

## RAWSON'S CHRISTMAS TURKEY.

BY EUGENE SHADE BISBEE.



**H**ARVEY RAWSON arose on the morning before the national feast day, and after arraying himself even more carefully than usual, descended to the breakfast-room with the air of a man upon whose shoulders rested a most stupendous responsibility. The toddling Marjorie had breakfasted and been carried away by Nora, an importation from the County Kerry with a French cap and a brogue, leaving Rawson alone with his wife, who was pouring the coffee as he took his chair. She began without the preliminary good-morning: "Now, Harvey, you can easily catch the 8:41, and you'll be sure and be home by noon with the things, won't you, dear? Let me see; don't forget the oyster plant, you know it wouldn't seem like Christmas without oyster plant, and—oh, yes; be sure and bring some of that lovely celery that Green always has—we can't get any fit to eat anywhere else. I think we have everything else except the turkey. Be sure and get a dry-picked one, Harvey, and don't pay more than twenty cents a pound for it—you know what a lovely one we got last year for eighteen cents; and—oh, yes; you might put a bottle of brandy in your pocket for the mince pies; I don't think Baker keeps the real imported, do you, dear? Perhaps it will do, though. Is your coffee sweet enough? I declare, I'm awfully annoyed about the turkey; it's a shame there were no nice ones here; too bad you have to go to the city to-day, too; but come home early, dear, you know how fussy cook is about having everything at her elbow, and I want our dinner to be a success. And don't you know, dear——"

But Rawson heard not. He simply broke his eggs, munched a piece of toast, sipped his coffee, and punctuated his wife's remarks by affirmative nods, as she chattered happily on. Presently he arose, got his overcoat, kissed her good-bye, and boarded the 8:41, as it stopped for an instant at Lyndhurst.

"Hello, Rawson, where are you going?" cried a familiar voice, as he dodged between trucks on West street, and after safely reaching the curb, he saw Billings standing before him on the

corner, smiling with the characteristic amusement of the New Yorker at his friend's narrow escape from death beneath the multitude of wheels. "Oh, up to Washington Market to buy a turkey; come along?" "Go you," replied Billings, briefly, and up Cortlandt street together they went.

At the corner of Church, Rawson said: "Cold, isn't it? Let's go in and have something hot."

"Good scheme," replied the obliging Billings, pushing open the door.

Rawson thought a "Tom and Jerry" would about hit the spot, and Billings, ever accommodating, said: "Make it two."

Then they had two more on Billings.

"Now let's go and get that turkey," said Rawson, "I've got to get the one-eleven for home; got anything to do?"

"No," replied Billings.

"Then come with me?"

"Sure!"

Rawson had the celery and oyster plant wrapped up and sent to a place conveniently near the ferry, and they were wondering how they were going to manage the twenty-pounder they had picked out, when a bright idea struck Billings.

"Say, Rawson; what's the use buying any blamed turkey when we can get one for nothing? I'm thirsty, aren't you?"

"Yes, of course I am," responded Rawson, with the look of a man whose feelings had been injured by the superfluity of the question.

"Well, let's go and hunt up some place where they are raffling a turkey. We can have a drink, and shake for the bird, savey?"

"Billings, I'll always be glad I know you; you're a genius; you've saved me a five dollar bill on that turkey; we can win one for a quarter. I feel luck in my bones, do you?"

"Sure; lucky enough to win any old turk that ever flew the coop."

The first place they made for was on Broadway near Park Place, and right in front of them on the bar, reposing in a bed of celery and cranberries, was a monstrous turkey. In his throat was stuck a small skewer holding a card, which bore the legend:

25c. A CHANCE.

"When are you going to raffle him?" queried Billings of the smiling attendant, pointing to the bird.

"You can shake now, sir. Anything over forty-two wins it, or you can take two small ones."

"How much does he weigh?" asked Rawson.

"Thirty-four pounds, sir," replied the mixologist.

Fifty cents went over the bar.

"Two 'Tom and Jerrys,' and I'll shake her up oncc," said Rawson.

He shook eighteen.

"Great Scott! Give me the box! I can beat than rank throw!" cried Billings.

The bones rattled across the mahogany.

Seven—fourteen—two aces, making twenty-three. Rawson's lip curled sarcastically.

"I'll shake you to see who pays for two more throws," he remarked.

"Roll 'em out," was Billings' brief rejoinder.

Rawson won, but was far below the necessary forty-three to win the turkey.

"Say, Rawson, I'm getting too much of this egg business. Let's make it a hot Scotch," suggested the convivial Billings.

"That suits me," responded Rawson, and the next round marked the change.

A dollar had gone for chances on the turkey, and they shook to see who paid fifty cents each time for the two throws.

And after every throw they had a hot Scotch.

The weather had sharpened, and a feathery frost began to form on the plate glass windows. The cafe was comfortable, and both men were set on winning that turkey.

