



Illustrated by
J. C. Clymer

Neils replied, "Sure thing! In America, so long as you make good they like you. You bet! You stop being a doggone foreigner fast as you can and the Americans will give you a great Christmas."

Agidia's Christmas

New World

By L. G. SALVERSON

WHEN Karleen Holm died she left to her brother a broken spinning wheel, a basket of dirty clothes, and her daughter Agidia. It was typical of Karleen, said the cotters round about, more especially since her brother was in America and was no good besides.

Agidia, sitting on a round stone beside the grey stoop of her mother's fisher cot, heard the mutters and sputters of indignation behind her. That was Dame Freda who sputtered through the broken ranks of her yellow teeth and would be wiping her bleary eyes on a freshly ironed apron. Dame Freda was virtuous and very clean and would be heard almost as respectfully as the parish minister.

Agidia looked out toward the placid shield of the sea-arm, which curved round the rocks of the village and recalled with prickly discomfort what her mother had said of it. She had likened the quiet fiord to Brynhild the Shieldmaid, asleep in her gleaming armor and, dark with storm, it was even more like the latter Brynhild boiling with passion and crying for destruction. Agidia squinted down her little nose at the blue water burnished with sunlight and thoughts like gulls screamed through her small brown head.

Her mother was dead. She was sorry for that since now no one would tell her tales of the great Volsungs or the pea-green gnomes of the hills; but again it would be pleasant not to be obliged to hunt the taverns any more for a wild-eyed woman

From within came the drone of His Reverence the Minister. "It is much to ask, but in the end will be best; here she could hardly make the grammar school, in America everything is free."

Agidia put fingers in her ears as she had done when her mother scolded. She knew what they were about back there in the dingy little room where her mother's deal coffin had stood—a scandal even in death she had been, poor mama. When the end was near she had ordered Agidia to fetch an old box from the clutter

under the thatch and out of it came a musty Spanish shawl which nonetheless retained its brilliant colors. "This you will put round me," said Agidia's mother, for I would have those hymn-singing fishwives to see what a dancer wears at the Royal Theatre." Then she died.

His Reverence, a small dark pot of a man, thick and round and solid on his peg legs, was deciding her fate. She was to go to America. His Reverence was telling the village matrons that it was best for her, what he really meant was that it was cheaper for the villagers. Agidia looked at the fiord and felt all prickly and hot and choked again. Now she could never steal down to the pearly-grey beach in moonlight, while the village slept, to dance along the water's edge on her little naked feet.

The mutters and sputters, throat clearings and official ums and ahs came to an end. The responsible neighbors filed out of the cot, clucked their tongues at Agidia, wagged their heads and hurried off to their stew pots. His Reverence and Dame Freda approached the little girl. Now that they were to be rid of her she was suddenly, and for the first time, no longer a problem but a child; a small brown nut of a child with a nimbus of copper-colored hair and wide speculative eyes with something distressing in their deep brown depths. "Well, well, Agidia," the Minister laid a stumpy hand upon her shoulder. "So now you will see the world."

"Are there fiords in America?" demanded Agidia, getting to her feet in a nervous jump.

"Fiords? Well, well, so you are patriotic, Agidia? No, there are not fiords exactly—but such cities; such cities!"

"You mean houses and houses with smoke and tram-cars?"

"Tut! What nonsense," interrupted Dame Freda. "Come along, child, it is getting on for supper; pancakes and kippers will do you more good than chittering."

So of course Agidia stiffened her little back and trotted on ahead of her benefactress, not without a certain glow at thought of the pancakes—very likely now that His Reverence was staying there would be syrup also.

AT LAST the great day dawned. Agidia's small box of made-over clothes was neatly tied and her basket of food packed to bursting, for no one could persuade Dame Freda that the ship's cuisine would be wholesome; black bread and cheese and cod liver oil would certainly be missing.

