THE CHILDREN'S DAY

By Grace Sartwell Mason

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IT was not yet entirely light on Christmas morning when Miss Everett was awakened by the first clarion call of the little Budweisers. From the Budweiser flat above her there came the shrill note of a tin trombone which ushered in a sudden joyous activity. Bare feet pattered and thumped overhead, and amid these sounds Miss Everett was aware of signs of an early awakening in the apartment next to hers.

"Christmas has become a nuisance in this house," said Miss Everett to herself; "there are too many children. The Morrisons will be at it in a minute; I may as well get up."

She dressed with her usual methodical daintiness. There was no reason why she should hurry; she felt there was very little in the whole day ahead to distinguish it for her from any other holiday or Sunday in the year.

"I shall have a peaceful, sane Christmas day," she told herself.

The maid who put her rooms to rights and made her morning coffee drew a round breakfast table in front of the freshly kindled fire in Miss Everett's charming sitting room and laid covers for two. Some one knocked at the door and Miss Everett opened it to a small woman with youthful eyes and a quantity of nut brown hair which she had evidently not yet had time to arrange.

"Wouldn't you like to see our tree?" she said to Miss Everett, eagerly. "We always have it just after breakfast, you know. The kiddies are in the dining room now, so you can have a peep."

Miss Everett inspected the tree, then she looked keenly at the other woman. "You look fagged out," she said, severely. "I heard you last night working till midnight. Why do you do it? Do you think it's worth while, really?"

The mother of the little Morrisons dropped into the nearest chair. Her youthful eyes in her small, careworn face glowed with an inextinguishable optimism.

"Why, of course it's worth while!" she cried. "The children have always had a tree on Christmas morning, and they do love it so! What would Christmas be for me if I couldn't make them happy? I always think of it as the children's day, you see."

Miss Everett went back to her empty, peaceful rooms. Up stairs the little Budweisers rollicked wildly, and next door she could hear the small Morrisons pushing back their chairs from the breakfast table. Her sitting room was like a little island of quiet surrounded by a noisy tide of gayety. Some one struck a chord on the piano next door and Miss Everett winced.

"If only they wouldn't sing!" she thought, but immediately there pervaded the room the shrill, sweet sound of children's voices. She could imagine them—all the little Morrisons—marching with shining eyes into their mother's sitting room, and she could hear them singing as they marched:—

"Hark, the herald angels sing
Glory to the new born King!"

There came into her mind the remembrance of Mrs. Morrison's youthful eyes and her voice as she said, "I always think of it as the children's day."

"Yes," said Miss Everett slowly, "it is the children's day.

And then, suddenly, she laid her head down upon her empty arms.

John Hearn knocked twice before she heard him, but when she opened the door to him she was as serenely self-contained as ever.

"You've kept the coffee waiting," she smiled. "Let me see, how many Christmas mornings have you been late for breakfast with me, John?"

"Seven," he replied; "I counted 'em up this morning. It's a blessed institution, Ernestine, this standing invitation to breakfast with you on Christmas morning. This year it saved me from having to choose between Aunt Sallie and the Kents. I don't know why I declined the Kents. Christmas isn't what it used to be; have you noticed that, my dear?"

She laughed as she poured his coffee. "We're getting old," she said lightly.

He looked at her across the table. Ernestine was very good looking in a distinguished and intellectual way. She was thirty-five and she looked less. "No," he said, "it isn't that."

A shade of defiance crept into her eyes. "What is it, then?"

But he did not answer immediately. He walked about the room, coming finally to a stand in front of her writing table. It was piled high with manuscript and proof sheets. "After all," he continued, abruptly, "what's it all worth? You're a successful woman and I'm a supposedly successful man; but on Christmas morning we're both alone. You've sent your annual letter to Aunt Marie at the other side of the world, and I've dutifully got off a list of presents that grows shorter every year. Presently I'll go down to the club to an infernally dismal lunch; then the papers and a book, a suicidal dinner and the theatre—unless you'll take pity and go out to dinner with me, Ernestine?—and then a lonesome pipe to end up a lonesome day. That isn't Christmas; it ought to mean something and it doesn't. It's"—— he stopped, listening, for the little Morrisons had begun to sing again, a hymn beloved of all children:—

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old;
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their hearts of gold."

John Hearn opened the door into the hall of Ernestine's flat and the shrill young voices swelled louder.

"That's better," he said eagerly. "Don't you like that, Ernestine?"

