

# GODFREY'S CHRISTMAS FIND

By DOROTHY DOUGLAS

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**T**HE spirit of Christmas was everywhere. In the great house on the hill Bridget, the cook, emboldened by that spirit, had come up from her domain and stood in the doorway of the drawing room with one large, red hand extended.

"I was after findin' this in the turkey, mum," she said. "It might and it might not be anything."

The family, busy on ladders and chairs, with Christmas greens, turned questioning eyes on Bridget.

"What is it, Bridget?" Mrs. Stone humored the cook.

"A bit of purple glass with some pictures on it, mum." Bridget having done her duty returned to her realm below.

"What is it, mater?" Godfrey Stone asked lazily.

After a moment of close inspection, by the window, Mrs. Stone spoke in tones of excitement.

"It is a rare amethyst with an initial engraved on it!"

"I scent a mystery!" laughed her son, rising to inspect the stone. "The initial is E. Does your butcher happen to—?"

"Oh, mamma, is this the turkey you got from the farm I told you of?" chimed in the eldest daughter, "because if it is—we could easily trace the owner of the stone. Godfrey can run over today—"

"Not on your life! Christmas Eve is not the day to chase around all the turkey farms in the village."

His sister's eye twinkled. "You would be out of the house by this



Like a Fairy Picture.

time if you had just seen the—turkey girl."

"Pretty?" Godfrey's tone was indifferent.

"So much so that I had fairly to drag Jim away when I took him with me to select our turkey."

"Perhaps," Godfrey suggested, meekly, "it would make the girl's Christmas more happy if the stone happened to be hers and was returned to her."

"Your Christmas spirit is very commendable," Mary put in dryly.

Godfrey laughed and took the stone from his mother. "Where is this turkey farm, Sis?"

"On the old farm road—you can't miss it."

Nor did Godfrey miss the little farm that stood like a fairy picture among groves of fir trees. The tiny cottage and outbuildings were of pure white and with their heavy thatch of snow there among the crystal hung branches of giant fir trees that were wonderful. Godfrey felt like a trespasser in the realm of fairies.

The impression was not withdrawn when the door of the cottage swung open. The Fairy Queen stood there, but she was not the sprite-like vision of dreams; instead, she was the embodiment of life and thrills and joy. Godfrey was decidedly disconcerted, but the girl's smile, together with her words, drew him within the tiny cottage. Outside all was white; inside all was suffused by the red glow from an open fire.

The girl's gentle voice broke Godfrey's very evident confusion.

"Did you want to inquire about turkeys?" She motioned him to the big low chair by the fire. In so doing, Godfrey caught sight of her left hand.

On her engagement finger there was a ring in which a yawning cavity marked the loss of a setting.

"No," he said finally, "I have brought this!" He held up the amethyst and watched the girl's face. A great light leapt into her eyes.

"How perfectly wonderful!" exclaimed Eleanor Deane. "But tell me—where did you find it and how?" Her questions tumbled from smiling lips.

"In the crop of a turkey," Godfrey informed her. Then despite his better judgment he added, "The bird was rather inconsiderate—to swallow your engagement ring—thinking it was corn." He attempted to laugh.

A quick color crimsoned Eleanor's cheeks. "An engagement ring is always very precious," she put in hurriedly. "I thank you for returning—mine." Her confusion over, Eleanor mentioned her occupation. "You see I have entire charge of my turkeys and it must have been in the mixing of their food that my amethyst dropped out. I mix it always with my hands. I hope the turkey Mrs.—" She paused in confusion.

"Mrs. Stone—my mother," Godfrey helped her out. Then because there seemed nothing more to say and because he seemed strangely depressed, Godfrey made his departure.

"Well!" demanded Mary Stone when her brother again sat by his own fire. "Isn't she lovely, and did you notice that sad look in her eyes? I heard in the village that the reason she took to raising turkeys is because she was engaged to some skate of a man—"

"Mary! What language!" expostulated her mother.

"Was?" Godfrey tried to keep the tone of his voice normal. "The amethyst was the setting from her engagement ring—she must be still engaged?"