His Reverence, the only person besides the doctor to drive a gig, took Agidia to the seaport and was very instructive all the way. Agidia had really nothing to fear according to His Reverence. In America were many of her people, in fact all sorts of people and all sorts of marvels transpired there. His Reverence recalled the case of Elma Strom—never of much account in Norway but in America they discovered she had perfect feet and now she made incredible sums as a demonstrator for a shoe company! Peder Gissing was another; in Norway Peder went about annoying busy people and never even learned his catechism but in America his talent was recognized immediately and now he was a first rate reporter. Why, only a month ago he had sent his sister a hundred dollars which he said was a bonus from the *Yellow Rag*. His Reverence flicked the flies with a thin whip and continued: "There is one thing to which you must apply yourself, Agidia, the American language. It is not exactly English as I remember my academy English but undoubtedly very colorful and what they call speedy. For lack of better I have brought along my Norwegian-English grammar; I recommend that you read it on the boat and

well, but our ship was caught in a late storm and I was both hurt and frozen; since then I have had a wasting sickness. Even the easy job at the warehouse seems too much and in winter I am always worse. So we must get your things, Agidia, and a store of food and fuel. Yes—certainly. And of course you must go to school—dear me, I hadn't thought of that."

Agidia did not get to school just then however, but because she sensibly reminded him of it they shopped for her coat and her shoes and never was such rapture produced by a red blanket coat nor fascinated clerks thanked so prettily with a grave little handshake. The only trouble she had was about the squeak; the more she tried to imitate the cheerful sound, pointing to the soles of her feet, the more stupidly the shoeman shook his head! But for all that when she had come down the street a yard or two the shiny new boots emitted a healthy protest and Agidia felt her cup of joy running over.

The laying in of stores was almost as great fun; in this she felt experienced having heard her mother haggle the factor back home. Her English, thanks to Uncle's absent-mindedness, was a little strange, but then Mrs. Morino of the corner store was not so long out of Italy and had, besides, as vast a burden of good

nature as of fat. Mrs. Morino, proud mother of seven lively Morinos, secretly approved Agidia's demonstration of housewifely concern. The salt must be smooth and clean—not for pickling; and the oatmeal she must look at to make certain the mice had not been in it—O, she was immovable on this. And then she must have some real American food and perhaps Mrs. Merino would instruct her on the proper American things for Christmas; she knew nearly everything about the cherry tree but nothing at all about food. Sure-a-thing! Mrs. Morino was ready to help Agidia. Now American food, she had of course the best. Hot dogs—that was very Americano, and the bean with-a the pork, and pie. O, sure-a thing, pie was extra Americano, especially pie made with-a the pumpkin.

Dear me! Agidia nearly jumped. Never was there an end of marvels in this country. Uncle Peer had just bought her a book with big print and pictures to help her with the American language and on the fifth page and almost as big as an egg was an orange-colored thing called a pumpkin, with ten white mice drawing it along as nicely as you please. And one made pie out of things like that in America. The discovery struck her mute. She lost interest in the

remaining purchases. Even Mrs. Morino's gift of a striped peppermint stick made scarcely any impression.

THEREAFTER Agidia's education went on rapidly, for Uncle Peer, as he had gloomily predicted, came down with his influenza and she was obliged to attend to everything; quite naturally she turned to Mrs. Morino for advice in matters domestic and cultural. All the Morino's big and little heartily approved of her resolution to quit being a dog-gon-foreigner as fast as possible. But their gratifying praise notwithstanding little Agidia's heart had its misgivings as Christmas drew near and uncle was no better and from dawn to dark scarcely spoke a dozen words. When dread and loneliness grew intolerable she put on her red American coat and, bronze curls loosed to the wind, would fly up and down the cold white beach, a lonely little figure bravely dancing down dismay to the tune of the ever present thought that somewhere out in the vast immensity the hovering spirit of America, the Father-of-His-Country, was watching her and that she must be cheerful and as Neils had said, "Step lively" no matter what happened.

Every so often uncle dragged himself out of bed to carry in bags of coal from the woodshed, but the effort left him more listless than before and no matter how cheerfully Agidia attacked the household tasks poor uncle remained fixed in his melancholy. In this state the holiday season broke upon them. Remembering her mother's last few weeks Agidia was seized by terrible anxiety. Uncle Peer might not recover . . . and the chief terror to little Agidia was not that she should be cast adrift once more but that uncle should die a dog-gon-foreigner.

Good though he had been to her, giving her I-Scream every Saturday and prunes on Sunday, she could not fail to perceive that he was still very Norwegian. His American English had not-a the pep, according to Mrs. Morino, and Neils would certainly have thought him a dum stiff, by gosh.

