but she went into the store, jingling the

coins, laughing and making jokes with all

would never, never undertake to wait on

the best in stock. She made no demur-

since her encounter with Micklejohn she

had a royal recklessness in everything. Be-

fore she had flouted the most trifling gifts.

Now she took with a free hand whatever

her wooers chose to offer, thereby greatly scandalizing the few other women making

"Let me take you home!" Jack said, looking up into her brilliant face when the

buying was done. Jack was fair and blue-

eyed and half a head the lower. She

door. Outside there was black darkness-

she could not make out even Jinny's pale

belated Christmas purchases.

## A CHRISTMAS CHOICE. By MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.

The crowd in the store overflowed the porch, but there was a lull in trade-a surprising full considering it was well toward 1 o'clock of Christmas eve. The morning had been April weather, full of fitful sunshine and soft, flawy winds. Now the sky was leaden, the wind sat northwest, lowering. ragged clouds scudding before it let fall fittle spiteful snow spits, or dashes of hail.

The Murray outfit came wabbling up. There was a sort of tremolo even to the foud crackings of Sonny's whip. Lassaphine, at Sonny's elbow, scowled and shivered impatiently at the noise. Such useless noise! The crack of doom could not have quickened the patient amble at which Brandy, the red ox, and Jinny, the pale little donkey, drew their clattering foad.

"By gonnys! Must be you've fetched feather bed alive!" Storekeeper Walker said, holding out both hands. Lassaphine overlooked them. Instead of getting out, she writhed down amid the turkeys. They were ane, big fellows, white and copperas yellow, and glossy, greenish bronze. She had fed and tended and talked to them since they came out of the egg. A lump had come in her throat, as she hoppfed them in pairs and laid them upon the scant straw at the bottom of the wagon. The lump was there still,

(Copyright, 1898, by Martha McCuiloch- a hill girl, who had, however, been obliging enough to die while Lassaphine was yet in arms.

"Drive round! We're a-goin' to walk in the back lot," Sonny called, shaking hands right and left as he spoke. All Lassaphine's worshipers were in the crowd on the porch -besides everybody liked Sonny in spite of his weakness for many glasses when one was too much for his poor head.

That was the secret of Lassaphine's presence-she could not afford to have him royster away the price of her feathered flock. For one thing there were her church dues. Sonny argued that the circuit rider, a wifeless young fellow, well clothed, well mounted, at no expense for living, had much less need of the \$5 than themselves. Lassaphine listened, smiling obstinately. She could put in action, not words, her feeling that it was due herself to pay, regardless of anything else.

A turkey walk, understand, is a sort of rural lottery, much affected around holidays in the middle south. As a lottery it comes under the ban of strict church people. Certainly there is a strong element of chance in it. Each walker pays a toward the stake, and set his peg within a stipulated sum for the privilege of walking -in local parlance "buys his peg." After it is bought he must walk blindfolded a though Lassaphine was very far from a sen- given number of steps and set the peg timental person. She could have sold her firmly in the ground. He who comes nearest flock to the turkey drover last week with the to the stake wins the turkey, or whatever lightest heart in the world. It was quite the prize may be. Commonly ten or a another matter to selze and bind themdozen live birds are walked off. The win-

instantly he shouted: "Step up to the cap- Though there were but seventeen turkeys, fist-and-skull-but you wouldn't lay the right here, only a dime! Come on, come on!

No such turkeys anywhere!"
"Come runnin'!" Haskell said, clutching a peg and flipping silver into Sonny's bat. In a twinkling ten pegs were taken. held up his hand. "Git yer blinder, Doc," he said to Grant. "You go first."

