A CHRISTMAS FAIRY STORY.

By AILEEN ORR.

THERE was once upon a time a little black boy called Billy. He had lived all his short life in a black camp with his parents and a number of other aborigines of the tribe. Billy had never been very kindly treated, and as he had a soft heart himself he sometimes felt it very much.

Now, one Christmas time, being left alone as usual, with no presents of any sort and no treat, he began to think of all the stories he had been told about the white children's Christmas and determined then and there to find out what it was really like. He had heard of the Christmas bills in a country many miles off and planned to go there, believing from their name that these must contain all the mysteries of Santa Claus and other joys from which he had always been isolated.

With a loving farewell to his own mia mia—the little shelter of branches which he had built for himself against the thunderstorms—he set off with only a piece of opossum skin hung round his waist for clothing and a boomerang in his hand.

Billy journeyed for many hours over paddocks and wire fences, wading bravely through creeks, water holes and bracken gullies—each, where the snakes were very numerous and poisonous, till he found himself in a beautiful valley between a large and a purple mountain. Approaching a vineyard, he asked an old gardener where the Christmas bills lay.

"Yonder!" said the man, pointing straight in front of them toward the blue mountains. "Keep straight on."

The little black boy was very ill and thirsty, for the sun had been beating fiercely upon him and the way along so he longed for some of the rosy juicy grapes which hung in such profusion on the vines.

"By all means," said the good natured gardener as he filled him the largest bunch he could find—big and juicy and inviting with the bloom upon them. Billy thanked him again, he having some time to be glad to return his kindness, and, bidding the man farewell, continued his way with a light heart.

As he climbed and climbed, rising higher and higher above the level of the river and smaller it looked, he could not see the old gardener any more. Soon the hill became so steep and slippery that he was forced to crawl himself up from tree to tree, leading first on to one branch and then another. Presently he came to a wide, high glove hill. In monotonous wretchedness he began to wonder where to go. Clouds rose and stood

"GIVE ME SOME OF THAT FRUIT, I BEG OF YOU."

mile after mile, and still he climbed thirsty and hungry.

"I shall die," he said to himself presently, "I shall die, I know I shall," he repeated solemnly. "I have climbed and climbed and climbed, and I am very tired and very thirsty, and I shall die, I know I shall die."

Wherever he looked there was nothing but rocks and stones and dry tufts of grass which burnt his feet. Then he gave a little cry of joy, for there, in front of him, he saw a beautiful garden full of fruit trees and flowers of every color imaginable, and in the middle of the garden was a lovely little fairy palace. Billy thought he must be dreaming, but he was not, for there was the palace, and there was the garden, and there was the fairy queen sitting on a throne of blue, the color of her dress.

"As you have come so far to see me," said the queen, "I mean to do all I can to help you on your way, but first you must have some real American pie."

Billy was overjoyed at her kindness, and followed her through the gardens, where they found a wonderful orchard, with brilliant flowers and fruit which surpassed his wildest dreams. Strawberries grew in masses all along the borders, and the trees were laden with luscious ripe peaches, nectarines, figs and every other southern fruit he had ever thought or heard of in or out of season.

Here they entered, and the queen summoned ten other little fairies just Billy's own size and age to wait upon and entertain him. They were all in different colors, so that as they flitted about him in the sunlight with their floating gossamer gowns they looked like a rainbow.

Feast the little darky boy;
Give him pudding, fruit and toy;
Sing and dance and merry make;
Don't forget the Christmas cake
For the goodly darky boy!

Having sung and danced for him, they then set the Christmas dinner on a long, narrow table out in the garden. There were strawberries and cream, and grape cake, mince pies (Gunsler made so many that Christmas he never missed those the fairies stole), chocolates, pineapple dumplings, and last, but most important, instead of a hot plum pudding with holly, as the cold countries have, there was a huge ice cream pudding, with precious stones instead of raisins through it, and a piece of yellow wattle blossoms stuck in the top.

Five fairies sat at one side of the table and five at the other, while Billy sat at the foot, and the blue queen at the head. They filled their glasses with magic wine, so that all who drank would be lucky all the new year round. Each fairy's wine matched her dress; the green one had green wine, the pink one pink wine and the purple fairy purple wine, and so on till it came to Billy, and his was black with a crimson light in it, and he thought it more delicious than anything he had ever tasted. Then they were given each a large slice of the grape cake, and afterward anything they wanted till they had appetite left for only the ice pudding which on such a hot day was most refreshing. Each fairy found in her share a precious stone again to match her dress. The yellow fairy got a topaz, the heliotrope an amethyst, the blue a sapphire, and so on till it came to Billy, who, after eating for some time, suddenly closed his white teeth upon something very hard and, taking it out and looking at it, found it was an opal with every one of the fairy colors combined gleaming in it.

All the fairies gathered round him and exclaimed, "That is a magic opal, and the owner of it will some day become chief of his tribe." Hearing this, he put it in his mouth under his tongue for safety, for, as he had no clothes, of course he had no pocket. The fairies then seeing he had no stocking to hang up, presented him instead, for a Christmas box, with a new boomerang, telling him it was a charmed one, so that whenever he wanted anything he had only to throw the weapon high into the air and it would return with the object of his choice and lay it at his feet.

THE BOOMERANG SOCKED HIM DOWN.