Agidia could think of no remedy for this appalling situation except to celebrate Christmas in a genuine American manner with pie out-a the pumpkin, hot dogs and a cherry tree. That evening she told her plan to uncle who, like a drowning man in a flood, caught, by accident, two words—tree and Christmas—to which he clung. "Yes certainly—you must have a tree—they have them at the corner store. And you may have a dollar, Agidia—perhaps two would be better. Yes certainly—a child must have Christmas and I have my pension to pay for everything."

Agidia was jubilant over these cheerful symptoms. "O, just wait and see, Uncle Peer, the Father-of-His-Country will take no shame for us this Christmas!"

But Agidia had certain troubles in store. Mrs. Morino quickly agreed about the tree. "Sure-a thing! A Christmas tree everybody must-a have."

But the adjective created considerable difficulty until one of the little Morinos explained that Agidia meant cheery—a happy tree. "Sure-a thing." Mrs. Morino shook with joyous comprehension. Now she understood and everything would be alright; a Swede from the hills always brought down trees for sale—cheap, too.

Agidia had her dark misgivings. A Swede? How should a Swede recognize the tree chosen by The-Father-of-His-Country . . . O dear, the longer she thought about it the less sure she was of right results, and indeed what did she see piled before the corner store a few days before Christmas but a heap of common spruce trees! O, it did not disappoint her really—even in Norway folks had not expected much of Swedes. Plainly she must scout for herself. This in mind she set off one afternoon, crossed the aerial bridge, to which she was now accustomed but always experienced trickles of pride in its achievement and, wonder of wonders, met Mr. Morino on the other side.

Mr. Morino was humming a gay tune as he waited for the bridge, his hat sat at a smart angle, his boots were bright yellow and his teeth parted in a dazzling smile when he recognized the little traveller. Mr. Morino was of course quite elegant and Americano: "Hello!" shouted he, [Continued on page 50]



But Agidia had certain troubles in store. Mrs. Morino quickly agreed about the tree. "Sure-a-thing! A Christmas tree everybody must-a have."

of course the catechism also." So at last, very small and frightened, Agidia found herself alone in the steerage of the huge ship and her wide brown eyes following jealously the waddle of His Reverence as he disappeared through the crowd. When the ship shuddered and shook itself, like some monster waking from sleep and began to move outward with snortings and blowings and heart-chugging throb of engines, little Agidia held fast to the ship's rail and bit her lips hard. Everything familiar and dear was being left behind. The mountains with their proud white heads, the glassy fiord, and the circling sea-mews and funny fat skuas

"Ho ho! We go a-voyaging!" boomed a deep Norwegian voice behind her.

"O yes," said Agidia, winking hard and giving her new knitted scarf a proud little flip. "To America, to Uncle Peer Ness."

"Now that's sense, let me tell you! You'll not be slashing fish over there—a pretty piece like you."

They became fast friends on the spot. Neils was his name, an old sailor too crippled for active service, too cantankerous to stay on land, so he helped in the kitchen and drove the cooks nearly crazy. Off duty he searched out little Agidia and, the two of them seated in a sheltered corner, proceeded to instruct her in the essentials of success and American ideals. Agidia was a willing scholar, but a day or two before the great Western continent heaved up out of the blue, like the Midgarde Snake, she expressed a faint misgiving. "But Neils, are you quite sure they will like me over there?—they didn't so very well back home."

"Sure thing! In America, so long as you make good they like you. You bet; it's a law, Agidia, the father of their country said that everybody should have a chance. Just you shoot plenty firecrackers on the Fourth of July and stop being a doggone foreigner fast as you can and the Americans will give you a great Christmas, by gosh!"

Agidia, who, as must be expected, was still very Norwegian besides being only eleven, took this a bit literally and her eyes brightened. Christmas was something she had never had except in doles from the village. "O Neils!" she cried, her eyes shining. "I will be such a good Americana, already I can speak thirty two and a half words with just a peek at the grammar book. O tell me about the good father of America. Was he like All-Father Odin with his wolves and his ravens?"

"Well, hear that!" Neils went off into prolonged guffaws. "That's good, that is. Now listen, Agidia, they don't want imaginary heroes over there—nothing but the A-1 stuff goes in America. George Washington was his name—the big fellow, and let me tell you eight years he was fighting over one valley forge—eight years! Now that's determination and in dead of winter he crossed the rushing torrent on the ice—nothing could stop the father of his country! What's more he himself cut down the cherry tree—just like that—just like any common body—and admitted it, by gosh."