Grant whipped out a gorgeous red-andyellow bandana. Sonny muffled his eyes securely, then, peg in hand, he was turned around two or three times and told to walk toward the central stake. A laughing shout went up as he shaped a course at right angles to it. "Walk, big Injun! Walk away! Walk Spanish! Tiptoe fine!" the rest called after him as he stepped his allotted forty paces. He stepped gingerly and so high Lassaphine herself joined in the laughing. When he stooped to stick his peg and bumped fairly against the lot fence

there was a chorus of gleeful howls. "B'Jacks! If I'm to win this fellow Sam Walker woon't have a panel o' fence left!" he said, pulling off his blinder and rubbing his chin. "Here, you nice young men, put on this same rag, and let's see if you do any

better, with no eyes in your head!" "One thing sure-we can't do any worse!" Jack retorted, as Sonny hooded Haskell and turned him about. Haskell had an Indian's sense of direction, along with a hunter's trained perception. He wheeled slowly until he felt the wind cut his left cheek, and then with a confident smile went straight

"Good for Len! Well walked! Sure shot!" the others called.

"That's Len's turkey, dead to rights!" Jack Childers said, "we couldn't beat that if we tried a year. Put up another turkey, Sonny-and bar Lem from walking." "Good as wheat!" from the crowd. Len

smiled quite happily. "It jest gives me a better chance ter see Lassaphine," he said aside to Childers. "I'll walk though fer the next-then you look out."

stepping manfully out. A babel of shouts assailed him, but he kept straight ahead and set Teeny's peg respectably near the stake. The other nine walkers went wildnot one came within five yards of the winning post. One luckless fellow brought up at the store steps-the rest scattered impartially about, though each had been morally certain with his eyes open that he could shut them and go straight to the goal without turning a hair.

always been sech er plous little cuss," Doc



THEY SWAYED BACK AND FORTH. treacherously as they fed from her hand, and deliver them thus to make sport for an idle

holiday crowd. "Ba-ay, Jim Walker! Ain't you got a new frock and stick er red-strip-ed candy? They mought tole this yer gal er mine inside! Sonny said, stamping his feet hard as he clambered down. "She wants ter spile our fun-Lassaphine does-been a-beggin' me all the way not to have the turkey walk-though she knows I saved them bur-reds jest fer nothing else in the world,"

do! Not never in the world!" Walker said. "Christmas comes but once a year, you know. Come in! Do! I've got the very dress for you-told my wife so last night, when the newest goods come in." Lamaphine shook her head decidedly. "I don't want no dress you've got," she said. | side.

"Nothin' you've got—until the money to pay for it is in my hand." "That woon't be long." Wailker said, rubbing his hands. "Look at all them fine gobblers! I call it jest a great notion of your pa's-havin' 'em walked for-stand you in twice whut the drovers 's been payin'! Ef you don't wanter trade though, lemme take

"I don't leave this wagin till it starts for dropped. He had vanished inside the log storehouse. As the team crawled a little from the steps to make room for a smart as full of tricks as so many unbroken mules new buggy he came out wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, his eyes glassy

with satisfaction. 'So you ra'ly did come, Jack! Good boy! Lassaphine did not turn her head, yet a slow blush gathered in her olive cheeks. She had long dusky eyes with a spark at the bottom, heavy night-black hair and the polse and stature of a Greek goddess. Notwithstanding, most women in the countryside reckoned her ugly. She was so unlike their standard of pink and white prettiness they could not in the least comprehend why so many men of so many minds

and fortunes lost their heads over her. Jack Childers, for instance, a congressman's son, rich and fair looking, though reputed wild; Len Haskell, most driving and thriving of the young farmers round about; Doc Grant, the bachelor tobacco dealer, a catch for any girl, to say nothing of Teeny Walker, the storekeeper's bashful young brother. It was certainly aggravating to good women with girls of their own to settle to have so many dangle after Lassaphine, who coquetted with all and favored none. The Murray place was poorer than poverty, the bare and unmerchantable fragment of a wide plantation. Its starveling acres were either galled and gullied or arm's slength apart. Teeny Walker darted

in two or three south-looking rooms. Grandpap never forgot, nor allowed the others to forget, what was due to Murray mother had not been a person of quality, but he said, stepping to the wagon side, where The walking went on with a rush, could mighty nigh manage you, Jack, fair

at a turkey supper, toward 1 o'clock on Christmas morning. By the time the supper logs, plugged, with a pound of powder in-

The back lot was an acre of rough turf. stretching between the span-new Walker house, brave in gaudy paint, and the squat he said. "Boys, we might as well hang our weathered store, nestling in the angle of harps on the willows." the cross roads. Half way in it a stout steps. As Sonny came down them with trust: in yer bones, consarn yer pictyers, ye're speak what you may not care to hear." -but I lay the best gobbler in the bunch, ye don't play none of 'em on me.'

