. Dr. Bland did not understand the effect which a broken heart sometimes produces upon the body. Mr. Ackermann died before the winter was over. Jack Halston came home as soon as he heard the news, but Miss Ackermann had gone to her father's house, and he found her and was obdurate. Her filial affection found satisfaction in refusing to forgive the lover who had desired her father's death. She would not even see him, and so the affair ended.

A well, it was too late now, and she was a fool to be dreaming of it. The sermon was ended, and the music of the organ roused her to the consciousness of things present and to come. She took part with the congregation in the rest of the service and then hurried home to make a hasty toilet for dinner.

There was only a quiet family gathering. The fiancé of the oldest daughter, a traveling salesman in the employ of a wholesale house, was the life of the party. He was considered a very bright young man and a good talker. He was at his best today and kept them all amused with stories of his travels, so that Miss Ackermann had only to listen with a semblance of interest.

"By the way, Miss Ackermann," he said presently, "I met an old friend of yours on this last trip. Halston was the name—J. W. Halston. It was in Idaho, Boise City. He is doing well in mines out there and is quite chummy with one of my best customers, who has some money in his business. The two were together at my rooms in the hotel, and he saw Min's picture on the bureau. I always carry it around to keep me out of temptation—guarding an angel business, you know, Min—and he saw it. You know people say you two look alike, and the likeness comes off strong in that photo. It struck him all of a heap. 'Excuse me,' he said, 'but will you tell me whose picture that is? It looks very much like someone I know ten years ago.' 'Certainly,' said I, 'that is my best girl. She is thought very much like a lady who lives in the same house, Miss Ackermann, from New Jersey.' Well, it turned out to be the very same. He asked lots of questions about you, especially whether you were married. I gave you a good character, and I guess you'll be hearing from him before long. Ross says he is a bachelor."

Miss Ackermann controlled herself sufficiently to smile. "Thank you, we were friends and neighbors when I was a girl," she replied, and in a moment more they were all laughing at a comical anecdote which the drummer was telling in his best style. It was no wonder he said good-bye. When the dinner was over the hostess excused herself soon upon the plea of domestic duties, leaving Miss Ackermann with the young people. So, knowing herself in the way, she lingered but a few minutes. Back in her room she gave way and took refuge in that last solace of her sex, a good cry. Her overwrought nerves demanded relief and would not be denied.

She was still huddled, a disconsolate heap, on the lounge when there came a tap at the door which she recognized as that of her little friend. She sat up and hurriedly straightened her hair, trusting that in the dim light of the fast falling twilight the child would notice nothing amiss, sharp as she was. "Come in," she called as the knock was repeated. "Here's a gentleman to see you," the child said, with the air of a person who confers a favor. "He says he is an old friend, so I brought him right up." Miss Ackermann remembered that it being Christmas day, the maid would be out and that consequently the little girl would answer the door. "Thank you," she said, "you may go." Then she found herself face to face with a bronzed and bearded man whose eyes only were familiar.

"Well, Annie," he said in a voice she knew all too well, "I am once more." She held out both hands with an eager gesture. "Oh, Jack, Jack!" she cried. A moment more and she was sobbing on his shoulder while his arms held her as though they would never let go.

An English Superstition. The most popular superstition in many parts of England is that every remnant of Christmas decoration must be removed before Candlemas day. Should a sprig of holly or other evergreen be left in any house one of its occupants will die within the year.

From the Yuletide Cynic. Thank heaven, it isn't only the aristocrat who can have a family tree at Christmas. Be Christmas white or Christmas green, it's all the same to you. If Christmas finds you all serene. And doesn't make you blue. It doesn't take a magician to transform a small boy into a turkey gobler.

When Santa Claus comes down the chimney he chases many a man up the spout. It's the vanity of the sex that prompts the female turkey to wonder how she is going to be dressed for the Christmas dinner.

The finest Coffee Substitute ever made, has recently been produced by Dr. Shoop of Racine Wis. You don't have to boil it twenty or thirty minutes. "Made in a minute" says the doctor. "Health Coffee" is really the closest Coffee Imitation ever yet produced. Not a grain of real Coffee in it either. Health Coffee Imitation is made from pure toasted cereals or grains, with malt, nuts, etc. Really it would fool an expert—were he to unknowingly drink it for Coffee. J. F. Smyre.

Christmas on Taft's Ranch.