Having made one terrible mistake already Agidia dared not confess that this was not as clear as Neils expected. She understood that under no condition must she compare the mighty hero of the forge with such a little god as Odin, and evidently The-Father-of-His-Country, who wanted everyone that quit being a dog-gon-foreigner to have a great Christmas, had demonstrated his good will by tramping forth and himself chopping down the cherry tree! Agidia longed to ask Neils what a cherry tree looked like and how they trimmed it, but decided that very likely it was irreverent to be nosy about such sacred American matters.

Moreover, when she began to reason it out she understood how simple and sensible it was. In Norway even ordinary fathers cut down spruce trees and ages and ages ago the Vikings cut the yule log; so naturally Washington had to hit upon the cherry tree. Of course in everything they were different in America.

But as a matter of fact Agidia discovered several things seemingly quite familiar once she had passed through the mad turmoil of the incredible city she had seen from Ellis Island, standing up against the sky like the flanks of a mountain pierced by a million lanterns. Uncle had not remained in New York like the girl with the pretty feet and the boy who had a



Agidia's little heart thumped but she trotted in front of Uncle Peer resignedly, trying not to gape too much—gaping, Neils had assured her, set one down instantly for a foreigner.

gift for prying out secrets. But even at that Agidia's worst fears and disappointments were never realized. Whirling over dusty stretches of endless country she had begun to think that Father Washington's country would smother her with its brown immensity and then, as by magic, out of the blue of morning drew a shining shield of a lake that sent out its clean reviving breath and filled her with fresh hope. After that Agidia applied herself to the Norwegian-English grammar and sat upon her catechism in her excitement over the prospect of becoming a child of The-Father-of-His-Country.

IN DUE course Agidia found herself on a broad platform in a very noisy city and saw a thin man come towards her; he had a stoop, limped painfully and peered into her face with a half-frightened air. "Are you Agidia?" asked he, and his voice sounded like a thin echo.

"Yes, Uncle Peer . . . it is awfully big here, isn't it?"

"O yes—yes certainly. Well, come along, I dare say we shall get on together; I was afraid you might be smaller."

Agidia's little heart thumped, but she trotted in front of Uncle Peer resignedly trying not to gape too much—gaping, Neils had assured her, set one down

instantly for a dog-gon-foreigner. Uncle Peer ambled along saying nothing and carrying her box with great care held out from his side like a bird cage. It was discouraging, but Agidia was determined to be cheerful; everyone was cheerful in America, according to Neils—that Uncle Peer looked so glum was a sad indication that he was still very Norwegian. "I'm so glad there is water," said Agidia hopefully, "I do not like so well nothing but land. It is a big lake too, isn't it, uncle?"

"Yes—yes certainly," muttered Peer, and crossed a line of railway tracks to a street as dismal as it was dirty. Agidia did not admire the look of the smoke-blackened houses leaning one against another like tipsy dwarfs, with here and there scowling walls of commercial blocks. But all this was forgotten when they got onto a bridge that operated as no bridge she had ever seen before—O, a marvellous bridge; that simply cut itself loose from solid land and sailed off over the water like a flattish balloon. At first she was frightened thinking an accident had occurred, but Uncle pointed aloft and there, sure enough, were all sorts of queer steel girders and cables to support the thing on its perilous journey. The exciting crossing made, Agidia perceived that they were on a long point of land with wide sweeps of water on either side; nothing was missing but the mountains and dark blue pines to make her joy complete.

Uncle Peer's house surprised her just a little. It was not what one might expect of America, it had a decided Old World list for one thing, leaning dizzily upon a treacherous sandy bank, and it was no bigger than a fisher cot. However, everything was very neat and clean.

They made a good dinner on potatoes and sausages which Agidia thought very elegant, each one done up in a separate jacket. And afterwards they walked to a corner store and ate something very cold—indeed quite frozen—with a marvellous flavor once it melted on one's tongue. Agidia would have liked to comment upon these marvels but Uncle Peer was hopelessly inattentive and un-American. He was in almost as bad case as Dame Freda each Holy Week when her sins sat the heaviest.

