

Pile up their gifts waist high And, smiling, beckon him.

n dreams he wanders through a palace fair, And Christmas trees bow low

cry of p in to escape the girl's pale lips. "Oh, my darling! forgive me; my great love has almost driven me beside myself." Then clasping her in his arms he con-

"God knows how I worship you, Lera; I can not give you up! My darling, I can

His voice trembled with infinite tenderness and love, and he smoothed the dark waves of his darling's hair with a gentle, aressing touch.

Lera Grantley was crying softly. She did not love him, but she could not bear to

the hot love him, but she could not bear to be the cause of his suffering. "Raymond," she said, sadly and sorrow-fully, "Raymond, I am truly sorry you love me so much; I am not worthy of it, believe me.

"Lera, dearest, I will win your love; only marry me is all I ask. Give yourself to me, my dearest." With all of an ardent lover's eloquence

he pleaded. "Oh. Raymond, you do not understand.

Would you marry me now, knowing that I have no love to give you?"

sweet mouth eloquent with sorrow, and the dark hazel eyes dewy with recent tears. Raymond Kingsley almost crushed the small white hands he held and caused a will be your wife, Raymond, and, perhaps, some day I will love you as you: deserve," The soft hazel eyes, with tears spark-ling on their long, curved lashes, were lifted to the handsome, noble face that bent so tenderly over her. As for Raymond Kingsley, he folded her in his arms with a prayer of thankfulness on his lips as he kissed the sweet face he loved so fondly.

loved so fondly. She did not love him now, but she would love him when once she was his wife. He did not dream that she loved another. He was too honest and unsuspecting for that. All he wished was her love; that was the one bright dream of his life. And some day he felt sure that dream would be realized.

A week later Archie Ashton came home, and was very soon informed of Lera's en-gagement to Raymond Kingeley. He would not credit such a report until he had heard it from her own lips. Then, and not till then, would he believe it. She was sure to be at the ball that evening, and he

The ball-room was brilliant with lights, and was one bright bower of fragrance and

As Archie Ashton entered, the first person his eyes rested upon was Lera. Lera, leaning on the arm of Raymond Kingsley, looking as beautiful as a dream, in a dainty evening areas of exquisite texture, all light and fleecy, with bare white arms and shoulders. A picture of fair, innocent, girlish beauty was Lera Grantley, and so thought Archie Ashton. He watched his chance, and, as soon as she was seated, made his way to her side. At the instant some one spoke to Bary

At that instant some one spoke to Ray-mond, and when Lera raised her eyes they encountered the handsome, smiling face of Archie Ashton.

For a moment her heart seemed to stand still; then the crimson blood rushed to her cheeks and she had all she could do to "Lera Miss Grantley-have you one dance left for me? Am I too presuming to ask for a walt?"

ent over her in the old familiar way,

and his voice sank to a low thrilling whis-

per. Lera handed him her card, saying: "I think the waltzes are all taken. However,

you may have a dance; there must be sev-eral unengaged." "I am fortunate," said Archie Ashton. "One waltz remains unclaimed—No. 8. Permit me." Aud he placed his name op-

Then, as Raymond Kingsley was seen approaching, he bowed low and left her. "She loves me!" he said to himself, as he made his way leisurely across the ball-room and took his station by a window

when I spoke to her? Now, that I am told another has won her, I find how dear she is to me. There must be a mistake; it can not be true! She does not love him. I

is to me. There must be a mistake; it can not be true! She does not love him. I shall win her yet!" Ah! that waltz, No. 8. To Lera it was more like a dream than reality. Archie Ashton had taken her around the orowded ballroom twice without accident, or interruption, or, what she dread d still more a whicread d mean her and the her are the fourthered Lera his arm, and they returned to the ball-room. Raymond Kingsley was nowhere to be seen. Archie Ashton re-signed Lera his arm, and they returned to the ball-room. Raymond Kingsley was nowhere to be seen. Archie Ashton re-signed Lera his arm, and they returned to the ball-room. Raymond Kingsley was nowhere to be seen. Archie Ashton re-signed Lera his arm, and they returned to the ball-room. Raymond Kingsley was nowhere to be seen. Archie Ashton re-signed Lera to her next partner, bowed low, left the room, and then the house. The rest of the gay, but she was con-scious of a strange dull pain at her heart.

Only for a second, then sudden strength came to her, and she wrenched herself away, and stood looking at him, with tears blinding her eyes. "I can but repeat what I have already said. It is too late." "Oh! think, darling, of my great love.

Have you no love to give me, Lera? My life is in your hands, to make or mar. You have made a mistake; you do not love Raymond Kingsley. It is not too late, Lera. Be my wife. Do not refuse me."