SECRETARY OF WAR TAFT is part owner of one of the largest ranches in Texas, the Coleman-Fulton ranch, so called, a 175,000-acre "farm" eleven miles from Corpus Christi on the San Antonio and Aransas Pass railroad. One hundred men are always and 250 men sometimes employed on it.

"It was so fortunate as to have the pleasure of seeing a unique Christmas on this ranch," writes Mary Ellen Muncy in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. "Christmas morning, though warm, was foggy, and a slow rain fell, but by 12 o'clock the sun came out, and the people at the ranch house began to make their preparations. Ever since early morning the employees from the different farms had been coming in. All kinds of vehicles were pressed into service. Some came on horseback and some on foot. There were many children.

"I saw what I had never seen before, a growing Christmas tree. Just in front of the house was a large mul-



berry tree. The ladies of the house came out about 2 o'clock and decorated the tree, with the assistance of some of the men. Even the men required stepladders to reach the top-most boughs. First, the ladies gave some artificial icicles, which they hung on the branches in great profusion. As the sun was shining brightly by this time, it gave the icicles a very glittering appearance, and the wind, commencing to blow, shook them gently, making the illusion more perfect. Then long bright ribbons of many colors were suspended from the topmost limbs and fruit and candies tied on with ribbons of the same color—orange with orange ribbon, apples with red ribbon, limes with green ribbon, etc. Small toys were suspended from the tree; large ones were at the base. It presented a very gorgeous spectacle, and the sight of the happy children that surrounded it made one wish to be a child again to enjoy it to the uttermost. But the best was yet to come.

"In the front yard were the presents intended for the grown people, and each man received one. One was a fine surrey. Five were each given fifty and seventy-five dollar saddles. Several married men got handsome metal beds, with springs and mattresses. Twenty or thirty fine hats, costing \$7 apiece, were distributed and many other articles, all the best of their kind. I saw a young man who received an all leather suit case. This last item may seem strange on a ranch, but there are many polished gentlemen among the employees who would consider suit cases very necessary should they have occasion to visit the city.

"All this while music was to be heard from a band stationed on the front porch, where many of the visitors were seated. After the Santa Claus of the Christmas tree had retired and the presents to the grownups had been distributed all repaired to the porch and front yard to see again the joyful children and the tree, and surely it was a thing of beauty and, with its fruits and flowers, looked as though it had been transplanted from fairyland.

"The people that came from a distance departed before midnight, but those that lived near by remained for an evening of music and good cheer, and thus ended a happy Christmas day.

"The Queen's Christmas Card." Queen Alexandra has not given up her interest in behalf of the unemployed. Last Christmas she sanctioned a unique plan to raise more funds for them. This was in the shape of the issue of a Christmas book, consisting of poems, stories, sketches, drawings and music, which was entitled "The Queen's Christmas Card." Algernon Charles Swinburne, Alfred Austin, the poet laureate; Thomas Hardy, Marie Corelli, Hall Caine, George Meredith, Arthur Wing Pinero, Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, Edwin A. Abbey, William Holman Hunt, Sir Edward John Poynter and Sir Edward Elgar are among the host of those who contributed. The production of the book was practically gratuitous. It sold for half a crown, and the proceeds were devoted to the queen's unemployed fund.

There is something about Kennedy's Laxative Cough Syrup that makes it different from others, and it causes a free yet gentle action of the bowels through which the cold is forced out of the system. At the same time it heals irritation and allays inflammation of the throat and lungs. It is pleasant to take. Children like it. Contains no opiates nor narcotics. Sold by R. P. Freeze.

Are you going to "swear off the first of January?"

THE THREE WISE MEN.

Who Were They?—An Unsolved Christmas Mystery.

One Christmas mystery remains unsolved. Who were the wise men of the east—the magi who followed the star of Bethlehem from afar to do homage to the newborn Saviour?

The simple story as told in the Bible is one of the most familiar in Christmas lore. Any child could recite it in detail. Painters and sculptors have made it the theme of the most inspired products of their brushes and chisels, but to this day the identity of these wise men remains a mystery. A search of the great paintings in which the subject is treated produces a bewildering number of different ideas presented. The varying versions of the books of the ages are as many.

It is fair to assume from the fact that the visitors were received at court by King Herod and that they carried gifts of value that they were in their own country men of royal or close to it. Herod evidently deemed it well to treat them with deference, for disquieted though he was by their news of the comet that was to lead them to the birthplace of the Redeemer he dissembled and told them that when they had found the newborn he would return to worship with them.

