

THAT BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS

(Continued from page 18.)

Jenny brought a green gingham apron, and the princess tied the apron on, making a big butterfly bow of the strings in the back, and then she danced over to the dumpy little stove and peeped into the bubbling pot. "Did you ever smell anything so good?" she asked. "I am as hungry as a bear."

The little girls laughed joyously. "It's bean soup," Jenny said, "and we are going to have it for supper, with some little dumplings in it. I was afraid it wasn't nice enough for you."

"Nice enough!" the delighted lady exclaimed. "I think bean soup and little dumplings are—um—um!" And she dug out her hands expressively.

"I thought," Jessie remarked faintly, "that fat princesses only ate honey and dew."

"Which shows that I am not a true princess," said the beautiful lady, "for honey and dew would never satisfy me."

Jenny got out three little blue bowls and set them on a table that was spread with a coarse but spotless cloth. There were a crusty loaf and clover sweet butter, and that and best of all there were the bean soup and the bubbling little dumplings served together in an old nutmegy tureen.

It was perfectly wonderful to see the princess in her shining gown at

or, I know she is lovely. And I haven't any mother, you know."

"Oh!" said the little girls, round eyed with sympathy. And then the princess told them that all her life she had lived in a big, lonely house and she had always yearned for a cozy home and for a sister.

After supper they popped the corn, and just as they finished in came Peter.

"I can't find any one to help, miss," he announced, "and it's snowing. I'll have to unhitch the horses and go back to town and get something to take you over in."

"No," the princess demurred as she stood in the middle of the room with a heaped up dish of snowy kernels in her hand. "No, Peter, I'm going to stay here all night."

Peter stared, and the little girls cried. "Oh, will you?"

And the princess said: "I really will. And, Peter, you can bring up the steamer trunk and my bag."

"Won't your friends expect you, miss?" Peter inquired, as if awaiting orders.

"I will send a note by you," was the calm response. And as the men went out she followed him and shut the door behind her. "Oh, Peter, Peter!" she whispered confidentially. "I am going to give them such a Christmas!"

"The little girls, miss?"

"Yes. They are so sweet and brave! And I have the presents in my trunk that I was going to carry to the other children. But they will have so much that they won't miss them, and I shall spend my Christmas in a plain little house, but it will be a joyful house, Peter."

"Yes, miss," Peter agreed understandingly.

"I wish we had a big tree," said the princess regretfully.

"Well, leave that to me, miss," Peter told her eagerly. "You just get them little things to sleep early, and I'll be here with a tree."

"Oh, Peter, Peter—Santa Claus!" exclaimed the princess gleefully. "It will be the nicest Christmas that I have had since I was a wee bit of a girl."

So Peter went away, and the princess, with her eyes shining like stars, danced back into the room and said, "Oh, let's play mariners!"

Jessie and Jenny had never heard of such a game, but the princess told them that she was a ship on the high seas and that they were to tell from her cargo what country she hailed from.

"I carry tea," she began. "Where do I hail from?"

"China," guessed Jenny.

"No."

"Japan," cried Jessie, with her little face glowing.

"No."

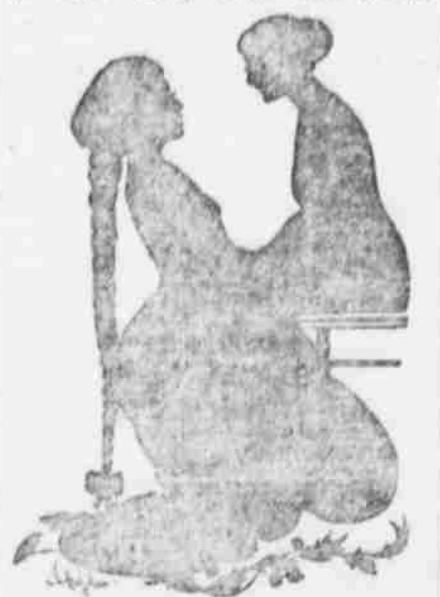
Then the little girls pondered. "It might be India," ventured Jenny, but the princess shook her head. Then Jessie cried, "It's Ceylon!" And that was right.

And after that Jessie brought a cargo of oranges from Florida and Jenny

yellow and a red and a blue fatzy book and a beautiful square basket of candy, tied with holly ribbon, and then from the very bottom of the trunk she drew a string of string of string—silver bells, fastened on red and pale green ribbons.

"I was going to get up a edition for the children at the other house," the princess explained to Peter, "but these little folks need it so much more."

The little bells went "tinkle, tinkle," as Peter hung them, and Jessie,



"YOU ARE THE LITTLE MOTHER," SAID THE PRINCESS.

dressing in her little bed, heard the sound and thought it a part of her dream.

And while Peter and the princess trimmed and whispered and laughed some one rattled the doorknob.

Peter opened the door, and there stood a white faced, shivering little woman.

"Oh, what has happened to my little girls?" she panted. "I saw the light, and it is so late. Then as she beheld the golden haired vision in pink and the gay tree and Peter in his trim livery she gasped. "Why, I believe it is fairies!" And she sat down very suddenly in Jessie's chair.

"You are the little mother," said the princess as she knelt beside her and put her arms around her and told her how she came to be there, and when she had finished she said simply, "And I have wanted my own mother so much this Christmas, and the little girls were so sweet that I knew I should love you."

"You poor little thing!" cried the little mother to the tall princess, and the beautiful lady put her head down on the other's shabby shoulder and wept, because in spite of her riches she had been very, very lonely in her big house.

And after Peter had gone they talked until midnight of Jessie and Jenny, and then they concocted great plans about the pretty things that the little mother was to make for the princess.

