

And They Are Wed on Christmas Day

No Time Is Lost by Cupid in Bringing Hilda and Jack Together.

By MARION R. REAGAN

HILDA MAY GIBBONS settled back in the rather comfortable chair of the pullman car, and, as the great train thundered out of the station, gave herself over to the none-too-satisfying thoughts of the prospects of her future. She was going home for the Christmas holidays. It was her first trip back in three and a half years, for it is an expensive journey from Massachusetts to Colorado, and it was really all the Gibbonses could do to pay Hilda's tuition at Wellesley. Such luxuries as trips home for vacations were simply out of the question. However, as this was her last year in school and she intended working in New York after graduation in June, the money had to be spared for her to see the family once more.

Her heart leaped at the thought of seeing her mother and father again, but fell just as suddenly when she thought of meeting all the young

less for a witty phrase and on which she always completely "vamped" young Elkins.

And all this dreaming made her the more self-conscious. When she passed him on the street, for example, she would feel herself stifling all over,

and found it difficult even to walk normally, imagining he was looking at her. She always discovered when she looked back, however, that he had not really been looking at her at all, and was quite unconcernedly smoking his cigarette.

When the train stopped at Princeton Hilda felt a sudden tremor come over her. Jack was a student at Princeton and would probably be in his home for Christmas. They might be riding on the same train! Almost unconsciously she leaned forward and looked into the narrow panel of the mirror to adjust her hat at the right angle.

She had just leaned back in her chair when the deep baritone of masculine voices informed her that several young men were on the platform of the train. The doors banged. The train moved on and a tall, well-dressed young man, preceded by a porter with a bag, passed her chair.

"Here, this male, isn't it?" he asked, indicating the chair exactly next to Hilda.

"Oh, yes, sah, yes, sah," answered the porter and quickly disposed of the baggage while the young man sank into the chair.

Timothy Hilda glanced in his direction. When she caught sight of him she couldn't suppress a little nervous cry of "oh!"

Jack Elkins turned. Hilda blushed a deep crimson and pretended not to see him. Jack continued to look at her for some seconds, evidently not displeased with the sight, and finally asked, "Pardon, but haven't I met you some place? Your face is so familiar!" And before Hilda could reply—"Oh, of course, now I know. You live in Boulton, don't you?"

"Yes, I live in Boulton," Hilda admitted stiltily, and put an end to what Elkins had hoped might develop into a conversation.

Almost an hour passed of complete silence between them. Then Elkins turned sharply in his chair. Something had gotten into his eye. Hilda offered her assistance and very carefully removed the annoying little cluder. The incident was enough to relieve her of her self-consciousness and their conversation became more genial. They discussed everything from poetry to politics. They had luncheon together on the train, and dinner. At the end of the evening when the porter came to make up their berths they said good-night, feeling they had known each other for years and years, and more than that—been in love forever.

Hilda was just the kind of girl Elkins had been hoping to meet. It was too preposterous to think of their both living almost side by side for all these years and never really meeting until now.

The next morning they had breakfast together and continued to talk for several hours—until the train finally arrived in Denver at noon.

Some of the ladies of Boulton, who had come into Denver to shop that day, were rather surprised to see young Jack Elkins and Hilda Gibbons in a large jewelry shop looking at diamond rings. But when they returned home that night and heard that most startling news—that Jack Elkins and



In a Large Diamond Shop, Looking at Diamond Rings.

Hilda Gibbons would be married Christmas morning, they were almost overcome.

Christmas morning when Hilda walked down the aisle of the little church, leaning slightly on Jack's arm, the envy of every girl in Boulton, the picture of perfect happiness, she turned to Jack. "Dear, we'll be the leaders of Boulton society now; let's always invite everybody to our parties—rich and poor—shall we?"

"Of course, dear; we shall do whatever you say," was his answer.