Leta. Be my wife. Do not refuse me." His voice—the voice she loved so well— was husky and shook with emotion. The bright, handsome face was full of love and tenderness; the dark eyes had lost their laughing light, and were filled with a pleading wistfulness. Ah, how her heart yearned toward him! The temptation was terrible. A medicace

The temptation was terrible. A week ago the knowledge that this man loved her would have made her the happiest woman in the world, and now it made her the most miserable. He loved her, and she

most miserable. He loved her, and she must send him away. Her promise had been given to Ray-mond Kingsley, a true and honorable man, and she would keep that promise, no mat-fer what the cost. Her voice was low and clear as she made reply: "I am Raymond Kingsley's promised wife, and again I tell you it is too late." "Lera! Lera! pity me. You do love me —I feel sure of it." He never forgot the expression of up-

He never forgot the expression of un-utterable misery on her face as she turned toward him. "Let this interview end now. Mr. Ash-

ton. My promise once given is irrevocable. I would not be worth the winning if

would betray the man who trusts me." Archie Ashton's face was pale as ashe. He looked imploringly at her while tears gathered in his dark eyes. Lera had risen and was ready to return to the ball-room. He could not let her go out of his life like this. He was sure that he loved her madly. and his love absorbed all his better thoughts. It did not occur to him that he was acting dishonorable in pleading for the love of another man's promised wife. He could see, spite of her efforts to hide it,

not blaffne you; you could not help loving him. I only pray God he will make your life a happy one. I knew you did not love me, Lera, but I had hoped to win your love. I know now it can never be. God bless you, Lera, my darling, and fare-well-forever. RYMOND KINGSLEY. Before Lera had finished the first fow

lines, she hurried to her room, and locking the door, threw herself on the bed in a passion of sobs and tears. "Oh, Raymond, Raymond! It is you I love. I did not know it until now. I love

you, and I have lost you." Springing to her feet, she paced up and down the room. What should she do? Perhaps, after all, it was not too late, if she could only see him; but no! A latter! Why not write a letter and send it to his house by one of her brothers?

It was a good idea, and she acted upop it. The note was soon written, and calling

you can, to haymond. Hurry, that's a dear boy." And Bertie did hurry. He ran all the way, as fast as his little fat legs would carry him through the snow, and he met Raymond Kingsley just as he was "starting for the depot. When he looked up and saw Bertie Grantley fixing down the streagt toward



"MERRY CHRISTMAS."

THE EVE OF LOVE.

BY CHARLES EUGENE BANKS.

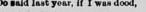
Deck the boughs so green and fragrant, Let the waxen tapers flame, Praise, ye men, from king to vagrant, Sing sweet praises to His name! Pile the blazing fagots higher, Let the gaping chimneys roar, String the harp and tune the lyre— Angels tap at every door. Soft the day of peace is breaking, Grandest day of all the year, And the Graces, care o'ortaking, Flood the world with love and cheer.

Happy, bright-faced children gather Round the smilling mether's knee;
From his chair the proxi-eyed father Looks on all complemently—
Looks on all and silent listens To the voice of Memory dear.
In his eye the teardrop glistons, And his heart, devoid of fear.
Panaive grows as he is sitting.

Pensive grows as he is sitting, Bitting in the firelight's glow, And the Christmas sprites are flitting, Flitting, fitting to and fro.

"TANT I STAY WAKE?"

"Mamma, tant I stay 'wake to thee old Santa Tlaus? Oo said last year, if I was dood,





THE BOARDER'S SOCK.

The star-boarder on Christmas hung up an old

THE PICTURE ON WHICH HE HAD BEEN AT WORK. - T "Lera

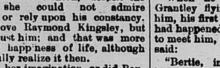
"Yes! she loves me; else why that flush on her check? And the downcast eyes

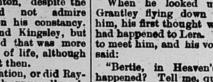
or interruption, or, what she dread d still more, a whispered word. Then he sud-denly paused and before she could realize where they were going, he had led her through the open door into the dimly lighted conservatory. It was almost de-serted, fragmant with the heavy perfume of the flowers and delightfully cool. Archie Ashton sought the most remote corner from the light, where he found aseat his. "Lers, I hear you are engaged to Ray-"Quite true," replied Lera. And in spite of herself her lips quivered piteously as she continued: "And I am to congratulate you also, am I not, Mr. Ashton?". "Me! Lers, you are dreaming! I am en-serted, for net line, wy darling, "Me! Lers, you are dreaming! I am en-serted. "And I am to congratulate you also, am I not, Mr. Ashton?". "Me! Lers, you are dreaming! I am en-serted. "And I am to congratulate you also, am I not, Mr. Ashton?". "Me! Lers, you are dreaming! I am en-serted. The you, my darling, all. Thetest of Raymond's calling, as he was defined as the they be and the set of a strange duby the met day she understood it also, am I not, Mr. Ashton?".

