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Polly and the Mistletoe

By OLIVE HARPER.

"I believe I will," said Polly Adams to a ridiculous china doll that sat on the chimney staring fixedly before her.

It was nearly midnight, and the house was still. The Christmas tree stood all decorated and with the gifts hung upon it in the library, back of the parlor, and Polly had been sitting beside the fire in her pretty yellow elderdown pajamas. Pajamas were a fad that season among all her girl friends, and Polly always, as she said, "kept right along with the procession."

Polly was tired, for she had been busy all that day. They were not rich, and so much of the running, devolved upon Polly, and the three boys were home from school, and they had two visitors to remain till New Year's. One of them was Archie—it is enough to call him just "Archie." So, while Polly braided the heavy mass of rich brown hair into one long loose plait, she glanced at the mistletoe and then at the sphinxlike face of the Chinese doll as she said:

"Now, Mrs. Li Hung Chang, what shall I do? Archie loves me. I know it from a dozen—yes, a thousand—



HE WRAPPED THE SHRINKING LITTLE FIGURE IN HIS FOLDS.

things, but he is so shy and timid. Minnie Blake is engaged, and so would I be it only Archie had me courage or a chipmunk," she hastily added as she thought of her bare feet and possible mice. "Now, if I could hang this mistletoe to the chandelier tonight in the excitement of seeing our gifts I could manage—I know I could—to get him under it beside me, and the boys would do the rest, and then—well, the ice would be broken. I will if you say so. Why don't you speak?"

Saying this, the dainty little beauty stamped her foot, now in its slipper, which jarred the room ever so slightly, and the doll did nod its head. Polly laughed, half startled, but with new courage. She took the night light in one hand and the bunch of mistletoe in the other, with its grapping wires, and strolled downstairs to the library door and on into the parlor, not noticing that the library door had shut to with the spring lock.

Polly did not wish to awaken any member of the family, so she did not switch on the lights. Her own tiny light but made the darkness visible. It

wfs rearsons down here all alone in the dark, so she hurried and pushed the side table over into the middle of the room under the chandelier, with the mistletoe on it, and then brought a delicate, long legged, gold patined chair, on which she climbed timidly, listening all the while for a sound.

The chandelier was high and Polly not tall, so do her best, standing on her tiptoes, she could not reach the fixture. "I must get up on the table," she said to herself, "and I hope I'll not fall and break my neck and rouse the house."

Just as this very courageous little maiden stepped to the table with one foot, while the other was still resting on the insecure chair, there was the sound of a latchkey in the front door and then a blast of wintry wind and two voices in the hall. They were those of her oldest and most unbearable brother Fred, and the other voice belonged to Archie Steadman. It was too much for Polly. It would be awful if Fred discovered her.

She tried to step down from her insecure perch, but the treacherous ornamental chair tilted, and Polly came down suddenly, striking her head against the table. She was too frightened to feel the hurt, for the noise was great enough to startle Fred into saying: "What's that? Burglars, I'll bet. Come on, Arch."

Saying that, Fred bounded forward and switched on the light and, seizing a heavy cane from the hatrack, sprang into the parlor. But Polly had managed to get on her feet and was scampering to the library door, dropping one of her slippers as she went and leaving the lamp behind her; but try as she might, she could not open the library door, and stood there pining with a strength born of desperation, while Fred said: "Burglars! Here's the light. They're after the gifts on the tree. Come on!"

With his cane swinging like an Indian club, Fred sprang into the library, while Archie, with his umbrella, followed, and both advanced upon the burglars. They could hear the rattling of the doorknob, and Fred shouted: "You may as well give up. You're caught!"

And then the library was also flooded with light, which was reflected from a thousand gilded ornaments on the tree, and by the illumination Fred and Archie saw the miserable little figure in yellow pajamas, huddled up like a cold duckling, with one bare foot and with its head down, in the corner of the door frame as though trying to hide.

From her baby days Polly had had a queer habit of hopping from one foot to the other without moving from her place when frightened or angry. Now one slipped little foot and one pink bare one kept up the familiar hopping movement. Fred looked at the culprit a moment and then sprang forward and, seizing one shoulder and the long braid of hair, turned her around to the light, while the miserable girl covered her face with her hands. Fred laughed loud and long, saying: "Well, I'll be jiggered if it isn't Polly!"

