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LITTLE MAKE-BELIEVE OR A CHILD OF THE SLUMS.

BY B. L. FARJEON.

CHAPTER V.

Continued.

"Ah," muttered Dexter, with a satisfactory sigh, "that's all right. But I wonder what it was?"

He walked slowly onward, somewhat uncertain of his footsteps—there was certainly something wrong with the pavement; it seemed to be loose—when he experienced a repetition of his dizziness.

This time he sank to the ground, in consequence of there being nothing substantial within reach for him to lay hold of, and a crowd immediately gathered around him.

Their voices acted like a charm upon him. He scrambled to his feet, and gazing at the people in a dazed condition, pushed through them unceremoniously, and in the course of half an hour succeeded in reaching his shop in safety.

While on the way he had left behind him, said with a laugh: "It's easy to see what's the matter with him!"

Dexter's movements, when he was in his shop, were guided by a kind of wise instinct.

The first thing he did was to put up his shutters and lock his street door.

The second thing, to place by his bedside as much bread as he found in his cupboard, and a jug of water.

The third thing, to make a large pot of tea.

The fourth thing, to undress himself and go to bed.

"I'll have a good long sleep," said Dexter, speaking confidentially to himself, "and I shall wake up in the morning quite well."

Then he drank a cup of hot tea. Then he said again: "I wonder what it was? I don't think I've eaten anything to disagree with me. It might be understandable if it was summer and a hot sun was blazing on my head. But it's winter, and a precious dismal winter, too. There was a frost setting in last night when that Little Make-Believe was running away with the pie. Rum idea, not to eat it herself. Almost as rum as finding myself here in bed in the middle of the day, instead of in the middle of the night. Shouldn't wonder if it was a rush of blood—yes, that's what it was, a rush of blood. Oh, Lord, here's my head going round again!"

Then he gave his head a great many shakes to bring it to a proper sense of its duty—he was really angry with it for its bad behavior—but it went round more than ever.

Then he looked at his father's night-cap, hanging scidly down from the rafters, and that was going round, too.

Then he looked at the little nest of drawers in a corner of the room, and that was going round, too.

Then he looked at the old armor, old brasses, old cravings, old lace, old enamels, old furniture, with which the room was crammed, and they were going round, too.

Then the ceiling went round, then the floor went round, then his clothes went round—how funny his muddy old boots, with his socks stuffed in them, looked, as they waltzed gravely in and out the goods.

A peculiarity of these proceedings was that, although every article in the small room was actually within his reach, they all seemed to be going round at a very long distance from him—just as if he were gazing at them through the thin end of a pair of opera glasses.

"Upon my soul," he said, "I feel like a teetotum." Suddenly, and evidently by some occult arrangement and understanding between themselves, everything stood stock still in its proper place and distance—boots, socks, nightcap, ceiling, floor, armor, brasses, enamels, etc.—there they were all of them as steady as a rock.

"This," said Dexter, with a weak little laugh, reaching out his hand to the teapot to pour himself out a cup of hot tea, "is about the rummiest thing that ever happened to me. Nobody would believe it of me, and I don't know—no, upon my soul, I don't quite know if I believe it of myself."

queer old faces of men and women and animals, which glided occasionally from the silent walls to have a close look at him; and when in his thoughts he asked them how they were, and whether they were enjoying themselves, they grinned and nodded at him, and seemed to say: "Very much, indeed, very much, indeed. And how are you, old fellow? and how are you enjoying yourself?" "Quite well, thank you," he replied, quietly. "Pray, don't stop on my account. Go round—go round. There's a number of little circles up there, and you'll just fit into them. And there's my boots waiting for partners. But upon my soul and body, if any little boy or girl would tell me what it all means, I give 'em a brand new farden. It won't last long, that's one comfort."

For it was all over once more, and every article in the room was as sober as a judge.

He felt so thirsty that he determined to have another cup of tea, cold as it was; but when he put out his hand he could not find the tea things.

He managed to crane his head over the bedside, and there upon the floor lay the teapot, cup and saucer, broken in a dozen pieces.

"Now, how did that happen?" he wondered; "not a moment ago they were as sound as I am, and I didn't hear anything fall. It's that confounded waltzing, I suppose. Enough to upset everything in the place. Never mind, I'll have some water."

But to say he would have some water was one thing, and to have some water was another. The water in the jug was a mass of ice.

