

MERRY CHRISTMAS



THE CHRISTMAS OF A CHERUB

A CHRISTMAS STORY BY ELIZABETH BONNEY BARRY

She was the kind of a child that people called "just the sweetest thing," and no one doubted that she would grow up to be a beautiful woman. Silky, golden ringlets covered her head, and large eyes which seemed sometimes gray and wistful, but oftenest just the tint of the violets, lighted up a round, chubby little face. The scarlet lips were usually parted in a friendly smile, disclosing a row of snow-white, baby teeth, and the nose confessed to the slightest tilt. Mary Elizabeth, she had been christened, but when only a few months old she had been pronounced by her proud nurse "simply angelic—just the image of a wee little cherub," and since then all thought of the real name seemed to have been forgotten; henceforth this fat, rosy little piece of humanity was known as "Cherub," and only as "Cherub."

Everyone loved her, for she had an amiable disposition, and when she laughed and each cheek dimpled prettily, she was irresistible. But woe to the person who incurred her displeasure. A frown from her meant trouble, and during the five years of her life her parents had grown to know that when that little face puckered a storm was brewing, and that it would be well to take Miss Cherub in hand at once.

This young lady was bubbling over with mischief, and generally when they found her sitting alone with that faraway, saintly expression, they knew that way down beneath those curls a plan of action was being formed which would surely get some one into trouble—undoubtedly Bobby. Her chief delight was found in making this small brother her accomplice, leading him on to carry out her campaigns and having him receive the punishment. When she was confronted with the charge, "Cherub, you started that!" she would raise those wide, innocent eyes, look straight at her accuser and say with the slightest droop to the corners of her mouth: "Bobby did it." At present, however, she was being "awful good," for tomorrow would be Christmas and she had placed many letters up the chimney of the fine, big Fifth avenue residence, asking Santa Claus for all sorts of nice presents, which she was sure not to get unless she was an obedient little girl!

Christmas morning, before any one in the house but the servants was awake, the two children were excitedly whispering together about what jolly old Saint Nicholas had left for each, for sleep was far distant, and nurse's scolding and attempt at persuasion was of no avail.

Near breakfast time Aunt Gladys Dupont, their mother's pretty young sister, just two years out of boarding school, who had lately arrived to spend the holidays with the family, came to the nursery and with a hearty "Merry Christmas!" kissed each of the children, and told them that they could get dressed and come to the dining room.

Immediately on finishing breakfast Mr. Baldwin would unlock the library door, where each year the tree and stockings awaited them; of course, the children would eat nothing. At last every one was ready and stationed just outside that enchanted room. Impatiently jumping up and down, hardly daring to breathe, the little one urged father to hurry. When they burst into the brightly lighted room it was good to see their faces. Their shouts and screams of delight and loud "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" could be heard all over the house, as each discovered his many gifts under the brightly decorated tree.

When, an hour after, Cherub and Bobby were "dragged off to church," as they were pleased to express it, they left their hearts as well as dolls and woolly dogs in the library at home. Naturally they squirmed and twisted through the whole service, and occasionally whispered to each other in eager tones.

That afternoon they were allowed to invite four of their little friends to a small party. They were all playing under the tree with the Christmas things, and as Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin had gone to walk Gladys proposed having a game of "I spy" with the youngsters. As she announced this Cherub, who was always the leader, yelled, "Hurrah for Aunt Gladys. Now she can be it!" and then whispered, just as audibly, "No, Bob, I choose to get under the sofa; stop pushing me!"—as they were hiding.

"Coming, ready or not!" called Gladys, as she started off on a hunt that proved fruitless. As she ran into the hall to continue the search she came face to face with the man to whom she had but recently been engaged. It was the first time she had seen him since the night, three

weeks before, when she had returned the ring and refused to listen to the explanation which would have cleared the misunderstanding, and although since then she had been miserable and had admitted to herself that she was in the wrong, she was determined that he should never know it. There was the old Dupont pride again!

For one moment they looked into each other's eyes, and then with a cold nod she turned away and busied herself with the game, which for the time being she had forgotten. Very little interest she felt, however, in anything but the man who had so unexpectedly appeared on the scene, and who at that very moment, before her astonished eyes, was coolly lounging in a Morris chair, glancing carelessly over a magazine.

When the first surprise was over she became embarrassed. As though reading her thoughts Jack Burrows spoke. "When will Fred and Fan be in? You see, I wrote Fred at least two weeks ago that I would come to spend Christmas day if possible, and having never heard anything more from me I suppose he entirely forgot it. How long have you been here?"

Cherub, hearing a familiar voice, ran from her hiding place, and was

"and I refuse to have anything to do with him whatsoever. I know that he was in the plan, too, and you all think you can make everything all right again, but you can't, you can't. I shall stay in my room this evening after dinner, so don't try to persuade me to entertain him. Take him out with you; I shan't go."

By 10 o'clock Gladys, worn out with her own thoughts and tired of her room, decided to go down into the library and enjoy the fire. Why should she punish herself in this way, cooping herself up in that gloomy old room, and what harm would it do to be simply friends with Jack, were the questions she had been turning over in her mind.