Unaware of the tension with which her brother awaited her answer, Mary said lightly, "Well—maybe she still is—but the story in the village is that she broke off with him."

During dinner Godfrey remarked casually: "Mother—do you think Dad has done enough for his factory hands this Christmas? Wouldn't it be rather a good idea to send a basket to each of the families?"

Mrs. Stone, rejoicing that the philanthropic spirit was being made manifest in her son, smiled happily. "It would be lovely, dear—I will just send Perkins over to that very little farm and—"

"No, no—Perkins knows nothing about turkeys!" Godfrey said without glancing in his sister's direction. "I will go over tomorrow for some birds for the New Year."

"Christmas is not the day to chase around all the turkey farms in the village," quoted Mary.

Christmas day was crisp and sparkling when Godfrey again approached the tiny farm. The fairy queen opened the door and a tinge of color came swiftly to her cheeks when she recognized her visitor.

Godfrey, using all his common sense, first mentioned the factory hands and the turkeys that he wanted for them.

"You know," Eleanor told him, "that the birds have to be taken away when they are living—I can't bear to have it otherwise. I seem to love every bird." She looked appealingly up at Godfrey and laughed tremulously. "I have a good weep after each gobble's departure."

Godfrey turned swiftly away, then impatiently back. "Why do you—"

Eleanor smiled wistfully and a little slow shrug crept over her shoulders. "If you care to hear why—I will tell you," she said.

"I care—very much," Godfrey returned, and kept the tenderness out of his voice.

"It was essential—that I do something," she said. "I have been an orphan for many, many years and for almost as many years I have been engaged to a Mr. James Vane. Jimmy and I grew up together and have been sweethearts always. I never saved any money—because Jimmy always had plenty and it hadn't occurred to me that I would ever want—with him."

She paused and Godfrey remained silent, longing for, yet fearful of, the finish of her story.

"Well—Jimmy was one of the idle rich and in looking for a pastime took to gambling. He has been gambling ever since."

Godfrey turned his eyes from the sorrow in Eleanor's face; then he spoke aloud the words his heart was asking: "Do you—love him—now?"

"Yes. I love Jimmy and always will love him—but not—"

She found it impossible to go on with Godfrey's eyes fixed in so disturbing a way upon her.

"Not how?" he demanded.

"As a husband—"

Eleanor replied faintly.

"Then why wear his ring?" Godfrey again demanded.

"I told Jimmy, when he asked me to, that I would wear it out of sentiment until—"

Eleanor knew she would have to finish her sentence, so she hurriedly did what his eyes asked, "until—I loved some one better than I loved him."

"Well," Godfrey decided slowly, "you won't mind so much now that the setting is out—will you?"

"It is my birthstone and it means—contentment," Eleanor returned demurely.

Godfrey laughed happily and Eleanor joined him. The Christmas chime in two voices thrilled through the tiny cottage.

"I am at peace for the first time in my life," Godfrey said softly. "And it is all because it is Christmas and my mother bought a turkey that had swallowed an amethyst that belonged to—"

# REGINA'S CHRISTMAS TREE

By MOLLY McMASTER

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**R**EGINA gazed dependently out of the window.

A light snow was falling like millions of sparkling diamonds and pearls yet Regina saw nothing. Her Christmas tree had not come! It mattered not that the day was a wonder day and that the eve of Christmas was close at hand. Nothing mattered to Regina save the fact that she had promised her Sunday school class a glorious tree and that now there was no tree for them. Tears welled slowly into Regina's eyes and blurred the glittering landscape.

She argued with herself that she might have known that the New York shops could not be relied upon to send a tree to the suburbs at so short a notice, but that did not help the situation.

Regina shrank from facing those twelve little girls whose smiles would vanish in childish disappointment when they learned that the tree they had been promised was not to be theirs.

The tears brimmed over and fell. Regina's vision was cleared and in the clearing she gazed directly at the miniature fir tree in the vacant lot next door. A sense of keen delight swept over Regina. After all, her children would have a tree!

