

THE CHRISTMAS OF A CHERUB

A CHRISTMAS STORY BY ELIZABETH BONNEY BARRY

She was the kind of 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; thenceforth 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 to-morrow would be Christmas and she had placed many letters up the chimney of the fine, big Fifth avenue residence, asking Santa Clause 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 ones 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 loung-

ing 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 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

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.

tree and pretty lights and play dolly. 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, aunty, 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 aunty, don't you, Mr. Jack? I love you both, and I love Santa Claus, too, 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. "Aunty, 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

PORTICULTURAL HINTS

WHAT TO DO WITH BULBS.

I would advise covering the plants with ten to twelve inches of litter from the barnyard. Let this extend well over each plant. If this covering is not readily obtained, leaves can be used to advantage. Take a box a foot deep and at least two feet square. Knock the bottom out of it, and place it over the plant. Then fill in with leaves, packing them down well. When the box is full nail the bottom in place to shed rain. Bank up about the box with soil from the bed. In spring do not uncover until the danger of freezing weather is over—that is, weather cold enough to freeze the soil to the depth of the bulb.—Home Magazine.

TRANSPLANTING HINTS.

Most ornamental trees may be transplanted successfully in the fall if they mature their wood early. It is not generally safe to plant after the middle of November in New England. Trees with soft, fleshy roots, like the magnolia or tulip tree, are, however, more safely planted in the spring. The larches and other trees that start into growth very early in the spring should always be set in the fall. When it is possible, still preserving the form of the trees, the tops should be reduced, as with fruit trees, to balance the loss of roots in digging. If the soil is poor where the holes are dug, rich, moist loam should be drawn to fill in about the roots, but stable manure or strong fertilizers should never be placed in contact with the roots. A moderate amount of fine, well rotted manure or a little fertilizer may be thoroughly mixed with the soil, or, better, be spread upon the surface after the roots have been covered.

Very large trees are often transplanted in the winter. A large hole where the tree is to be planted is dug in the fall before the ground freezes and filled with leaves or old hay; the soil is then dug from about the tree roots, leaving a ball large enough to contain most of the roots of the tree. The ball of soil is left to freeze, and during the winter may be drawn upon sleds to the hole and be dropped in place, good soil being filled in about the roots in the spring as soon as thawing weather begins.

Evergreens generally succeed best when moved early in the fall, but may be transplanted at almost any time when a ball of earth is taken up with the roots, and the leaves are not frozen. The soil used to place about the roots must be moist and firmly pressed against them.

WINTERING PLANTS INDOORS.

Perhaps the best, most serviceable and artistic way to winter tender plants is in window boxes, placed inside the window and about six to twelve inches from the glass. The box may be expensive or otherwise, as desired. So far as the plants are concerned, any box will do, provided it is well drained, but by all means have it made to fit the window. Paint it on the outside any color appropriate to the surroundings. It should be six to eight inches wide and six inches deep, with several holes drilled in the bottom for drainage. A tray or tin pan of a corresponding size should be provided to catch the water that soaks through, but the box should not be set down tightly into this. Allow enough space all around to admit free circulation of air. Small block of wood about an inch thick placed in the bottom of the pan will elevate the box sufficiently. The failure in growing house plants often rests upon inattention to this simple requirement. All healthy growing plants require an abundant supply of oxygen. When a flower pot or window box is left to stand in water half the time the circulation of air is stopped and the roots are suffocated. This one thing is responsible for more deaths of house plants than any other neglect or mismanagement.

A neat and inexpensive means of supporting the window boxes is on brackets placed about two inches lower than the window sill. Drain the bottom of the box with about an inch of broken flower pots, charcoal or any rough material, and fill up with good soil.

In a sunny window begonias will give abundant satisfaction, in such varieties as Vernon, Erfordii, gracilis, magnifica, Vesuvius, metallica, cominea (B. rubra), manicata, Duchartrel, incarnata and others. Begonias of the semperflorens type (i. e., Vernon, etc.) that have been planted out of doors can be taken up, with as much earth adhering as possible and planted in such a box. The arrangement can be suited to one's own taste.

Rex begonias are also suitable for such a place, and will make a beautiful box, either alone or with other subjects.

Geraniums are also suitable for a sunny window. Old geraniums do not lift (transplant) well, and it is always best to start with young stock.

Ferns of the Bostoniensis, Pteronili and Scotti types (varieties of Nephrolepis exaltata) are suitable for either sunny windows or those that are only partly shaded. But it is better to have them in pots rather than in boxes, as they are then more conveniently handled.—Indianapolis News.

