

# A Mother's Christmas Plan

After All It Was Not a New Departure.

By F. A. MITCHEL

"Mary," said Ernest Warfield, "we shall have to ignore Christmas this year. I'm sorry, knowing as I do how you and the children love the day and delight in making preparations for it, that such a course is necessary. But it costs money, and money I have not. Indeed, I am afraid this European trouble is going to throw me out of business."

The words were spoken by the husband and father at the breakfast table shortly before Christmas. He had served an apprenticeship with a publishing firm, saving his money, in which he was assisted by a frugal wife, until he had accumulated \$10,000. This he had used to set himself up in business, relying for success upon an idea he had conceived that he possessed a faculty for discerning those qualities in a novel which are calculated to please the public. In this he was disappointed. The public did not seem to fancy the books he published, and he lost most of his capital. Then came the war, and no one had money to buy books. The prospect looked very gloomy.

"I am perfectly willing, Ernest," replied his wife, "to do anything you deem necessary."

"I know you will, my dear. It's the disappointment to the children that troubles me."

"I will see that the children are satisfied with what we may be able to do for them."

The husband made no further remark, turning over the pages of the morning paper listlessly. He did not hurry to go to business, for there was little to do when he got there. Finally his eye struck an advertisement and he threw down the paper with a groan.

"That novel, 'A Mystery of a Mirror,' has reached a sale of 100,000 copies. It was offered to me, and I declined it. There's not a particle of literary merit in the whole book. What's a publisher to do, I'd like to know, when the public will take in such rot as that and won't read real literature?"

"The critics say that 'A Mystery of a Mirror' is ingenious," said his wife.

"What's ingenious to do with literature? I tell you there's no literary taste any more."

The wife was thoughtfully silent for awhile, then said:

"We have for centuries been judging literature by the same old standard, and I am beginning to think that we are partly wrong. According to this standard, there is no merit in the work of a detective story writer who has made a great reputation and a fortune besides. Our literary magazines say that there is no literary merit in these stories. I once thought so myself, but I am beginning to doubt it."

"There's money in them—that is, in some of them—at least for the author. Whoever wrote 'A Mystery of a Mirror' has made a small fortune. It's a dollar book, and 10 per cent royalty on a hundred thousand copies is \$10,000. If I had accepted the rotten stuff I might have made that out of it myself."

"Never mind, dear. Better luck next time. I think myself that publishing a novel is like buying a ticket in a lottery. If you succeed in tiding over the present trouble I hope you will put your money into something that isn't so risky."

Warfield made no reply, but rose from the table with a sigh, kissed his wife and children and went to his business. As soon as he had gone the wife and mother gathered her children about her and, taking them into her confidence, told them that papa had lost money in his business and had requested that they ignore the coming Christmas. She had a plan that she thought would make the anniversary just as pleasant as usual. She didn't say what it was, but pledged every child to make no mention of Christmas till Christmas came. They were all agreed to know what the plan was, but she would not tell them. Nevertheless all agreed that, on papa's account, they would do just what their mother wished.

Whatever preparations for Christmas Mrs. Warfield made she kept her own counsel. If gifts came into the house in advance she contrived to receive them herself and hide them. But whether they came or not, her husband and children were ignorant of the fact. The husband being absent during the day and the children at school there was ample opportunity to take in articles without their knowing anything about it. The children, reposing every confidence in their mother, made no complaint at not receiving funds to spend for gifts for each other, for mamma had told them that she would provide presents for each to give.

When Christmas eve came the younger children insisted on hanging up their stockings. Their mother made no objection to their doing so, for she had told her husband that she had provided a few inexpensive toys to fill them. After the youngsters were in bed she brought out the packages. Her husband could not see that they were inexpensive, but made no comment. If his wife was keeping a secret from him he was keeping one from her. He had lost every dollar of his capital and

was expecting on the 1st of January to close out his business. What he would then do he did not know. The horrors of poverty stared him in the face.

Before going to bed Mrs. Warfield slipped back into the dining room, where the stockings were hanging, and deposited a number of packages that she took from hiding places marked for and from different members of the family. The dining room had been selected for these gifts because there were in it a very large open fireplace and an ample chimney through which Santa Claus could get his fat body. Besides, Mrs. Warfield intended that the family Christmas should begin at breakfast time. It was then that the gifts would be distributed, and it would be impossible for her to conceal any longer her plan for the celebration of the day.

Christmas morning opened bright and crisp. The Warfield children were up, as usual, at daylight pulling down their stockings and diving into them. Their mother joined them and forbade their opening any of the packages except those that Santa Claus had brought. A bright fire blazed and crackled and snapped on the hearth, joining in the festivities and adding to the children's happiness.

"Why, mamma," said one, "I thought we were not going to have this kind of a Christmas this year."

"I didn't say that. I said that I had an especial plan for this year's Christmas."

"What is it?"

"Wait."

Mr. Warfield came down and in the merry scene forgot for the moment the troubles in which the merry-makers were equally interested, though they were ignorant of them. He permitted little Billy to show him his jumping jack and consented to pull the string that worked its arms and legs. He was obliged to kiss Molly's doll and take notice of how it closed its eyes when it lay on its back. Mrs. Warfield was as cheery as the children.