Rawson felt that he *must* win it to recuperate, and Billings was equally determined that he would present it to his friend for having inveigled him into the game.

Occasionally some other customer would try his luck, and losing, walk out. Nobody seemed to expect to win it but Billings and Rawson, but simply chanced a quarter as a part of the season's festivities.

And still the ivory cubes rattled out of the box; and still the silver went over the bar. Rawson looked at his watch.

"Jove, old fellow; missed that one-eleven; have to catch two-fourteen now; shake 'em up again; got to hurry; wife's waitin' for that turkey."

"Sall right; win her in a minute; don't be in a rush; catch s'm'other train; here goes," replied Billings, shaking them out.

And time rolled on. Likewise the dice.

"Have cigar?" asked Rawson.

"Shake you for one," replied Billings.

"Let her go," and cigars came to flavor the Scotch.

"Hey! barkeep; I got her!" cried Billings, and sure enough he had, for the total count made forty-four.

The attendant smiled, and asked: "Will you have two small ones?"

"Not by a jugful! Gimme the big one!" cried the happy winner.

A waiter tied the bird up and placed him on the bar before them. Billings gave him a quarter.

"Let's have a bottle of wine on it, old man," he said to Rawson.

"That's good;" replied his friend, and they celebrated the good luck with a small bottle.

"Now 've got to catch train; lessee, one at three-fifty-six;" said Rawson.

"Ah, never mind 'bout train, have another;" said Billings.

"No; got 'nough. Say! whose turkey's that?" asked Rawson, suddenly, eying the bird on the counter.

"'S my turkey;" answered Billings.

"No, it's not; 's mine;" sharply responded Rawson.

"You're crazy; 's my turkey; didn't I throw— say, barkeep, what—"

"Never mind the barkeep; guess I know whose turkey 'tis:" said Rawson.

"Well, I'm going to give him to your wife with my compliments;" replied Billings.

"Blamed kind givin' my turkey away;" said Rawson.

"Tell you it's my turkey, Rawson."

"Bet you fi' dollars 't's mine, old man."

"Go you; produce your five;" said Billings, bringing up a wad from his pocket and throwing a bill on the bar.

Rawson covered it and they referred to the barkeeper, who pronounced in favor of Billings, who scooped the money and then insisted that another small bottle was due from Rawson.

Rawson acquiesced, and they sampled another.

Billings looked at the clock above the cigar stand.

"Say, old man, you better be movin' 'f you 'spect to get that train; what time she go?" he asked.

"Jerusalem!" cried Rawson, "only got ten minutes;" and

grabbing the turkey, he shot out of the door, closely followed by Billings.

A cable car was passing, and both landed on the platform and then went inside, where they sat on either side of the turkey. Billings grew reminiscent, and entertained Rawson with numerous amusing anecdotes. The time passed quickly. Presently the conductor came in, and Rawson said: "Stop at Cortlandt, please."

"This car don't go down-town," replied the man.

"Where in blazes does it go?" replied the man.

"Fifty-ninth street," answered the conductor.

"Are we goin' up-town?"

"Certainly you are," said the conductor.

Both men made a rush for the door, and dropped off while the car was moving. They stood in front of the Saint Denis, and looked at each other.

Then Rawson said: "Well, can't get three-fifty-six now; have to catch five-fourteen."

Billings was equal to the emergency.

"'Sall right; le's go in and have an apple toddy."

"Where's the turkey?" suddenly asked Rawson.

"You've got him," replied Billings, looking at Rawson's empty hands.

"Got nothin'! Didn't you bring him?"

"No; thought you had him."

"Great Scott; he's on the car!" almost yelled Rawson.

"Cab, sir?" asked a waiting cabby.

"You bet!" cried Rawson. "Catch that car up by the Morton House, and I'll give you 'nother dollar," and he pushed Billings in, and tried to jump in after him, but his head hit the top, and an eight dollar silk hat was smashed over his ears. But the cabby cracked his whip, and they started after the turkey. The street was pretty crowded, but they finally overtook their car at Eighteenth street, and Rawson sprang out and boarded it, leaving Billings to settle with the cabman. In five minutes he came back, victory expressed on his face, as he proudly swung the bird by the feet.

"That was lucky," said Billings.

"You bet!" assented Rawson.

"Well, might as well walk down to the Spingler and have that toddy now. Cold ridin' in that old cab, wasn't it?" said Billings.

They found the hot apple toddy so comforting that they had several, and finally adjourned to a table to have "another" while they waited for train time. The crowd grew more numerous and mutual friends began to drop in. They had several more. Rawson missed the five-fourteen and telegraphed his wife as follows :

"Been detained in city on important business. Be home with turkey on eleven-forty. HARVEY."

Then they went over to Riccadonna's and had an Italian dinner, while the turkey was put in the ice-box. After dinner they started for Tony Pastor's. The performance was not to the liking of either. Rawson complained of the house being overheated and suggested that they seek a cooler atmosphere, to which the ever-ready Billings assented. Upon reaching the sidewalk they found Fourteenth street a sheet of white and the snow falling thick and fast.

