


My Christmas Dinner.



BY GRACE E. GREY.

Illustrated by H. E. Taylor.

LOOK forward to Christmas Day. My wife's surprised delight at the presents she has planned I shall give her, is pretty to witness, while the half-crown tie she saves up to buy for me is always becoming. A smell of dinner makes the morning savoury and delicious. My wife and I dine tête-à-tête. Admiration compels me to propose and drink numerous toasts in her honour. She laughs and looks charming. She tells me the things I said to her the night we were engaged, and blushes when I say them again. After dinner Brown and his wife and Scrimger and Mrs Scrimger come in. While my wife and my wife's sister are playing duets to the ladies in the drawing-room, Brown, Scrimger and I retire to my study, so-called because I smoke there. Over an afternoon pipe we talk of our selfish bachelor days. Those were days! Brown, whose wife's mother lives with them, sighs at the recollection, and Scrimger and I hasten to point out to Brown that he is a better man since he put those days behind him. He is happier in a well-ordered home than in lodgings, where he may possibly meet evil companions, and have holes in his socks. If he has a little money it is infinitely wiser to put it on his wife than on a horse. By the latter course he may never see his money again; whereas he may look at his wife's new spring bonnet for two and a-half hours every Sunday morning in church, provided the weather is not too doubtful and the Simpsons have passed in their winter

things. When Scrimger and I have finished telling Brown all this—such is the beauty of Christian counsel—we almost believe it ourselves.

In view of so much quiet and profitable pleasure, consider my feelings when my wife came home from a Charitable Aid meeting and, with tears in her eyes, begged me to forego my Christmas dinner for Little Dot's Hospital Cot Fund. Little Dot was an orphan and a cripple. The price of our dinner would buy her a pair of beautiful, warm, thick blankets. My wife said we should be gainers by the act of self-sacrifice, for we would lead higher and nobler lives in consequence.

"Think of it," urged my wife, pleadingly. "Little Dot is friendless and—without the blankets—homeless. A rich dinner, once eaten, gives only indigestion. Blankets will give Little Dot warmth and therefore pleasure through the cold winter months. It would be sinful to eat up so much lasting comfort and happiness."

"If you put it that way," I foolishly began, for her eyes were wet, and she had on the red dress that I like.

She kissed me, called me Dicky, and declared I was always her own old boy. She said our dinner would more than buy the blankets—there might be a trifle over for a doll and spring flowers.

"The turkey alone," she said triumphantly, "will save 8s—with accompaniments you can call it 10s; ham and three vegetables bring that part to, say, 15s; then mince