At last down she came, much to the bewilderment and secret pleasure of the gentleman musing before the fire, and cosily settled herself in a huge chair beside him. Neither spoke, for neither knew just how to open the conversation.

The silence was becoming unbearable when a tiny noise heard in the hall caused them to glance toward the door. There on the stairs with her night dress clutched a bit up on one side, displaying her little bare feet, and with her eyes wide open as though sleep had never visited them, stood Cherub.

As she caught sight of her friends her face broke into the most mischievous of smiles, for did she not know that the place for her at that hour was up stairs in bed? Gladys, who welcomed any interruption to the suspense, ran, caught up the child,

and mother and father—and Bobby," doubtfully, "when he's real good." By this time Gladys's face was crimson, and angry tears rose in her eyes. The idea of being made a laughing stock, even by a child! Then as the little arms stole around her neck all the bitterness melted away and only love and longing filled her heart. "Aunt, when is you and Mr. Jack going to get married? I'm going to be flower girl and have a white dress and pink roses. Mother said 'very soon,' when I asked her a long time ago," rattled on the unsuspecting youngster.

It was then that Gladys threw pride to the winds, for from the midst of Cherub's tangled curls came a muffled, but very tender, "Yes, Cherub, very soon," which just reached Jack's ears. He started joyously from his chair.

"Oh! Cherub, it's so late you must go back to bed. What will mother say?" And Gladys picked up the little fairy and carried her to the stairs, where she kissed her many times.

Then with happy, sparkling eyes, and a little bright spot on each cheek, she went back into the library and stood beside Jack. Together they watched the child climb the steps.

"Good night, little Cherub," they called after her as Jack took both the girl's hands in his, and—

By this time Cherub had disappeared, and was crawling happily back into bed.—The Pathfinder.

Day Before Christmas.



Mrs. Turkey—"What is your great wish?"
Mr. Turkey—"An air-ship."

Christmas Anxieties.

Dolly—"Doesn't it worry you aw-



THE CHRISTMAS TREE

(ACCORDING TO TOMMY)

The trees in our orchard and down by the well in summer time give us our cider and sell. The apples and peaches, the quinces and pears; The plums, I can pick from my window up stairs; All good in the summer, and all 'tis a treat. To have all the nice juicy fruit you can eat But none of the summer stuff satisfies me I Like that which we pick from the Christmas tree!

The fruit of the summer is good in its place— With stone-bruise feet and with tan on your face; 'Tis fine to climb up where the robins have found; A nice yellow apple, all mellow and round. And take it away from the robber so bold While he and his mate fly around you and scold. 'Tis fun at the time, but if never could he 'Tis nice as the fun of the Christmas tree.

The Christmas tree grows in a night, and it bears Things lots and lots nicer than apples and pears— We seen on its branches, doll-habes and drums; And steam-cars and soldiers and big sugar-plums; We gathered new milfers and picture-books, too, Right off from the bent-over bag where they grew; And candles glow lighted there, so you can see 'Fore daylight the things, on the Christmas tree!

Sometimes in the parlor, sometimes in the hall, Sometimes in the dining-room—best place of all— The Christmas tree grows with its wonderful fruit, And sometimes it has a pine box for a roof! The funny thing is that I sometimes find Right there what for weeks I had had on my mind, And always, on Christmas, who wants to see me Had better look under the Christmas tree.

Two Stockings.

In her little stocking Betty Baby found, First, a tiny golden ring Set with rubies round, Then a lovely dolly, Beautiful to see, Bonbons, cakes and sugar toys, Happy Baby she!

In her little stocking Polly Baby found, First, a stick of candy, Then an apple round, Then a pair of mittens, Fitting perfectly; That was all, but none the less, Happy Baby she!

—Youth's Companion

KEEPING THE SECRET.

I have a secret with Santa Claus, And he will never tell; He knows so many secrets because He keeps them all so well.

But, O dear mother, if you could guess, How very surprised you'd be; But nobody knows the leastest thing, But Santa Claus and me.

I wish I could tell you, mother dear, I'm sure you would love to know; Can you wait till Christmas, do you think? The days are so very slow!

It's something you need for your dressing-case, I made it,—it's all from me; It's square and pink and covered with lace, And its name begins with C!

You mustn't know until Christmas Day, Oh, my, aren't secrets fun? And I can keep them, can't I mamma? I never would whisper one!

The Poor Boy's Christmas.

Observe, my child, this pretty scene, And note the air of pleasure keen With which the widow's orphan boy Toots his tin horn, his only toy. What need of costly gifts has he? The widow has nowhere to flee, And ample noise his horn emits To drive the widow into fits.

MORAL.

The philosophic mind can see The uses of adversity.

The Stock Exchange.

Many persons think of the New York Stock Exchange as a seat of commercial iniquity, and have been encouraged in this view by magazine articles picturesque and expert in phrasing, but not so accurate as they ought to be.