Some fifteen minutes later Regina appeared in outdoor costume. She had put on her gymnasium suit, high rubber boots and her father's great top coat. Over a riot of curls her snug fur cap fitted closely.

"You look for all the world as if you deserved your nickname," expostulated Regina's mother. "Regina, I do hope no one will see you."

"There's no one for miles around," Regina laughed and shouldered an ax. "Unless the people who live in the bungalow turn up—I will have the world to myself." She picked up a big tub with her free hand and trudged off toward the fir tree in the vacant lot.

Regina's eyes were too intent on her mission to see that a thin curl of smoke was twisting from the chimney of the bungalow that rambled in the lot beyond the vacant one.

Regina drew near the coveted tree and her heart expanded lovingly.

"What a little beauty!" she exclaimed half aloud.

The little tree was of special origin and stood not much higher than Regina. Over its branches a veil of smoke seemed to linger. After a moment spent in admiration, the girl put down her big tub and began to clear away the light fall of snow from about the roots of the tree. Her cheeks were gloriously red and the sparkle in her eyes rivaled the day itself.

When the snow was cleared Regina swung the great ax into the frozen earth. The ground scarcely responded to her strength. She swung again.

"Hey! What are you doing to that tree!"

Regina dropped her ax and gazed in the direction of the deep, gruff voice. A man was standing on the veranda of the bungalow.

Regina picked up her ax and with dignity swung it again.

"I say there, you—that tree belongs to me!" The man was coming toward her.

Regina stopped and turned. "This is a vacant lot," she called out with asperity.

The approaching male whistled. His speed quickened. He made an involuntary movement to raise a cap that in his haste he had forgotten to put on.

"I beg your pardon," his voice had lost the gruff quality. "I thought you were a man—but that tree is mine. I brought it up from my father's garden in the south." David Langhorn spoke rapidly. Regina's face was rather startling in its beauty and he had a desire to cover her embarrassment. "I have taken very special care of that tree."

"Very special," Regina said coldly. "I have lived here a whole summer and no one—"

"I have been away—lately."



"I don't see why you leave your poor little trees around in vacant lots," Regina put in hurriedly because she felt like crying now that her precious tree was taken from her.

"This is my lot," Langhorn told her. "If you had chopped down—I wasn't chopping it down—" Regina cried indignantly. "I was going to put it very carefully into this tub."

She stumbled over her words, but determined to tell this very good-looking man with the red hair that she was not a George Washington. "I ordered a Christmas tree by express and it didn't come. My Sunday school class—twelve little girls—are expecting a tree to-night in my house and now—" Words failed Regina. She bit her lip and looked appealingly up at Langhorn.

The man laughed because it was the safest thing to do for the present.

"And I have brought down twelve little settlement boys with the same promise—and nary a tree have I got. I reckoned on getting one in the village."

Regina laughed and the whole world seemed to echo the laugh.

"I have tried even the department store!" She gazed into David Langhorn's eyes. "I am sorry for the poor little souls whom we are disappointing—my class worked so faithfully all last summer."

"By Jove," David said. "I read once of some people who had a Christmas tree out of doors! They had great bonfires and the tree was lit by a thousand candles as well as the stars and a Santa Claus drove up over the real snow! Couldn't we do something like that?"

"With this tree! How perfectly glorious!" Regina, beside herself with joy, began to shovel away a greater clearing.

David took the shovel away from her.

"My kiddies will do that—it will be the treat of their lives." David looked seriously at Regina. "Now go home and get warmed up. This afternoon I will call properly and in the evening—Christmas Eve—" He did not finish with words for the hearts of both David and Regina were overflowing with good tidings of great joy.

That evening Santa Claus drove up through the crisp snow and opened his great bags before the little tree. It was a wonder tree there in the vacant lot and it was hung with a hundred electric bulbs. Six bonfires reared their flames skyward and around and about danced and capered twenty-four joyous children.

And when the moon was high in the heavens and the spirit of Christmas had entered into each heart, David and Regina drew the band of children about them and led the young voices in carols.

