

LOST.

A CHRISTMAS STORY FOR BIG AND LITTLE PEOPLE.

(Continued from last week)

This was the first of an intimacy of which Arthur told nothing to his mother or to Elsie; he felt as if they would not understand about it. This odd little friendship, fed by clandestine meetings, continued to grow and to be a source of delight. Arthur liked Norah better than any one he had ever played with. She was always willing to play his way; he would liked to have given her all his things. Their companionship flourished greatly at the time when Arthur's mother was ill and had to be carried about to the seaside or to the mountains for her health, and Arthur was left home on account of his noise; and Elsie had a beau and spent her time sewing on her wedding things; and the cook, who had the rheumatism, stayed in bed with black bottles of medicine. At this epoch the hole in the hedge was as open as the Arch of Triumph, and became almost commodious as the king's highway. The children brought stones and blocks of wood to shorten the drop on the off-side, and to make the descent more easy. What a place it was to roll down melons and peaches and lost things of all sorts! But since the cold weather had set in mamma had been at home all of the time, Elsie's beau had gone to sea, and the cook was apt to be at work near the basement windows, so that the visits to the hole in the wall greatly fell off. But the children did not forget each other. Arthur used to take red apples and cake and leave them for Norah. Often he found there a pathetic little piece of a pop corn ball, or a bit of dirty candy tied carefully up in paper. Once there was a lock of hair, tangled and curly, which she had cut off with a knife; it was wrapped up in a piece of paper that some liver had been brought home in, and was suggestive of scalping, but Arthur took the spirit of it. Sometimes the children met there and exchanged a few words.

"Are you going to have Christmas at your house, Norah?" he had asked, lately.

"Yes—lots and lots. My papa has got a joy, and now we'll be rich."

"We're not going to have any Christmas at our house. I heard my mamma tell papa that she could not stand it to see just one little stocking hung up. I guess she couldn't; she said so. She said I would not know it was Christmas, 'cos I was so little."

"Christmas is to-night," said Norah, "an' you can have all my things—that is, most all of them."

"I want my own things," said Arthur.

"Maybe Santa Claus would put your things at our house, 'cos I'd bring 'em right up to you."

"Perhaps I'll come down to your house and get them."

This idea had been working in Arthur's mind all the day, and the moment Elsie let him go out of her sight he dropped out of the sidewalk group, slid like a shadow down the farther side of the house, shot into the shrubbery like a mole in the ground, crept through the friendly hole, and dropped utterly from view. He made a rough and tumble descent down the snowy bluff, but he shouted with the shout of the free, and breathless with joy and excitement, tumbled into the lean to, with its now empty pig pen and the forlorn hens.

Mrs. McCulloch had gone out washing for the day, with no restriction upon the children except that they must not meddle with the fire. The companionship of the little company was so delightful to Arthur that he did not much mind the pangs of hunger. Norah said that her mother would be home at dark and bring the supper with her, and that her father would come still earlier, because he came on the cars. But dark came down on the forlorn room, and no mother or father came home.

"Now it is night, and we ought to hang up our stockings," said Arthur.

"We haven't any stockings," said Norah.

"I have got four, and that makes one piece."

They hung up the stockings behind the stove, underneath a long shelf. The stove was all black now, and Arthur's legs were cold. Norah opened the oven and had him stretch out his legs into the oven. She sat by him their chairs close together, her motherly little arms clasping him warm and close, while she assured him she was not afraid and that her mother would be here very soon.

"I shant cry," he said.

"Nor I, neither," said she.

"You would cry for the soldiers, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," she answered; for Norah was of that quality that had tears for others' woes, but very few for her own.

Outside, the storm was coming down fast; the room grew darker and colder; the gusts of wind made the candle flutter and smoke, and a black shroud formed on its bending wick. The oven got so cold that the children drew up their feet under them. Arthur's head nodded and fell forward on Norah's shoulder, and so, curled up in each other's arms, they went to sleep. An hour went by, and Mrs. McCulloch did not come home. The lady

she had washed for decided to keep her laundress a few hours longer and have the ironing done on the same day. The thought of extra wages was a tempting one to Mrs. McCulloch, so she said: "All right, ma'am. What is a few hours more or less, an' their father at home to attend to the children?"

But the father did not come home, either. How could he? Was not Sandy McCulloch, hour after hour, walking through the town with a bell, crying, "Child lost!"

At last he was going through River street, which really was not a street worth going through, but Sandy had a drawing towards his own home which guided his feet thitherward. He had been out a good while, his voice was hoarse, and the intervals between the cries longer than they had been at first; the snow made a peak on his hat and a cape on his shoulders.

"It looks queer up there," he said, gazing at the windows of his own tenement. "Wonder what the curtains are down for! 'Tain't curtains, neither; it's too flickerin'." Guess I'll give 'em a shout.