To crawl out of bed and get a sharp-pointed knife and to crawl back again shivering and dig into the ice with the knife till he obtained sufficient to assuage his thirst, occupied him much longer than he supposed, for he had lost count of time, and intervals which he reckoned as so many minutes were in reality so many hours.

"I'm as weak as a kitten," he thought; "but come what will, I'll have some sleep, or I'll know the reason why."

So he winked at his father's night-cap, and saying, "If you're going to have another waltz, have the goodness to let me know beforehand," turned on his side and fell into a sleep less disturbed than he had previously enjoyed.

His dreams were not so extravagant, but were sufficiently fantastic.

His predominant fancy was that he was walking through scores and scores of alleys and courts and narrow streets for the purpose of asking the little boys and girls what it all meant.

Every one he asked returned the same answer, and to every one who answered him he gave a brand new fardening. The answer was: "Old Dexter's had a fever." Not "You've had a fever," but "Old Dexter's had a fever," as if he himself was somebody else.

"But look here," he said to a young imp with weak eyes and red hair; "I'm old Dexter!" "Gammon!" retorted the young imp, with scornful snap of his fingers.

"Did you ever see old Dexter going about as you're a-going on, with a sack of brand new fardens on his back, giving 'em away as if they was stones? You old Dexter. Tell that to the marines."

By which speech the dreamer knew that he carried on his back a sack filled with the new fardens he was giving away so liberally.

He did not find it at all an unpleasant sort of hump, and notwithstanding that there were thousands of fardens in it, it was as light as a bag of feathers.

He went about to other boys and girls, and tried to bribe them with admitting that he was old Dexter, and no other fellow; but he, them as he else—there they were all of them as steady as a rock.

"This," said Dexter, with a weak little laugh, reaching out his hand to the teapot to pour himself out a cup of hot tea, "is about the rummiest thing that ever happened to me. Nobody would believe it of me, and I don't know—no, upon my soul, I don't quite know if I believe it of myself."

He was surprised to find that the tea had got ice cold all in a minute.

"Here's another funny thing I don't quite believe," he said; "a minute ago the tea was boiling hot, and now it's as cold as charity. But I mustn't forget it's winter; that's what's making my fingers tremble so. Jolly cold—jolly cold. Yes, jolly cold as charity. No; that can't be right. Jolly cold as charity sounds topsy-turvy."

Loaves of bread, basins of soup, sheep's trotters, mutton chops, plum duff, pork sausages, mince pies, and goodness only knows what, which they immediately commenced to distribute among the thousands and thousands of poor children who started up like magpie on all sides.

The faces of many of these poor children were familiar to the dreamer, for he had seen them in his walks about the streets.

The most familiar figure in the throng was Little Make-Believe, who seemed to be ubiquitous, she was so continually repeating herself.

How eagerly they took the food from the birds, and how eagerly they ate and drank the good things!

What a chorus of thanksgiving filled the air! "Prime, ain't it?" "Here's a jolly go!" "Good luck ter yer!" "Warns a chap, don't it?" "Never had such a feed in all my born days!" "I wouldn't call the Emperor of Roosher my uncle!"

And they laughed and hoorayed, and the birds kept up a pleasant twittering all the time.

"What do you think of the sight?" asked the figure in the gray cloak. "It's beautiful!" exclaimed the dreamer, enthusiastically.

"Well, did old Dexter ever do such a thing?" "I don't remember," said the dreamer, considering a little, "that he ever did."

"It's worth doing, is it not?" "I should say it is. Listen to the little chaps."

"It seems to please you." "It does."

"Why," asked the cloaked figure, "did old Dexter never indulge in a pleasure so cheaply purchased?" "Now yer mention it," replied the dreamer, "I suppose it is because he never thought of it."

"Not a young man, this Dexter?" "Not at all."

"How old, should you say?" "Oh, I know, having lived with him so long. He's fifty-five."

"Fifty-five! And never thought of doing a charitable action?" "Perhaps he didn't have time," pleaded the dreamer.

"Not in all those fifty-five years? A large family of his own to occupy him, perhaps?"

"No," said the dreamer, with something like a sigh, "he has no family."

"No wife?" "No. Here, I say!" cried the dreamer, excitedly, as the phantom of Polly Cleaver glided past. "What are you doing here? I thought you was dead."

"To whom are you speaking?" "To one who was my wife for about a month. There she is—no, she's gone!"

"Dead to you?" "Dead to every one, so far as I know."