"Sonny, you shorely don't think they'd try it, with Lassaphine a-lookin' at 'em?" Man of his word!" he shouted to the buggy's the storekeeper called after him from the door. Len Haskell shied a stone at Walker, shake of his fist, Doc Grant made a motion

do it-honest Injun, I will-if you say so." fluttering and peeping. Sonny lifted out a a gambling scheme." big bronzy fellow, swung him back and he worth, boys? Would you say now-half in my life! I don't know what you mean."

a dollar?

handful of loose silver. "I say two-" Jack Childers began. Len Haskell stopped him with a significant his breath. "It hurts her-Lassaphine, you with a little sneering laugh. "You ought to know-to take even that much. She hates bein' here, but she cain't well help it."

said jocularly, setting his younger rivals agin' things to save me trouble. I'm a proovergrown with vagrant briers and the big up to them. "Some er you-all do me a I won't ever be anything more. Take my was flung violently aside—Lassaphine, her weather-stained house was ruinous except favor, please!" he said, breathlessly, name off your books—at once. Do you eyes blazing, stamped her foot and cried: "Folks are comin' so peart, likely I shan't Still the Murrays managed to live by it- git the chance to walk at all-but I wanter Lassaphine and Sonny and grandpap, be in, five pegs deep at least-I thought maybe one er you'd buy 'em, and walk fer

to read and sign her name, must wear seed and sign her name, must wear see shoes upon high days and holidays and go Len grinned good-humoredly. "Better her voice a little. "Come on everybody! and me. A preacher's same as a woman—it to church at least once a month. He was lemma have er walk and a half," he said. After this, I'll hold pegs—and Sonny may ain't fitten fer him to fight, no matter how the more strenuous because Lassaphine's Grant laughed explosively. "O, these boys!" have fun with the rest of you."

ners are rarely thrifty enough to take home Grant said. Haskell nodded. "But he'll "Come now, Miss Lassaphine! That won't their live prizes. Instead, they hand them be in at the turkey supper, large as life," over to a negro cook, who serves them up he said. "You must remember it's a developing process-falling in love with Lassaphine," Jack Childers added. "But say! is eaten it is time to go out and shoot Look younder! There comes the preacher, anvil Christmas guns, or touch off hollow as I'm a livin' sinner! I wonder what

> "Lassaphine-like the rest of us." growled. Doc Grant whistled shrilly, then nodded assent. "Preachers are jest men,"

Commonly the preacher had an open counstake had been driven. A pile of roughly tenance, a ready and engaging smile. Now writhed free of the struggling beasts, whittled pegs lay beside the store's back his face was somewhat set, his smooth staggered, swayed back and forth through a tenance, a ready and engaging smile. Now writhed free of the struggling beasts, cheek the least bit flushed as he rode toward three parts of the crowd at his heels, he Sonny, answering only with a grave, colhome," Lassaphine interrupted, turning to stopped and gathered the pile under his lective nod civil greetings from every side. pick up the rope reins her father had arm, saying with a mild pretense of mis- "Brother Murray," he said, not touching "Ye've all got so much Christmas Sonny's outstretched hand, "it grieves me to

> "Dear bless my soul! Is anybody dead, or a church burnt, or air you turned aginst your feed, boardin' round?" Sonny asked cheerfully. "Don't be cast down Brother Micklejohn-no matter what happens, the Lord'll provide.'