When something unusual, like the recent decline of stocks, calls attention to "the market," we realize how little thought most of us give to its original copy, and in one of his poems, which contained in the original by day. It seems remote from the interests of the man of small means. But the central stock-market is a solid and important institution, and the conditions which it indicates at the end of each day's trading are almost sure signs of the state of the country's production and commerce. It is true that a great many of the transactions on the stock exchange are mere gambling, and represent nothing more than the turning of money from one man's pocket into another's; it is also true that even in legitimate trading there is a fever and hysteria which perverts not only commercial values, but life values. Nevertheless, most of the chicanery and madness of stock transactions flourishes not in the central market, nor in the offices of those who guide it, but in the suburbs of the business, in offices not related to the exchange or to any reputable banking-house.

Real stock transactions bear a definite relation to the business of the country, and after due allowance is made for the artificial manipulations,

so difficult to practice on the market as a whole, we find the exchange a sound register of the state of the country. The same things that all human beings fear, crop failure, war, strikes, depress the market. That is why men were afraid, when the market "broke;" not so much because they cared for the stocks, as that they feared the signs of the end of prosperity. Fortunately the market recovered, and there was no panic. But for a few days all intelligent persons watched the market with respect and attention.—Youth's Companion.

Celery and Hazel-Nuts.

Cut in round, thin slices one pound of large hazel-nuts; cut in the same way four very crisp celery hearts. Mix with one salt-spoonful of table salt; dress them with a few white leaves of celery around; and serve all the hors-d'oeuvres on a silver platter.—Harper's Bazar.

Christmas Pies.

Mince pie has an especial claim to a place at the Christmas dinner. Our forefathers called it Christmas pie. The name was changed by the Puritans and Quakers, whose mouths had to water for it in vain so long as it was called "Christmas." It is interesting to know by the way, that mince pie developed from a thick stew made of mutton and raisins. In small households, Christmas pie sometimes takes the place of pudding, sometimes resigns entirely in its favor; but, in large ones, one may be as lavish as one can afford, for it is a marvel without unwholesome appetites people bring to Christmas dinners!—Country Life in America's Christmas Annual.

He Looked the Part.

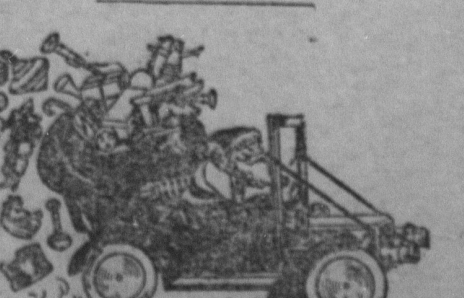


Mr. Jones, on coming to town the day before Christmas, finds himself mistaken for a very celebrated personage.

Out of the Hurly-Burly.

Jane—"I never had such a miserable Christmas month in all my life." Martha—"What's the matter?" Jane—"Why, I got a silly fit, and did all my Christmas shopping two months ago."

The machine which cuts up wood to make matches turns out 40,000 "splints," as they are called, in a single minute.



soon comfortably settled on Jack's knee, while the other children, who had followed her, jumped around and shrieked, no one knew just what for. Jack was a great favorite at the house, and the broken engagement with Gladys had been a source of disappointment to all, especially to Mr. Baldwin, with whom Jack had been intimate ever since the days of Yale together.

Gladys fled furiously to her room, where all the rest of the afternoon she nursed her woes. Just before dinner time Mrs. Baldwin came to comfort her, and tell her how Fred had never even mentioned Jack's talked-of visit, and how the meeting at the house was a big mistake, which all wished had been avoided. But the injured one would hear nothing of it.

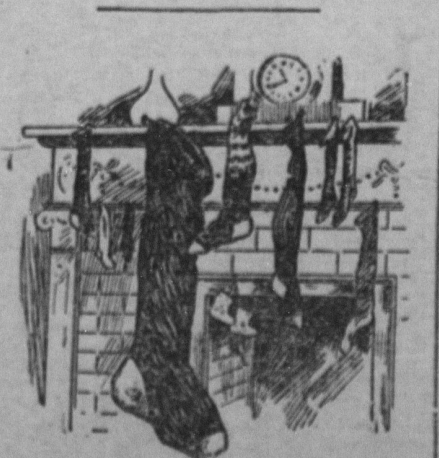
"It was very unkind of you and Fred to bring us here together when you know how I hate him. I hate him," she sobbed, with a little stamp,

and cuddled her warmly in her lap. Where's mother and father? Can I get some candy out of my stocking over on that chair? When is you going to bed? came the questions pell-mell, never waiting to be answered. To Jack's inquiry as to how she happened to come down stairs in the night in that fashion, she replied that she had waked up and couldn't get to sleep again.

"I thought it would be nice to come down here with the Christmas tree and pretty lights and play jolly. More fun than lying in bed, 'cause I got so hot," was the explanation which she seemed to think justified her advent. At this the young couple laughed heartily.

"Is Mr. Jack your beau, aunt, and do you love him this much?" was her next query, at the same time stretching out her arms as far as her chubby shortness permitted. "You love aunt, don't you, Mr. Jack? I love you both, and I love Santa Claus, too,

fully to think what to buy for Tom?" Polly—"Of course but it worries me more to think about what Tom is liable to buy for me."



Puzzle—Find the Stocking That Johnnie Hung Up.