could see, spite of her efforts to hide it, how much it cost her to appear calm. "Lera," he cried, "the terrible words you have just spoken are but to test my love. You do not mean them. I can not live with-out you, Lera; do not cast me off for----"" "Mr. Ashton!" Lera's voice sounded cold and calm as she interrupted him. "Mr. Ashton, I shall never alter my de-termination; and if you continue to talk to me of your love, knowing I am another man's promised wife, I foar I shall lose the respect I have always entertained for you. The music has coased. Let us return to the ball-room."

the ball-room." A sudden agony that was near akin to madness seized upon Archie Ashton, but before he could utter a word the conserva-tory began to fill with weary dancers, and

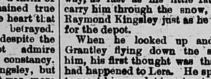
it was too late to say more. Recovering himself with a mighty effort, he offered Lera his arm, and they returned





world.

her brother, she said: "Run, Bertie, and take this, as quickly as you can, to Raymond. Hurry, that's a



eneath a load of presents rich an You've had such dreams, I know.

How lightly rest the fingers of sweet sleep Upon the eyes of youth When from each shadow cunning fairles peep, And dreams are true as truth;

When all the world is given up to joy,

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And each wide chimney hides A Santa Claus for every anxious boy, And every girl besides.



A Christmas Story.

BY JEFFIE FORBUSH HANAFORD.

"Only a few more touches, and then it

"Only a few more touches, and then it will be complete." The speaker, Raymond Kingsley, stood gazing with a tender light in his honest blue eyes at the picture before him. He was an amateur artist, with much power and genius, that only required study and necessity to give the world a truly great painter. Unfortunately for the world, he was wealthy and in love: consequently he was

wealthy and in love; consequently he was not very energetic in his study. He was content to follow art simply as an amusement, and satisfied in being able to repro-duce on canvas the form and features of the girl he loved, there his ambition ended. The picture, on which he had been hard

at work since sunrise, represented a young girl, dressed in a picturesque toborgan cos-tume; her small hands, encased in soft woolly mittens, held a pair of snow-shoes, and at her feet was a toboggan on which were seated two boys, presumably her brothers.

The snow lay thick and white upon the ground, and sparkled in the sunlight on the bare branches. The girl's face was full of tenderness

The girls face was full of tendencess and beauty. A soft knit cap sat jauntily upon her shapely head, and contrasted with its waves of dark brown hair, and her eyes, brilliant and loving, had truth beam-

ing in every winsome glance. Raymond Kingsley drew a long breath as he gazed upon the sweet face in the

"Oh, Lera, my beautiful, bright-eyed darling, this is just as you looked the day my eyes first rested upon you. I loved you then, and I love you now, my darling, with all the strength of my manhood; and when this picture is completed I shall ask you to become my wife. For your dear sake, with your love to bless me, I might some day make my name famous. Without it—oh! Lera. Lera, my darling, without your love Lera, Lera, my darling, without your love I care not to live."

It was Christmas eve. All day long the snow had settled down in soft, delicate flakes, until at six o'clock it ceased. It laid so thick and white that the world seemed half buried beneath a floar cover

and the Christmas bells merrily pealed would marry Raymond, and crush her love

forth. In the little parlor at Mr. Grantley's comfortable home were seated two people, one a young and pretty girl. She was pretty, because dark, lustrous eyes, wavy brown hair and a soft, blush-rose com-plexion made her so. Her girlish figure was full of graceful curves, and looked very small and slight in a dress of black lace with a bodice of dotted black net. But hark' she is sneaking.

heart and soul, and I would marry you to-morrow-yes, now, this moment, if I could."

There was deep silence for an instant,

then Lera said: "Supposing I should marry you, Ray-mond, and never love you. Could you, be happy then?"

happy then?" Raymond Kingsley drew in his breath with a sharp ory, then he answered: "My all-absorbing love for you, my Lora, must and will win your love in return.

Only marry me, and I will be content to wait until my patient love shall reap its own reward."

Raymond's face was deathly white as he awaited her reply. Poor Lera! how could she tell him that

her love was given long ago to handsome, careless Archie Ashton, a min who had never asked her to love him. He had never hinted as to whether or not he loved her, hinted as to whether or not he loved her, it was true; but he had looked it, and al-ways seemed happy when in her company. His eyes wore a tender, softened look in their clear, laughing depths that she never saw in them at any other time. Ah! she loved Archie better than any one else in the wide world. The sound of his voice was the sweetest music on earth to her, and one glance from his dark eves would send the bricht from his dark eyes would send the bright blushes into her cheeks, and the touch of his hand filled her with unspeakable hap-

piness. Could she tell all this to Raymond Kingsley? tell him that if Archie Ashton had asked her to marry him she would have answered yes, but that he had not and never would?

