THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

By Mary Graham Bonner

E LLEN had been feeling that there was no such thing in the world as a Christmas spirit.

During the summer, for example, she had taken a trip. Everyone seemed to enjoy it. Everyone seemed to be glad to get away from the world with its scandals and its spoilt civilization. That was what everyone said as they took the trip through the simple wilds, remote and picturesque and old.

This seemed to be the life everyone longed for and then some one mentioned a scandal which had taken place nearby some months before.

With a dash everyone made for the scene so they could tell the people back home that they had seen the locality of the scandal and Ellen had been disgusted. Was it such a sordid world after all?

Then she had taken some poor children to a big store to see the Christmas display and they had been refused admittance. The customers had objected to such crowds of childrenthey wanted to see the display themselves-why should poor children see the toys when they could only look? And all about the outside of the store were eager little faces peering into the windows and hoping that perhaps they could get in when the one who watched at the door was not looking. Once in a while one did and the children from outside waited for the news. "What did you see? What did you

see?" they shouted as the lucky one came out again. Other stores had been different. Other stores had not had their rich



customers complain. But it had saddened Ellen. And one of these very complainers had bought six copies of "The Christmas Carol" by Dickens to give away to friends. Ellen heard that later. It had not improved matters.

And on this same Christmas trip another she had met had said to her that these children had such shamefully poor coats and had reproved Ellen.
"I wish," the woman who had spok-

en so sharply to Ellen had said, "that they had some of the nice warm things belonging to my children," but when Ellen suggested that she should do omething for these children she had

And another person had patted her children and had said:

"A fine work, my dear." And Ellen knew that the woman felt he had showed Christmas duty and Christmas service and Christmas love by making that speech.

But when Ellen began to see the trees which were sent to the city for Christmas she felt better. The smell of the trees gave her some of the Christmas spirit. Oh, yes, it was all right after all, she had been seeing only what was disagreeable and everything else had passed her by.

And then one day in the crowded section of the city she saw a small orippled newsboy go up to a Salvation army bucket and put in his donation. Helping others to have a Christmas dinner when he was none too sure of

As she saw it she involuntarily smiled and a smile answered hers. A strange man was smiling at her. Was some one going to be imperti-ment to her? Was the incident of the



little boy only going to serve as an excuse for a man to smile at her? But in another moment he was apol-

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I was trying to place you in my mind. I was so sure I knew you. And then I rebered that you were the picture of the girl on the cover of a magazine iast Christmas which I saved all the year and so which is naturally very And then Elien laughed. For last

rear she had posed for one of her artist friends.

"I don't suppose you've any iden;"
the man continued, "hew much good
that picture did. I've heard so many
speak of it and of the Christmas spirit

axpressed. You fairly breathed it

"And now I'm different?" she asked.
"You don't look just as—just as
Christmasy," he faitered.
And Ellen felt ashamed. For she

had been critical of others and in wor-rying about the world's shortcomings the had lost her own Christmas spir-it. But it had been merely wander-ing—it was not utterly lost—and the man? The man who had found it

They became friends and then they came sweethearts and they made of heir love a permanent thing and were

And he always called Ellen his beauetful Christmas picture. And Ellen was glad that he did. It kept conmat had once almost left her for good

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BRENT had grown away from his family. Brent was a successful man. He played a violin in a big city orchestra. He belonged to the union and the union backed him up and he never played a minute more than he had to play. It had become such a business with him that he never played now when he came home.

He came home once a year. Something handed down to Brent from his parents made him do this, although when he was home he often was cross. On the last home-coming he remembered his mother had talked to him about the costness of a home and had spoken of the attractive house she had seen a picture of in the paper. She wished Brent would marry and have a nice home like that instead of an



apartment which was so far from being a home. He had explained to his mother that such a "home" was beyond the incomes of ordinary city people and that if she wanted him to be as cosy as that she'd have to get him the cosiness of millions.

For it took a millionaire to own real "home" in a city.

How foolish his mother had been not to have realized all that. She knew so little of city life, of business, of anything outside her own small groove. But Brent was coming home for Christmas and that was happiness for the parents. Only they did wish Brent was more like the boy he had promised to be. There was something so hard about him. He had told them the time before of a friend of his who was

getting a divorce from his wife.
"But my friend is so honorable," Brent had said. "He wants the divorce as he's bored with his wife, though still she loves him, but he is having her secure the divorce and is paying all the expenses, for it is only fair to a divorcee to have the divorce secured by her. He really never want ed to marry her. He became tired of her soon after they were engaged. But it was his high sense of honor which kept him from telling her-to have a man break the engagement would have

been dishonorable. And Brent scorned their opinions He regarded them as old-fashioned. There was a man in a town some little distance away who wanted to see Brent's father on business and it was



arranged that a meeting should take place at the man's bouse. Brent's father was going to sell much of the land, which had become a burden since Brent had gone away.

And he arranged the meeting so that he would be able to meet Brent on his way home for Christmas.