He flung open the door of his room and burst in, ringing the bell and shouting. The candle blew out with the gust of the open door. What kind of a place was this to come to? Dark as a pocket, no fire, no light, no smell of sizzling sausages and onions, no steaming kettle, and no ruddy, hearty wife to rush at him and beat the snow off of him and scold him affectionately for not coming sooner. The children awakened, screaming with fear, and the dogs all barked at once.

"Hullo!" shouted Sandy, in a big gruff voice. "Hullo! The big bear has come! What are you all doing in bed be eight o'clock?" And he struck a match.

"It is my papa! It is my papa!" shouted Norah, springing into his arms, to be tossed up, and tumbled and kissed. "And here is Arthur!"

"Who is he? Who'd he thought it? I vum to goodness if it ain't the very one I'm after!" He struck another match, and turning Arthur round, checked off the items. "Lost child! Well, I reckon. Five year old. Jest about. Curly hair! Yes, sir. Blue eyes! That's right. Long stockings! Where's your stockings, sir?"

"Hanging up. We're keeping Christmas."

"Oh, you are! I should say so!"

McCulloch flung up the window and called.

"Here he is! Lost child—curly hair, blue eyes, name Arthur, long stockings! Walk right up! Here he is!"

Mr. Dick Graham's sleigh, which was keeping in the wake of Sandy's voice, stopped in front of the house. The lady sprang as light as a bird to the curbstone, and with a rustle of silken skirts had crossed the sidewalk and flashed up the rickety stairs half a flight ahead of Uncle Dick. She had only to follow the noise. McCulloch kept up a steady cry, like an auctioneer: "I've found him! Walk up, walk up! He is all right!" The dogs barked, the babies cried, Norah locked her arms about Arthur and almost shrieked:

"It is your mamma! She has come for you!"

"Oh, my lost one—my darling!" cried the mother, as her boy leaped up to her and wound his arms tightly around her neck. She clasped him closer and closer, with rapturous kisses, and happy tears flowing down as the floodgates of her strong grief gave way.

McCulloch, with the idea of keeping this scene properly illuminated, struck another match, and yet another, and at last bethought himself of a lamp. Then Mrs. Graham saw the poor room so dark and cold, the empty cupboard, the bare feet of the shivering children, the row of stockings—Arthur's and Jamie's stockings—hanging behind the stove.

"What were you doing here, Arthur?" she asked.

"I was keeping Christmas, 'cause you told papa you couldn't have Christmas at our house."

"But I can now, darling. We'll have forty Christmases all in one!" she cried, impetuously.

"And Norah, too?" asked Arthur.

"Of course Norah."

"And both the babies and the dogs?"

"Yes, yes—every one and everything! We will have a great Christmas tree to-morrow morning; and you must come Mr. McCulloch, and bring your wife and all the children, and every one will blow trumpets and have drums, because—oh, because—here she sank upon her knees with Arthur in her arms, and she dropped unconsciously into Scripture phrase—"because this my son was lost and is found, he was dead and is alive again!"

"I am afraid he will catch cold, without them," said Mrs. Graham, as she drew on Arthur's stockings. "It seems a pity to break up the children's little play." Then she gave a caressing touch to the long pair that had been Jamie's, as if she were taking a tender farewell of them. "You keep them," she said to Mrs. McCulloch, who had come in. "They are good and warm, and you will find some one whom they will fit."

When Mrs. Graham reached home with her boy in her arms, she found many signs of confusion about the place—the new snow was all tracked and trodden down, the house was ablaze with lights, a doctor's carriage stopped the way, and it was

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the doctor himself who threw open the door to her.

"No cause for alarm, my dear Mrs. Graham," he said, heartily. "Your husband is all right. He has been in a railroad accident, but it is only a surface wound."

"And there, sure enough, sitting up in his Morris chair by the blazing fire of the library, was Mr. Graham, too dizzy and weak to get up and meet his wife, his face very pale indeed, where it was not discolored with bruises or covered with black patches. Uncle Dick laughed at him, and said he looked like a man on a sign-post, but his wife said he looked handsomer to her than he ever had before in all his life, because he was so thankful.

Mrs. Montgomery was a woman of deep designs. It was she who had the coffee and supper ready, and who lit all the gas in the house, and had the fires so roaring hot in the grates, and everything so cheery.

"I just brought in some of these evergreens and things," she said; "we have such loads of them at our house that we don't know where to put them." Then she and Uncle Dick put them up, and that is how it happened that there were evergreen garlands in the Graham house that night, and vases of pink and red roses on the tables, and the smell of pine and balsam filled the place.

"We will all hang up our stockings," said Arthur—"papa and mamma and Uncle Dick and me—four is enough." The stockings made a goodly show that night beneath the mantle-piece of the library, but a much better one in the morning after Santa Claus had filled them all. The McCulloch family came to the Christmas tree the next day. They got so many things that their house would not hold them, and they had to move into a bigger one with no cracks in it and no hole in the back fence.

Before she went to sleep that night Mrs. Graham emptied the contents of the sacred drawer where she had wept so often over the momentoes of her lost children. She took out all the warm winter garments, and with a full heart gave them to God and to His poor.

COUGHING ALL NIGHT.