She had risen and stood at the window with her back to him. With the first line of the old hymn an unusual, painful flood of loneliness threatened to engulf her again. She clenched her hands. Not for anything would she have him see that the sound of children's voices could make her weep.

"They get noisier every year!" she said harshly. "I've lived here eight years and I like these rooms, but I am really afraid I shall have to give them up. They're filling up the place with children—just listen to those Budweisers!"

Papa Budweiser was joyously singing, "Wei schön leuchtet der Morgenstern!" and the six little Budweisers were joining in.

"I like it," said John Hearn. There was a hungry look in his eyes, but Ernestine did not see it. She was looking at a copy of "Soul's Adventures" he had brought her.

"What a nice edition," she said, forcing a lighter tone into her voice. "What's this other package?"

John started as she held up a heavy parcel. "Oh, by Jove! I clean forgot Hanford! That's a box of cigars for the old chap. You don't know Hanford? He travels for a Chicago firm—a nice, decent, middle aged chap, who's had horrible luck lately. I used to go to see him and his wife, sometimes, when I was out their way. They were the happiest couple you ever saw—it used to do me good to see them together. Well, she died last month. Last night about eleven I met Hanford on the street. We both tried to talk cheerfully about the weather and the state of the streets, but, I tell you, Ernestine, something gripped me by the throat. If you ever saw a man that's struggling to keep his head above water, that's Hanford. I went back to his hotel with him, for—here's the worst of it—he's got three motherless children on his hands and he's brought them down here to New York for Christmas. Can you imagine it—Christmas in the kind of dingy, second class hotel Hanford can afford?"

Ernestine's eyes widened. "That's like a man!" she cried. "Why didn't he leave them at home?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I suspect is the reason. I think Hanford's afraid of himself. He's never been a drinking man, but last night there was something about him that made me suspect maybe he'd gone under after his wife's death. He gave me the impression of a man who's fighting. Do you know what I mean? Oh, he's all right, now; but I sort of think the children are a safeguard. He told me they were living in a boarding house, anyway, and they cried to be with him for Christmas. So they're here. They'd gone to bed last night when we got back to the hotel, but they had hung up their stockings—three of 'em tied to the backs of chairs—and the littlest one is only about two fingers long! Hanford had bought a few things to put in them, but I didn't like the quality or the quantity of his assortment. Now, I thought maybe you could tell me where a fellow can get some toys and things this morning. I don't know where to start in"——

He stopped with an embarrassed laugh, for there was a shiny look in his listener's eyes as if the tears were near the surface.

"Why, I—I don't know," she said. "I haven't bought any toys for years, and I don't believe the shops are open this morning anyway. I wouldn't have the slightest idea where to look."

John Hearn stared. "I thought all women knew about such things," he said, disapprovingly. "Well, I'll have to make a break by myself"——

"Wait!" she exclaimed. "I'm going with you. I can see that you're perfectly helpless. I'm going to put on my street things."

From the next room she called out to him to know how old the children were. There was a note of excitement in her voice he had rarely heard there, and when she came back, hatted and furred, she brought in one hand a great bow of rose pink ribbon and in the other a cluster of Chinese dolls and a book.

"The ribbon is for the eight-year-old girl," she explained, "the pirate book (lucky it just came in for review) is for the big brother, and these favor things are for the littlest one. These will do to go on with. We'll go right down to the hotel and survey the land; then we can plan about the rest when we find how things are going."

John Hearn observed with satisfaction that Ernestine had taken things entirely in her own hands. "We'll take a cab," she said. "Something tells me we ought to get there quickly."

In the corridor on the fourth floor of a melancholy family hotel they met Hanford. He was making for the elevator, and there was an air of flight about him. When he saw John Hearn and his companion he turned his back to the light with a wordless gasp of surprise.

"I was just going out for a—paper," he said. "The children are in there." He waved an arm toward a closed door. And then, as if the gesture had lost him his self-control, he suddenly dropped his head in his hands and leaned against the wall. Ernestine had never seen anything so grotesquely tragic as the sight of this stout, middle aged, unshaven man sobbing against the wall. Stranger as he was, and in spite of her fastidious distaste for a scene, she found herself putting her hand on his arm and asking him to tell her his trouble.

"It's the children," he returned between two sobs that tore his throat. "Little one's sick this morning—he cried for his—mother; so did the others. I can't stand it any longer—got to the end of my rope"——

"No, no; you haven't," she said, gently. "I've come to take you and the children home with me for the day. Come, take me to them—or, no—stay here with John a few minutes and I'll go to the children."

