

Our Boys and Girls.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the
Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles
a King.

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth!
Ay! the star rains its fire and the
Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles
a King.

In the light of that star
Lie the ages imperaled;
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame, and the Beau-
tiful sing,
In the homes of the nations, that Jesus
is King.

We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the
night
From the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they
bring,
And we greet in his cradle our Saviour
and King.

—J. G. Holland.

ON THE TOP FLOOR.

A Story For Christmas.

CLARA MARSHALL.

"No, my son," said Mrs. Stanton with decision. "I am sorry to disappoint you, but when I said I thought Santa Claus would bring you a copy of 'The Arabian Nights' this year, I didn't know that I should be called upon to pay for my type-writer before the end of next month. Santa Claus will bring baby a rag doll, which will do her quite as much good as the bisque doll that I thought she would get, but you and I will have to go without any presents this Christmas, except the barrel of apples that grandma sent us last week. And that reminds me, did you carry Ned Staples his apples today?"

"Yes. I dived down into the barrel and picked out the two biggest and reddest ones I could find, just as you said I must always do. Baby could hardly hold the one she carried, but she said 'apper' real plain when she handed it to him, or when she dropped it on him, I'd better say, for I had to hold her up so she could see him on his bed. You know his rheumatism is so bad now that he can not get out of bed—but his old grandma just won't send for the doctor. Ned says she wants him to die."

"Oh, what a naughty boy to say such a thing!"

"Well, mamma, I heard her say one day that Ned lived just out of spite. You see, she is only his step-grandma, and that makes a difference. If my grandma in the country had to take me to live with her I know she'd never say such a thing, poor as she is. Ned's grandpa used to be sort of good to him when he was alive, so Ned says, but he died a long time ago."

"And are Ned's father and mother both dead?"

"Yes; Ned can't remember them a bit. First his mother died, and pretty soon afterward his father, and then his grandpa. When Ned can first remember they lived in a little house close by the sea, but after the rest of them got through dying, his grandma sold their house and came to the city to live. I guess she didn't get much for it, or she wouldn't be living on the top floor like us. Mamma, when do you think papa will make that fortune that he said he would make out West?"

"I think it will be a very long time indeed, before he makes a fortune by selling goods on commission," replied Mrs. Stanton, sighing.

"Well, I wish he would, for then we might have a house of our own, without any old Mrs. Bennett in it, and I might have a tricycle; and baby—well, baby is so easy to satisfy that I don't believe she'd care to be rich. She's awful good-natured. Sometimes, when Ned's shoulder and knee are hurting him awful bad, he'll speak real cross to her, and she doesn't get mad as bigger people would do. Yesterday, when she was sitting on the bed by him, and broke one of his jack-straws, he called her a meddlesome little bother, and all she did was to grin at him, with her three little teeth; and then—"

ry and said she was the best baby alive. Hello! What's that?"

"Go and open the door," said Mrs. Stanton. "It may be the postman."

"Yes, so it may," returned Hugh, as he ran across the room. "He says he loses so much breath climbing up the stairs that his whistle gives out before he gets to this floor."

It was not the postman, however, but a stranger who asked if that were Mrs. Bennett's room.

"No," replied Hugh, "Mrs. Bennett lives in the back room. Hold on a minute and I'll bring out a lamp so you can see your way and not stumble over her tubs."

"The old woman ought either to clear her deck or rig up a lantern," said the stranger; "but she was always a cranky old craft."

"Shsh!" exclaimed Hugh. "If she hears you, she will blow up Ned when you go away."

"Oh, if there's to be squalls I guess me and Ned can weather them," replied the stranger as he began to rap on Mrs. Bennett's door.

"He's got on a big blue overcoat and he wabbles about just as baby does when she tries to walk," reported Hugh to his mother.

"I say, mamma, maybe it is Santa Claus. Don't he ever get himself up to look like a sailor?"

"Not that ever I heard of."

But that Mrs. Stanton had not heard of everything was proved by her next day's experience. She and her children had hardly finished their breakfast of oatmeal and baked apples when there was a knock at the door, followed by the sound of retreating footsteps, and when Hugh opened the door, there, before him, was brand-new tricycle, piled upon which were 'The Arabian Nights,' gotten up gorgeously, and a blue-eyed doll with real hair. Hugh dragged them in without delay, but before baby had given her doll its first hug, he rushed out again at the sound of a footstep in the hall, and the next thing Mrs. Stanton heard was, "Avast there! Let go my rigging, or we'll both go headfirst down the companion way."