Thereafter when Agidia had gone to bed she puzzled about Uncle Peer; she understood now what a problem was and what she, with her singing and dancing had been to the villagers back home. It was a relief, however, that Uncle came home Saturday afternoons and stayed home except for a turn to the corner store where they bought that marvellous frozen stuff called I-Scream. Agidia thought it a queer name for such delicious food and a good example of what His Reverence had meant when he spoke of the peculiarities of the American language. After this Saturday jaunt they sat on the stoop, Uncle smoking slowly and staring into space now and then giving a little cough in his throat like the frightened bark of an eaglet and Agidia, watching the water that lapped the white beach, would have been blissfully happy had Uncle been only a little bit aware of her.

But one night when it was getting on into October and the wind off the lake was cold, Peer Ness roused himself suddenly. "Yes—certainly . . . you need a coat, Agidia, and shoes, too, doubtless."

O, this was too much! Agidia flew across the little porch and fell upon her knees. "O, Uncle, if you really mean it—O, we must be careful of the colors—red, white and blue—those are the proper ones, Neils told me . . . and I should like a squeak in my shoes, Uncle Peer, a squeak is so cheerful."

"Yes—certainly," agreed Uncle Peer in his thin reedy voice and fell to coughing nervously. Agidia remembered her cod liver oil which she had studiously avoided and carefully treasured and now offered to her uncle as a likely remedy.

Peer Ness emerged a bit farther out of his mental fog and looked at the little girl with stirring interest. Why, she was a bright little button and good-hearted. Dear, dear, she had eyes like a feathering swallow, big and hungry, and full of wild courage. He set aside his pipe. "Put down the bottle, Agidia, I have something to say."

Agidia was thrilled and settled herself in what she thought the exact posture of an elegant figure on a poster that decorated the wall of the livery stable down the street. "It is best to be prepared for the worst, Agidia. Yes—certainly, the worst may always come about . . . once I sailed the lakes and was doing

DOLLARS AND CENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
PRESAGE THE RETURN OF PROSPERITY

IT IS the general impression that politics and business do not and should not mix, but it is as inevitable as that night follows day that business, when it gets big enough and important enough to affect national interests in a large way, will find itself in politics. In fact, politics is just another name for the nation's business. So, in international affairs as in the national field, the affairs of trade and commerce find they are very much in international politics as soon as they loom large in the fortunes of the countries affected.

At the present time, international politics is playing an outstanding rôle in economic affairs. The world's business is very badly askew as a result of the dislocation due to the war and its after effects. In addition to the physical and mental suffering the war left in its wake, it also bequeathed to us the legacy of an immense international debt, along with those now-familiar terms, "debtor country" and "creditor country." Unfortunately, it also left in its train an intense national selfishness and fear, resulting in what is termed economic nationalism—that is, the desire of a nation to live unto itself, taking from other nations all it can get without giving anything in return. In the realm of trade this means willingness to sell to other nations but the refusal to take anything in payment save gold.

Now the war seriously depleted the gold holdings of the belligerent nations and the only form in which they can possibly pay what they owe to creditor countries is in goods or in services. The chief creditor countries, the United States and France, have been especially loth to take goods in payments of what was owed them and have raised their tariffs to unconscionable heights to shut out foreign goods. The full evil effects of this did not become evident till the United States, late in 1928, refused to make further loans to debtor

countries with which to pay back what they owed her, and precipitated the memorable crash and panic of the autumn of 1929. In self-defence other countries were compelled to raise their tariffs, and this process of jacking up tariffs higher and higher has continued until now it has become so absurd all nations seem to realize its futility and many of them are taking steps to lower imposts and so permit trading with their neighbors in return for similar concessions.

NATURE has blessed some nations with an abundance of certain resources but has denied them others possessed by neighbor nations. The world, in the past, has always, through international trade, exchanged these gifts of nature and everyone profited thereby. Selfish nationalism has amply demonstrated how unwise, indeed, how impossible, it is to do otherwise; and we are now confronted with the spectacle of a series of international conferences to arrange and facilitate a return to international sanity in trade and finance.

The first of these, held at Lausanne in June, admitted the patent fact that Germany could not pay the immense reparations payments demanded of her and scaled these down to a fraction of their original amount. War debts between other nations were modified accordingly. Prostrate business and trade at once showed some signs of reviving. There was a small though short-lived boom in the securities markets, and high-grade bond prices have since continued to rise.

The Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa followed close on the heels of Lausanne. Its chief significance was that it plainly told high-tariff nations that the British Empire was large enough and sane enough to live and trade happily and profitably among its own units if need be, and would certainly do so if unfriendly tariffs were maintained against it.

