



**THAT
BEAUTIFUL
CHRISTMAS
BY
FRANK H. SWEET**

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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 chided. "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



"DID YOU EVER SMELL ANYTHING SO GOOD?" SHE ASKED.
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 was set a little cottage. Peter knocked 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 carriage."
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 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 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 came!"
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 taking 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 Jessie's chair was a tiny cedar bush, and Jessie's flowers had been busy with bits of gold and blue and scarlet paper.
"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 stay."
"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!" gasped little Jessie at last.
The beautiful lady laughed joyously. "Peter calls me the princess," she said. "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 a wave of her hand.
"And now to our popcorn," she said.

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Shop Early

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If you can't decide on any of the above then give him one of the following:

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