He lifted his haggard face out of his hands and watched her as she opened the door he had indicated. Then he mopped at his swollen eyes with his handkerchief.

"John, she doesn't know what she's saved me from," he said.

In one of two adjoining bedrooms Ernestine found the children. There was a tumbled bed in one corner, and on it lay a yellow haired little chap of five. His face was feverish and puffed with weeping. Sitting beside him tailor fashion on the bed was the eight-year-old girl, and kneeling on the floor at the other side of the bed was the oldest boy. They had emptied the contents of their stockings on to the bed in a vain attempt to divert their sorrowful little brother, but his interest was plainly not aroused to any extent by the scant array of cheap toys around him. As Ernestine walked in they stared at her half frightened, and she noticed that the three pairs of big eyes were red-rimmed.

"Merry Christmas!" she cried. "I'm a new kind of Santa Claus. I just met your father in the hall and he told me about you three. I've only got a few things left—but here they are! Do you mind if I sit down on the bed, too?"

For an instant the three stared dubiously. But no one could resist Ernestine when she set out to make herself liked. The oldest boy accepted the Santa Claus story with the sheepish smile of the fellow who knows better, but the yellow haired little chap was plainly fascinated. It was not more than two minutes before he had drawn himself perceptibly nearer to watch the opening of Ernestine's shopping bag; and when he beheld the Chinese dolls he openly kicked off the coverlet and crowded quite up to her shoulder.

"Did you come down the chimbley?" he whispered.

His head was very close to her shoulder, and his wide, upturned eyes were marvellously blue. Before she realized it Ernestine's arm had crept around him. His little body snuggling close to her sent a new sort of thrill through her heart. Five minutes later she was holding him in both her arms when John Hearn brought in the children's father. She reddened a little as she met her friend's eyes, but she did not release her hold on the littlest one.

"We're acquainted, you see!" she cried, gayly. "Help me to get the children's things on, you two men; we're going straight up to my house. We're going to have a Christmas dinner—and a Christmas tree!" she added, recklessly.

She saw the father's anxious eye on the small Dickie, and she took him aside quietly. "I think the trouble with the little chap is only home sickness," she said. "He mustn't get to crying again; he's got to be coddled. You leave it all to me."

In the carriage on the way back up town John Hearn could not keep his eyes from Ernestine's face. He had never seen there before a look so humanly tender. She held Dickie Hanford in her lap, for the littlest one had become convinced that the strange lady was the source of wonderful and pleasant things and not to be allowed to get away from him. He leaned his small, pale face against her furs, and it was impossible to tell which of them appeared the happier.

"Which do you think looks nicer on a Christmas tree, red candles or green ones?" she asked the children, and the last trace of home sickness and shyness vanished from their faces. By the time they reached Ernestine's flat they had attained a state of happy anticipation, and even Hanford's face looked less haggard.

"I'm afraid we're putting you out a good deal, Miss Everett," he said as he looked around her sitting room. The maid had cleared away the breakfast things and freshened the fire; the room was full of an atmosphere which struck straight at the heart of the homeless man.

Ernestine shook her head. "You've given me something to do," she said, "and that's what I needed. All take off your things and make yourselves at home. I'm going up stairs to tell the little Budweisers to call on you presently, and the Morrisons will show you their tree, and in the meantime I'll go out and make a few arrangements with Santa Claus."

It was all very well to be gay before the children, but when she had had a short conference with Mrs. Morrison she called John Hearn out into the hall.

"John," she said desperately, "Mrs. Morrison says she doesn't believe we can find a single toy and much less a tree in this blessed town to-day. What shall we do? We're going to have a tree if we have to go where they grow and chop one down—and something to put on it, too! Mrs. Morrison says we might find some little shop open in Harlem, so I've told Rita to give them a little luncheon about noon, for heaven knows when I shall get back!"

"I'll go, too," said John.

"Of course! Do you think I'm going alone on such a wild adventure? Have you plenty of money with you? For I'm going to have a tree if I have to hire a private detective to locate one!"

He reassured her on that point. He was light hearted enough to assume any responsibility. Every time he looked at Ernestine he felt as if he discovered some charming new aspect of a book he had often read and which had often disappointed him. She had become tenderly human, in the sort of way he had always felt she might if one touched the right chord in her nature. He himself had never touched it—indeed, of late he had almost despaired of Ernestine.