But alas, there was a wicked fairy not in presence through the length of a whole year, and though he heard about or saw the boomerang he had said all he could to the fairies to cool and had seen Billy place it under his tongue. So when the fairies, high in fairy glee, threw the boomerang, which, in the fullness of his Christmas joy, he had in the hurry to be off forgotten to take with him, the fairy ran in front of it and caught it in the hand as it came back, and when Billy followed him out of the garden to rebuke him Billy received no answer but his stone and cried for help, but the goblin knocked him down and beat him till he lost consciousness. Then the wicked creature forced open his mouth, stole the magic opal and ran away with it as fast as he could. When poor Billy recovered he soon heard that the opal was gone and guessed who had taken it, but he was in despair of ever finding it again, so sitting miserably on the ground, he opened his mouth wide and cried loud and loud. But this he soon found was a silly, useless thing to do. Just then he spied his boomerang, which he had quite forgotten, on the ground. He fairly leaped for joy, he picked it up, and, jumping to his feet, he threw it straight into the air.

Away it swung, and out of the sky, from the east, and from the north, from the south, from the west, it came back, and struck him down.

CAME FLOATING SWIFTLY BACK.

Again and again he threw it, and each time it came back and struck him down. Then he gave a cry of joy, for he saw that the boomerang was killing the goblin, and when it had killed him it came back to Billy, who, picking it up, threw it once more, and it came back with the goblin's body in its arms.

Billy leaped gladly left the fairy land together and journeyed on again over wood and dock and fence till at last he found himself back in the black camp where his little mia mia and aborigine companions were. When they found how successfully he could throw and the wonderful things the boomerang brought back he grew so very popular and rich that they at length made him chief of the tribe. Then he married a sweet little black girl with the tightest, tiny black curls and the blackest possible eyes. Round her neck he hung the magic opal, and as she wore it always they lived happily ever afterward.—Leslie's Weekly.

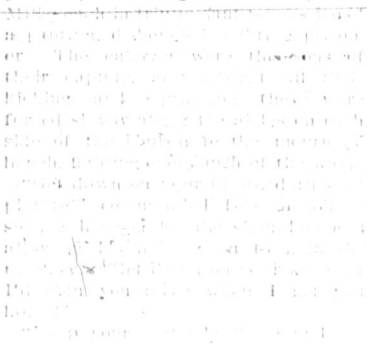
Why Not These For the Girl?

A signet ring, bangle bracelet, sash and hair bow sets, postcard album, die stamped monogram stationery, hand bag, sewing set in fancy case, music folio and rolls, a stunning leather belt or sterling silver buckle, a dainty pendant and thin gold chain, wood burning outfit, a camera, silk petticoat, a pair of white kid party slippers, a silk rubberized raincoat, roller skates, doll house, white spangled fan, leather desk set, metal trimmed pincushion and jewel box combined.

A MEMORABLE WATCH MEETING

NEW YEAR'S EVE came right in the middle of a series of "protracted meetings" which had been started in a little church in the northern part of Indiana some twenty-five years ago. The faithful few had been gathering night after night for a month, and a larger than a dozen persons had been [illegible] mourners' bench, including [illegible] backsliders. [illegible] hymn was announced and [illegible] been taken, and a [illegible] and young men [illegible] tween the door and the last row of seats.

As the hours slipped by and the end of the old year approached the service changed into a season of prayer and testimony. The little clock which hung on the wall behind the pulpit finally pointed to 11 o'clock, and the preacher arose to make one last impressive effort to reach the souls of the eternal torment. At his [illegible] the most ardent member of the congregation left their seats and [illegible] the audience, looking for a [illegible] vert.



"GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES, OR YOU'LL BE YOUR OWN JUDGE."

It was at this critical moment that an unlooked for [illegible] disturbed the passing of the [illegible] and lowered the [illegible] of [illegible]. Deacon Wiley and Mrs. had been so [illegible] as to approach the [illegible] crowd from the door and [illegible] that there was too much [illegible] and talking. They had even [illegible] two or three of the [illegible] that a failure to preserve [illegible] from the church. The effect of loud talking [illegible] reached the ears of the worshipers, and all heads turned toward the door. Loud cries and angry words, uplifted fists and stamping feet told that a [illegible] was taking place. Out of the [illegible] personally [illegible] Deacon Wiley and [illegible] a picture of [illegible] or. The cries were those of their [illegible] all [illegible] higher and higher [illegible] Deacon Wiley [illegible] "Who will be [illegible] to come for ward?" shouted [illegible] "Who will be [illegible] to come for ward?" shouted [illegible] [illegible] with a leap he [illegible] and, [illegible] to [illegible] Deacon Wiley [illegible] [illegible] leave [illegible] the corner of their wives. Let us all unite in prayer."

Instantly prayed Deacon Wiley, leading the low, murmuring chorus with a fervent entreaty to his son to forego the wickedness of the world and unite with the church. When Deacon Wiley ceased Deacon Mills began to pray aloud for his wayward boy. It was very funny to the crowd around the door, but after awhile something seemed to choke their laughter. Sister Mills' high pitched and quavering voice arose in prayer, and there was a pathos in her appeal that started tears into the eyes of the roughest rowdy in the crowd. Sister Wiley, unable to restrain her emotions, joined her cries with those of Sister Mills. Suddenly a wave of increased excitement swept through the congregation. Two of the youngest young men of the town walked slowly down the aisles and knelt at the low railing. They were hardly down when two more came forward.

Such a revival was never known before in the history of the church as the one which started with the watch meeting that night. Rev. Ebenezer Harker said to himself that it was due to his powers as an exhorter. Two mothers believed in their hearts that the efficacy of prayer had been demonstrated in a wonderful manner. But suppose those muscular fathers had remained inactive. Would the protracted meetings have lasted another week?

HELLO!

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