

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 hills 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 vine fences, wading bravely through creeks, water holes and broken undergrowth, where the snakes were very numerous and poisonous, till he found himself in a beautiful valley between a blue and a purple mountain. Approaching a vineyard, he asked an old gardener where the Christmas hills lay.

"Yonder?" said the man, pointing straight in front of them toward the blue mountain. "This is A-gra-glen." The little black boy was very hot and thirsty, for the sun had been beating fiercely upon him all the way along, so he begged a few of the round juicy grapes which hung in rich profusion on the vines.

"By all means," said the good natured gardener as he picked him the largest bunch he could find, ripe and inviting with the bloom upon them. Billy thanked him, saying he hoped some time to be able to return his kindness, and, taking the fruit, he continued his way with a light heart.

As he climbed and climbed, rising higher and higher, the ground grew smaller and smaller below him till he could not see the old man any more. Soon the hill became so steep and slippery that he was forced to draw himself up from tree to tree by holding first on to one branch and then another. Blue gum and wattles rose high above him in monotonous grandeur till he began to wonder where the Christmas trees and stockings were and how they grew.

"Give me some kind young!" said Billy, "I have been sick and hungry."

"I have been sick and hungry," said Billy, "I have been sick and hungry."

"I am a girl," said the other feebly. "Have pity."

Whomupon, moved to sympathy, he gave her all he had left.

"To his astonishment as she was eating this she turned into a lovely little queen all dressed in soft, shimmering blue, the color of the sky.

"As you have done me a service," she said, "I mean to reward you in the way you most want. You shall have a real Australian Christmas."

Billy was overjoyed and at her bidding followed her through the bush till they reached a wonderful garden filled 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 blue fairy 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 darkey boy; Give him pudding, fruit and toy; Sing and dance and merry make; Don't forget the Christmas cake; For the goodly darkey 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 (Gunter maid, so many that Christmas be 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 tinge 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 boom-erang, 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 GOBLIN KNOCKED THE AIR AND IT HIM DOWN.

But alas, there was a wicked little goblin peeping through from the back of a bush tree, and though he had not heard about or seen the boomerang, he had caught all regarding the magic opal and had seen Billy place it under his tongue. So when the little black boy had hidden the opal, taking the fairies for his Christmas feast, and started home again he was waylaid in the bush by the evil goblin, who had followed him out of the garden to rob him. Billy refused to give up 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 noticed 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 long and loud. But this he soon realized was a silly, useless thing to do. Just then he spied his boomerang, which he had quite forgotten, on the ground nearby, and remembering why the blue fairy had told him, he picked it up, and, jumping to his feet, he threw it swiftly high into the air.

Away it swung without touching the trees, and, sure enough, as the goblin, a couple of miles off, was just admiring his plunder, the boomerang flew it out of his hand before his very eyes and carried it back to the feet of its rightful owner. Billy shouted for joy, and, putting it once more in his mouth, he took his wonderful toy under his arm and sped down the hill. As soon as he reached the very edge of the garden he stood still at work, so, nothing but what he would have done as a token of gratitude for the present, the old man looked him up and down and exclaimed, "There is not such a little fellow like you could do for me."

"I can do very best," said Billy.

"Only one more thing, I must tell the president," said Billy, and he told the little man that he had lost in the bush a year ago.



CAME FLOATING SWIFTLY BACK.

Now when he told them the tale, he went wandering through the air as before, and for a few minutes it was a position, saying to himself, "I'll be home in a few days with a new toy for my little boy." Billy and his mother were sitting upon it. When Billy came down in his arms, and Billy triumphantly left them together and journeyed over paddocks 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, musical 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 placemat 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 not more than a dozen persons had knelt at the mourners' bench, including the church backsliders. When the meeting hymn was announced and these had been taken, and a dense crowd of boys and young men occupied the space between 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



"GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES OR I'LL BEAT YOU ALIVE!"

preacher arose to make one last supreme effort to reclaim some soul from eternal torment. At his direction the most zealous members of the congregation left their seats and mingled with the audience, looking for a chance to converse.

It was at this critical moment that an unlooked-for interruption disturbed the passing of the old year and marred the peace of the meeting. Deacon Wiley and Mills had been so bold as to approach the pious crowd around the door and suggest that there was too much laughing and talking. They had even dared to tell two or three of the leading spirits that a failure to preserve order meant election from the church. The sound of loud talking suddenly reached the ears of the worshippers, and all heads turned toward the door. Loud curses and angry words, uplifted fists and stamping feet told that a nerve struggle was taking place. Out of the tangled mess presently came Deacons Wiley and Mills, each in triumphant possession of a painting, disheveled, fighting prisoner. The captives were the seat of their captors, and amidst all their yelling and spluttering they were far off slowly along the aisles on each side of the church to the mourners' bench, flinging every inch of the way.

"Get down on your knees, damn your picture!" commanded Deacon Wiley, seizing his son by the shoulders and allowing his fist to rest on the deacon's chest. "Get down on your knees or I'll skin you alive when I get you home."

"Keep your seats, brethren and sisters," exclaimed Rev. Ebenezer Harker. "This younger man is sorry when his last day on earth is so saved after the way you have."

"There was a surprise if that is the case who told the preacher that Deacon Wiley, the wild one, had ever robbed a woman of her pocket money or his father's store, and that he had let the pigs to be on his shoulders. He said a terrible thing toward the woman, and that he saw his mother conversing with her. He meant to hurt her and saw her in company with a man, and he was the strongest which is able and to be able to sit down on his knees. At the same time 'Daddy' Mills went down under the pressure on his shoulders.

"Who will be the next to come forward?" shouted Rev. Ebenezer Harker, dancing back and forth before the pulpit with a joy he could not conceal. "The Lord bless these young men who have seen the error of their ways. Let us all unite in prayer."

Everybody 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 quivering 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 toughest 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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