"I have no doubt of that," Micklejohn said, Jack Childers contented himself with a trying to speak severely, and to keep his eyes from Lassaphine, who had risen and toward his hip pocket, but dropped his stood erect in the rickety wagon bed as a hand and looked at Lassaphine with: "I'll queen might stand beside her throne. "My trouble is not material, but spiritual. It Lassaphine did not smile—she was busy does trouble me beyond expression to find with the turkeys, which had set up a pitiful 'you, a professor of Christ, openly engaged in

"Gamblin'!" Sonny's jaw dropped, his forth, head downward, once or twice and hands fell to his sides, nerveless and flaccid. said almost shamefacedly: "How much is "Gamblin'!" he repeated. "I never gambled "I do know-it's walkin' for our turkeys," "A whole dollar-not a feather goes for Lassaphine said springing down, and stand-Doc Grant said loudly, jingling a ing at her father's side. Her head was high, her eyes darted lightning, a royal color burned in her cheeks. She fooked Micklejohn full in the eye-his glance fell before "Let it go at one," he said, under her's. "Where are your wings?" she asked man. Understand though, this is my turkey "No plottin' agin' the whites, here!" Grant | walk, I raised the turkeys, Sonny's jest manbationer, not a full member of your church-

> Micklejohn bowed silently. His breath came a little short. Lassaphine waved him toward the gate. As he turned his horse's sead she laughed defiantly, and patted

whom Grant and Haskell had managed to keep miraculously sober for Christmas eve, was already in his seat, propped all about with parcels. "No-1'll go as I came-in my own private carriage," she called over her shoulder. "I don't want to spoil sport. Be sure, you all, to come tell me how the turkey supper went off." "Tell you what, she's got grit-that girl has!" Walker said, sticking his hands in his pocket by way of emphasizing his first leisure since sunrise. "She ain't afraid of nothin' in this world per the pert." 'We found that out several hours back.' Jack said-and Walker could not understand why the others laughed so heartily. . . . . . . . .

Christmas dawned properly clear and cold with a powdering of fine light snow over everything. By 12 o'clock it had melted, except where it lay in shadow. The road as moist, not wet, from it, yet Lassaphine held her skirts high above it. She sang in a gay, loud voice as she walked and now and then made a dancing step. Until now she had never in her life made a Christmas gift-and she was going to bestow upon the Rouse tribe-five strapping girls, renters and poor whites, all the gauds and gewgaws she had accepted from her lovers. When they came, later in the day, she would tell them of what she had done-she smiled whimsically in thinking of Doc Grant's dismay-there was feud, tobacco-born, betwixt him and the Rouse tribe's progenitor. Len would sigh thriftily over the waste of his noney; Jack-Jack would laugh with her and think it a fine Christmas prank.

The Rouses should never know. She had marked their name on the bundle-stealing in, she would knock, drop it and run away. Their house sat almost flush with the road which a little fater plunged downhill into a dark and threatening gorge. Either side the dazed, his hands hanging, his eyes fast hills, precipices almost, crowded in so close, a resolute man might dispute another's passage. Lassaphine hated the gorge. passed through it whenever she went to her favorite church, Sharon. Brother Micklejohn laid his head on her shoulder, with a dry, preached there today. The Rouse tribe were likely to go and hear him. Lassaphine her-

self had meant to be there-also to fetch the minister home with her, to share her Christmas dinner. "Let the Rouses have himwith the rest," she thought, touching the bundle of which her arm was growing weary. She heard hoofs upon the road behind, and slipped within a roadside cedar clump to rest. She was hardly well hidden before three riders halted just in front of her, spoke briefly together, then rode furiously away down hill.

Brother Micklejohn had prayed with fer vor and preached with unction, yet his heart was heavy as he rode away from Sharon. Against hope, against reason, he had hoped to see Lassaphine. He loved his Master and his Master's work, yet he was barely 23, with veins riotously full of young red blood. From the first he felt Lassaphine's spell. A brief while he had fought against it-then its subtle sweetness. It was conscience which had made him anger her; he was jealously afraid of his own heart. Another man, in Sonny's case, would have been privately told of his unseemly behavior. Love and Lassaphine had constrained him to deal harshly, upon pain of seeming to himself a coward.

