

Then Bill was gone.

That was last fall. This is spring, and I haven't heard from him for ages. He's probably been sent away and we'll never see him again. This horrid war will keep on and on forever. He'll marry some native girl in the South Seas and I'll become a cross old maid with only a toothless old dog (that'll be you, Pudgy) to keep me company. Why, Pudgy — Pudgy, where are you? Come here this instant!—Pudgy.

Now isn't that just like life — in your greatest moments of sorrow even your own dog leave you to suffer alone. Oh, well, I

might as well get used to leading a lonely, solitary life all — oh! Pudgy, you scared me. What do you have in your mouth? Why, it's a letter, a special delivery letter— from Bill! Oh, Pudgy, you darling, darling dog! I'll give you my very best fuzzy slippers to chew on tonight. He says — oh, it's too wonderful for words — he's coming home on leave tomorrow night.

Hurry, Pudgy, I'll have to go home and get an appointment for my hair, and see if my yellow sweater is back from the cleaner's and oh, Pudgy, I'll bet he's awfully handsome in his uniform!

Our Christmas Tree

LESTER HUNT

We, like many other families, have our own special customs. We have our holiday customs, our dinner customs, our own way of making beds, and our own brand of humour. There is one holiday custom, however, that I especially treasure because I had a share in its initiation. It is the custom of getting our own Christmas tree.

As I remember this first experience, it took place about a week before Christmas, but we still hadn't found a Christmas tree that we liked. It was then that we "men-folks" decided to get our own tree. I was eight years old at the time and Sarge was ten. As we started out — the three of us— for Dad was to chaperon the adventure — it was decided that Sarge, since he was the older, should carry the axe, while I might carry the rusty and almost toothless saw. Dad, of course, would carry nothing — the head of the family shouldn't be so weighted down.

The day was clear and a gusty breeze

came in from Puget Sound. We started the climb up Gatewood Hill — Dad, Sarge, and I, with my chubby legs doing double-time. At last we reached the top of the hill, a little breathless, but exhilarated because we were getting our very own Christmas tree. Sarge and I pranced onward until we reached a cull growth of small firs. I was so excited that I rushed upon a scraggly little tree about three feet tall and started to scrape at it with my saw, while Sarge, who had taken a fancy to a fir about fourteen feet high, struggled valiantly to chip the bark with the axe. Dad called his two "bloodhounds" off, and told us that we wanted a tree about seven feet high that was both bushy and straight. So on we tramped over the path, making little forays into damp bushes to inspect every likely tree. We had at last reached a bluff when, there on the very edge, we saw *our* tree. It was nestled among the larger ones, but still was bushy, and as straight as a

mast. Dad called for his, "Keepers of the Saw and Axe," and we both respectfully submitted the tools to his custody.

As he sawed the trunk, a pungent, pitchy odor filled the air. Finally the tree fell, and Sarge and I got into a quarrel about which one was to carry the tree home with Dad's help. Sarge won, as usual. I started to cry, which action immediately snatched Sarge's short victory from him. I

was now carrying the tree, although most of the weight fell to Dad. I still remember my two short legs getting tangled as I tried to keep up with Dad's strides, the feel of soft fir needles brushing my face and the sticky, oozing pitch covering my hands. The discomfort really didn't matter, however, because I experienced the first thrill of a hard won personal possession.

Frustrated Genius

ARTHUR GRAHAM

He sits down at the desk, tears a sheet of paper out of a tablet, picks up a pencil, and commences. After commencing for some twenty minutes he decides that he should un-commence long enough to decide upon a subject upon which he can commence. Another twenty minutes pass during which he systemazically breaks the lead of his pencil, sharpens his pencil, turns the radio on, turns the radio off, takes his shoes off, puts his shoes on, musses up his hair, combs his hair, loosens his necktie, takes his necktie off, takes off his glasses, twirls his glasses around his finger, walks across the room and picks up his glasses from the floor, cleans his glasses, puts on his glasses, sneezes, takes out his handkerchief, cleans his glasses again, files his finger nails, doodles away three sheets of paper, and groans. In fact he does everything except decide upon a subject.

Then it happens! He's been struck! Feverishly he scribbles, and scribbles, and scribbles. As the words flow from his pencil he smiles, feels important, and subconsciously plays with the idea that per-

haps he is a budding genius. He crosses a "T" with too much enthusiasm and the lead of the pencil breaks. Praying that the spontaneous outbursts of his inner self are not stopped by this abominable quirk of fate he fumbles for his knife, opens it, and cuts himself. Consoled with the knowledge that all geniuses have to surmount insurmountable obstacles he runs to the medicine cabinet. There is no antiseptic, no gauze, no cotton, no sympathetic friend, nothing but a cruel cold world and blood; blood on his shirt, blood on his trousers, blood on the guest towels.

Regaining his composure he wraps his handkerchief about his wound and returns to the desk. He finds that writing hurts his finger, but, gritting his teeth, he carries on. The pencil first runs, then walks, then crawls, then stumbles, then stops. He stares despairingly at the paper, mechanically turns it over and re-reads it, and then wads it up and throws it on the floor.

Tearing a sheet of paper out of the tablet he commences.