And in the morning Jessie and Jenny, waking in the early dawn, saw sitting on the footboard of the bed two Teddy bears, one with a flaring pink bow and one with a flaring blue bow, and the Teddy bears held out their arms saucily and gazed at the happy little girls with twinkling eyes.

"Oo-oh!" cried the little girls, who had never seen a Teddy bear before. And that was the beginning of the most wonderful day of their lives, for all day the tree went "tinkle, tinkle," as they foraged in its branches for bonbons. And the chicken dinner was a delicious success. And in the afternoon they all took a ride in the princess' sleigh, with Peter driving on the box, and when at last he set them down on their own humble doorstep and lifted Jessie in his arms the princess smiled at them radiantly from under her plumed hat.

"Remember, Peter will come for you every Saturday, and you are to stay at my house all day," she said.

"Oh, yes!" Jenny sighed, with rapture.

"And you are to come to my wed-

ding in the spring—all of you," said the princess gaily.

"And see the prince!" said Jessie over Peter's shoulder.

"And you are going to let me share a third of your mother?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" from both of the little girls.

"Then you shall share a third of Peter," the princess called back as the smiling coachman drove her away through the glistening snow.

The Present Said "Papa!"

In station K, in New York city, a young clerk who was sorting a sack of Christmas mail was amazed to see a package in the sack move. He carried the sack to the sorting table and dumped out the contents. Something suddenly exclaimed:

"Papa! Papa!"

The frightened clerk examined every package carefully. In the one that

moved he found a live kitten packed in a small bird cage. The kitten had a pink bow of ribbon at its neck, and attached to the ribbon was a card bearing the inscription:

"A Merry Christmas from Uncle Jack."

Further investigation brought forth the fact that the cry "Papa!" came from a doll with band curls that called "Papa!" each time it was squeezed. The clerk had frightened the kitten in one package and squashed the mechanical doll in the other package. He was much relieved when he had unraveled the double mystery.

Wipe It Again.

When in Spain he so cheap that it is used instead of water for mixing shoe blacking.

Identified Her.

A story of lovely woman's ability to rise superior to those petty details which so often impede, limit and nullify the operations of any more man is told of a Harrison woman who tried to have a check cashed at a bank where she was not known, says the Newark Call. The usual remarks were made by the cashier concerning the need of identification, to which the woman immediately replied: "Oh, well, I can always be identified by this mole on my cheek."

A Mistaken Cure.

"Jennie!" yelled the composer.

"Yes, dear," called back the gentle wife.

"Why in thunder don't you keep that kid quiet? What ails it?"

"I can't think, dear, I'm singing one of your ditties to the poor little darling"—Linnbom's.

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AFTER SUPPER THEY POPPED THE CORN.

the head of the table, and little lame Jessie said: "You were just sent to us for Christmas. Why, it's just like—the night before Christmas, when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there. The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads."

"But our stockings weren't hung yet, and we weren't in bed," said Jenny.

"It was too early for that," said the princess, "but let's go on with the rhyme, just for fun. I see you know it all through, so you mustn't mind my changing it a little:

"When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter Jenny sprang from her chair to see what was the matter. Away to the window she flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash. When what to her wondering eyes should appear But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer!

"Oh, no; I forgot! I mean—

"When what to her wondering eyes should appear But a carriage stuck in the mud right out here And a little old driver, so lively and quick You must have thought Peter was dear old St. Nick."

The children laughed gleefully, and Jenny said: "We would have thought that, only we aren't going to hang up our stockings this Christmas at all, Jessie and I aren't going to get any presents, for mother hasn't been well, and she couldn't get any sewing. But she said we could make our Christmas merry, and we were to pretend that we had been to the big stores in the city and had bought things for the tree and dolls and everything."

"That's a lovely way," said the princess gently, and she laid her hand, with its flashing rings, over Jessie's thin ones.

"And we are going to pretend," Jessie said, "that our chicken is turkey."

"Quietly, quietly, Peter," warned the princess.

But we won't have to pretend about the mince pie, for mother has made a lovely one."

"I wish I could help you eat the chicken," said the princess wistfully, "and I should like to meet your moth-



THERE STOOD A WHITE FACED, SHIVERING LITTLE WOMAN.

brought a cargo of rugs from Persia, and there were cargoes of spices and of coal and of coffee and of fish and of grain and of lumber, and the princess finished triumphantly by carrying a cargo of oysters from the Chesapeake bay.

"One more," begged Jessie.

"I carry a cargo of castles," said the sparkling princess. "Where do I hail from?"

The little girls guessed and guessed, and at last the princess said: "That wasn't a fair one, really, for my castles are castles in Spain."

Then, with her own castle building, and when she had finished she said, "And so your mother shall have all of my sewing, and that will keep her busy until spring."

"Oh, you are going to be married and live happy ever after!" sighed Jessie rapturously. "It's just what a fairy princess should do."

"And what you should do," said the princess, looking at the clock, "is to go to bed, bed, bed, so that you can wake up early in the morning."

She tucked them in and came back later in a fascinating pink kimono, with her hair in a thick yellow braid, and she kissed them both. But it was little lame Jessie that she kissed last. And then she went away like a glorious vision, and the little girls sank into slumber.

In the next room the princess opened the door cautiously, and there was Peter with snow all over him, and his arms were full of holly and mistletoe, and a great tree was propped against the doorpost.

"Quietly, quietly, Peter," warned the princess, and Peter tiptoed in and set the tree up in the corner, and its top reached to the ceiling.

The princess opened the steamer trunk and took out two white Teddy bears, one with a flaring pink bow and the other with a flaring blue one, and then she took out a green and a



THE PRINCESS SMILED AT THEM RADIANTLY BENEATH HER PLUMS.

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