She must be furiously angry-still he would not give her up-he would go to her, and r mehow make his peace. He rode with eyes downcast, reins hanging. His horse, all at once, shied violently, then stood stock still. A glance told him the reason-three other horsemen so aligned as to block the Jack Childers was in the middle. Grant and Haskell to right and left. All three faces were set in a sort of steely whiteness. Instinctively Micklejohn understood, and in understanding comprehended now much he had mistaken his vocation. The elemental savage woke in him-love religion, honor, ambition, were as nothing by contrast with this lust for a weapon this mad desire to fight to the death. He was wholly unarmed, in the face of tremendous odds. He was better horsed than any of the three, and to the full as good a rider. His one chance was to ride them down, and run for it. It was characteristic that the thought of turning back never once entered his mind.

He gathered up the reins, bent his head whistled softly and spurred straight at the line. Jack swerved his horse the least bit, let the other get his head well past, then leaning lightly tore the reins from Micklejohn's grasp and threw his horse upon its haunches. The force of impact swung his own horse around—in an instant both animals | He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs had fallen. The riders, at hard grips, breathless heart-breaking minute, then fell loval principles and cuts off his king's head

prone in the rocky road. Micklejohn stood six feet-he had brawny broad shoulders and loose-jointed, longreaching arms. But try as he might, he could not free himself. Jack's arms were locked about the big chest like a steel band, momentarily tightening. Not a word had been spoken. None was needed. Micklejohn knew he was paying for what they had taken as an insult to Lassaphine. The knowledge was mere feeling-he neither thought nor planned consciously. Life meant fighting-nothing more nor less -fighting an antagonist he ought to crush with one arm, who yet seemed likely to

best him. He shut his eyes, but opened them in stantly. He could see nothing but rings of red and yellow and green, melting into blackness. Still Jack's grip held, vise-like, agonizing. His breath went no lower than the throat-he must break the grip or perish. With a mighty plunging surge he got to his knees, loosed one hand, clutched it and struck Childers a blow full in the Blood followed it, red blood, warm and sticky. It came in a trickling jet, but did not dim the fire in Jack's eyes. Still he held hard, swaying back and forth, foiling Micklejohn's efforts to get upon his feet saw the purple face, the staring eyes

-he knew the end was only a minute away Triumph was in his grasp, Micklejohn had struck him again, a feeble, glancing blow. All at once a whirlwind seemed to rage behind him-his arms were torn loose, he 'Shame! Shame! Shame on you! After

this never call yourselves men!" "You-don't-think-you can't-we set on him-three to one?" Jack gasped. She nodded coldly. "I can't think anything Sonny's arm. "O, I wish I was a man, and else," she said. "I know well why-bemuch strength and will he may have. I

tain's office and settle, gentlemen! Pegs Lassaphine somehow found herself at the weight of your hand on me, no matter what end possessed of \$25. It was almost dark, I might do. "Ne!" Jack said, "nor let anybody else."

"Who planned this foolishness first?" she her court. Teeny darted out of sight-he asked, still severe. "All of us," said Haskell laconically. "Then we drawed lots-and Jack had luck. her in the face of all those others. Jack Childers at once flung himself over the coun- That fellow had to be thrashed-ef he ter into his vacant place and certainly sold thrashed Jack, then I come into the argy-Lassaphine some astonishing bargains from ment, and Doc after me."

Lassaphine's face relaxed a little. "You all go on up to the house and walt," she said. "I-I-that is-there's something-I've got a word to say to brother Mickiejohn.' "I'm 'fraid it's 'Yes,' " Doc said gloomily

as they mounted and rode away. "Remember how she blushed up, at the last. Lassaphine ain't like no other woman ever I saw-but even she's likely to be a fool over a good lookin' preacher."

"Does look like it," Haskell admitted. with a half sarcastic sigh. "Twould be funny now, if we'd won the brother's case smiled down at him and stepped toward the for him, instead of runnin' him out o' the country, as we intended. What do you think ness against the red of Brandy. Sonny, about it, Jack?" "I-O! nothing!" Jack said as though

coming out of a dream. "In this matter Lassaphine must do the thinking."

