



GLYN'S STREAMLINED CHRISTMAS PARTY!

By MONTY LOWTHER (*the humorist of the Shell Form*)

You can't beat the good old-fashioned Christmas—as Bernard Glyn, the inventor of St. Jim's, is compelled to realise when he runs an ultra-modern Xmas party!

WHEN Bernard Glyn asked us to a Christmas party just before breaking-up, we might have known that it was going to be no ordinary here-we-go-round-the-mulberry-bush affair.

To do him justice, our tame inventor did actually warn one or two fellows beforehand not to expect the usual Festive Season stuff.

He told Grundy, for instance, that it would not be a common or garden Christmas party. But Grundy, with his usual originality, took this to mean that the party would not be held on the common or in the garden and thought no more about it!

Whispers of a difference of opinion between Glyn and his sister over the party reached us as we drew near the

end of the term, but we didn't pay much heed to them. At the most, we thought, it would be on such a question as where to hang the mistletoe or how many mince-pies made five.

In actual fact, however, it concerned much more momentous matters than mince-pies or mistletoe.

We didn't know anything about that; and when we marched up to Glyn House in best bib and tucker on the great occasion, we fondly imagined we were going to the usual cheery orgy of mince-pies, jellies, dancing, postman's knock, cracker-pulling and gifts off the Christmas-tree.

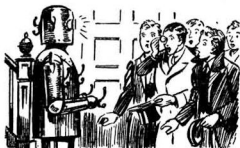
You can take your Uncle Monty's word for it, we soon found out our mistake when we arrived!

The first thing that met our wide-eyed gaze as we walked up the drive of Glyn House was a neon sign over the door. It read :

" WELCOME TO BERNARD GLYN'S STREAMLINED PARTY ! "

" Why ' streamlined ' ? " we asked ourselves.

" Oh, probably that's Glyn's way of



" Good-evening, friends ! " the Robot roared. " A merry Christmas ! Kindly hang your coats and hats on my hooks. "

telling us the party's an up-to-date effort with modern improvements," we told ourselves, after a little reflection.

Then we put on our happiest grins and trotted up the steps to meet Glyn.

But we didn't meet Glyn. We met an outsize in Robots instead. As the door was opened—by invisible hands, incidentally—we saw this mechanical object standing in the hall. It gave us quite a jump to hear a rasping electrical voice from its innards bellowing at us.

" Good-evening, friends ! " the Robot roared. " A merry Christmas ! Kindly hang your coats and hats on my hooks ! "

" Great pip ! "

We did as we were told—staring at the Robot goggle-eyed as we did so ! The very moment the object was

loaded up on all hooks there was a whirring noise, and it simply streaked across the hall on a rail we had not noticed previously and finished up with a crash in a cloakroom. A few seconds later, it returned empty and pulled up with a click in front of the door, ready for the next arrivals !

" Well, that's that ! " Tom Merry said. Which just about summed up what we all felt !

In our blissful innocence, we imagined that that would be the end of Glyn's efforts at mechanising his Christmas party.

It was only the beginning !

When we reached the buffet and saw that it was called a " RUNNING Buffet," we thought that that was merely a hint that it would be open throughout the party. But, believe it or not, they really meant " running " ! All the tuck was on a large circular table which revolved continually, leaving the guests to grab what they wanted as it passed them !

Quite a nifty wheeze, you'll think. We might have thought so, too, if the thing had worked properly. But the dashed thing went too fast. To get what you wanted, you had to chase it round at a dickens of a speed ; so, for the first part of the evening, the running buffet was full of fellows running after a fancied snack, like champs on a cinder-track !

And was it worth the effort when they got it ?

It grieves me to say it, old pals, but it really was not ! You see, Glyn had been studying science in diet and had decided that we should get the maximum amount of nourishment and satisfaction out of a choice selection of unflavoured vitamins. So he had spread out platefuls of caraway seeds and raw carrots and covered them with cardboard imitations of

Christmas puddings and mince-pies to make it look like the Festive Season!

Ye gods! You should have seen Fatty Wynn's face when he scooped up a Christmas pudding and found it was merely a brace of carrots in disguise! You should have heard Trimble's howl when he snatched up a plate of mince-pies and discovered that it was only a ration of caraway seeds in special Christmas clobber!