Hastening out into the hall she saw a seafaring man with a face as dark as

mahogany trying to make his way down the stairs, while Hugh clung to his coat-tails.

"Mamma, I've caught Santa Claus this time," exclaimed the boy. "Now, make him tell just how he happened to know just what we wanted, and where he got 'em. I didn't see any pack when he came in last night."

"Come in Mr. Santa Claus, and tell us all about it," said Mrs. Stanton, smiling, as she held her door wide open.

Rather reluctantly the seaman came rolling in (for Hugh was right in describing his gait as "wabbling"), and after settling himself in the chair that Mrs. Stanton drew up to the stove told the story which will be given here in a few words.

Seven years before, while ill of yellow fever in Jamaica, he had been given a letter informing him of his wife's death, but not mentioning the fact that she had left an infant. This news made him so much worse that, when the ship of which he had been second mate sailed for home he was reported to be dying. He didn't die, however; and when he recovered, shipped aboard a British schooner trading between Liverpool and the West Indies. He was English born, and his American wife being dead, there was nothing to bring him back to the United States until, seven years later, having made a little pile of money by trading on his own account, he concluded to invest in American railway stock. Then visiting his old home, in order to place a tombstone on his wife's grave, he first learned that he had a son, after which he lost no time in finding him, an easier matter than might be supposed, as his son's step-grandma, though she chose to live on the top floor of a tenement house, and do her own cooking and washing, had ten thousand dollars in the bank, besides owning several houses in the little town where she had formerly lived.

"Hurray!" burst out Hugh suddenly, after listening gravely to what Captain Staples had to tell. "And so Santa Claus brought Ned a father! Ain't that jolly?"

"Ned thinks so," replied the captain. "I had a doctor to see him last night and his rheumatism has taken a turn for the better already. I hope to have him on his legs in a day or two."

"And I bet it was Ned who told you what we wanted."

"Yes; when I asked him what he'd take in the way of Christmas presents, he answered right away, 'A tricycle, the Arabian Nights, and a blue-eyed doll.' I'd a mind to scold him for wanting a doll, but when he asked me to pile up the things in front of your door, I was glad I didn't."

Captain Staples soon moved his son into more comfortable quarters, but neither father nor son forgot those who had been kind to the latter when he needed friends. Mrs. Stanton had so much work given her that her typewriter went in a gallop all day long, and as she was well paid she was soon able to rent better rooms and put money in the bank, besides. Mrs. Bennett remained on her top floor with no company but her cat. "She wouldn't keep that," remarked Captain Staples, "if it didn't catch its own meat, and help out her thin blankets on cold nights by sleeping on top of her."—*Intelligencer.*

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DOROTHY'S CHRISTMAS.

BY ANNA A. WALKER.

Dorothy was in trouble—mamma was ill, papa was almost out of work, and it was coming Christmas. Dorothy was 13 years old, the eldest of the Blake children, and she felt the responsibility of taking her mother's place while that faithful parent was laid aside from her cares.

There could be no money spent for Christmas presents, but Dorothy was an ingenious girl, and she planned to make a present for each child. For her nine-year-old brother Bertram she could make a pair of mittens of a piece of blue cloth; for the seven-year-old twin girls she would make rag dolls; for the five-year-old brother Wesley she would knit a ball with bright worsteds.

When the mittens were finished for Bertram a neighbor saw them and told Dorothy she would pay her twenty-five cents if she would make two pair for her children. This was splendid. If she did that she could buy papa and mamma a present. It took some time to accomplish so much, but Dorothy went on patiently and earned the promised money. Now, the rag dolls were to come next—the meals to prepare, the baby to care for, and almost all the housework to do, but love fired Dorothy's heart and hands to make extra efforts, and one of the dolls was ready, and the little planter was about to begin the other, when various hindrances came in her way. Mamma was not as well, and the woman who came in every day to look after the dear invalid took a severe cold and was forced to absent herself from the duty for several days.

This left the young housekeeper with so much extra care that she forgot to put away her work and baby found the new doll and was at once attracted by