"Le's go down to corner and get warm," said Rawson.

"Just said 'twas too hot," replied Billings.

"Well, must have made a mistake. Look at the snow," answered his friend.

The end of this dialogue found them in front of two smoking glasses at the corner of Third avenue.

Billings cast his eye toward the other end of the room, whence sounds of merriment issued, when his face assumed a peculiar expression, which caused Rawson to ask : "What's matter with you ?" and at the same time turn his own head.

The sight that met his glance brought a look of puzzlement to his face, and he at once confronted Billings.

"That our turkey those fellows shakin' for ?" he asked.

"No, 's'nother turkey," answered Billings, taking another swallow.

"Then where's ours ?"

"Don' know. Must be in theater."

"That's so. Le's go and get him."

"All right," said Billings.

They bought two admissions and went in. The usher had seen no turkey, neither was the bird in their former seats. Upon being remonstrated with for obstructing the view by prowling around in search of the missing turkey they adjourned to the lobby to hold council.

Said Rawson :

"Where did we leave him?"

"Don' know," answered Billings.

"Did we eat him?" asked Rawson in deep seriousness.

"Don' know. See any feathers on me?" queried Billings.

"No; don't see any feathers; must eaten feathers, too."

"No, I didn't; I don't want any feather dusters inside o' me; maybe we left him somewhere."

"Say, Billings, where did we eat?"

"Don' know, I told you; don't you know?"

"Dorlon's?"

"No, didn't eat there," answered Billings, emphatically.

"By Jove! I know," exclaimed Rawson.

"Where?" queried Billings.

"Rick's!" decidedly.

"Did we leave turkey there?"

"Guess so; let's go see."

"What time is it?" asked Billings.

Rawson looked at his watch.

"Ten-thirty," he said; "just got time; let's take cab."

They drove back to Riccadonna's. The smiling proprietor greeted two such good customers effusively and opened a small bottle while the turkey was being securely wrapped and tied. Of course they had "another" on the strength of their good luck in finding the troublesome bird and then started together for the ferry. Billings was determined to see his friend and the turkey safely started for home.

They managed to reach the ferry in time for the last boat connecting with the eleven-forty train, and Rawson flew in the corner cafe for his celery and oyster plant. Recollecting his wife's admonition, he put a bottle of brandy in his pocket, and hurried aboard the boat, Billings just in advance with the turkey.

On landing, the latter bade him a jovial farewell, and laden with bundles, the belated Rawson got into the smoker and settled himself for the forty minutes run to Lyndhurst. His own carriage awaited him at the station—his own wife at the door.

"Oh, Harvey," she cried, "I'm so glad you've come! Where's the turkey?"

Rawson looked around in a helpless sort of way, and then bracing himself, replied: "Must be in the carriage—have Williams bring him in."

"There's no turkey in the carriage, sir," replied the coachman, to the message sent him.

A great light dawned on Rawson.

"Dorothy," he said, "that infernal turkey has been the cause of my missing at least two trains, and now I've left it on the one I did manage to catch. We'll eat fried liver for Christmas dinner."

"Oh, Harvey! and to think of the awful humiliation when the invitations can't possibly be recalled so late," and she burst into tears.

That effectually altered his mind.

"Send for Williams at once, Dorothy, and I'll get your turkey; there, don't cry, little girl," he urged, placing his hand on her shaking shoulder as she stood with her handkerchief pressed to her bowed face.

But she was beyond the power to send for any one, so he stepped into the cheerful library and pounded a bell. To the maid who appeared, he said: "Have Williams drive to the station at once and telegraph to Bolton to the agent to get a turkey from the smoking car of No. 63, and send to me by first train returning."

The turkey came back by a train about three o'clock, and when placed before the gathered company, was worthy of the trouble he had cost.

When the guests had all gone, Rawson took his wife aside.

"I've just done a little figuring, dear," he said. "Did you like your turkey?"

"It was perfectly lovely, Harvey. I'm going to have you get one every time."

"No, you don't!" he replied, with decision, a peculiar twinkle in his eye.

"Why, dear?" she ingenuously asked.

"Do you know how much that turkey cost?" he queried, by way of reply.

"About twenty cents a pound."

"I wish it had," he answered. "Dorothy, that ugly beast cost me a whole day away from you, and four dollars and thirty-seven cents a pound," and he smiled oddly.

She looked at him quizzically for a moment, and then said: "Oh, Harvey!"

A rustling as of softly crushing silk was all the reply, then a muffled voice saying: "Oh, Harvey, you'll spoil my chrysanthemums," which was once more quieted with a sound suspiciously like a series of kisses, followed by two voices in merry laughter, as Harvey Rawson led his wife toward their own cozy corner in the library.