"She doesn't know the worst," said her husband to himself, "or she could not keep up this way."

The thought brought back the gloom to his face, but his wife kissed it away with a smile.

Then his eyes took in the numerous bundles she had stacked about the fireplace, and he could not refrain from giving her a look as much as to say, "Why did you go to such expense?" But she gave him another kiss, and the children were constantly forcing him to inspect more gifts. And so it was that he got through this Christmas ordeal, with trouble at the door, better than might have been expected.

When the children had emptied their stockings all sat down to breakfast. Thus far it seemed that no gift had been provided for papa. After he had asked the divine blessing he said to his wife:

"I am glad, my dear, that you have acceded to my wishes in one respect—you have not inflicted a Christmas gift upon me."

"Lift your plate," was the reply.

Warfield did as he was bidden and revealed an envelope addressed to him. Opening it, he took out a check payable to his wife and indorsed to him for \$11,655.

"What's this?"

"Stanford Bros.' check to me for royalty on 'A Mystery of a Mirror.'"

Warfield looked at his wife inquiringly. He evidently did not understand.

"I wrote the novel," she continued, "and sent it to you anonymously. I received it back with a printed unavailability card. I sent it to other publishers, and they all declined it. Finally Stanford Bros. consented to bring it out. They are a new firm and have adopted a new plan of judging manuscripts. They circulate them among a large number of persons such as may be expected to read them when published. Nearly all these approved. They published the book on the usual terms. This is my first romance, but I understand from them that the book is still selling and will sell for some time."

There was so much of mortification mingled with this announcement that the authoress arose from the table and put her arms about her husband's neck. Then at a sign from her the children followed her example, each giving him a hug and a kiss and an outcry.

"Glad you got your Christmas gift, papa?"

When he had been duly hugged and kissed into a frame of mind acceptable to his wife and children he took up the check again, looked at its face, turned it over and looked at its back and said:

"What do you propose I shall do with it, sweetheart?"

"Whatever you think best."

"I shall do whatever you think best."

"What use should be made of it is for future consideration. For the present it is enough for us to know that I have the wherewithal to give the children a merry Christmas, and, as for you and me, well, we know that we have a new start."

Later Warfield proposed that he continue the publication of fiction, leaving his wife to decide what he should issue and what decline. But she refused to make the trial and persuaded him to confine himself to what was less like a lottery. However, she devoted herself for a time to hunting for some field that was needed and neglected and finally found one which she recommended, and her husband, following her advice, succeeded admirably.

Christmas day was thereafter in the Warfield family a double celebration. It was not only Christmas, but an anniversary of their being tided over a gulf of poverty and the beginning of plenty.

### WOMAN CHASED FROM HOME BY MAN WITH A KNIFE

Flourishing a big knife and shouting at the top of his voice Nick Demos chased Mrs. Pearl Lusk from her home on east Seventh street Tuesday evening. The man was arrested Wednesday morning and pleaded guilty and received a fine of ten dollars and costs.

Just how the fracas started is not known as they refused to tell. The man was evidently making a friendly call and became enraged at

the woman. She was chased screaming from the house and ran to a neighbor's where she sought refuge. The man was finally quieted by some of his fellow countrymen.

Complaint was filed with Judge Walker Wednesday morning by Mrs. Lusk and the man was arrested and taken to jail. After pleading guilty he stated that he had no money and was remanded to jail to lay out his fine and costs.

Harry Cramer is reported quite sick at his home in this city.

### Two Weddings at Court House.

Two weddings were solemnized Wednesday afternoon at the court house by Judge Grant. The two couples are Charles C. Mauser, 21, and Miss Pearl M. Ward, 23, and Ira Southard, 21, and Miss Jessie K. Ward, 21. All young people are from the Big Springs vicinity. The two young men are farmers in that vicinity and they will make their homes there. The young ladies are sisters.

Herman Timmer is reported on the sick list this week.

The Mutual Building & Loan Association of North Platte has plenty of money on hand to close loans promptly. Borrowers in this association make a saving on the repayment of their loans equal to \$250.00 to \$350.00 on a thousand over any competing building and loan association. 99-9

W. T. Beery, master mechanic of this division from Grand Island, was visiting friends in the city Wednesday and looking after some company affairs at this terminal. He formerly lived in this city.

# Only One More Day

THIS IMMENSE CO-OPERATIVE FAMILY IS CALLING YOU, they are telling you also that you can secure the same reductions in prices and terms. But you must hurry, the sale only lasts one day longer, after that time you have to pay a great deal more.

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Your dollars will go about twice as far at this sale, and the saving is worth while.

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**FREE TRIAL**—For 30 days you may try out the piano you select in your home. If at the end of that time you do not want to keep it notify us and we will send for the piano and return to you every cent you may have paid.

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**FREE DELIVERIES**—All pianos or players are put in your home free of charge. This applies to exchanges also.

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**WE GIVE** with each player-piano, a bench, scarf and 12 rolls of music of your own selection.

**WARRANTIES**—Each instrument is guaranteed against all defects. Some five years, some a lifetime by the makers. On top of that we give our personal warranties, doubly protecting you.

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This Sale Positively Closes Saturday Night, January 2nd So You'll Have to hurry.

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