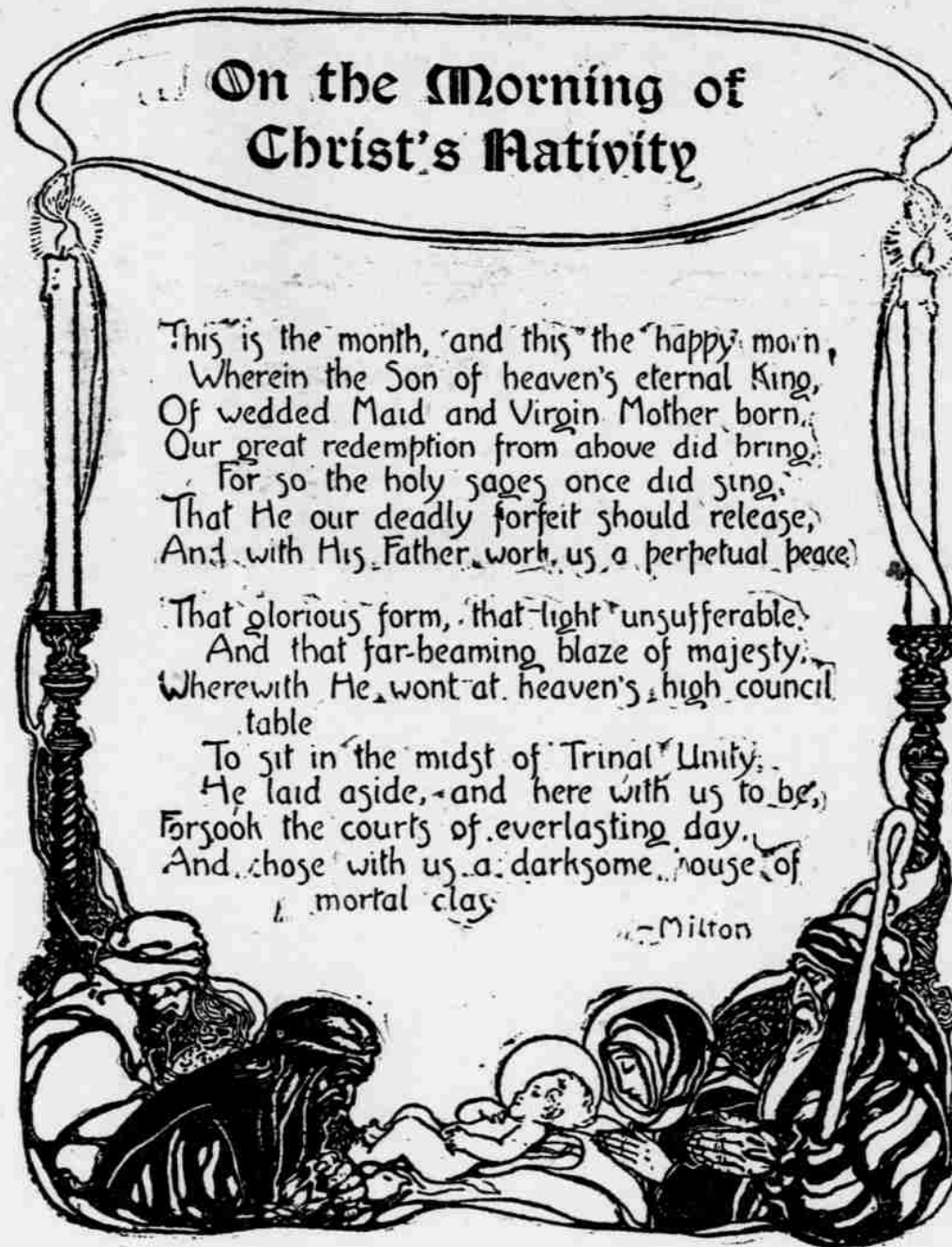
"And left no child behind her?" "None that I ever heard of."

"So you stand alone, without one human link of love to bind you to the world, without sympathy, without charity, without a spark of kind feeling for the suffering and helpless. Farewell!"

In the utterance of this word the children and the birds faded from his sight, and the dreamer found himself alone with the figure in the gray cloak, which was slowly moving away.

"But I say, old boy!" cried the dreamer, "you are rather hard on old Dexter. He isn't at all a bad sort of fellow. Upon my soul, he isn't."

He caught hold of the cloak, which fell from the figure, and the dreamer saw before him the form of a man shaped in ice, and on the region of the heart were inscribed the words, "Old Dexter's Charity."



