

Some Christmas Stories for Big and Little

THE MISTLETOE MAID



THE Spirit of the Mistletoe
Her spell about the land throws wide,
And eyes are bright and cheeks aglow
Where stirs the pulse of Christmastide.

O gracious branch with berries pearled,
Yet as the winter, weeping, dies
The charm still masters Cupid, so
Where'er he looks in Psyche's eyes
The rhythmic sweetness of a kiss?

A CHRISTMAS A LA MODE.

IT was Rose Marie who, marking the day of my last visit on the calendar, made the discovery that I was to belong to father on Christmas day.

This may sound a bit confusing, for most little girls belong equally to their parents, but I, Willette Warrington, don't. Ever since I can remember mother has lived in our nice apartment in Central Park West, and father has lived down in the Fifties, just off the avenue. And I belong to mother year in and year out, excepting three days in each month, and for these three days I belong to father.

When Rose Marie made the discovery that my next visit to Fifty-something street would fall upon the 25th of December she was quite ready to cry her little black eyes out.

Father sent the brougham on the morning of the 24th.

"Billie, Billie, dear!" cried mother, clasping me tightly in her arms when she caught sight of the carriage which was to take me away.

"Don't you want me to go, mother?" I asked a little unsteadily.

"Want you to go?" she cried, then she hesitated and added, very calm and self-possessed: "Of course I always want you with me, Billie, dear, but then so does your father want you, and for the next three days you belong to him. So I want you to go."

"But now—and tomorrow Christmas day! Oh, mother, won't I see you tomorrow—won't I see you on Christmas day?" I cried, clinging fast to her pretty gown.

"I'm afraid not, sweetheart," she said gently.

"But I want you—I want you, mother, on Christmas day of all days in the year," I said.

"But don't you want your father, too, Billie, dear?" she asked. "Oh, I know you do—you must! So run along, dear little girl, run—quickly!"

She let me go and pushed me gently from her, and I knew by the smile in her big brown eyes that the tears were very near.

Father was waiting for me on the steps of the Cordova, and when he saw the brougham halt under the marquise and just one little girl step out his face went all aglow, and he picked me up and kissed me.

"Well, well, well! Where's Rose Marie?" he asked, and then I told him she had stopped at home.

I wish you could see father's rooms in the Cordova. They are ever so nice, with dark walls and gay rugs and big, substantial looking furniture. There's an open fireplace and a huge old settle with no end of red cushions in his den, and it is here we sit on an evening, side by side, and talk until bedtime.

After we had come up in the elevator to father's apartment he turned to me and asked me about the day's program.

"I'd like to go down to the shops after luncheon," I told him promptly.

"Good! Jolly! And suppose we go

down to one of the more quiet of the big hotels and lunch there," he said.

He always does think of the very nicest things! A big hotel downtown! After luncheon we entered our hansom again and were driven away to one of the big shops, where, as father put it, one can buy everything from a collar button to a steam launch. Rose Marie says men do not like shopping, but, then, Rose Marie doesn't know everything in the world, and father and I had a beautiful time. We bought all sorts of gifts for just everybody, and father didn't look while I selected his present, and I didn't look while he selected mine.

"Now," I said, as we came out of the department store, "I want to buy mother's gift."

"Why, of course," said father hurriedly. "What do you want? Where do you want to go? I'll tell the cabby."

"I haven't decided what to get," I said slowly. "What do you think? Can't you suggest something, father?"

He shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't, Billie," he told me quietly. "Get on."

"Oh, mother," I shouted, whatever you think your mother will like. I know she will appreciate it all the more if you select it yourself."

He put me in the hansom and, jumping in himself, told the man to drive slowly up the avenue. This would give me time to decide upon the present and where it should be purchased. I was wavering between a set of silver for her Antoinette desk and a pair of green emerald bars for her favorite dwarf places when our hansom was caught in a block.

Directly abreast of our hansom was another one, ours going north, our neighbor's coming south, and as I turned my head I looked straight into mother's eyes! She was the sole occupant of the south coming cab.

