

# CHRISTMAS BY

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Γ was the night before Christmas

-and stormy. "Squash, squash!" went the wheels of the carriage in the

"Whew-ew-ew!" whistled the wind. And it blew Peter's hat out into the middle of the road.

"Whoa!" yelled Peter and climbed down from his high seat. The princess poked her head out of

the window. "What's the matter?" she asked. "My hat blew off," Peter told her, "and the wheel is stuck in the mud, miss."

"Oh, Peter, Peter!" the princess "You must get that wheel out

of the mud at once." "Which is easier said than done," Peter grumbled. "It's that dark I

can't see my hand before me." "There's a light back there among the trees," the princess informed him. "Perhaps you could get some one to

help you.' "I'll go and see, miss, if you ain't afraid to stay alone," said Peter, after some effort succeeding in quieting the

plunging horses "I am dreadfully afraid," she admitted shiveringly, "but I suppose you will have to go.'

Now, in the middle of the pine grove

ed at the door. "Who's there?" asked a childish voice, and a little girl poked her head

out of the square window. "Our wheel is stuck in the mud," Peter answered from the dark, "and I want to get a man to help me."

"There isn't any man here," Jenny informed him. "There is only me and Jessie, and our mother has gone to nurse a sick neighbor, and she won't be home until morning."

So Peter went back to the carriage and reported to the princess.

"I shall freeze out here," said the princess. "I will go up to the house and sit by the fire while you look for some one to help you with the car-

She climbed out of the carriage, and with Peter in the lead she plodded through the woods, and the wind blew her long coat this way and that, and at last, wet and panting, she came to the little house.

And once more Peter knocked, and once more Jenny came to the window. Then she flung the door wide open, and so tall was the princess that she had to stoop to enter it. It was a dingy little room, and there was a dumpy black stove in the corner, with with its flashing rings, over Jessie's a bubbling iron pot that gave forth a most appetizing odor.

"Oh, oh, how nice and warm it is!" said the princess as she held out her hands to the fire.

In all their lives the little girls had never beheld such a wonderful person, for the princess wore a long red cloak and a black velvet hat, with a waving plume, and her muff was big and round and soft, and she had a haven't any mother, you know." scarf of the same soft fur about her neck. Her hair was pale gold, and she had the bluest eyes and the reddest lips, and her smile was so sweet and tender that Jenny ran right up to her and cried, "Oh, I am so glad that you

Jessie from her little chair echoed her sister's words. But she did not run, for there was a tiny crutch beside Jessie's chair in the square window.
"And I am glad to be here." said the

princess, whose quick eyes were tak- back to town and get something to should love you." ing in the details of the shabby room. "It's so nice and warm and cozy."

"Isn't it?" said Jenny happily. "And we are getting ready for tomorrow." On a small round table beside Jes-

sie's chair was a tiny cedar bush, and stay here all night." Jessie's fingers had been busy with bits of gold and blue and scarlet pa-

"We are going to pop some popcorn," Jenny explained, "and string it and hang it on the tree.'

"Oh, may I help?" the princess asked. "I haven't popped any corn since I was a little girl."

Jessie clasped her thin little hands. "I think it would be the loveliest thing in the world," she said, "if you would

"Peter is going to find some one to help with the carriage, and I will stay until he comes back."

And when Peter had gone the princess slipped off the long red cloak, and underneath it she wore a shining silken gown, and around her neck was

a collar of pearls. "And now if you will lend me an apron," she said, "we will pop the

corn.' But Jessie and Jennie were gazing at her speechless.

"Oh, you must be a fairy princess! rasped little Jessie at last. The beautiful lady laughed joyously. Peter calls me the princess," she "He has lived with me ever since I was a little girl. But really I

am just an everyday young woman and am going to spend Christmas with some friends in the next town." She dismissed the subject with wave of her hand.