The Ancestry of Santa Claus

HE jolly, portly, roistering old Santa Claus is in hot water. Preachers and parents are rising up against him, declaring that he is a fraud and as such ought to be suppressed. Thank heaven, a sporadic agitation like this can have no serious results. Recalcitrant parents and preachers will pass away, but Santa Claus will endure until the end, as he has endured from the beginning.

No one can say how old he is or at what period he made his first appearance among prehistoric men. The name of Santa Claus, by which he is known in America, is the Dutch pet name for St. Nicholas. The name Criss Cringle, by which he is known in England, is a corruption of Christ Kindlein, or the Christ child. But the festivities that distinguish Christmas existed long before Christianity, and a jolly god of good cheer appears as the personification of the period from the earliest pagan times. Now, the Santa Claus of to-day is simply that old jolly god sobered up, washed and purified.

The Dionysia of the Greeks, the Saturnalia of the Romans, the Twelve Nights of the old Norsemen and of the Teutons all celebrated the coming of the winter solstice. People then gave themselves up to all sorts of revelry and excess. In the Dionysia the representative figure was not the young Dionysus or Bacchus, but the aged, cheery and disreputable Silenus, the chief of the Satyrs, or the god of drunkards. In the Saturnalia it was Saturn, in the Germanic feasts it was Thor, both long bearded and white haired gods like Silenus.

Now, although the central figure of the Christmas festival is the child God, the Christ Kindlein, the influence of long pagan custom was too strong within the breasts of the early Christians to be easily superseded. The tradition of hoary age as the true representative of the dying year and its attendant jollifications still remained smoldering under the ashes of the past. It burst into new flame when the past was too far back to be looked upon with the fear and antagonism of the church, and there seemed no longer any danger of a relapse into paganism. At first, however, the more dignified representative was chosen as more in keeping with the occasion. Saturn was unconsciously rebaptized as St. Nicholas, the name of the saint

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity
This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring:
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.
That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith He went at heaven's high council table
To sit in the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome, house of mortal clay.
—Milton

whose festival occurs in December, and who, as the patron of young people, is especially fitted for the patronage of the festival which has come to be looked upon as especially that of the young. At first St. Nicholas did not supersede the Christ child, but accompanied Him in His Christmas travels, as, indeed, he still does in certain rural neighborhoods of Europe where the modern spirit has been least felt. St. Nicholas, according to the hagiologists, was a bishop of Myra, who flourished early in the fourth century. He is the patron of children and school-boys.

It is strange that everywhere St. Nicholas is most honored and his feast day most observed the most pious and instructed among the common people know little of the legend of the saint.



Christmas Eve in Brittany: the Little Carol Singers.

When the average visitor arrives in Brittany for the first time he generally rubs his eyes to find out whether he is asleep or awake, for he discovers a land so novel in its aspect, a people so quaint in manners, customs and clothes, that it all seems like a dream from which he will presently awake to the nineteenth century he certainly leaves one of the confines of this country are passed. Think of a low, flat land, with a strange growth of garbled, queer-looking trees, of great stretches of plains with dark, surging grasses, only now and then a low level of a thatched stone house, in which the natives and their live stock, particularly the pigs, dwell together.

It is a place of little joy of living, for the land is ungrateful, and it requires all the energies of the husbandman to get even the smallest return for his work. The poverty is appalling and beggary is on all sides. The peasants rarely eat meat because of its cost. They live mainly on a soggy black bread, which is broken up into

a soup made of a piece of suet stewed in boiling water. When the sardine is in season it is added, although this fish is generally eaten broiled, and when the chestnut comes all hands stuff at all hours of the day. The children dress just like the grown folks, and for both a single dress is kept most of their lives for the best, while on every day their collection of garments, save with the better classes, is remarkable.

But there are interesting customs that happen there, and have happened for, lo, these many years, since there is little change in Brittany. That of feeding the poor is a significant one, taking place on Christmas Eve, as well as at other times. Here comes the little ones of the poor to get their pieces of black bread and the boon of the good cure distributes without prejudice to all comers. The clank of the sabots is heard along the stone streets as these unfortunate children tramp up to the rectory, and the picturesque of the scene is emphasized by the opera bouffe clothes the suppliants wear.

Sometimes the beggar was a female. In Lower Austria she was called the Budelfrau. In Suabia it was the Berchel who chastised children that did not spin diligently with rods, but rewarded the industrious with dried pears, apples and nuts.