"Mother!" I shouted. "Oh, mother, mother!"

"Billie!" she cried. We had both seen each other together, just as we always see everything together.

"What is the trouble?" began father when he, too, turned his head and looked into mother's lovely eyes.

"How-de-do, Will?" she said softly. I saw father clench his hands tightly, then, "How-de-do, Nell?" he returned. "Awful block, isn't it?"

"Oh, very bad!" said mother, but she was looking at me sitting so proudly at father's side, and presently I caught the suspicion of a tear in her eyes. Directly a big lump came in my throat. I saw how it was. Mother was thinking of Christmas and of her little girl, and I was sorry, sorry for her and for father too. The surface cars banged their bells, the policemen shouted and the cabbies swore. And all the while our hansom was jammed tightly next to mother's, and we sat staring straight at each other and saying not a word.

Just then a policeman came up to mother's hansom and shouted to the cabby. It seemed that the left wheel of mother's hansom was locked in the right wheel of another carriage in such a way as to render it unsafe to pull out. The policeman, who of course knew nothing of our affairs, said:

"Step across into the hansom next to you, ma'am. Its wheels are safe, and I'm thinking the line will be moving north first."

Poor mother flushed cruelly and said not a word, but just sat there looking with pleading eyes at father. But father didn't move, and neither did he speak, so I took the situation in my two small hands and said:

"Father, won't you help mother into our cab?"

Directly I spoke to father he was all attention and politeness. He stood up and held out his hand to mother and carefully helped her across into our hansom. I believe mother would never have come only she knew that a great many persons had heard me and were watching us, and so she yielded gracefully, as mother alone can.

When she was in our cab and sitting down with me squeezed in between father and myself, she raised her eyes and said quietly:

"Thank you, Will."

A moment later the line started, slowly moving northward, and our hansom went with the others, father and mother and I were sitting side by side. It seemed so good just to think of it, although I knew it all came of an accident alone.

After we had gone two blocks uptown, father spoke—very quietly and with tightly pressed lips.

"I'll speak to the man and tell him to stop at the next corner. Then I'll get out and you and Billie can have the cab to yourselves."

"There is no need for you to get out, Will," mother told him quickly. "It is I who am the intruder. Have him stop, please, and I will find another hansom."

"I wouldn't have you do that for the world," he returned. "I shall leave you at the next corner; that is settled."

Mother put out her hand and let it rest lightly on father's arm.

"Will," she cried, "please don't make me feel worse than I already do. I was forced in your cab, by accident it is true, but nevertheless, I did allow you to help me enter it. But that was because—people were—watching us—and I thought—It best. Now that we are out of the tangle, I must thank you and ask you to set me down—at once! Else I shall never forgive you."

And they continued to talk, and the hansom continued on its way, and nobody but myself noticed that we had got well uptown and were within two blocks of the apartment building in Central Park West, where mother and I live.

So, quite unobserved, I spoke up the tube to the cabby, and said:

"The Strathmore, and quick, please!"

We turned down a cross street into another, and before one could say "Jack Robinson" we had stopped at the door of the Strathmore.

"Oh!" cried mother.

"What is this?" frowned father.

But he leaped out on the snow covered pavement and gave mother his hand. A moment later we all hurried up the steps and—stopped in the lobby!

"Thank you," said mother. "You are very kind."

Father laughed. "Oh, not at all," he told her. "This is not a case of being kind—exactly."

"Won't you come in—for a little—a cup of tea, perhaps?" asked mother slowly.

I don't know what father would have answered, so I took no chances. "Do come!" I cried, and looked at mother to further second my invitation.

"Yes, do," she said, without raising her eyes.

"Thanks, I will!" cried father, and we all went up in the elevator together. When we were safely in mother's pretty sitting room and I had securely locked the door, I slipped away and left them together. Somehow it seemed as if they would get along better with out me just then, and, besides, I think I had helped a lot as it was for a mere little girl, don't you?

An hour later—it seemed hours and hours later, although it really wasn't, of course—I went back and found mother in father's arms.