"How fast you walk!" he laughed. "I feel as if I ought to ask forgiveness for dragging you into this, spoiling your peaceful day, you know."

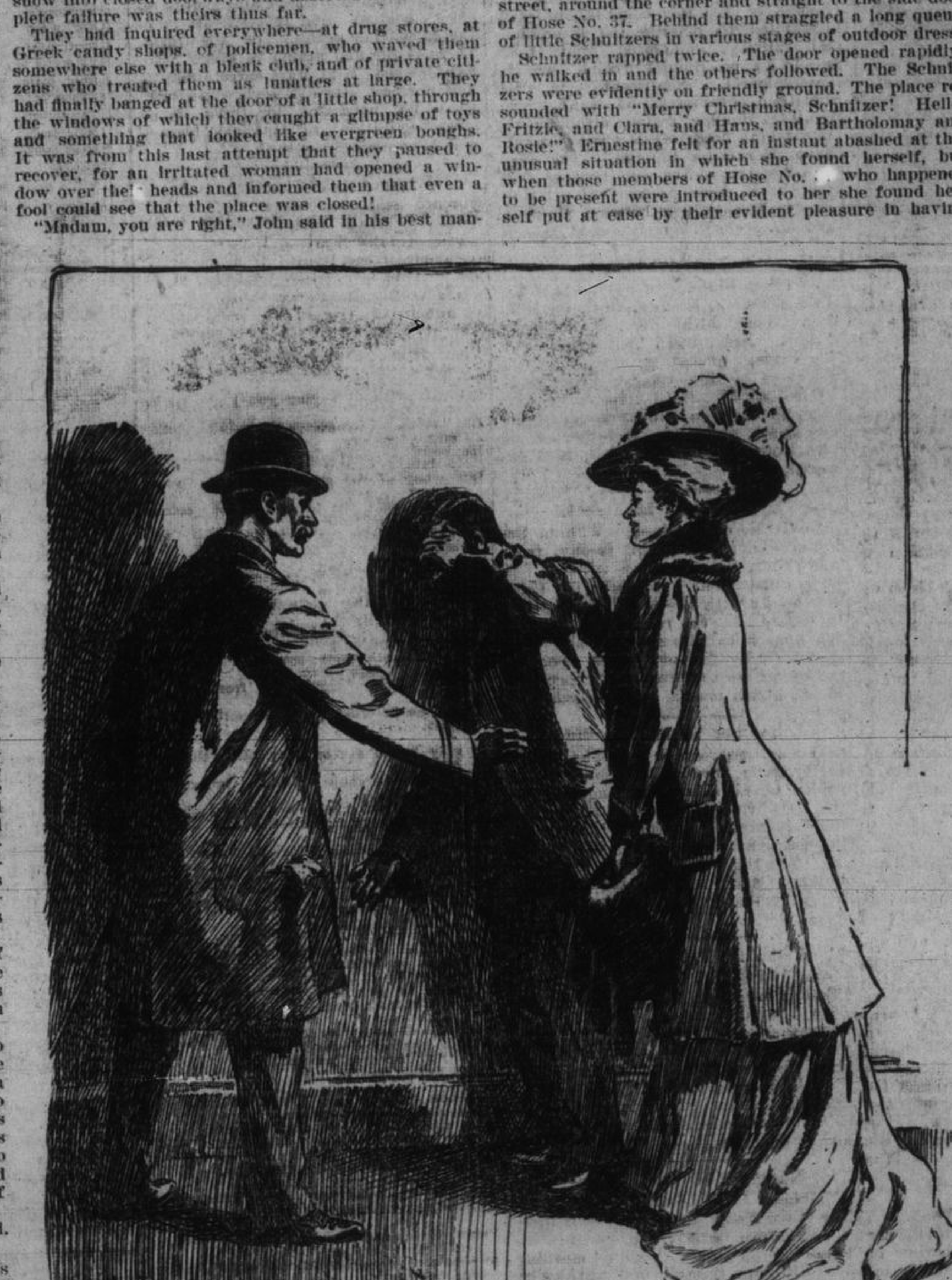
"My peaceful day!" she repeated scornfully. "Too peaceful, too empty, too abominably selfish! Don't waste your breath in talking—we'll have to run if we catch this car."

They caught the car, but, stranded high and dry in Harlem, they looked at each other helplessly. As far as they could see the streets of Harlem were as the streets of their own neighborhood, heartlessly engaged in having a good time behind closed doors.