Archie said nothing and was trying to pretend that he did not know anything at all until he saw the tears streaming through the fingers, and then he said hotly:

"Fred, I am ashamed of you. You are not treating your sister right at all. Here, Pol—I mean Miss Adams," continued he, at the same time jerking the big maroon cover from the old fashioned square piano, to the instant destruction of two plaster ornaments. "Here, Miss Pol—Adams."

Saying this with a lordly air, he wrapped the shrinking little figure in its beneficent folds, while her heartless brother lay on the carpet in convulsions of laughter. She sobbed out: "I—I—forgot—something—and that is why!"

"Ah, boah! You just wanted to see if Archie had put a present on the tree for you."

"Oh, Fred, don't!" she cried, while tears trickled down her hands. "Mr. Adams, I consider your treatment of your sister very harsh—very cruel."

"Well, I suppose she can't help being a little fool," continued Fred, laughing still.

"Sir, another such remark concerning this ang—ah, your sister—under the circumstances will sever our friendship. Pol—Miss Polly, I have your present here. I was going to give it to you tomorrow, but under the present circumstances I shall ask if you will accept it now and here, as with it you will have a protector."

With a malevolent look at Fred, Archie fumbled in all his pockets until he found a small box. Then he reached for one of Polly's wet little hands. Archie looked very imposing to Polly, and little by little her sobs ceased, and by the time he had opened the box she could see through her dimmed eyes that he had a superb solitaire ring for her—one to make the heart of any girl proud, and one in keeping with his wealth. So she even smiled a little as Archie, with one last look of defiance at Fred, placed the sparkling ring on the proper finger and then folded her in his arms proudly and with a look of ineffable happiness, though Polly did look something like a noble squaw.

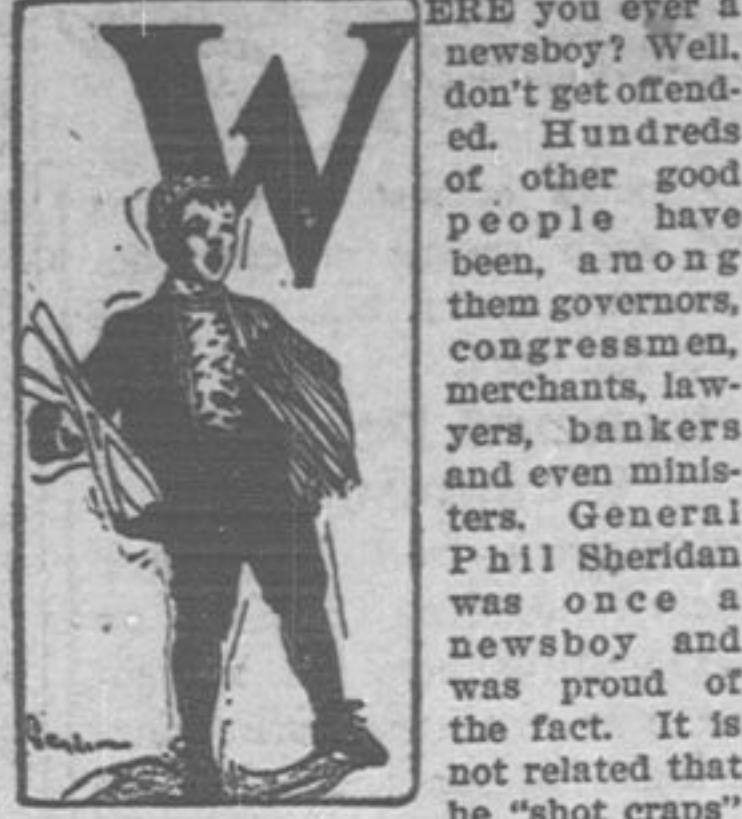
A Santa Claus Party. As the once popular "donkey party" no longer holds forth for novelty, here is something new—a Santa Claus party. Take an old sheet and paint or draw on it a Santa Claus. Have a number of color caps cut from medium weight water color paper and distributed among the guests. Taking turns, let each one be blindfolded and, walking toward the sheet, try to place the cap on Santa's head. The person succeeding in this winner and receives the prize of a toy Santa Claus. The two who also come the nearest might be given prizes of reindeers.—Bee Hive.