The female bogie survives, especially in Russia and in Italy. In the former place she is known as the Babushka, in the latter as the Befana. Befana is a corruption of Epiphania or Epiphany. For it is on Epiphany, January 6, that the Italian make presents to their children in commemoration of the gifts given by the three wise men to Christ on that date.—New York Herald.

MOTHER AND CHILD.



N. Barabino, a Living Italian Painter.

Each carries a basket. The devils blacken their faces and add horns of pigs' snouts or such other fantastic devices as the ingenuity of boyhood can devise. They are girt with chains, which they shake or rattle furiously. It is thought much better fun to be a devil than an angel, hence the number of the former is only limited to the number of boys who are able to command the necessary regalia. In the twilight of the evening of December 5 the good bishop and his suite begin their round of visits. It is the season for juvenile parties, and almost all the children of the village are collected in a few separate houses, each of which St. Nicholas visits in turn. He enters with the two angels, while his swartly followers are left to play their pranks outside. A great silence falls upon the children, and one by one they are called up and examined by the saint. This part of the evening's business is carried on with the greatest seriousness and decorum. Simple religious questions suited to the age of each child are propounded, after which it has to sing hymns and recite prayers. If the ordeal is successfully passed the angels present it with nuts and apples. If it fails it has to stand aside. When the examination is ended the devils are called in.

They are not allowed to approach the good children, but may tease and frighten the naughty ones as much as they like. They do this at first as a matter of duty. Duty is followed by the pleasures whose anticipation had caused them to collect—pleasures which consist in strange dances and antics, and in pursuing the larger girls with the attempt to blacken their faces. Their whole appearance is intended to be grotesque and farcical. For the entire evening they are allowed full license in the villages, though in some of the towns the festival has, for good reasons, been prohibited. For weeks before the eve of St. Nicholas a devil may occasionally be seen at the window of some cottage where the children are supposed to be naughty or their elder sister is known to be particularly attractive. It is proof of the sound nerves of the children that no harm comes from the ordeal.

When St. Nicholas has left the children return to their own homes, but they do not believe that the generosity of the saintly bishop has been exhausted. After saying their prayers and going to bed they place dishes or baskets upon the windowsill, with their names written within them, and in these their parents deposit small presents, which their little sons and daughters fancy he has brought.

In many places the beggar over-shadows in importance both the Christ child and St. Nicholas. He appears under different names and in different guises. In Lower Austria he is the frightful Krampus, with his clanking chains and horrible devil's mask, who, notwithstanding his gilded nuts and apples, gingerbread and toys, which he carries in his basket, is the terror of the nursery. In Hanover, Holstein and Mecklenburg he is known as Claus. In Silesia his name is Joseph.

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"I see now," he said, looking around at the fair young faces and sparkling eyes before him, "that Mr. Rockefeller is right when he says the country is still full of opportunities for our young men."—Chicago Tribune.

Wisdom's End. "While he was under thirty his parents had too much sense to let him marry."

"Yes," he was under fifty he had too much sense to wed."

"Now that he's eighty-five."

"Well?" "He's going to take a wife."—Houston Chronicle.

With the Funny Fellows



Pity the Poor Rich. Don't blame a man because he's rich. And has a lot of pelf; For if you don't watch out belike You may get rich yourself. —Judge.

Everything Else Is. She (on shipboard)—"Is the moon up, dear?" He—"If it isn't it's lonesome!"—Harper's Bazar.

A Comeback. Her—"I wouldn't marry you if you were the only man in the world." Him—"If I had any such crotch as that you'd never get the chance."—Cleveland Leader.

He Had His. Bleeker—"Cheer up, old man; there's a good time coming." Meeker—"Not for me. My wife is coming back from the country to-morrow."—Chicago News.

The Important Things. The Husband—"Why, my trunk is full of your shirt waists." The Wife—"Yes, I found there wasn't room in it for them and your clothes also."—Harper's Bazar.

Values. "After all a kiss is worth only what the contracting parties think it's worth." "Well, a girl's kiss is always worth its face value."—Philadelphia Press.

Evident. "How did you know that Blank is wealthy? I didn't mention it." "Yes, you did, indirectly. You said his brother-in-law was a duke. That's the same as saying that there's money in the family!"—Detroit Free Press.

Betrayal. Rodney—"Why do automobile men wear goggles?" Sidney—"If I tell you, you'll tell." Rodney—"Never; honor bright!" Sidney—"Well, it's to hide that scared look in our eyes."—Harper's Bazar.

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