And now comes the economic and financial conference to be held soon in London—the most important conference of all. At this it is expected the United States will formally admit what everyone—even her own statesmen and big business men—knows: that she cannot and does not expect to exact payment of the immense war debts and reparations owing her by Europe.

Up to now, thanks to the Presidential elections, she has had to keep up the fiction that she will not consent to cancellation of war debts. She has even gone so far as to stipulate that her attendance at the London Conference is conditional on the subjects of reparations, war debts and tariffs being excluded from discussion. No one takes this very seriously. Everyone knows they will form the chief subjects of discussion and it is further known that reparations will be forgiven and political war debts will be cancelled formally, with dotted i's and crossed t's, for the very simple reason that it is an economic fact that they are now actually cancelled because they are beyond the capability of the debtor countries to pay.

With this formal recognition—this wiping of the international slate free of political debts—currencies will be stabilized, business men will take heart and once more trade between countries will begin to flow as of old; for it is also a foregone conclusion that nations will find it advantageous to reduce their absurdly high tariffs and remove the many other restrictions which now throttle commercial intercourse.

Canada, having retained a soundly backed national currency, is in a splendid position to take advantage of the new era of which we now dimly see the dawn. It is earnestly to be hoped that notwithstanding a Democratic success in the United States presidential elections, the economic and financial conference at London will not long be delayed. The sooner it is held the sooner will the world recover prosperity.

AGIDIA'S NEW WORLD CHRISTMAS

Continued from page 9

and spat with precision into the water, "you make-a the shop? You watch-a the change good—eh? Bambino?"

Naturally she must explain that except for the possible purchase of a peppermint stick her mission was to find cherry trees. Mr. Morino screwed up his face as he did over the weightiest problems and light dawned. "Jesu Maria!" cried he, "sure-a thing . . ."

If it wasn't for business he would go himself; and then in very rapid, in fact quite rippling Americano, Mr. Morino explained and pointed and beamed and approved, from which Agidia gathered the satisfying fact that if she proceeded straight up to Superior Street, turned to the left and walked on for five blocks, she would come to The Palace and there in the entrance and over the arches were cherry trees galore.

AGIDIA shivered with ecstasy as she bounded along oblivious to the good-natured stares she provoked from plodding pedestrians who saw this bronze-headed daughter of Prometheus dancing by, as something too sweetly vital to be true. And at last she saw it, the marvellous Palace, and stood entranced. O! O! of course she should have known that The-Father-of-His-Country would require some such citadel for his sacred cherry-tree. Why, there were lights glowing like jewels everywhere and the doors were like arches between great trees and all across the front were the most beauti-

ful brown branches with white and pale pink blossoms on them. O dear, and the poor Swede had brought plain prickly spruces!

Like a pilgrim before a shrine little Agidia stood there drinking in these glories until, her little feet stinging with the cold, she decided to cross over for a last lingering look. She dared not mount the steps. She contented herself by studying the queer yet so beautiful pictures on the wall outside. These pictures represented more cherry trees and a lady with such odd knobs of hair and great pins sticking out like the antennae of a dragonfly and her dress was like a nightgown brodered up the back and tied round the middle with a wide sash. Agidia wondered with sinking spirit if this were the proper Christmas dress and if so how she could turn her striped flannel nightgown into the exact article. O dear! Agidia almost jumped at the boldness of her succeeding thought. In fact, now she was here, something seemed to say to her why not enter the palace of The-Father-of-His-Country and give the American Reverence who must be in charge her Christmas dollar? Why not ask His American Reverence to buy hot dogs with it for poor little girls who were still dog-gon-foreigners? And perhaps when His Reverence heard how speedy her American English was already and saw her smart red Ameri-

can coat he might give her a little twig of the sacred cherry-tree for her own American Christmas.

The thought engendered miraculous courage; she was no longer conscious of the stinging cold nor frightened by the thumping of her heart, but she realized that being so newly made over she should not enter at the front portals of this sanctified place. Fortunately, or fatefully, it was Saturday afternoon and within three-quarters of an hour of the matinee performance of Madame Butterfly, by the San Sistine Opera Company.