But they started forth blithely into the unknown. At that stage of the quest hope beat high and all kinds of good luck seemed possible. An hour and a half later they stopped at the corner of a street where a nipping wind played lonesomely, piling the snow into closed doorways and deserted areas. Complete failure was theirs thus far.

They had inquired everywhere—at drug stores, at Greek candy shops, of policemen, who waved them somewhere else with a bleak club, and of private citizens who treated them as lunatics at large. They had finally banged at the door of a little shop, through the windows of which they caught a glimpse of toys and something that looked like evergreen boughs. It was from this last attempt that they paused to recover, for an irritated woman had opened a window over their heads and informed them that even a fool could see that the place was closed!

"Madam, you are right," John said in his best manner, "but can you tell us where we can find a Christmas tree?"



"I can't stand it any longer—
Got to the end of my rope."
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The woman stared as if her worst suspicions were confirmed. "Naw!" she said. "Anybody but a batty swell would 'a known enough to uv bought a tree yisterday!"

"She is perfectly right," mourned Ernestine, huddling in her furs. "I deny the implication that I'm a swell, but I agree that I'm quite incompetent."

"You're cold," said John, looking at her anxiously. "Your nose is quite blue. It's lunch time and after; you ought to have something to eat. Let me take you back home"——

But at this she turned upon him. "John Hearn, I shall go back with that tree or upon it! I promised those poor little things a tree and they shall have it! Let's try that street. You never can tell what is just around the corner."

A fine snow, like powdered ice, was beginning to come down. They tramped onward, doggedly, two, blocks, three, five—and then the glow of a gorgeous fire arrested their steps. It came from a fat and jovial coal stove and it lighted up the fifteen feet square of a shining little German saloon. The room was empty, but holly branches and ropes of evergreen were on the walls and there was an old fashioned air of Christmas cheer about the place.

"Shall we?" they said to each other, and the next minute found themselves in the ladies' parlor, confronting the proprietor, who resembled his own coal stove in that he was perfectly round and shone with the ruddy light of friendliness and good living. When he learned that the lady was cold and hungry he became hospitality incarnate.

"This room iss too coldt," he declared. "You must into the other room come."

As he led the way to the family sitting room at the rear he was obliged to shoo before him children of all ages and both sexes. They blossomed out from unexpected doors and corners, and each child had the round, glowing face of its father.

"Christmas hasn't missed them here," said Ernestine, with a sigh, for every child they had seen hugged some treasure to its breast and the little room they were in glittered with tinsel and colored paper decorations.

"I believe that fat little German can help us!" said Ernestine suddenly. "When he comes back with the coffee I am going to tell him our story."

A little attention to the children, who stared in shyly from the doorway, a word of praise for the coffee, and the sympathy of her audience was won. Ernestine told the story of their quest for a Christmas tree, and, moved by some homely feeling in her listener's face, she added a hint of the three motherless children. A sentimental dew gathered in the eyes of the little German. He rushed out and brought in his wife, three times his size, but infinitely motherly. The story was retold. By this time the entire Schnitzer family was in the room, and when Ernestine finished she knew that the responsibility of their search was shifted to other and more capable shoulders.

"Will you be quiet, you children?" the father of the family cried. "Now, von at a time, soh! Fritzie, vere did you Christmas drees see yesterday? Betterman's? Ach, yes; but Betterman's at ten o'clock closed. Vat you say, Clara? The Front street market? Ach, nein; they sold the last one! And there is Hermann's place, but he is long ago gone home; and Freddie Heinz, he had four for sale on the curb yesterday. The Janowskis bought one and the vidow next door bought von—for vy I cannod see—and"——

"Star Hose No. 37!" all the children cried at once.

Papa Schnitzer leaped to his feet. "Ach, soh! Dose hose fellers bought Freddie Heinz's best dree!"

He put his hand to his head with an effect of impassioned thought, and then he cried:—"For vy should dey a Christmas dree haf? Dwenty men and not one schild! It is a dree wasted. Not?"

Ernestine felt rather bewildered, but presently under his flow of Teutonic American she perceived dimly a purpose forming. Suddenly the little German dived into a dark clothes press, from which he emerged with a fur cap on his head and an overcoat in his hand. Immediately every child in the room began to clamor and dance, and before Ernestine realized what was happening heels were waving from this cupboard and outer garments began to fly out into the room.