Much of our information about the early days of the Christian era comes from the monks of the fourteenth century, who delved deeply into historical sources since lost to the world. The story of the three wise men has received wide credence. According to these monks, the wise men were three great kings called Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Caspar was the oldest and came from the north. At the time of the birth of Christ he was sixty years old, and for more than two-thirds of that time he had ruled in Arabia. Balthasar was black, a native of Saba, from the east, and forty years old. The youngest was Melchior, from the south, whose country was Parthia. He was twenty years old.

Impelled by some mysterious power, they dropped all the cares of state and followed a single star thirteen days and nights without eating or sleeping till it led them to Jerusalem.

Then the story follows that of the Bible until they returned to their own countries. The story does not stop here. It tells circumstantially the after life of the three wise men. The good Apostle Thomas journeyed to their country and baptized them, and all three went out to preach the doctrine of the Christ. They were slain by barbarous nations, and later the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, recovered the sacred bones and took them to Constantinople. Thence they were carried to Milan and finally found an ultimate resting place in Cologne, where they now are.—New York Post.

WHEN SANTA WENT ASTRAY. Miracle of the Loaves Repeated For Washington's Poor.

The day of miracles has not passed, according to the firm belief of a hundred or more poor people in Washington. Last Christmas day Almas temple, who had given its annual dinner to the poor. It was a well planned affair, generously contributed to, and turned out a big success. But the most notable thing about it was not on the programme and made the hit of the occasion.

While the Shriners were feeding their guests there came to their hall 150 loaves of bread. The huge six-foot Santa Claus was busy cracking jokes as he waddled about and took down the gifts from the Christmas tree. In the middle of one of his stories there entered another big fat Santa Claus, carrying a colossal basket full of bread, and behind him were three or four negroes, also carrying baskets of bread. One of the Shriner committee men at once inferred that some one had sent a gift of bread to be distributed and signed a receipt for the 150 loaves. In a few minutes they were handed around to the heads of families, and an additional smile of Christmas joy was around with them.

When the festivities were nearly over and the crowd had begun to disperse a man came running in and asked: "Did you get 150 loaves of bread?" "We did," was the reply. "What did you do with it?" "Gave it away."

"Well, that was an order from the Carroll institute. It came here by mistake. But it is all right. We are glad you gave it away, and if you need more let us know," and the man went away, evidently fully satisfied with the incident.—New York Times.

Paragraphs From the Durham Herald.

They may agree on a compromise now, but who is going to pledge the next Legislature to keep hands off?

It may be that prices of the things one has to have dropped off, but if so many of us have dropped off, but if so many of us have not noticed it.

We do not pretend to know why it is, but somebody is evidently getting cold feet on the railroad proposition.

All should rejoice that there is prospect of a settlement without the Governor having to order out the militia.

Mr. Watson may think that the only Populist left, but what's the matter with those people he helped to elect to office down in Georgia?

The shooting up of a town by five hundred masked men would be considered a pretty bad affair if it had happened anywhere else but in Kentucky.

If the State compromises with the railroads at a rate higher than that named by the Legislature we would not like to be the man who does the explaining.

It may be all wrong to have a law against gambling, but so long as there is such a law it should be enforced against the poker-player and the craps-shooter alike and all should be tried in open court.

When the Stomach, Heart, or Kidney nerves get weak, then these organs all fail. Don't drug the Stomach, nor stimulate the Heart or Kidneys. That is simply a makeshift. Get a prescription known to Druggists everywhere as Dr. Shoop's Restorative. The Restorative is prepared expressly for these weak inside nerves. Strengthen these nerves, build them up with Dr. Shoop's Restorative—tablets or liquid—and see how quickly help will come. Free sample test sent on request by Dr. Shoop, Racine, Wis. Your health is surely worth this simple test. R. P. Freeze.

Thousands of men and women in all walks of life are suffering from kidney and bladder trouble. Don't neglect your kidneys! Delays are dangerous. DeWitt's Kidney and Bladder Pills afford quick relief for all forms of kidney and bladder trouble. A week's treatment 25c. Sold by R. P. Freeze.

WE HAVE enlarged our building so as to enable us to buy Furniture in large quantities and hereby get better freight rates and discounts. We propose that our customers shall share in this reduction. When in need of anything in HOUSE FURNISHINGS it will be to your interest to call and examine our stock. We guarantee satisfaction.

Respectfully, M. J. ROWE & CO. Phone 24.

Please Pay Your Taxes Now.