Still later when one tiny girl had cuddled herself into Regina's arms and two more had fallen asleep in David's there was only a duet of voices. David and Regina sang all the old English carols until twenty little kiddies had fallen into a happy sleep.

"For unto you is born this day.

"In the city of David, A Savior!"

The voices of David and Regina trailed into silence and they only looked at each other. Regina was the first to speak, the mother instinct prompting her.

"Perhaps we had better waken them now—the fires might get low."

David was silent a long moment, then he said slowly and reverently, "The fires will never burn low—Regina. This is the night when the Great Spirit of Love was born into our world."



**BEST TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS**

**They Should Suggest Action and Set the Mind of the Child at Work.**

In selecting toys for the children's Christmas, remember they should be such as to suggest action, and bring the imagination into play, as it is the child who plays, not the toy, and imagination is the soul of the play. The best toys are those which set the mind to work, and give the little brain scope for expansion. This is one of the strongest recommendations for the simpler toys. The wonderful mechanical toys sold in the shops are complete in themselves, and leave the child nothing to do but to wind them up and start them going. In this case, it is the toy that plays, not the child. Children soon weary of having nothing to do, and losing interest in the monotonous repetitions, the little inquisitive mind sets about investigating the internal mechanism, greatly to the damage of the toy, which is soon ruined and thrown away, while the child turns for amusement to the old toys that are so hopelessly undone that everything they are supposed to do must come from the play-spirit in the child.

# Paula's Christmas

By Helen Ross



**M**R. MERCER had been unusually silent throughout dinner and when at last the butler withdrew and the two were alone, he reached over and took his daughter's hands.

"Paula," he said quietly, "I'm afraid you won't like my Christmas present this year. I—"

"Never mind, father," interrupted the smiling girl, "if it has one diamond less than you wished, I'll survive the shock."

"If it were only that! Paula, I have always respected your common sense too highly to deceive you about business matters, so I will not conceal from you that the Casten deal went against me, and I am penniless. Every newspaper in town will have the details within a few days. I am an old man and do not care, but naturally my keenest regret is for you, though nobody can say that your old daddy didn't give up every cent he possessed for what he knew to be right and just."

Paula covered her eyes with her hand, while the father watched her anxiously.

"Don't take it hard, dearie," he begged. "We'll not starve, though it will be a struggle for a while."

"Father," she said calmly, "I am not taking it hard; I was only wondering how much we could scrape together to continue fighting. Men like Casten have no right on this earth. I'm ashamed to admit it, but as far as I am concerned, I'm glad, truly glad it's a blow for you, but don't worry about me. You know I always desired to make my own way, but it's next to impossible for a rich man's daughter. Then when I had to take mother's place, my hands were too full. All I care about is that we get enough to go after Casten. There's a Christmas party at Barham's tonight, but I'd rather stay here and talk things over with you."

"Polly girl, you have no idea how you have lightened my worry," said Mr. Mercer huskily. "I know you'd rather not, but by all means go to your party. It's most important that the true state of affairs is not suspected until absolutely necessary. I'll spend the evening across the street with Judge Simms. When your mother was alive, the judge and his wife and she and I never failed to celebrate Christmas eve together, and they'd be hurt if I stayed away."

Paula kissed him absently and ran upstairs to dress. She was far from underestimating the disaster, and the suddenness of it startled her.

"It's one thing to talk about earning your living and another thing to do it," she told herself. "You are a success so far because you are your father's daughter. It'll mean hard work. Still, work overcomes heart-aches and teaches one to forget!"

She brushed the powder-puff across her nose, and descended. At the door of the library stood Mr. Mercer.

"I forgot to tell you, Paula, that I found it necessary to put Dr. Grant in possession of the facts."

Paula turned away at mention of the young physician, and started towards the door.

"Good-night, dearie—have a jolly time!" called her father.