Farm Topics

SUPERIORITY OF THE MULE.

The mule is less nervous than the horse and therefore loses less energy in useless fretting. In fact, one of the chief characteristics of the mule is his ability to take care of himself under all circumstances, says Farming. Much of the apparent shirking which is charged against the mule is an inborn tendency to husband his strength and make every effort count.

The result of this instinctive care on the part of the mule is that he is able to turn out more work than would be possible for a horse of the same weight under the same conditions. The mule instinctively avoids holes, sharp obstacles, barbed wire fences and various other forms of danger which are not so successfully avoided by horses. It is a matter of common observation that in instances where mules run away they seldom injure themselves to any serious extent.

TEST OF AGE IN FOWLS.

A rooster's age is determined by the size of his spurs. If they are long he is "antique." If there is a small button on the ankle where the spurs come later he is a young bird. Ducks are invariably judged by the under lip of the bill. If a dressed duck will sustain its weight by its under bill, "lay it back and try another," for there is no telling how old it is; certainly too old to be real tender. But if the bill snaps easily it is a young bird. Gobbles are told by their spurs, the same as roosters, the age of the hen turkey being determined by the length of its beard. Aside from the test applied to ducks there is one infallible rule which can be applied with safety in all cases. The back part of the breastbone can be bent easily in a young fowl. If it is sharp and hard and refuses to yield to pressure from your thumb it is an old bird.

ATTEND THE NESTS.

Do you know that you can train a hen to be a poor layer? Do you know that she can and will keep her eggs when ready to lay for a whole day? If this condition is allowed to continue she may and probably will lay fewer and fewer eggs, finally becoming an indifferent layer, hence the necessity of having plenty of clean, comfortable nests. Did you ever notice how shyly the young pullet will go about looking for a secret place where she may stealthily deposit her precious eggs? How very particular she is about it! If there is an insufficient number of nests, or if they are unclean, or too much exposed she is likely, after some delay, to lay the egg on the floor and among the other hens, which may lead to egg eating. Comfort is one of the essentials of egg productions, and what is more necessary than handy, clean and comfortable nests?—National Fruit Grower.

READ MORE.

I say to farmers read more, think more, work less, spend less time gossiping with your neighbors about matters not connected with agriculture or farming. Talk and discuss matters, but let them be mainly matters pertaining to your business, and get the foundation for thoughts and the texts for discussion from good, reliable papers and books, and then apply the methods in practical tests and see if you are not only more successful in financial matters, but also more happy and contented on the old farm. The young people certainly will be. One of the best methods for keeping them on the farm is to supply plenty of good readings, giving them a little time to read and encouraging them to stay at home, and doing so yourself as far as possible.

Work less, read more, think more and gain more happiness, contentment and wealth.—E. M. Pike, Rutland County, Vt.

FARM NOTES.

The surest way to learn whether a given cow is paying her way is to test her product.

Clean, commodious quarters are important factors in helping cows to be profitable to the owner.

Individual nest boxes hung to the wall so they can be conveniently removed for cleansing will be found handy.

A sowing of crimson clover and rye in the chicken run or near by will make excellent late fall feed. Of course the part of the run seeded must be closed for a time.

Hens are moulting unusually early this season, and if properly fed and strengthened while undergoing the operation should be laying again before cold weather sets in.

So great is the demand for fruit packages that the price is gradually working upward and must eventually greatly lessen the profits of fruit growing for shipment by rail.

A Quincy, Mass., groceryman got himself into trouble with the postal authorities when he sold common store eggs for fancy stock. Buyers got mad when the chickens turned out to be ordinary scrubs.

The Maine station rates clear hen droppings as worth about \$1.10 a barrel, although at auction often brings not more than fifty cents. It loses value if kept on hand unless carefully cared for, shrinking in nutritive value about one-half in, say, three months.



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 do hate him," she sobbed, with a little stamp, "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

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 an interruption to the suspense, ran, caught up the child, 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

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.

THE HOLLY MERCHANT OF YE OLDEN TIME.



KEEPING THE SECRET.

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

Oh, dear mother, if you could guess,
How very surprised you'd be,
But nobody knows the lengthiest 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-caps
I made it—It's all from me,
It's square and cool 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 shall whisper one!

Christmas Anxieties.

Dolly—"Doesn't it worry you awfully 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."

