

# Her Christmas Pudding

It Opened the Way to an Unexpected Pleasure

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Tied snugly in a round bag, the Christmas pudding bubbled merrily in the big pot on the gas range. Young Mrs. Bell tripped lightly to and fro about the tiny kitchen, her heart full of Yuletide cheer and gentle graciousness. It was her first Christmas as a housewife, and the little flat was spick and span with cleanliness.

Laura Bell lifted the pot lid and peered at the fragrant pudding.

"My, but that does smell Christmasy!" sighed Laura as she replaced the lid and proceeded to wash the mountainous array of dishes in the sink. "I never believed I could anticipate an enjoyable Christmas away from Lakeville and the home folks, but I begin to think we two are going to have a lovely time, even if we are all alone in this big, strange city."

That night at dinner Timothy Bell leaned back in his chair and surveyed the remains of his excellent meal with manifest approval.

"So the pudding was a success, dear?" he inquired.

"Light as a feather, and so spicy!" said his wife proudly. "I'd show it to you, Tim, only I've tied it up again and put it out on the fire escape to keep cold. I shall boil it for an hour tomorrow, just before dinner, so it will be piping hot."

"Now this is Christmas eve. Do you want to go out tonight?"

"I'd like to go out and mingle with the crowds, although my own shopping was finished a week ago. It seemed strange to prepare my gifts so early and send them through the mail instead of running around with them the way I've always done in Lakeville. I rather miss the excitement and fun of it all. Now, Timothy, dear, don't look so solemn. Really I'd rather be here in New York with you today than away out in Minnesota with everybody else if you were not there."

"I've a mind to try it on every man, woman and child I meet in the corridors tomorrow," said Laura daringly as she cleared away the meal. "What do you suppose they would say?"

"Probably complain to the janitor," grinned Timothy, gathering a pile of dishes and whisking them into the kitchen. "Hurry up, sweetheart. Let the dishes wait till we come home. Get on your things and let's join the crowd. If we can't have a Lakeville Christmas we'll have the New York kind, eh?"

"Of course we will," agreed his wife.

The Bells enjoyed their excursion into the shopping districts. The broad avenues were ablaze with light and color, and the moving multitudes of Christmas purchasers formed constantly changing pictures that delighted the country bred eyes of Timothy and his wife. More than once Timothy's hand went down into his pocket to add a mite to some Salvation Army kettle on a corner or to dispense holiday comfort to some one whose need of food or warmth was apparent to his observing glance. Once he and Laura conveyed a party of four ragged urchins into a little toyshop and made four children radiantly happy with simple gifts.

When they reached home again the clocks were striking 11 and Laura's eyes were sparkling with happiness, while Timothy felt a quiet satisfaction in the pleasure the evening had brought them. As they waited for the elevator a young man and a girl entered the building and stood near them.

Timothy's keen glance noted that the man was well dressed, but rather thinly clad for the season. His face was thin and pale, as if he had recently been ill, while his dark eyes wore a brooding, discouraged expression that was out of keeping with the spirit of the approaching festival. The girl, who wore a wedding ring on one slender unglowed hand, watched him with a pretty air of motherly anxiety. She was a brown little thing, with hair and eyes of a warm russet hue and a charming face that attracted Laura Bell's attention.

As they glided up in the elevator Laura found herself watching the girl with interest. There was a sad look when the young man's glance was turned away from her uplifted face, and Laura noted little tense lines about the mobile lips. The elevator stopped

at the Bells' floor, and as they left the car Mrs. Bell turned with a sudden impulse and nodded in the friendliest manner at the little brown girl.

"Merry Christmas!" she called. The door slammed as the car mounted up, but the brown girl leaned forward and called back in a low, sweet voice, "Merry Christmas to you!"

"I did it, Timothy," sang Laura as they entered their own cozy flat. "I knew some of these flat dwellers were human—even if you doubted it."

"Wrong again and glad of it—this time," admitted Timothy as he turned up the gas in the parlor. "Now, Laura, how about those dishes?"

"They must be done tonight," declared Mrs. Bell, tying a large apron about her slender form. "There won't be a thing to do tomorrow except to roast the chicken, heat up the pudding and cook some vegetables."

Laura went to the window that opened on a fire escape and raised it. Then she uttered a faint shriek of dismay and turned to her husband.

"It's gone!" she cried dramatically. "What—the pudding?" Timothy approached the window and made a careful examination of the impromptu refrigerator. "Nothing here; not a blamed pudding of any kind," he reported. "Sure you didn't bring it inside and forget about it?"

Laura opened the pantry door and revealed its cupboard-like interior. There were the plump chicken and the delicately tinted celery and the crimson cranberry sauce and bowl of fruit, but there was no sign of that snugly bagged plum pudding that was to be the chef d'oeuvre of the Christmas feast.

The hour that followed was an exciting one for the Bells. They searched high and low, in the most impossible places, for the delectable pudding that Laura had made, but in vain. At last Timothy went down to the basement and consulted the genial janitor, who listened with interest to his tale of woe, but offered no solace.

It was after 7 o'clock on Christmas morning when Laura was awakened by a ringing of the hall bell. Throwing on a warm wrapper and thrusting her feet into furry slippers, she hastened into the narrow hall, careful not to disturb her sleeping husband.

Laura opened the door the merest crack and peered inquisitively through. What she saw caused her to throw the door open with cordial hospitality.

"Merry Christmas! Come in, do!" she said to the little brown girl who stood there, looking rather pale and frightened.