Little Agidia, glowing with eagerness, approached what she thought a vestry door and found herself in a long black cheerless place that somewhat dashed her expectations and a moment later a very common-looking person in blue overalls came hurrying towards her, every dusty wrinkle of his face a question mark. In the shadow behind him were others in like dress, with hammers and saws and all sorts of queer unsightly objects. Out of nowhere, as it were, and perfect silence these blue figures bounded forth like startled goats and began at once to set up an awful clatter, performing the most amazing antics—why they even fell upon perfectly innocent walls and like Samson carried them hither and thither with astonishing ease!

The man with the wrinkles squinted down the ridge of his nose. "Well, what do you want, young one?" he

demanded brusquely but with a softening twinkle, for now that he saw the interloper better she had a mellowing effect. Agidia tried to smile as brilliantly as Mr. Morino and to show-a the pep. "No, no," said she, in perfect Morino intonation, "not-a want, give . . . one dollar, please mister, for-a the hot dog, to make Christmas for-a the dog-gon-foreigner—to make him good child of The-Father-of-His-Country."

Panic knocking at her little heart, the broad smile notwithstanding, Agidia produced her dollar and held it out to the astonished stage hand who could make nothing of what she said and thought the little thing out of her senses.

Something very like a laugh saved the situation and the little girl from tragedy. Mr. Elmer Troen, lately of The Royal Stockholm Opera House and engaged for the American season by Messrs. Sistine, had chanced to overhear and though he had little time to spare just then hurried to the rescue. A word to the stage hand and Agidia found herself alone with this tall elegant gentleman who smiled merrily, wore white like a deep-sea captain and had a gold tooth in his head. "How do you do?" said the gentleman, and immediately Agidia perceived that Mr. Morino lacked something in cultural perfection.

"Hello!" she responded, and for lack of better offered her hand still clutching the silver dollar. Said he, grasping the cold little hand with firm kindness: "Perhaps you would like to come to my dressing room and explain about the hot dogs."

Agidia smiled now without thought to Mr. Morino, a smile that welled up from her intelligent brown eyes and spread like sunshine all over her little face. As she trotted along beside him she acknowledged with gratitude that it was easier to understand American English when spoken with less pep than dear Mr. Morino advocated. In Mr. Troen's dressing room sat a marvellous lady—O sweet! Agidia had never seen anyone so like a white and golden flower and Mr. Troen explained that this radiant being was a singer and a professional dancer besides.

Little Agidia almost forgot the hot dogs and the gist of her mission and must of course explain as best she could that ages and ages ago her own mother—before she came to a bad end and the fisher cot—had been a dancer, too; but of course not so beautiful . . . in America everything was different and so marvellous for which reason she had come to the Palace to give her dollar towards the real American Christmas that The-Father-of-His-Country would know she wanted to become A-1 Americano. She really had to do it to make up for mama's coming to such a bad end and uncle's likely to reach his grave still very Norwegian.

Said the gold and white Miss Jeweson a little breathlessly as though something had caught in her dainty white throat: "And what do you call a real Christmas tree?"

Agidia drew up her little red-coated figure, tossed her bronzed head with spirit and answered proudly: "The cherry tree, of course! O, I know all about it. The Big Fellow—George Washington, cut the very first one down himself—just like that, like any common body; so that everyone who quits being a dog-gon-foreigner can have a great Christmas, by gosh!"

That they should both laugh was not surprising to Agidia, she laughed herself for joy to be thus gaily received and gladly understood. And when Miss Jeweson put her soft arms about her in a sudden ecstasy why, just by second nature, they danced about the

[Continued on page 52]

"YES, DOCTOR - BOVRIL
IS JUST WHAT HE NEEDED"



"He began to pick up at once and now he's talking about going to business." Bovril, the concentrated goodness of prime beef, tempts invalid appetites and has the unique power of enabling convalescents to get more nourishment from other foods.

Taken regularly after illness, Bovril helps to reduce the "getting well" period from weeks to days.

BOVRIL
Gives Strength
Quickly

B2M

"PRAISE FROM CAESAR
IS PRAISE INDEED"

We are constantly receiving letters of congratulation from readers on the *Shadowland* Section of The National Home Monthly and it gives us pleasure to devise new methods to amuse our subscribers. In the January issue we are launching another novel feature in this connection. "We hope you'll like it."

THE "UNKNOWN QUANTITY" IN CONTRACT BRIDGE

Continued from page 20

reasonably bid 5 Hearts but he seems to have a good business double and, in all probability, will do so.