"Are all those kids going, Gus?" asked Mrs. Schnitzer.

"How can I help it?" replied her man, gazing at the tangle of arm sand legs fighting for overcoats and rubbers behind the closet door.

"Come with me!" he cried to his guests, and speechless they found themselves swept into the street, around the corner and straight to the side door of Hose No. 37. Behind them straggled a long queue of little Schnitzers in various stages of outdoor dress.

Schnitzer rapped twice. The door opened rapidly; he walked in and the others followed. The Schnitzers were evidently on friendly ground. The place resounded with "Merry Christmas, Schnitzer! Hello, Fritzie, and Clara, and Hans, and Bartholomay and Rosie!" Ernestine felt for an instant abashed at this unusual situation in which she found herself, but when those members of Hose No. [illegible] who happened to be present were introduced to her she found herself put at ease by their evident pleasure in having company.

"I vant to make a speech!" declared Schnitzer at once. And he took the centre of the floor. Ernestine never forgot what followed. Not for nothing had Schnitzer gained a reputation as orator of the ward. He told the story of the search for a Christmas tree and of Hanford's motherless children in a manner that was nothing less than inspired. He was only a fat, beer selling, sentimental little German, but as she listened to him and watched the dawning sympathy in the faces of his audience there came to Ernestine the reflection that here at last was reality. She felt all at once more akin to the world—a new sense of life, warm, homely and sincere, possessed her.

Schnitzer worked up to his climax with a true oratorical cunning. He had pictured the three children, without a mother and without a spark of Christmas cheer, and then he turned upon his listeners.

"And here we haf dwendy men and not one schild. But haf we a dree? Ach—soh, yes! Dings in dis world are not right! Vat do you with dis dree? You look at it vonce, and into the street with it! And dose dree liddle children I told you of—ask of yourselfs, iss it right? Mein frients, vat do you now with dat dree? Gif you it to those children—no? Or yes!"

The response came without an instant's hesitation. Grinning shamefacedly as does the American man when he gives way to sentiment, the members of Hose No. 37 as one man presented their tree to Ernestine. Just as it stood, with candles ready to light, gorgeous in ropes of tinsel, with thirty-seven silver stars affixed to it, with cunning little helmets tied among the branches and glittering hoar frost transforming it into a fairy tree, they handed it over.

"But—but"— stammered Ernestine, blushing with pleasure, "we can't take your lovely tree! It wouldn't be right"——

"Why, say, lady," their spokesman cried, growing red himself, "what's the use of a lot of old fellows like us having a tree? Christmas is for the kids—I know, for I've got a bunch at home! You take the tree and make the kids happy—see?"

Fifteen minutes later the noble tree was being tenderly loaded onto a wagon belonging to the Fire Department and Micky Doyle had been told off to convey the gift to Ernestine's house. All this was by order of the chief himself, who had entered quietly at the end of Schnitzer's speech. If they had had a magic lamp to rub things could not have fallen out better. They had even found a small shop near by the mistress of which knew the Schnitzers. John Hearn, conveyed by the children, had been let in and had bought a basketful of things under their competent direction.

Ernestine was beaming. She shook hands all round with the members of Hose No. 37, and then she announced her determination to ride home beside Micky Doyle.

John Hearn started to protest, but the happiness in her face stopped him. He was not going to do anything that might mar the completeness of her rejuvenation; he would ride with Micky Doyle, too. Amidst a great deal of laughter and the drollest remarks from their friend Schnitzer they mounted the high seat beside the driver, where they sat embowered in Christmas tree branches, and waved their grateful farewells to the members of Hose No. 37.

Hearn thought Ernestine might prefer to walk before they got into her own neighborhood, but she was thinking only of the children.

"I hope they'll be looking out," she said; and they were. Their three faces were pressed close to the window, wistfully and rather soberly, until they caught sight of the Fire Department wagon and its load. Then their eyes popped out as if a fairy tale had suddenly come true under their very noses. They even looked a little frightened; but all that changed to sheer rapture when Micky Doyle bore the tree upstairs and into the room where they were.

Ernestine retired into her bedroom and wiped her eyes. "I never imagined a child could be made so happy," she said to herself.