"And now to our popcorn," she said. Jenny brought a green gingham apron, and the princess tied the apron on, making a big butterfly bow of the strings in the back, and then she danced over to the dumpy little stove and peeped into the bubbling pot.

"Did you ever smell anything so good?" she asked. "I am as hungry as a bear.'

The little girls laughed joyously. "It's bean soup," Jenny said, "and we are going to have it for supper, with little dumplings in it. I was afraid it wasn't nice enough for you." "Nice enough!" the delighted lady exclaimed. "I think bean soup and

little dumplings are-um-um!" And she flung out her hands expressively. "I thought." Jessie remarked faintly. "that fairy princesses only ate honey and dew.

"Which shows that I am not a true princess," said the beautiful lady, "for honey and dew would never satisfy

Jenny got out three little blue bowls and set them on a table that was spread with a coarse but spotless cloth. There were a crusty loaf and clover sweet butter, and last and best of all there were the bean soup and the bobbing little dumplings served together in an old mulberry tureen.

It was perfectly wonderful to see the princess in her shining gown at

the head of the table, and little lame Jessie said: "You were just sent to us for Christmas. Why, it's just like-'The night before Christmas, when all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even The stockings were hung by the chimney

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon there. The children were nestled all snug in

their heads.' "But our stockings weren't hung yet, and we weren't in bed,' said

"It was too early for that," said the orincess, "but let's go on with the rhyme, just for fun. I see you know

it all through, so you mustn't mind my changing it a little: "When out on the lawn there arose such Jenny sprang from her chair to see what

was the matter. Away to the window she flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the When what to her wondering eyes should

appear But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny

"Oh, no; I forgot! I mean-"When what to her wondering eyes should appear But a carriage stuck in the mud right out

here And a little old driver, so lively and You must have thought Peter was dear old St. Nick."

The children laughed gleefully, and Jenny said: "We would have thought that, only we aren't going to hang up our stockings this Christmas at all. Jessie and I aren't going to get any presents, for mother hasn't been well, and she couldn't get any sewing. But she said we could make our Christmas merry, and we were to pretend that we had been to the big stores in the city and had bought things for the tree and dolls and everything."

"That's a lovely way," said the princess gently, and she laid her hand, thin ones.

"and we are going to pretend." Jessie said, "that our chicken is turkey. But we won't have to pretend about the mince pie, for mother has made a lovely one.'

"I wish I could help you eat the chicken," said the princess wistfully, "and I should like to meet your mother. I know she is lovely. And I

had lived in a big, lonely house and denly in Jessie's chair. she had always yearned for a cozy home and for a sister.

After supper they popped the corn, and just as they finished in came Pe-

"I can't find any one to help, miss," take you over in."

"No," the princess demurred as she stood in the middle of the room with a heaped up dish of snowy kernels in the other's shabby shoulder and wept, her hand. "No, Peter, I'm going to

Peter stared, and the little girls cried, "Oh, will you?" And the princess said: "I really will.

And, Peter, you can bring up the steamer trunk and my bag." "Won't your friends expect you, miss?" Peter inquired, as if awaiting

orders. "I will send a note by you," was the calm response. And as the man went | Teddy bears, one with a flaring pink out she followed him and shut the bow and one with a flaring blue bow, door behind her. "Oh, Peter, Peter!" and the Teddy bears held out their she whispered confidentially. "I am arms saucily and gazed at the happy

going to give them such a Christmas!"

"The little girls, miss?" "Yes. They are so sweet and brave! And I have the presents in my trunk that I was going to carry to the other children. But they will have so much that they won't miss them, and I shall spend my Christmas in a plain little house, but it will be a joyful house, Peter.