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Christmas, Mistletoe

—the Kissing Custom

Since the Christian era, mistletoe was dedicated to Christmas time. With it went the custom of kissing under the white-berried plant, probably a survival of the saturnal of pagan rites.

But the Christian elders decided that when the churches were decorated with mistletoe, there was too much kissing going on during the services and too many requests for the wedding service.

So they abolished mistletoe and hung up in its stead holly, to signify the dark monotony and many thorns of matrimony. But the mistletoe stayed in the homes at Christmas, and so did the kissing custom.

It is a bad luck for a maiden to stand under the mistletoe and not be kissed. It means that she will not be married that year.

Naturally

"Have you been doing your holiday shopping early?"

"Well, not of late."

A MATTER OF MONEY



He—'I'm going to give you a Christmas present this year that no money can buy.

She—I prefer one that some money can buy.



RS. TIMOTHY TITUS was hanging out the clothes in the keen December wind and Mr. Frost was freezing them stiff as fast as possible. A clothespin in her mouth did not prevent the good woman from singing "I Want to Be an Angel," and her daughter Anna, as she brought out the rest of the wash, hoped that the desire thus expressed would soon be granted. For it must be confessed that the life of the Titus family was not a happy one. Care had written wrinkles on the mother's face and also upon her disposition. Nothing could have looked sweeter in Christmas prospect to the Titus household than something angelic; but all of them, from the old man down to Peggy, felt that it depended upon Mrs. Titus; so that this strain from the back yard had a note of hope in it, over and above the probability of another wintry and bitter holiday.

Mr. Timothy Titus shared this hope from the standpoint of the trials of his winter vacation. During the rest of the year and while it was good, nature nurtured out of doors he was a gardener, but with the advent of winter he became an unprepared piece of furniture about the Titus home.

The fact was that Samantha Titus was, at heart, a hopeful, kindly and generous woman. The principal reason of present scarcity in her household had been her goodness to the sick and poor within her reach. A neighbor had remarked upon her liberality by saying that "Mr. Timothy Titus gave away in the winter all that Tim Titus could get out of summer," and that "she not only gave away all the profits, but was willing to give away all the capital losses." Her song on that cold day did not indicate that she felt satisfied with herself, but rather that something of Christmas longing was really stirring within her.

Anyway, the wish might have been a prayer, for it was answered. As Anna put it afterward, "It seemed like what happened to the shepherds at Bethlehem." For Mrs. Titus got a new and happy idea in a peculiar way. She had been calling for a Mr. Saxe over the telephone for half the afternoon in vain, in order to collect a washing bill that might slightly improve the Christmas possibilities, when Anna humdrumly suggested that she might try the saxophone.

The joke not only made her laugh, but it brought her mind to the thought that sometimes fortune pushes us for neglecting our relations to others by the failure of the resources that we have depended upon and rewards our use of new and untried means. This thought caused Mrs. Titus to put her bride in her empty pocket and pushed her out upon the flood of affection that reached as far as California. For her brother Sam, who had not heard a word from her for years, received a letter that was stamped with a loving tear or two, and it was like a Christmas present for the far-away brother. It provoked a loving expression also, as love always does, and through it the Titus began a new and related history.

With Christmas time the burden of care and labor that had pressed so heavily fell off, and the angel that had been under it came out, as the smiling mother dressed old Timothy up for a Santa Claus and was merry with them all.

When Sam heard about it he felt like one of the Wise Men, even if he had hailed from the West, and sent his gifts ahead of Mrs. Titus. It was worth the long journey to hear Peggy say that she thought he was the real Santa Claus and to kiss her rosy cheek.

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Had Him Guessing

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Mrs. Gray—Nothing to speak of—The Parlor Knight.

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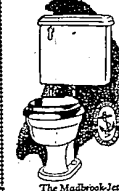
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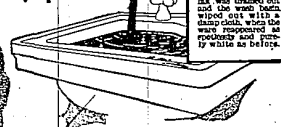
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