"Oh, won't we have a holy Christmas?" I cried joyfully. "Father and mother and I—what a lovely, lovely time we'll have together!"

"You can wait anything you own that we will," laughed father. "Why it will be a regular Christmas in a mode, eh, Nell?"

And then he kissed mother, and mother hid her happy face on his broad shoulder, and I was oh, so happy!

Merry Christmas, indeed!—W. Carey Wonders in Smart Set.

MR. MARDIFIELD'S CHRISTMAS GRANDSON.

"I WONDER who they are!" said old Mr. Mardifield.

He was standing at the window of the breakfast room, looking across the sunny street at an unpretending little cottage.

"Whom do you mean, uncle?" asked Clara Barton, who expected to be her granduncle's heiress.

"Why, those people across the way?" "Oh, common folks, I dare say. Nobody else would live in that house."

Old Mardifield came to the breakfast table. He sighed softly as he took the cup from Clara's jeweled hand.

"Uncle, dear, you are very silent," said Clara.

"I was only thinking, my dear," said the old gentleman apologetically.

"Only thinking?" Yes, his mind had gone back years along the dusty track of time, and he had been musingly pondering upon what the result would have been had he shaped his course differently in the days that were gone.

He had had a son once, of whom he had been proud and fond, and if—

"I would have done anything for him—anything," thought Mardifield, swallowing his coffee, "if he would only have been willing to consult my feelings a little. But when he married that western girl it was like drawing a gulf between us, and he knew it. But he's dead now, and even on his deathbed he was too proud to send for his old father."

These were the thoughts that were passing through old Mardifield's mind.

As the old gentleman was returning from a walk later in the cool sunshine a little fellow hanging over the gate accosted him eagerly.

"Sir, are you Santa Claus?" "Not that I know of. Why?"

"You are like the picture in my book," said the boy—"a fat old gentleman, with a long white beard and lots of parcels." And my mamma said Santa Claus wouldn't come to our

house 'cause we were so poor. And I want a stocking full of toys, like the other boys, and a new sled, and a pair of skates, and I thought if I saw Santa Claus I'd ask him."

Here a soft voice from the window called "Lionel! Lionel!" and the apparition slipped down from the gate and ran away.

"A cunning little rogue!" thought Mardifield. "Santa Claus, eh? An old gentleman with a long white beard—ha! ha! ha! And I might have had just such a chubby rascal of a grandson as that if only—I wonder if they would object to my adopting him! Santa Claus, eh? Well, I believe I will turn Santa Claus for once!"

The stars were shining out, tiny points of gold, through the darkness of the Christmas eve, when Mr. Mardifield knocked at the door of the little cream colored cottage.

"Come in!" a gentle voice called, and Mardifield, groping his way through a semilighted hallway, found himself in the presence of a sweet faced woman, in a pillowed chair, her fingers busied in some piece of knitting.

"Madam," said he, bowing courteously, "I am Santa Claus!"

And then he told her the story of how little Lionel had accosted him in the morning.

"You are very kind, sir," said the woman tremulously. "We are poor—so poor, in fact, that the bare necessities of life are sometimes beyond our reach—and little Lionel's dream of Santa Claus must have gone unrealized if it were not for your thoughtful consideration."

She smiled faintly, with a motion of her white transparent hand toward the chimney, but as Mr. Mardifield turned round to look he started as if smitten by some sudden blow.

"My God!" he gasped, "whose picture is that hanging over the mantel?"

"My husband's portrait, sir."

"Your husband's?" Then, and he turned once more to face her, "you are Charles's wife?"

"My husband's name was Charles Mardifield," she answered. Little Lionel, awakened by the loud voice in which the old gentleman had spoken, sat up in his bed, with disheveled curls and big eyes.

"Santa Claus, Santa Claus!" he cried. "Mamma, I knew he'd come!"

"My child," said Mr. Mardifield, lifting the little form in his arms, "Santa Claus has sent you a grandfather."

And, bein' that the parson was Pursuit of the wider's heart, He loved they had a righteous cause And promised he would do his part.