The rest of the day was wonderful. It would have been impossible for an onlooker to decide which enjoyed themselves most, the children or the three grown-up people. The tidy peace of Ernestine's flat gave way to a riotous disorder. A Christmas supper from Victor's was ordered and eaten amid much gayety. Then the children were sent up to visit the little Morrisons. Ernestine unpacked the basket Hearn had filled and disposed the presents about, while the two men lighted the candles. The children came back, sidling in at the door with a delicious momentary embarrassment; then, with radiant eyes, they looked speechlessly at the tree—and Ernestine told herself it had all been more than worth while.

Later that evening the littlest one went to sleep with his curly head against her arm. He had tried manfully to keep awake, but it had a day too full of excitement; his head bobbed and bobbed until finally it found a resting place in the hollow of her arm.

"I can't thank you as I'd like to, Miss Everett," Hanford said earnestly, as he prepared to depart with his sleepy children; "you've helped me more than you can ever realize. I—I don't like to think what kind of a day it would have been without you."

A degree of peace and hope had come back to Hanford's face. As she looked at him Ernestine realized something of what the day had meant to him; for, in her own heart, there had flashed a sudden realization of what the day had brought to her. When Hanford had gone she came back into her sitting room. She turned down some of the lights and put a chair or two in place, but her mind was not on the task. She knelt in front of the dying fire with the intention of mending it, but she remained staring into the glowing heart of it.

"Did you notice," she said after a time, "that the little chap went to sleep with his head on my arm?"

John Hearn was putting out the candles on the tree. He turned and looked at her for a long minute. "Yes, I noticed," he said.

The room was very quiet. Overhead the little Budweisers had subsided; next door the Morrisons were silent. But just as a nearby clock chimed nine some one in their apartment began to play, "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem." John Hearn left his task and came to the fire. One by one the little Morrisons took up the burden of that hymn beloved of children:—

"Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night!"

In their voices as they sang there was something of the exultation and mystery of that other day which was a Child's day. To the man and woman listening there came an instant in which they saw their futile lives in the light of another Life which began as a little child under the waiting stars of Bethlehem. Their eyes met, and the man saw that the woman's eyes were shining with tears.

"Ernestine, Ernestine!" he cried; "I know you at last. I love you more than I can tell; I have always loved you—but now you need me. We need each other. Can't we make all our Chirstmas days like this one—no longer alone, or empty, or sad?"

She reached out her hands to him. "No longer empty or alone," she said. "It's the children's day—and ours."

THE HEALTHFUL BANANA.

IN the production of nutritive substance per acre of ground cultivated the banana is far ahead of any other food plant, says a recent French writer. In fertile ground an acre of bananas may feed fifty men, while the same area planted in wheat would support only two. Methods of preservation have been sparely applied to the banana, which is one reason for its slight use as a food outside of the countries where it grows.

Of the four chief ways of preserving foods—namely, heat, cold, drying and antiseptics, only drying has been applied extensively to the banana. The Waas machine dries bananas by furnace heat, producing about twenty-seven and a half pounds of the desiccated fruit from one hundred pounds of the natural weight. In other forms of apparatus the bananas are heated in a partial vacuum, which dries them more quickly. Fruit thus dried and pressed keeps a long time. In some places they are kept in strings, like sausages.

Banana starch is obtained by drying the green fruit. This product is made in quantities in South America, in the form of a fine, very white powder. Its grains are slightly rounded, but it resembles in other respects more familiar varieties of starch, although it is somewhat richer.

These banana products could probably be used to advantage in Europe and the United States. The first firm to put a dried banana breakfast food on the market may make a fortune. The cereals have been somewhat overworked and the forms into which they may be tortured are being exhausted. The banana as a fresh fruit is not all that can be desired; as a starchy vegetable it may have an extensive career of prosperity and popularity before it.

MOSQUITOES OF MANY KINDS.

WE are accustomed to talk about mosquitoes, and their peculiarities without always realizing that there are many species of these pests, with widely differing characteristics. One species may inoculate its victims with malaria, another with yellow fever; others may be comparatively harmless. Some prefer, in the larval stage, to live in clear pools; others, again, in cisterns, water barrels or in chance collections of water such as may be gathered in old tin cans or clam shells. In the London Times recently a correspondent called attention to the fact as he believed it to be that mosquitoes are never found in swamps or marshes where there is peat. At once a correspondent of Nature names five species of mosquitoes that he has personally found in such places. The writer in the Times also mentions casually that mosquitoes never breed in salt water, whereupon his critic gives the names of five species that do so and says he has more in reserve. All of which goes to prove that there is danger of inaccuracy when we observe a single variety and then make assertions regarding a