He was out of town, had been away for a fortnight, and only the day before he left she had seen him driving, and beside him, smiling into his face, was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. A bebeautiful woman she had ever seen. A be-witching blonde beauty, all velvet and seal-skin, bright eyes, and sunny golden hair. Her clear, silvery laughter mingled with the chime of the sleigh-bells as they glided by, so absorbed in themselves that poor Lers was unnoticed. With trembling hands she had pulled down her weil to hid has herein the

down her veil to hide her burning tears. Two ladies were walking directly ahead of her, laughing and talking loud enough for her to hear.

"Archie Ashton's new lady-love! Beautiful, isn't she?"

tiful, isn't she?" "What a firt he is!" remarked her com-panion. "I really thought he had made up his mind to marry Lera Grantley; he has been quite devoted to her of late." "All that will end now," said the first speaker, "for he is engaged to be married to the lady with whom he is riding. She is visiting at his house. I received my in-formation direct from a member of the family."

family. Just then Lera reached her own gate and

entered. mond this. In

for Archie Ashton out of her heart forever. She would give herself to Raymond, and

She would give herself to Haymond, and try to make him happy. Once married, she might forget Archie. All this passed like a flash through Lera Grantley's mind as she stood by Raymond Kingsley's side and listened to his plead-ings for her love. She did not know, poor girl, that mar-riene with enother could not hit out and

and I-I thought you cared for me. You had been in the habit of doing, he sent a herew I loved you, Lera." letter containing his farewell. It ran as "You never said so," was the quiet reply. follows:

follows: LERA: My dearest, my love (for the last time I call you mine). I was in the conservatory last evening, Lera, and heard Archie Ashton tell you of his love. Then, and not till then, did I realize the awful possibility that you loved another. For my sake, darling, you were strong and true. And now, dear, for your sake, I will be generous, and give you back your freedom. I am going away, Lers. and you will soon forget me. Perhaps it is better so. I do

MAMMA LIGHTS THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

ALDIFE

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world. DEAREST BAYNOND: You were mistaken; it is you I love, and if you go away I shall die. LERA.

"I will return with you, Bertie, my boy," he said. And he started with strides down the street, and Bertie trudging along by his

Lera met them at the door, and throwing her arms around Raymond's neck, gave him, not only one, but a dozen kisses un-asked, as she whispered:

"How could I tell I should love thes to-day, Whom that day I held not dear? How could I know I should love thee away, When I did not love thee near?"

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"Mamma, when will you light the Christmas tree? We are so tired waiting. "Just as soon as papa comes, Ray."

The voice is sweet, low, and strangely familiar. Yes, we are not mistaken. It is Lera. And as the door opens to admit the hus-

band and father, we recognize Raymond Kingsley. It is Christmas eve, and the world with-

out is wrapped in a misty shroud of snow, bright, sparkling and clear. Within all is happiness and love. Three beautiful children scamper across

the bright carpet as their father enters, and the youngest, a bright little boy with his his mother's dark eyes and a sweet laughing face, says: Oh, papa, I wants to see ve Trismas

"So you shall, my boy; so you shall. "So you shall, my boy; so you shall. Mamma must hurry and light it, before we grow tired waiting." "An' tan us see mamma light ve ittle can-

An tan us see mamma ngut ve nue can-dles on ve tree, papa?" exclaimed Ray, the eldest, in great excitement. Raymond Kingsley slipped his arm lov-ingly around his wife and kissed her ere

"Yes, my darlings, we will all watch mamma while she lights the Christmas tree; and may we have many a happy Christmas together in the years to come."

WRITTEN BY A TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

A sailor came home from the East Indies on the night before Christmas and pre-sented his sister with an owl and a talking parrot. The pair had hung in the captain's cabin during the home voyage, which was the skipper's honeymoon, and had picked up stray bits of conversation. While the sailor and the family were est-

"It is the sale of the table table of the table of table of the table of table of

"Not you, you ogle-eyed tooter," replied

Prily. After a few minutes Polly said:

"Throw up a tater." "To-whoo?" asked the owl.

"Me, of course. Dash my grog! If you're hungry go to a Chinese laundry and eat. Rat-eaters don't keep Christmas."

HE WAS INSIGNIFICANT.

"Arabella," said Cholly Softop to Miss McFlopley, "did you ever notice that some people are amused with very little and insignificant things?" "Are they? Well, you must feel amused continally, then."

"How so?" "Why, you are with yourself so much of the time."



for Christmas, this year, Job?' young millionaire Asset's wife.

"I cannot afford it, my dear; the money market is too tight." "There isn't much difference between

you and the money market in that respect. Shall you remain at home on Christmas?"

"I don't know." "I trust you may. Your presence in the house will save me from having no presents at all."



