

Prompted from the Gallery.

IN the "third floor back" of a dismal-looking lodging-house in a street near Waterloo bridge, a man was standing, singing. In a dilapidated armchair by the window, his audience—one wee, pretty lassie—was curled up, wrapped about with an overcoat, for it was the afternoon of Christmas Day, and there was no fire in the cheerless grate.

"Shall I light the lamp, daddy?" she asked, as he ceased to sing and began to execute a grotesque dance, still whistling the refrain of his song. "It has grown so dark that I can't see to give you your cues," and she held up some tattered manuscript as she spoke.

"No, Babsie; that will do for to-night. Don't try your eyes. Shall we have our usual chat in the dark, pet? There is no rehearsal to-night. Ugh how cold it is. Have we no coal or wood, dearie?"

"No, dad; but it isn't very much colder without fire, because the silly smoke won't go up the chimney, somehow, so

anxious was he to see her astonishment and delight. But no answer came; no patter of little feet. The dreary room was empty. He sat down chilled and uneasy, and the apples rolled unheeded to the floor.

But one hour—two hours—three hours passed, and still no Babsie. The fog was growing denser and denser. The anxious father paced up and down the little room. At every footfall on the stairs he rushed out and called her name.

The callboy at the Regal Theater was calling out "Overture and beginners" as he made his way along the passages when a man rushed past him and disappeared into one of the dressing-rooms. It was Nigel Halliday, white and trembling, and with huge beads of perspiration on his brow.

"He'll never be on!" said the performers in chorus. But he was at the side, dressed and made up, fully five minutes before his first entrance. The other performers were looking at him curiously, for his face was twitching and he spoke to no one. "Nervousness or drunkenness," they all agreed.

There was a ripple of laughter as he made his first entrance. It acted like an electric shock upon him. He knew what was expected of him, and he worked desperately. "He'll do," said the anxious manager, sagely, as he watched his grotesque exit and listened to the applause that followed it.

As soon as Halliday was off the stage after the fourth scene he caught the assistant manager by the arm.

"I'm not on until the palace scene," he said, eagerly. "How long is my wait?"

"Oh, about an hour to-night," was the reply.

Halliday rushed down the passage to his dressing room, removing his kingly robes as he ran.

"What the deuce are you doing?" cried one of the men, as he watched him struggling into his overcoat. "Are you drunk to-night, or what?"

"Don't stop me!" panted Halliday. "Hands off, I say! It's my long wait. I'll be back in time. My child is lost—missing since morning. I'm crazy with anxiety; she's my only one."

Through the streets he ran, threading in and out the traffic, heedless of the shouts of drivers. The fog had cleared away, and the night was starry.

"Babsie! Babsie!" he panted, as he tore along. "Babsie! Babsie!" as he vaulted up the staircase to his home. All was dark in the desolate room. He stood for one moment and threw up his hands in voiceless prayer, and then he hurried back to the theater.

Just before he entered the palace scene he made his way through the passages, and had something to say to the manager. He found the manager in a room where he was playing cards.

"My word I'll be over-taken to



IN A DILAPIDATED ARMCHAIR ONE WEE, PRETTY LASSIE WAS CURLED UP.

I have to keep the window open when we do have a fire."

"My poor little frozen baby," he said sadly, taking her in his arms. "We will find lodgings where the smoke does exit the proper way—after boxing night."

"Dad," she said, as she nestled close up to him in the armchair, "shall we have a Christmas tree to-day?"

"Yes," he replied, "but I'm afraid I'll be in the city to-day."

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FORTUNES IN TOYS.

Wealth Waiting for the Man Who Can Invent a Popular Puzzle.

The chief penny toy now most in demand is something of a mechanical kind, either in the shape of a working model or puzzle. The old kind of toy, with no movement, but which simply was made to be looked at, is of no use to-day. Of the most popular penny toys, during the last half century, more than one dealer gave me full particulars. About 1862 or so there was a tremendous run on penny watches with imitation gold chains! And the manager of a famous firm told me how curiously this came about. It was all due to a woman who stood near the Mansion house, it seems. This hawkker colored a piece of thin board with black velvet, and, cutting out holes for the penny watches, placed the latter in them, with the "gold" chains twisted attractively round. Then she called out loudly: "A lovely watch and chain for a penny!" People began to buy rapidly, and time after time that day she replenished her stock and sold out again. Other hawkkers learned of it, and within three days this penny watch had become quite a rage all over England. The toy firms were simply "mobbed" for it by the hawkkers. One firm alone sold over 5,000 gross in three months; and the maker, a Frenchman in Paris, had to put down new machinery and keep his factory going night and day for four months to supply the demand.

There is a fortune now waiting for the man who can invent a puzzle that will take the place which the "fifteen puzzle" once had, or the famous "pigs in clover." I was informed, on the very highest authority, that more than one regular street seller of toys could be pointed out to me who had often made over £20 a week; and that £10 weekly was by no means unusual for many of them to make during a good run of a popular article.—English Illustrated.

An Old Timer.

A crowd of young men were seated in one of the steamboat offices in the city the other afternoon while an old steamboat veteran regaled them with stories about old times on the Mississippi and reminiscences of old-time citizens.

"Did you know old Bill Jones?" asked one of the men, after the captain had finished relating how he ran a gantlet of Indians with his boat 'way back in the forties.

"Member Bill Jones? Well, I guess I did," replied the captain. "Let's see he died just after the war. He was a good old fellow, too. I knew his father before he was married to Bill's mother."

One of the boys thought the old man was "doping," and, by way of tripping him up on his dates, asked: "Cap, how long have you been running on the river?"

"Who, me? Why, I started on the Mississippi when it was nothin' but a creek."—Memphis Scimitar.

New French Pistol Saber.

A pistol saber is a new form of weapon now engaging the attention of the French war department. It has a firearm in the hilt, and when the sword meets with a resisting surface it recedes and the pistol is discharged. The sword weighs one-third more than the usual cavalry weapon, and when the pistol is not loaded the saber can be used in the ordinary way. Experiments show that the bullet will go through a breast plate.

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Other events, aside from warfare, that have occupied public attention to a greater or less extent have been: Signing of the treaty of peace with Spain; settlement of difficulties in the Samoan Islands; trial, conviction and pardon of Captain Alfred Dreyfus in France; numerous large fires that have destroyed many lives and much property; tornadoes that caused disaster and death at Kirkville, Mo., in April, and at New Richmond, Wis., in June; several fatal shipwrecks; deaths of prominent men, among them President Felix Faure of France, Garret A. Hobart, Vice-President of the United States, and Robert G. Ingersoll; great street car strike at Cleveland and labor riots at Pana and Cartersville, Ill.

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