Brent greeted his father with reserved affection. "So you've brought the fiddle," Brent's father excisimed. rent never brought his violin with him any more because he would be asked to play by old friends who didn't realize that music was his bust-

"Yes," Brent said, "I have to play right after Christmas and the town I'm to play in is nearer here, so I'm going there directly."

There was nothing more said. But at the next station a group of youths got on and at once began to play the mandolins and guitars which they had with them.

Brent's father nudged him.
"Don't insult me," Brent whispered

angrily. "No son, I only wondered-I didn't mean you-I wonder if I could play on your fiddle with the boys. You know it's a good many years since you brought yours with you and I haven't touched one-Fil be careful of it. I used to play as a boy, you know. They

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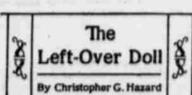
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sald you got your music from me." And Brent's father played and became a boy again. All the Christmas tunes they played-and the people in the train sang and there was merrymaking that recalled to the aged man the happy days of long ago, despite the

fact that his fingers were stiff. Brent watched at first, rather disgusted at such a display of friendliness, for many of the people were strangers, and then he saw his father's pression which the music gave him and which he had denied him. What a cold, conceited, heartless person he had been, severe with his parents, keeping his music solely for pay, denying it to those whose love and warm sympathy had given him the talent.

"We had music, Christmas music, on the train," Brent's father told his mother as they got home.

"And we're going to have it here, too," Brent added. "I've made music my business, but Dad has put music into his life. And somehow," he added, and his voice had a new affection in it, "that Christmas music on that dingy, local train, and the singing of those cheery people just got at my heartsomehow," he repeated.



WHAT was the left-over doll thinking about as she hung on the topmost twig of the Christmas tree all slone? Perhaps about all the other gifts that had been taken off by loving hands and given to the boys and girls. Maybe she was wondering whether there would be a Christmas tree every winter, bearing such nice fruit in such a strange season, if there had not been such a great gift from God as come on Jesus' birthday. More than all, however, she must have been asking herself why she was left over. why nobody wanted her, why the name that was pinned on her dress

had not been called. She was as good a doll as ever was made. Her eyes would open and shut, she always had a smile upon her

face, her cheeks were rosy, she did not have a pug nose, and her dress was beautiful. When they put her on tree she thought her name would be the very first one. She could hardly walt to hear it, and she won-

would never get

through singing carols. Now it was all over and she wasn't wanted at all, not by anybody, not even by Sally Wiggins, who had no doll-not even one. She wasn't wanted! Oh, it was too bad, and her eyes tried to wink out two

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. So they put her in the basket with the other unwanted things, and there the minister found her the next Sunday. She was lying there fast asleep, with a little carpet sweeper near her, and a box of candy close by, and a looking glass by her side. At her feet there was a spruce cone that had fallen off of the tree, and the bit of Warranty deed blanks and paper that had told who she was contracts of sale at this office; 5c meant for, but her eyes were shut- each, or 50e per dozen.

she had retired from the world, no one wanted her.

There she was still when the minister came into the room the next Sunday morning. But now her eyes were wide open, only she wasn't looking at the presents in the basket. She was awake, but turned away, and still trying to squeeze out some tears because she was left over. And every time the minister took her up she would shut her eyes and go to sleep straight, and then she seemed to be sad, and to be dreaming about being left over, even while she was awake.

She wasn't awake even on children's day until little baby Mower came in to get ready to be baptized, but as soon as he held her up she opened her eyes, and when she saw what a pleasant little boy he was she looked pleasant and hopeful again Then he put her down, and she went to sleep and slept until Christmas came again!

With a new Christmas there she was upon a tree once more, and they were singing carols again and getting ready to call off the names. This time she was sure that somebody would want her, for she had been patient a whole year, and she hadn't made any fuss even though she had felt so sorry, Besides, this was the very best tree they had ever had, and so many had come to see it. It was full of gifts-not like the little tree that the minister saw in the corner of a house parlor-the mother said, "It's most all tree and paper, but it's a tree"-there were go-carts, and everything, and an Indian tomahawk to go with a boy's warwhoop, and some fringed pants to be put on with them, and a picture of a little girl in red, under a big umbrella, in a snowstorm, and "Ain't this a nice snowy day?" written under the picture, and lots of things, and the left-over doll, looling so friendly

and nice-nicer than ever. Well, they began to call the names, and almost the first thing somebody

took down the left-over doll and gave her to Polly Rankin! Polly In just the dearest child I know. It was Polly who had said that she wished she had a doll to pet and bring up right. am sure that Polly will do it. She will make the left-over doll

feel very much wanted. She will teach her to be always cheerful will find her very obedient, and even nicer than she looks, and she will be kind to her. I hope that when the leftover doll is grown up she will be just like Polly!

"Banta Claus."

"Santa Claus" is a corruption which originated apparently in Flanders or possibly among the Dutch, of the name St. Nicholas, a saint noted for his love of children and his boundless charity. His "day" was perhaps December 8, originally, but since the displacement of Old Father Christmas, the British representation of the Christmas spirit, he is celebrated almost universally as the Christmas

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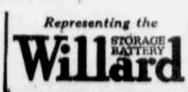
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