

"Oh, any one would know you'd make a mess of it," Betty wailed, snatching the box out of his hands and taking up the conversation.

"At first we planned to get three things, but finally decided to combine our funds and get something for the house. And this seemed what was most needed. We now ask you to accept it—"

"What the devil?"

Mr. Emerson could control himself no longer. But his daughter, with all the dignity of her fifteen years, went right on:

"To accept it as a slight token of our love and esteem on your wedding anniversary."

"Wedding anniversary!" Mr. Emerson yelled.

"Wedding anniversary!" Mrs. Emerson hoarsely repeated as she hesitatingly received the package.

She cast a sheepish glance at her husband, who was standing there, the picture of chagrin. If he also had forgotten, everything would be all right.

Eye met eye. He had! Rushing to his side, her free hand found his and held on tightly.

And for the first time since its inception the Emerson household was divided, not against itself but parents against their own and legitimate offspring.

Junior, however, who had been eying his male parent skeptically for some time, sullenly blurted out:

"Gee, dad, did you forget that—"

"No, no, Junior," his mother nervously

interrupted. "Dad is taking me to the theater to-morrow night."

"But," their son and heir stubbornly insisted, "it isn't to-morrow night. It's—"

"Look!" Jack shouted. He had been busily removing the tissue paper from the contents of the box that he had taken from his mother's arm. "This is Eros. Gosh, he was a fat kid, wasn't he?"

A glaring, glittering statuette of Cupid on top of a globe was being slowly revealed to view. The chubby arm above the head was still wrapped and carefully tied.

Suddenly Mrs. Emerson stepped forward and seized the statuette from Jack's grasp. A feeling of fear came over her. No! No! It could not be! From time immemorial Cupid had wielded a bow and arrows.

Hoping against hope, she jerked off the remaining bits of paper and twine. A staring pause followed. Her shaking fingers tightened about the round object as if to hide it.

With closed eyes and fast beating heart, she began to think in sequences. She had been born by it, she lived by it, and she would die by it. But, with a sigh of great thankfulness, she could also love by it.

Her calm, still beautiful face lit up with one of her rare smiles. Bravely she faced her husband, and held up for his inspection the fat, golden god of love, with the world at his feet and his right arm bearing aloft a little shiny relentless timepiece.

It was already *tick — tick — ticking* in her trembling hands.

THE FAIREST DAY

To-day I hear a starling sing
Upon the leaf-forsaken bough;
Good cheer runs through his caroling,
And in my heart there stirs the spring
Though it is winter now.

To-day I see a kindling fire
Along the sweeping snow-slopes run;
It touches willow wand and brier;
The brooks all leap with young desire;
With laughter beams the sun.

The fairest of the calendar
This radiant day of song and shine,
For over gleaming crests afar
Comes Love as comes the morning star
To be my Valentine.

Clinton Scollard

The Galley Slaves

NOBODY WANTED TO BE COOK OF THE U. S. S. BONITA UNTIL
DORIS PAGE CAME TO THE SHIP AND OFFERED TO
GIVE COOKING LESSONS, BUT THEN—

By Elliot C. Bergen

THE U. S. S. Bonita, coming up into the tide, slid neatly alongside a steamer's gangway. Dave Simmons tossed over a line, which was seized by somebody on the big ship and made fast. A young officer jumped across from the patrol boat and went aboard briskly.

Out of the after hatchway appeared a brown, curly head, much rumped. Two mild blue eyes squinted forward questioningly. The skipper, slouched at the wheel, caught the question and consulted his wrist watch.

"All right, Spud—pipe 'em below, if you're ready. We'll stand by here for dinner."

The brown curls vanished, but popped up again almost at once and came on deck. Their owner was a slender lad of middle height, gentle though businesslike of face, wearing dungarees many sizes too long and turned up at the bottom. This youngster opened the signal chest amidships and took out a small red pennant, which he hoisted smartly to the port yard arm. Then, without comment, he returned below.

Dan Dexter, boatswain's mate second class, executive officer of the Bonita, grinned at the triangle of bunting. It was a symbol of efficiency, of adherence to regulations; but on a patrol boat—

"Ain't we got swank, though, with Spud's meal pennant?" drawled Dan. "When I see that peewee flyin' up there, I begin lookin' around for sixteen-inch guns an' a marine guard. Mostly we're just a flea bite on the navy's big toe, but at chow time—boy, we're the flagship o' the mosquito fleet!"

"Where'd he get it from?" inquired Dave. "We're the only boat in the harbor that's got one."

"Betcha he made it himself," suggested Cy Talbot, cocking an eye aloft. "A guy that cooks can sew, can't he?"

"Maybe his girl fixed it for him."

"His girl!" The booming voice of Ben Breen put the idea to rout. Ben had a face and a figure to match the voice. "His girl! Say, the only girl he's got is on the cover of *Snappy Housekeepin'*. I seen that lad talkin' to a girl once, an' you'd think he was bein' bawled out by the admiral. He's scared of 'em!"

"Well, anyway," said Dan, "it's a good meal pennant. If—"

"Hey, you fellers!" called Spud from the hatchway. "Lay aft, will you? The beans are coolin' off fast."

"Comin'—four bells an' a jingle!"

"Nine hundred to a sailor—count mine again!"

"Beans!" groaned Cy Talbot. "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday—"

Nevertheless, Talbot led the stampede aft, and presently they were squeezed about the table at one side of the cabin. It was not a large cabin, for the Bonita measured just sixty feet over all. At the head sat the commanding officer. Chief Boatswain's Mate Randall. Next at his right was Dan, with Frank MacDermott and Bob Slattery, engine room petty officers, farther along. The three seamen filled up the other side.

Spud served up mess, quickly and without ado. As commissary steward, ship's cook, baker, mess attendant, and chambermaid, he did pretty well for one who had the rating of a second-class seaman. He knew how to boil water and get things out of cans, and his menus were simple but filling, which was all that a patrol boat crew ought to expect.