"Yes, miss." Peter agreed understandingly. "I wish we had a big tree," said the

princess regretfully. "Well, leave that to me, miss," Peter told her eagerly. "You just get them

little things to sleep early, and I'll ba here with a tree." "Oh, Peter, Peter-Santa Claus!" exrlaimed the princess gleefully. "It will

had since I was a wee bit of a girl." So Peter went away, and the princess, with her eyes shining like stars, danced back into the room and said,

ce the nicest Christmas that I have

"Oh, let's play mariners!" Jessie and Jenny had never heard of such a game, but the princess told them that she was a ship on the high seas and that they were to tell from her cargo what country she bailed

"I carry tea." she began. "Where do

hail from?" "China," guessed Jenny, "No."

"Japan," cried Jessie, with her little face glowing.

Then the little girls pondered. "It might be India," ventured Jenny, but the princess shook her head. Then Jessie cried, "It's Ceylon!" And that

And after that Jessie brought a cargo of oranges from Florida and Jenny brought a cargo of rugs from Persia, and there were cargoes of spices and of coal and of coffee and of fish and of grain and of lumber, and the princess finished triumphantly by carrying attacked to the ribbon was a card beara cargo of oysters from the Chesapeake bay.

"One more." begged Jessie, "I carry a cargo of castles," said the sparkling princess. "Where do I hail

The little girls guessed and guessed and at last the princess said: "That wasn't a fair one, really, for my castles are castles in Spain."

Then, with Jessie in her arms, she told them of her own castle building, and when she had finished she said, "And so your mother shall have all of my sewing, and that will keep her busy until spring." "Oh, you are going to be married

and live happy ever after!" sighed Jessie rapturously. "It's just what a fairy princess should do." "And what you should do," said the princess, looking at the clock, "is to

go to bed, bed, bed, so that you can wake up early in the morning." She tucked them in and came back later in a fascinating pink kimono, with her hair in a thick yellow braid, and she kissed them both. But it was little lame Jessie that she kissed last. And then she went away like a glorious vision, and the little girls sank

In the next room the princess opened the door cautiously, and there was Peter with snow all over him, and his arms were full of holly and mistletoe, and a great tree was propped

against the doorpost. "Quietly, quietly, Peter," warned the princess, and Peter tiptoed in and set the tree up in the corner, and its top reached to the ceiling.

The princess opened the steamer trunk and took out two white Teddy bears, one with a flaring blue bow and the other with a flaring pink one. and then she took out a green and a yellow and a red and a blue fatry book and a beautiful square basket of candy, tied with holly ribbon, and then from the very bottom of the trunk she drew string after string of shining little silver bells, fastened on

red and pale green ribbons. "I was going to get up a cotillon for the children at the other house," the princess explained to Peter, "but these little folks need it so much

more. The little bells went "tinkle, tinkle," as Peter hung them, and Jessle, greaming in her little bed, heard the sound and thought it a part of her dream.

And while Peter and the princess trimmed and whispered and laughed some one rattled the doorknob. Peter opened the door, and there

stood a white faced, shivering little woman. "Oh, what has happened to my little girls?" she panted. "I saw the light,

and it is so late." Then as she beheld the golden haired vision in pink and "Oh!" said the little girls, round the gay tree and Peter in his trim liveyed with sympathy. And then the princess told them that all her life she fairles!" And she sat down your said fairies!" And she sat down very sud-

"You are the little mother," said the princess as she knelt beside her and put her arms around her and told her how she came to be there, and when she had finished she said simply, "And I have wanted my own mother so he announced, "and it's snowing. I'll much this Christmas, and the little have to unhitch the horses and go girls were so sweet that I knew I

> "You poor little thing!" cried the little mother to the tall princess, and the beautiful lady put her head down on because in spite of her riches she had been very, very lonely in her big

> And after Peter had gone they talked until midnight of Jessie and Jenny, and then they concocted great plans about the pretty things that the little mother was to make for the princess.

> And in the morning Jessie and Jenny, waking in the early dawn, saw sitting on the footboard of the bed two

little girls with twinkling eyes.