I will be at the following places on the dates mentioned, and hope those who have not paid their taxes will meet me and pay the same. Please give this your attention, as I am compelled to settle the state taxes soon, and the schools of the county have opened, and the schools cannot run without money so I must have the money to meet the above obligations.

Table with columns for location, date, and name. Locations include Hickory, Conover, Q. M. Smith Store, Catawba, Claremont, Long Island, forenoon, Monro, afternoon, Sherrill's Ford, Merrill, Mt. Pleasant, W. L. Loftin's Store, Oliver's, Maiden, Heavener Bros. store, D. M. Brittain, Dr. T. F. Foard's, Broo ford's, Hickory.

The fact that Mr. Fairbank made a number of speeches in Kentucky may have helped in the result of a continuance of cocktails there.

BADLY MIXED UP. Abraham Brown, of Winterton, N. Y., had a very remarkable experience; he says: "Doctors got badly mixed up over me; one said heart disease; two called it kidney trouble; the fourth, blood poison, and the fifth stomach and liver trouble; but none of them helped me; so my wife advised trying Electric Bitters, which are restoring me to perfect health. One bottle did me more good than all the five doctors prescribed." Guaranteed to cure blood poison, weakness and all stomach, liver and kidney complaints, by T. R. Abernethy druggist, 50c.

Fall and Winter HATS. Our Fall and Winter Hats will be ready for sale after October 11th, 1907. We would be pleased to receive your patronage. Very respectfully, Misses C. & E. Yount, Conover, N. C.

THE MAN WHO WALKS. will find untold comfort in the Stetson Shoe. His feet won't grow tired—his shoes won't lose their shape. Mind energy is too valuable to waste in foot distress. Buy Stetsons.

WE HAVE enlarged our building so as to enable us to buy Furniture in large quantities and hereby get better freight rates and discounts. We propose that our customers shall share in this reduction. When in need of anything in HOUSE FURNISHINGS it will be to your interest to call and examine our stock. We guarantee satisfaction.

Respectfully, M. J. ROWE & CO. Phone 24.

THE MAN WHO WALKS. will find untold comfort in the Stetson Shoe. His feet won't grow tired—his shoes won't lose their shape. Mind energy is too valuable to waste in foot distress. Buy Stetsons.

WE HAVE enlarged our building so as to enable us to buy Furniture in large quantities and hereby get better freight rates and discounts. We propose that our customers shall share in this reduction. When in need of anything in HOUSE FURNISHINGS it will be to your interest to call and examine our stock. We guarantee satisfaction.

Respectfully, M. J. ROWE & CO. Phone 24.

We want to buy your COUNTRY PRODUCE

we pay cash for peanuts. Pork season is here and we want your hogs. See us for best prices. We also want your cattle and hides. You will find us next door to the postoffice, phone 43, Don't fail to see us, we are your friends.

Newton Grocery Co.

RIGHT THIS WAY TO GET Your Furniture!

of all kinds. We have a good line of BED ROOM SUITS, ODD BEDS and DRESSERS, HALL RACKS, SIDE-BOARDS, ROCKERS, CENTER TABLES, DINING TABLES, PICTURES, ETC.

We are Headquarters for Floor Coverings; have a good assortment of Art Squares or Rags. We have AXMINSTER RUGS, BRUSSELS RUGS, TAPESTRY RUGS, INGRAIN RUGS.

We also have a good assortment of Mattings which we are selling for less money than it can be bought for on the market today. Come our way and get what you need. Respectfully, J. F. HERMAN & SON

THE MAN WHO WALKS. will find untold comfort in the Stetson Shoe. His feet won't grow tired—his shoes won't lose their shape. Mind energy is too valuable to waste in foot distress. Buy Stetsons.

WE HAVE enlarged our building so as to enable us to buy Furniture in large quantities and hereby get better freight rates and discounts. We propose that our customers shall share in this reduction. When in need of anything in HOUSE FURNISHINGS it will be to your interest to call and examine our stock. We guarantee satisfaction.

Respectfully, M. J. ROWE & CO. Phone 24.

THE MAN WHO WALKS. will find untold comfort in the Stetson Shoe. His feet won't grow tired—his shoes won't lose their shape. Mind energy is too valuable to waste in foot distress. Buy Stetsons.

WE HAVE enlarged our building so as to enable us to buy Furniture in large quantities and hereby get better freight rates and discounts. We propose that our customers shall share in this reduction. When in need of anything in HOUSE FURNISHINGS it will be to your interest to call and examine our stock. We guarantee satisfaction.

We are doing Fine Job Work