Australian Elections. London, Dec. 14.—According to the Chronicle, the constitution of the new Australian Parliament, on present figures, is: Labor, 25 seats; Reildites, 20; Liberal Protectionists, 18; Conservative Protectionists, 12. The new Senate will probably contain 16 Laborites.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE NEWSBOYS

By J. A. EDGERTON

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"DIXTRY"

There are about 180 boys in the home at one time. Only those are lodged that have no homes of their own. One of the things that make the place attractive to the lads is the gymnasium. Here are all the usual athletic paraphernalia, bars, clubs and the like. The sport that is liked best by the gamins, however, is boxing. Those who don the gloves have to carry out the game according to rules, as the idea of a "square deal" in sport is quite well developed among these small Americans. It would be imagined that they have enough fighting on the streets without resorting to prize fights, but their life is such a struggle that it develops that side of their nature to the full.

The event of the year at the home, however, is the Christmas dinner. The boys themselves assist in preparing this feast. In leisure hours they pare potatoes, turnips, onions and what not, help get the other vegetables ready and generally make themselves useful. They regard it as their affair and therefore take a pride in performing what otherwise would be trifling tasks. They enter into these duties with the same spirit that they would display at a game of craps or a fight.

There are about 600 urchins fed in the home each Christmas, and it is safe to say that no feast in the land is more enjoyed. Table etiquette may not be highly developed, knives, forks and spoons may not be used in just the proper ways, fingers being more frequently employed, and it is barely possible that the boys "swipe" what they cannot eat, but at any rate they are enthusiastic. They may reach for everything in sight, eat the pie first, grab joints of turkey in both hands, throw bones at the small diners across the room and use their well developed lungs in a manner that starts the bolts in the steel framework of the building, but all these little idiosyncrasies only indicate that they are having the time of their lives. It is related that on one occasion a large and succulent pie was placed before each gamin and that in about two minutes most of those pies had disappeared. When a "cop" present made a strenuous talk about pastry, the pies were pulled out from under tattered coats, where they had been stowed for future emergencies. The hard life of the street does not tend to bring out a very fine sense of "meum et tuum" and the divine right of property. In fact, it must be admitted that many of the boys will steal on occasion, but, considering the life they lead, who can wonder? There is no objection to the lads filling their not too clean pockets with the remains of the feast, however, and they religiously avail themselves of this privilege. It is a point of etiquette for an Indian guest to carry away what he cannot devour, and these little chaps are the Indians of the streets.



THE EVENT OF THE YEAR IS THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

degrees of dirtiness. Some of them have no nationality or size to speak of, but they are all dirty. That is one of the sacred privileges of boyhood.

Some of the deeper shades of dirt have faded off the hands and faces of the lads in the Newsboys' home situated near Newspaper row in New York. The gamins who lodge there are required to wash occasionally, and to take a bath once a week. Somehow the little chaps rather like the shower experience. Maybe it is the shower bath that reconciles them. And then they have a chance to douse each other and do athletic stunts. The average boy has no objection to water as such provided he can get his whole body in it. He will even run off and take the chance of a licking to go swimming. It is the application of water to his hands and face that galls his proud spirit.

There are various newsboys' homes in the larger cities of the country, but it is believed that the New York institution is the parent one. It has been in existence something over half a century. It has reclaimed numberless waifs, returned runaway lads to their parents, besides furnishing a home for regiments of boys that had no other shelter. Men, and of a good, no other shelter. Men, and of a good, no other shelter. Men, and of a good, no other shelter.

Christmas Post Cards. The favorite Christmas post cards have very little room for writing. The entire back of the card is covered with a "Madonna and Child" by Murillo, Raphael, or, to come to more modern times, Gabriel Max or Bouguereau. The coloring is most artistic, and these cards are quite worth framing as little works of art. Some of these Madonnas—for instance, the Raphael "Madonna of the Chair"—are framed in a wreath of glowing holly, which contrasts vividly with the colors in the Roman scarf slung over the back of the chair. Other subjects are to be had in these truly artistic post cards, notably portraits of fair women by Romney and Lely, Reynolds and Gainsborough, Greuze and Le Brun.—New York Globe.

Shah Surely Dying. Teheran, Dec. 14.—The condition of the Shah became worse yesterday. He lost consciousness at an early hour, and at 7.30 p.m. was still unconscious.

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BOXING IN THE GYMNASIUM.

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