Glyn turned up at last. He was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Enjoying yourselves, boys and girls?" he chortled; and before we had time to open our mouths, he said: "That's great! What do you think of my little mechanical gadgets, eh? I knew you'd like 'em! But what you've seen so far is nothing compared with what you're going to see! Have a decko at the band, for instance!"

With these words, Glyn charged cheerfully into the ballroom, whence weird and wonderful sounds were wafting.

We tottered after him, and when we saw the origin of those musical strains we felt decidedly strained ourselves. Believe it or not, Glyn had achieved the masterpiece of a complete automatic orchestra!

There was a piano-player, drums controlled by a sort of central non-stop hammer, a violin played off a paper roll, and a saxophone and cornet worked by electric bellows. The whole thing was going full steam ahead under the direction of an overalled mechanic!

"On with the dance!" said Glyn gaily.

So, out of politeness to our host, we picked our partners and got going.

There was nothing wrong with our dancing. Most of us St. Jim's chaps could stagger through a fox-

trot at a pinch without disgracing ourselves, and Cousin Ethel and Barbara Redfern and their pals were experts.

It was the auto-orchestra that let us down. It's true that all the instruments played the same tune, but they happened to play it at varying speeds. If you want to know how that cramped our style, try dancing to half a dozen gramophone records all playing at the same time, and then you'll understand!

What a party! Did we enjoy ourselves?

WE DID NOT!

Mechanisation is all right in some things, but when it's applied to a Christmas party in all its branches, you reach the giddy limit.

We put up with an auto-butler and an auto-snack-bar, not to mention an auto-orchestra, an auto-balloon blower-and-supplier, an auto-dance announcer and a number of other minor autos. But when Glyn thought it shouldn't stop at that, we thought



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it dashed well auto—pardon, ought to! The mechanical Santa Claus was what did the trick.

It came careering into the ballroom with gifts for Glyn's guests in its interior.

Theoretically, the gifts should have



Instead of handing our Christmas-gifts to us one at a time, the auto-Santa started rushing all over the place, shooting out presents like a machine-gun.

glided down a chute and stopped in the auto-Santa's palm one at a time till taken, but something went wrong with the works. Instead of standing still and doing its stuff in a leisurely manner, the dashed thing started rushing all over the place, shooting out presents like a machine-gun.

There were shrieks from the girls and yells from the fellows. I never saw anything like it, myself. Somebody remarked afterwards that it was a knock-out. He must have meant it in the plural. I saw half a dozen knocked out before Glyn stopped the auto-Santa's capers!

Then Glyn's guests threw their manners to the wind and told him what they thought of him and his streamlined Christmas party, and it looked as if a flop was in the offing, when Glyn's sister came to the rescue.

"Don't mind Bernard, please," she said. "He had to do it in his own way first. I told him it wouldn't work, but he just had to inflict it on you. Luckily, I made preparations for an old-fashioned party to start as soon as the streamlined one broke down. I think I'd better start it right now!"

That announcement was the best thing of the evening so far.

Everybody cheered. As for Glyn, he grinned a sheepish grin.

"I think you're the most out-of-date lot I ever saw!" he said. "But if you prefer the old-fashioned stuff, by all means have it! Like to help me clear away the automatic gadgets?"

"What-ho!"

And we all joined in with a will.

You will hardly be surprised when I tell you that Glyn's gadgets put up a stern resistance when we set about them.

Santa Claus came to life again, and we had a rare old struggle with him before we overcame him. Tom Merry worked the oracle in the end by smothering him with a plush curtain.

The auto-orchestra turned awkward, too. The big drum hit Manners in the bread-basket and the trombone gave Gussy a omer on his elegant chin. Then Grundy crept up from behind like a Redskin on the warpath and switched off. Eminent authorities state that this is the only rational action Grundy has ever been known to perform.

The running buffet was easier to stop. But it stopped too suddenly and most of the eatables on the table shot off at a tangent and found targets among the guests before finishing up on the floor.

Naturally, the Robot in the hall shied like the dickens. We managed to lasso him at last and dragged him back to his cloakroom in triumph.

Well, that put everything in the garden lovely, and in five minutes we were enjoying real Christmas fare and old-fashioned Christmas fun. It was all such a success that by the time we reached "Auld Lang Syne" we could afford to look back on the streamlined opening as quite a hit in its way.

All the same, I have an idea Glyn's next Christmas party will steer clear of streamlined effects!