It's this night coughing that breaks us down, keeping us awake most of the time, and annoying everybody in the house. Lots of people don't begin to cough until they go to bed. It gets to be so that retiring for the night is an empty form, for they cannot rest.

Adamson's Botanic Cough Balsam makes life worth living to such people by its soothing effect on the throat. The "tickling sensation" promptly disappears when the use of the Balsam is begun, and the irritation goes with it. This medicine for cough hasn't a disagreeable thing about it, and it does efficient service in breaking up coughs of long standing. It is prepared from barks and roots and gums of trees, and is a true specific for throat troubles.

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THE BATH.

We found the lovely young golf person sitting where she had broken her brass—"You will observe that I am bathed in tears," she sobbed in wild defiance.

"Bathed!" we exclaimed concernedly. "How extremely un-Scottish!"

"Yes," said she in a hard, despairing voice, and we saw at once that she had ceased for the moment to be socially ambitious.—Detroit Journal.

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Supposing the Ax Had Fallen!

Some years ago an inquisitive medical student, while examining the gullotine in a big waxworks exhibition in London, took it into his head that the sort of yoke which fits down on the shoulders of the criminal to hold him in his place would not be sufficient to confine a person who struggled.

His curiosity on that point led him to watch till the place was empty, when he actually put himself in, letting down the yoke. He soon found, however, that he was quite unable to lift it, and it at once flashed into his mind that the sharp ax suspended over his neck might not be firmly fixed, or it would fall, as it should, with a touch.

He was afraid to struggle lest the shaking should bring it down and at once deposit his head in the basket of sawdust below him, into which his eyes were of necessity steadily looking.

Having staid some time in this plight, he was overjoyed to hear the approach of a visitor, whom he implored to release him. It was in vain.

"I'm thinking," said the gentleman, a Scottish visitor to the metropolis, to his wife, "that he must be hired to show how the thing acts, and I think we'd better not interfere."

So the luckless student was left till one of the attendants came in and made fast the ax before releasing him from his predicament. The ax was afterward removed and laid by the side of the structure to prevent future accidents.

A Convincing Answer.

There are many people who do not care for libraries who pride themselves on having "only the books they read" about them, but the answer made by a distinguished scholar to one of those persons very well illustrates how valuable is this idea as to what a library should be. The scholar was connected with an institution of learning which had been greatly helped by a liberal man of the neighborhood, but the liberal man was not much of a sympathizer with the idea of increasing the library. When appealed to in the matter, he replied:

"More books? Dear me, it seems to me you've got more than you can read now. Have you read all you have all ready?"

"No," returned the scholar, "and I never expect to read them all."

"Then why do you want more?"

"Let me ask you," said the scholar, "did you ever read the dictionary through?"

"Certainly not," was the reply.

"Well, sir," said the scholar, "a library is my dictionary."

The answer was convincing, and the merchant provided the professor with the funds he wished for.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

It Can't Be Done Now.

"An increase of salary!" exclaimed the pompous manager of a small omnibus company to a clerk who had just made that request. "I am afraid, sir, that you are too extravagant!"

He toyed with his heavy watch chain and looked severely at the young man, who returned his stare boldly. It was the set phrase on such occasions, and the applicant had heard it all before. He meant to have that rise or go somewhere else.

"Excuse me, sir," he replied respectfully. "I haven't any chance to be extravagant on what I earn."

"Young man," continued the pompous gentleman. "I have risen from the monkey board. How? By being careful. When I was young I made money by saving 'bus fares."

"Ah, that was in the old days," said the young man, with a knowing wink. "But with the bell punches and the present system of inspection, you would find you couldn't save sixpence without being collared, however careful you were."

The manager nearly fainted, and the young man had to seek other employment.—London Standard.

Getting Rope Sense.

A peculiarity about roping horses or steers with a lasso is that after getting a hard fall a few times they quickly get "rope sense." I have often seen them, in a corral, stand stock still when the rope falls across their backs—even when, as a matter of fact, they are not caught. If any reader has ever encountered a clothesline while running a full speed in the dark, the line stretched at about the level of the throat, he will notice that he doesn't run across that lawn any more after nightfall. He's got "rope sense," in fact.—Wide World Magazine.

Why She Enjoyed It.

On Monday, as a certain Scottish minister was returning homewards, he was accosted by an old woman, who said:

"Oh, sir, well do I like the day when you preach."

The minister was aware that he was not very popular and answered:

"My good woman, I am glad to hear it. There are too few like you. And why do you like it when I preach?"

"Oh, sir," she replied, "when you preach I always get a good seat!"—Scottish Nights.

Queer Lot.

"Stranger—I have heard that you have a good many queer people in this town.

Citizen—As odd a lot as you'd find in a year's travel. They are a queer set, the whole of 'em, outside my family. And my wife is almost as bad as the others. But then, you know, she wasn't originally of my family.—Boston Transcript.

A peculiar clock of the time of Charles I was the lantern, or birdcage style, which hung from the walls high up, with its works exposed.

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