

**A CHRISTMAS DINNER CARD.**

"I was a stranger and ye took me in."  
 It was my misfortune to be forced to spend Christmas in one of the larger lumbering towns on the western coast of Michigan and on this eventful day to us all, I attempted to make myself comfortable by twisting myself into a knot in one of the large leather chairs and cocking my feet up on the window. I settled down to try and gain a little cheer from a holiday number of Scribner and a very poor cigar. I had just finished one of Robert Grant's stories when I became aware of a lady standing by my side and was surprised to find that she was about to address me. I straightened myself up as she said, "I am one of the members of the Christmas dinner club, organized for the benefit of traveling men who are away from their homes and in our city on this day. We have been organized for some years past and on each Christmas we present all of those in our city a card entitling them to a place at dinner at the table of one of our members. Each one is to prepare for one person at her table in excess of the family and invited guests. We are all married or daughters of prominent men in the city and take this way to keep up the spirits of the 'belated' stranger within our gates." You can imagine my surprise at this, and I must confess that I was a little rattled as it was one of the "daughters" of the society that was speaking to me. Finally, collecting myself, the cigar and the magazine I made myself presentable for the young lady to bestow this card upon. The conditions are as follows: "You are to come to dine at six o'clock sharp. Prepare to spend the evening as our guest and friend. You are in no way to repay the favor, and you are to take the donor of this card to dinner. If you will agree to the conditions you may consider yourself invited." After thanking her for her extreme kindness and attempting to discover more about the society I again lapsed into the ease of my chair and inspected the neat little card. On one side the name of the donor, on the other a steel plate emblem and "Christmas Dinner Club" below. After lunch I began to inspect my wardrobe so as to make my best appearance and started dressing at four. I was so nervous that I tied my ties in all conceivable ways, ruffling and soiling them. Finally the guest was arrayed in all his glory. Fastening a small carnation in my button hole I descended into the carriage and directed the driver to the street number given me, I drew a good many pictures in my mind of the house and its inmates but had not dared to walk out for fear of passing it without knowing, and have them think I was making a tour of inspection. At last we arrived at a rather sumptuous mansion and ascending to the door I rang. It was opened immediately by a maid and presenting my card I was ushered into a magnificent parlor. Here I was met by my benefactor, and then introduced to her father, mother and younger sister, we chatted pleasantly and finally I was told the story of the organization of this wonderful club. The lady who had organized it was the wife of a traveling man and he like myself had been forced to spend Christmas in a far-away town. On the morning he had watched the inhabitants as they went to church. The children with their drums and sleds, and thought of his own home far away, at last he sat down and wrote of his misery to his wife at home. On the letter reaching her she formed a club to look after all strangers at the hotels. She had interested the better people of the city and I was now one of the greatest admirers of her club and my fair host and her father and mother. At last dinner was announced and I at once offered myself to the donor of the card as an escort to dinner. We had just

reached the threshold, and the sumptuous feast was spread before us, the waiters stood in their places and a music box tinkled its airs in one corner of the room. The table was decorated with flowers and set with finest china and cut glass. I was just entering, when I felt a hand laid on my shoulder. I turned to see who had dared to stop me, and rubbing my eyes and waking up, I heard the bell boy say, "Better wake up dinner is nearly over," and I rose, walked into the bar, took a large drink and then into (not the sumptuous dining hall of a residence,) but the dingy dining room of the hotel where I ate my Christmas dinner.

**Christmas Eaves Dropping From the Trolley.**

Young Matron—"What are you going to give Grace this year?"  
 Society Girl—"I have just bought her a twenty-five cent cup and saucer. Last year I gave her a beautiful comb and brush tray; paid six dollars for it, and she sent me a twenty-five cent picture frame. She gave her house-maid one just like it. I made up my mind that I would get even."  
 Y. M.—"Y-e-s, but she will probably send you something handsome this year and you will feel mean."  
 S. G.—"Well, I will have my revenge anyway. What are you going to get Ned?"  
 Y. M.—"When he gave me my Christmas money he said: 'For heaven's sake, do not spend any of it for me!' We had rather a pathetic time of it last year and it was our first Christmas together too."  
 "You know we were staying at Beer's hotel."  
 "I had remembered every one I was expected to, except the servants and thought Ned would give them money. He supposed I had purchased gifts for them and came home without one cent, and did not expect any cash either until after Christmas."  
 S. G.—"What did you do?"  
 Y. M.—"We gave the waiter a handsome scarf I intended for Ned, and to Bridget a pair of side combs he had for me. What will you give Margaret?"  
 S. G.—"Oh, I am going to give her the pin Jack Hathaway sent me last year. She has never seen it and he is in Florida and will not know I never liked the thing."  
 Y. M.—"Have you anything for Marie?"  
 S. G.—"Yes, I am going to give her the picture I won at the last euchre. I have worked a center-piece for Mrs. S. I had the worst time doing it. Had a great notion to throw it away before it was half completed. Suppose she will criticise it terribly, she is so particular."  
 Y. M.—"Yes, but it is so nice to give things one makes. It shows such love and thoughtfulness."  
 S. G.—"Y-e-s, I suppose it does. Do you exchange presents with Louise now?"  
 Y. M.—"I hardly know, but I will have some handkerchiefs sent up from Barr's on approval. If she sends me anything they will be ready; if not, I will return them after Christmas."  
 S. G.—"You and Mrs. R. seem such great chums now, what will you give her?"  
 Y. M.—"Not anything. I think too much of her to scramble around the bargain counter for her, but I would dearly love to give her a remembrance. I have a list of people with whom I have exchanged gifts for ages and I haven't the moral courage to make a break for liberty. I do not follow the devices and desires of my own heart in Christmas gifts. I do the things I do not want to do and leave—do you get off here? Good bye!"  
 S. G.—"Good bye."

—M. D. H.

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