"For just a moment. There is something I must explain." She slipped inside and sank into the chair that Lau-

ra offered. "I know you will think it strange that I have come, a perfect stranger, but the janitor said you had lost a pudding."

"I have. Did you find it?" cried Laura eagerly. "It's the greatest mystery what has become of it."

The girl smiled sadly, and a flush reddened her cheek for a brief instant and was gone. "I shall have to tell you about ourselves," she said, with dignity, "so that you will understand why we have eaten half of your pudding. We're all alone, both of us, and we've had bad luck ever since we were married. In September Paul was taken down with typhoid fever and lost his position as book-keeper. He's just able to get around now and look for work, and he hasn't been at all successful. Things have been going from bad to worse, and we're going to move out the first of the year. We've been running low for a long time, and for the last two days we haven't had much to eat, so there—just milk or something like that. Tonight before we went out the dumb waiter whistle sounded, and when I opened the slide there was our bottle of milk, with a plum pudding in a bag."

"I thought—honestly I did—that somebody had sent it up to us, though we're not acquainted with a soul here, and so I heated it up, and we ate half of it. It was lovely. A little while ago the janitor came and inquired if we'd seen a plum pudding, so I came right down to tell you, as Paul is asleep. I don't know what to say to you."

"Don't you dare say another word about that pudding," commanded Laura. "If you only knew how lonesome we are today you and your husband would come down and spend the day with us. We were wishing we knew somebody in the house here to ask. I'm so thankful about that pudding. Why, if I hadn't put it in the dumb waiter instead of the fire escape (I'm very absentminded when I'm busy) you would never have received it, and we might never have been acquainted. Isn't it a blessed old pudding?"

These two lonely young women hugged each other delightedly, and afterward Laura went to arouse Timothy that he might accompany her to the floor above, where the Robinsons lived, and add his persuasions to bear against the pride of Mr. Paul Robinson.

"You might find a position for him in the office, Timothy," suggested his wife hopefully.

"I think that will be easy," promised Mr. Bell.

It was a merry little gathering that did justice to Laura's Christmas dinner. The tragedy that was beneath the eating of half the pudding was quite forgotten in the joy of the present and the hopeful outlook for the future. When the day was over and the Robinsons had returned to their rooms, cheered in mind and purse by Timothy's delicately proffered generosity, Laura slipped her hand in her husband's arm and leaned her head against him, saying:

"It's been different from any Christmas I ever spent, Timothy, and I've been wondering what might have happened to them if that blessed pudding hadn't opened the way."

## THE STRIKE JUSTIFIED.

Workers' Only Recourse When Conditions Become Intolerable.

Samuel Gompers, addressing a meeting of the white goods workers of New York, at which over 1,000 girls were present, said in part:

"I always try to avoid strikes, but when conditions become intolerable I say strike and strike hard."

"If there must come some sort of a crash before the men and women,

chiefly women, employed in the lowest paid trade will respond to their duty to their fellow workers and themselves, then it must come speedily. Such a struggle may require great sacrifices, but no great struggle was ever successful without sacrifices."

"A few short weeks ago we heard of such shocking conditions in New York that would cause the blood to boil in any man's veins. That catastrophe, that murder, of a few weeks ago when 147 girls were killed by stupidity, greed, avarice of the men who wanted dollars and had women to burn must serve to arouse all workers."

"Think of the condition of these poor girls, lined up in great rows behind machines, behind locked doors, with no chance to escape—kept as if they were criminals. No criminal in Sing Sing or any other prison is kept in such bondage as these girls, who were forced to jump from windows to escape from their workroom."

"Is there a man in the entire country who has a daughter or sister whose blood does not boil at the thought that the daughter or sister must submit to the humiliation of being searched every night when she leaves a workroom for fear that she may have concealed a needle, a bit of thread or some scrap of cloth about her?"

"I am told that in the white goods trade girls earn \$3, \$4 and sometimes as high as \$8 a week for ten hours' work a day. Think of this in the year 1911, with the present high cost of living! It is the height of inhumanity to make girls work for such wages and expect them to be moral!"

"For many years the bosses have now attempted to crush out organized labor. You know that the United Hatters has been sued for \$280,000, that the Federation of Labor has been sued for \$750,000 and that a conspiracy was formed to send three men—Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone—to the gallows. You know that the supreme court has just defeated an effort to send John Mitchell, John Morrison and myself to prison and that the bosses who brought about this attempt are still trying to accomplish their end."

"You know that labor men have just been kidnaped from Indiana and taken in chains to California without warrant of law and with no opportunity to defend themselves in the states where they lived."

"These things would not be done if there was not a conspiracy on the part of possessors of wealth to crush the wage earner. You must all join unions to defend yourselves."

"And now there comes the new question of a strike in the white goods trade. I always try to prevent strikes wherever possible, but I say to you that under present arrangements, if there be no means to bring about better conditions, then I say strike, and strike hard. Form a union and union labor will be behind you."

## Recall For Judges.

Governor Osborn of Michigan furnishes further argument in support of the recall for judges. The Michigan legislature recently passed a bill repealing a requirement that the supreme court judges of that state reside at the capital, and Governor Osborn vetoed the bill because the judges had previously agreed in consideration of an increase in their salaries that they would reside there. In his veto message he said: "This bill has been lobbied for actively by members of the supreme court, actuated by selfish purposes. While this may be their privilege, it indicates the finite character of our courts and proves to my mind that any recall law that might be enacted should apply to the judiciary with equal force as to other officers of the government."—Public.