So when the Chris'mas doin's were The church was full as full could be, And all the gals but Lucy Kerr Got presents from the Chris'mas tree.

At last the parson, with a smile, Called Lucy's and Elnathan's names, And they went blushing up the aisle, Not knowin' of the women's aims.

"Take hold o' hands," the parson said, And, not suspectin' what it meant, Before they knowed it they were wed, Both havin' give their full consent.

Then all the congregation stood, While Widder Barton pitched the key, And ev'rybody sang that good Old hymn, "What Shall the Harvest Be?"

CHRISTMAS 100 YEARS AGO.

Apprehension Felt From British Navy In the War of 1812.

Six months of the war of 1812 had elapsed when the people of the United States celebrated Christmas a hundred years ago. Hull had surrendered Detroit, but another Hull had won a decided victory over the British ship Guerriere, while another ship, the United States, had captured the Macedonian. In New York a great Christmas banquet was given to Captain Isaac Hull, commanding the Constitution, "Old Ironsides," which had won the battle with the Guerriere, and to Captain Stephen Decatur, commander of the United States.

The banquet was given in the City hotel, which occupied the whole front of a block from Cedar to Thames streets, in the vicinity of Wall street. This was the last Christmas festival in New York till after the signing of the peace treaty, for in 1813 the city was plunged into black despair over the fear of the British navy and the distress that had been caused to our commerce and shipping.

Looked at from this distance, it seems little less than a miracle that the comparatively puny American navy should have whipped the navy of Great Britain, then the greatest in the world. The panic in which our chief seaport town was thrown by the fear of attack from the mistress of the seas is easily understood.

A STABLE served him for a dwelling, And for a bed a manger mean, Yet o'er his head, his advent telling, A new and wondrous star is seen. Angels rehearse to men the story, The joyful story of his birth. To him they raise the anthem, "Glorious To God on high and peace on earth!"

HER CHRISTMAS PRESENT BY WILLIS BROOKS

ELNATHAN TODD kept company with Lucy Kerr so ternal long

The women all declared that he Was doin' her a greesous wrong. They 'lowed he ought to let her know What his intentions really were, Or give somebody else a show To come a-shinin' up to her.

But always when Elnathan tried To pop the question—so I've heard— He'd stammer like his tongue was tied And choke all up, he was so skeered.

And Lucy, bein' bashful, too, Would set and tremble like a leaf, And havin' nothin' else to do Would gnaw her pocket han'kerchief.

At last the women folks agreed 'Twas time for them to take a hand, So, under Widder Barton's lead, They told the parson what they planned.

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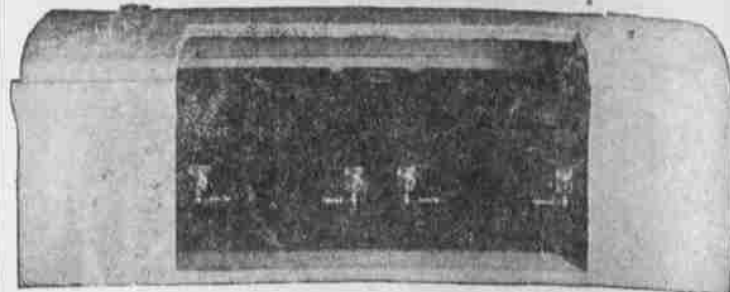
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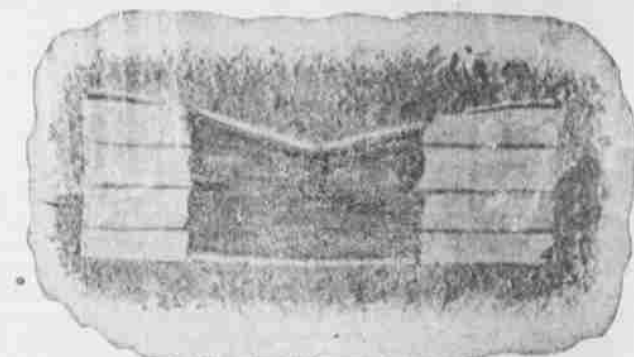


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