"Oo-oh!" cried the little girls, who had never seen a Teddy bear before. And that was the beginning of the most wonderful day of their lives, for all day the tree went "tinkle, tinkle," as they foraged in its branches for bonbons. And the chicken dinner was a delicious success. And in the afternoon they all took a ride in the princess' sleigh, with Peter driving on the box, and when at last he set them down on their own humble doorstep and lifted little Jessie in his arms the princess smiled at them radiantly from under her plumy hat.

"Remember, Peter will come for you every Saturday, and you are to stay at my house all day," she said. "Oh, yes!" Jenny sighed, with rap-

"And you are to come to my wee ding in the spring-all of you," said

the princess gayly. "And see the prince!" said Jessie over Peter's shoulder.

"And you are going to let me share a third of your mother?" "Yes, oh, yes." from both of the lit

tle girls. "Then you shall share a third of Pe ter." the princess called back as the smiling coachman drove her away

through the glistening snow.

The Present Said "Papa!" In station K, in New York city, a young clerk who was sorting a sack of Christmas mail was amazed to see a package in the sack move. He carried the sack to the sorting table and dumped out the contents. Something suddenly exclaimed:

"Papa! Papa!" The frightened clerk examined every package carefully. In the one that moved he found a live kitten packed in a small bird cage. The kitten had a pink bow of ribbon at its neck, and ing the inscription:

"A Merry Christmas from Uncle

Jack. Further investigation brought forth the fact that the cry "Papa!" came from a doll with blond curls that called."Papa!" each time it was squeezed In moving the mail sack the postal clerk had frightened the kitten in one package and squeezed the mechanical doll in the other package. He was much relieved when he had unraveled the double mystery.

Revised For Christmas. "You say Jack writes he can't be here With you on Christmas day? Well. 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' So the poets say."

'Tis not Jack's absence. What care I Because he can't be near? It's absence of the presents That I, of all, most fear."

For sake of up to dateness now We'll change this little rhyme.
'Tis presents make the heart grow for Just at Christmas time.

-Walter Wellman.

Daddy's Christmas Dream. Is rather sad for Willy, And likewise limits much the cheer Of Mabel, Maud and Milly, For they would welcome ten or twelve To shout around the shanty

And in their stockings deep to delve For goodies left by Santy.

But once a year is quite enough
(Since buying's such a bother
When times are panicky and tough)
For these dear youngsters' father—
In fact, poor daddy hopes the fates
Will cause (to get a cheap year)
The calendar to change its dates
And Christmas swap with leap year.
ROBERTUS LOVE.

Charming Away Tigers. No woodcutter will go about his task in the Indian forests unless he is accompanied by a faker, who is supposed to exercise power over tigers and wild animals generally. Before work is commenced the faker assembles all the members of his party in a clearance at the edge of the forest and erects a number of huts, in which he places images of certain deities. After offerings have been presented to the images the particular forest is declared to be free of tigers, and the woodcutters in virtue of the presents they have made to the deities are supposed to be under their special protection. If after all these precautions a tiger seizes one of the party the faker speedily takes his departure without waiting to offer superfluous explana-

tions.-Calcutta Statesman.

Not Mechanical. A song and dance comedian was working in a cheap vaudeville house where a performance was given hour ly. The tired performer had made nine appearances and had fallen asleep on his trunk when the manager poked

him in the ribs and said: "Hey, you-wake up! It's time for you to go on again." "Say," retorted the performer, "I can't go on again. What do you take

me for-a film?"-Metropolitan Maga-

His Preference. Pompano-Why do you work so hard. Bagley? You slave from morning until night. Bagley-I know I do. I wish to get rich. I want to die worth a million. Pompano-Well, there's no accounting for tastes. Now, I would much prefer to live worth half a mil-

lion.-Philadelphia Call.

A Limited "Forever." "What's the matter, Clara?" asked a father of his daughter.

"Ferdy and I have parted forever." "Um! In that case I s'pose he won't be calling for a couple of nights!"

His Delusion. Howell-I had the nightmare last night. Powell-That so? Howell-Yes; I thought that I was being kicked by the foot of the bed .- New York

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