Sonny and grandpa gave the trio an up-roarious welcome, which grew somewhat chastened when ten minutes later Lassaphine came in with brother Micklejohn in her wake, "Shake hands-all of you," she commanded, "then wash your bands and faces and come out to Christmas dinner." It was a royal dinner. Black Luce, whose forbears had belonged to the Murrays in the days before their decadence, had done her very best-and Sonny had helped her. Sonny had a gourmet's palate and a pretty taste in seasoning. At Christmas neither was ever stinted, however bare the living other days of the year. They ate in leisurely fashion-it was quite dusk when they arose from the table. Lassaphine led the way into grandapa's room, which was bright with leaping firelight. Notwith-standing she lit candles in two tall brass sticks, turned about and faced Micklejohn, sticks, turned about and faced Micklejohn, who throughout what ought to have been an ordeal had seemed curiously elate. Her face was grave, though a laugh lurked in "Brother Micklejohn," she said, her eyes. "you asked me down in the gorge if I came there because I loved somebody?" and came there 'because I loved somebody?' and I said, 'Yes.' Did you think I meant you?" "I did," Micklejohn said, smiling softly

and half extending his hand. Lassaphine's head went up. "You thought wrong," she said. "I did go for love, though-because I couldn't bear to have Jack disgrace him-"Hurrah!" Haskell shouted, hugging

grandpa, who stood next him. "Hurrah!" Grant echoed, trying to shake Jack's hand, Delight in the minister's downfall overbalanced personal loss. Jack stood as though on Lassaphine. The cut on his forehead was throbbing viciously-he was spent and weak-the flood of joy overwhelmed him. He flung his arms about Lassaphine, and smothered sob. Before them all she bent and kissed him, then laughed out to the fleeing Micklejohn: "If you've a mind, you may come back and marry us-Old Christmas day.'

AN ENGLISHMAN ON ENGLISHMEN.

Action Based on Principle Whether Right or Wrong. Timely interest attaches to the following extract from a play by George Bernard entitled "The Man of Destiny." In this play (vol. II, "Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant," published by Herbert S. Stone & Co., Chicago) Napoleon Bonaparte speaks thus to a woman spy, whom he has identified as English and is taxing for the methods whereby she has sought to compromise him "No Englishman is too low to have scruples; no Englishman is high enough to be heir tyranny. man is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who have got the thing he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. Like the aristocrat he does what pleases him and grabs what he wants; like the shopkeeper he pursues his purpose with the industry and steadfastness that came from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude. As the great champion of freedom and national independence he conquers and annexes half the world and calls it colonization. When he wants a new market for his adulterated Manchester goods he sends a missionary to teach the natives the gospel of peace. The natives kill the missionary; he flies to arms in defense of Christianity; fights for it; conquers for it and takes the market as a reward from heaven. In defense of his island shores he puts a chaplain on board his ship; nails a flag with a cross on it to his top gallant mast and sails to the ends of the earth, sinking, burning and destroying all who dispute the empire of the seas with him. He boasts that a slave is free the moment that his foot touches British soil and he sells the children of his poor at 6 years of age to work under lash in his factories for sixteen hours a day. He makes two revolutions and then declares war on one in the name of law and order. There is nothing so bad or so good

on imperial principles; he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his king on on republican principles. His watchword is nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost." Suicide of Dr. E. Y. Baker. ARKANSAS CITY, Kan., Dec. 20.—Dr. E. Y. Baker, an old resident of this city, committed suicide today at the St. Charles hotel, Dr. Baker has a divorced wife in Missouri, and has prominent relations in Ohio. He had been dissipating and was temporarily

that you will not find an Englishman doing

it, but you will never find an Englishman in

the wrong. He does everything on principle.

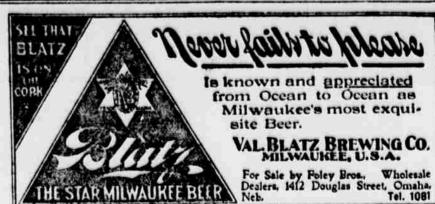
you on business principles; he enslaves you

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