However, at one table, South opened with 4 Spades, West doubled. East must construe this as a business double and passed. Five was made without much trouble. At another table where the players holding North and South hands were ardent upholders of the artificial 2 Club bid—South opened with the artificial 2 Club bid, to my mind most unwisely, and this allowed West with a strong hand to bid cheaply with 2 Hearts. North had no option and passed. East with a wonderful distribution for his partner's bid (void of Spades and long trump support) bid 4 Hearts. South now bid 4 Spades which West doubled. East was not satisfied with the double and bid 5 Hearts. South now bid 5 Spades. West again doubled. East still was not satisfied with the double and was now prepared to take a small penalty rather than pass the double of 5 Spades, so he bid 6 Hearts which South doubled. Needless to state the little slam was made with ease, the only loss being one Diamond. The difference between the two plays was 2,750.

The artificial Club bid was never designed or intended for a hand of this nature and the lesson to be learned is—when you have a preemptive hand with strength all in one suit and the opportunity to utilize it presents itself at the start—preempt to the limit.

THE question arises, "What can you do about it?" The answer is "Nothing," and it is a good thing that you can do nothing. Just go ahead enjoying these distribution freaks and hope that Contract Bridge will never develop into a game of "Set Hands."

Even the greatest of bridge minds have their limitations in the laying out of hands, get into ruts, and repeat themselves. In shuffling and dealing you continually get something you have never seen before.

Despite the fact that a multiplicity of hopes and aspirations lie shattered on its hidden reefs, that its persistent and unceasing interference in the affairs of "Mr. Law of Averages" has caused untold argument as to what might have been, I still heartily say, "Long live Distribution."

AGIDIA'S NEW WORLD CHRISTMAS

Continued from page 50

dressing room as lightly as two bits of thistleblow. Then, coming to a stop, Miss Jeweson held the happy little girl out at arm's length. "Why, Elmer!" she cried, snatching off Agidia's tan and ruffling up her curls, "look at her! Why the little thing is a beauty and a born dancer. O Elmer, what a Christmas we shall have after all—thanks to the cherry tree."

Then to Agidia, hastily, for a bell

was sounding from the din out front: "Listen, dear, you must wait till I come back." Here a little twinkle crept into Miss Jeweson's eyes, O a dear little twinkle more like a caress than fun. "You must stay for the cherry tree service—in fact it's the law of the palace. Mr. Troen will arrange everything. Afterwards I shall tell you what The-Father-of-His-Country has in store for you."

THE TOWER OF SILENCE AND SOUND

Continued from page 21

Major Murray's assistance and advice were sought by the Canadian Government in planning the Radio Commission, and he occupies a unique position in the world of the Air. McGill University was partly responsible for the education of A. Wells Coates, B.A., B.Sc., Ph.D., who designed the News, Effects, Productions, and Dramatic Control studios. In the front rank of modern art, Dr. Coates has made an important contribution to the artistic development of this most modern of buildings, that houses this most modern of the arts.

British Broadcasting House day by day plays a larger and larger part in the life of the British Isles. New and powerful stations will soon make it possible for it to be linked more closely with Canada, and the other parts of this wide-flung Empire. From this Magic Tower music and learning, wisdom and nonsense, go out into the ether and are gathered gratefully into millions of homes. Some day soon, perhaps, television will play its important role too, and more than ever British Broadcasting House will become the Tower of Silence and Sound.

LIFE

By GEORGE WILLIAM REID

*A play was written in Heaven;
The angels gathered around;
The plot was skillfully woven;
And actors soon were found.*

*They chose the mummies from Earthland;
Not anyone was barred.*

*They sent down to Hell for the Devil;
He, as the villain, was starved.*

*The plot was a thing of mystery,
Of tears, of joy, of strife.
It was passed by the greatest censor;
And the angels named it "Life."*

"TO YOUR FRIENDSHIP"

By DEREK RAND

*There is a soul that speaks to mine;
A soul that I can but define:
As fresh, and clear, and crystal pure
As dew-drops are in their allure . . .
As soft as a mother's fond caress . . .*

*As poignant as a sigh repressed . . .
As dear to me as a lover's kiss,
Or a dreaming poet's wildest wish.
How could my friendship ever be
As much to you, as yours to me?*