Paula swept into the waiting automobile and settling down for the long drive into the suburbs, rapidly evolved numerous plans, meanwhile noting the Christmas gayety on all sides. The air rang with the excited chatter of children returning from belated shopping or sight-seeing tours, and mingled with their merry voices were the subdued conversations of their elders. The sparkling snow, sleighbells, bright lights and holiday decorations struck a sympathetic note in her heart. The huge motor purred softly, and as Paula reached up to arrange the rich red ribbons which held hollywreaths against the glass doors and windows, her conscience smote her because of her real gladness.

"I'm forgetting what it means to poor father," she soliloquized. "It's no fun for a man of his age to start all over again."

A quick stop threw her on the floor, and by the time she had regained her feet and jumped out to investigate, the chauffeur was lifting a prostrate body from beneath the wheels. An awed crowd gathered swiftly. The chauffeur was exonerated from blame, as several men had seen the little newsboy run in front of the automobile and slip and fall on the snowy street.

"That's Tim Brown—he lives in Rose alley—just over there, ma'am," volunteered another white-faced newsy, stooping to pick up the scattered papers.

"I'll take him home," announced Paula bravely.

The sea of hard, strange faces surrounded her, and she felt sick and nauseated, but she quietly held out her arms for the poor child who lay crawling in the chauffeur's gentle grasp.

A tall young man stepped briskly through the crowd, and made his way to her side.

"Oh, Doctor Grant—I'm so glad you're here!" exclaimed Paula impulsively.

"More terrified than injured," announced the doctor after a hurried examination. Then turning to Paula, "I saw it happen from a distance up the street and recognized your car."

Assisting Paula into the motor, he made the child comfortable on her lap and stepped in with her.

"I'll report to you later, Paula," he called to the policeman, who immediately permitted them to drive away.

In a few minutes they were at the stricken home. A tired, resigned woman opened the door, and after the doctor's tactful explanation, she gratefully accepted this last blow which kind fate had seen fit to administer.

While Doctor Grant and the mother were working over the boy, Paula's quick eyes took in every detail of the bare home. Christmas for the many little Browns promised to be scanty. A kind neighbor had taken the other children to her home, so Paula's presence was unnecessary. She slipped out of the house, gave the chauffeur a few instructions and as he drove off rapidly, she sought a nearby telephone booth and after ten very satisfactory minutes, was back at the house. Her phone calls were to certain toy dealers and caterers, and long before the doctor was ready to go, the chauffeur had shyly dragged baskets and bundles of all sizes and shapes into the wee kitchen.

At last Dr. Grant was ready to leave.

"May I ask for a lift, Paula?" he asked wearily. "I have had a hard day. I told Mrs. Brown that you



"That's Tim Brown—He Lives in Rose Alley."

would be around to see her tomorrow and also to watch Tim eat his Christmas dinner. In a week he will have forgotten what happened." As they turned into the brilliantly lighted avenue, he happened to glance at her evening cloak. "Oh, how stupid of me! to let you go so far out of your way when you are going to the Barhams."

"No, I'm going home. I've had enough for one night," answered Paula with averted face.

Now that she remembered her own trouble, she felt a strange shyness with this man who was in the secret of their financial wreck. The silence became awkward—somehow there seemed nothing to say.

"Paula," began the doctor abruptly, "I have heard of your misfortune, and now I feel free to ask you to be my wife. I realize—please don't interrupt until I have finished—I realize that you will take steps to support yourself at once, but I need you too much to allow that."

Paula's heart leaped violently, but the elation was brief. The sweetness speedily turned to bitterest misery.

"Why does this occur to you tonight of all nights? It would seem as if you were doing this out of charity," commented Paula coldly.

"No, Paula, out of esteem. I am poor, but I have enough for two. You certainly understand why I have not spoken before;—a Paula Mercer could hardly be expected to share a young physician's precarious income."

He appropriated her reluctant hand. "And so you allowed your pride to come between us? No, I thank you for the honor, Dr. Grant, but I have some pride, too."

"Paula," pleaded the young man miserably, "if you only knew the battles there have been between my wretched pride and my love. I need you so much, Paula."

"If I were you I'd engage a competent housekeeper," Paula remarked sarcastically. But her heart ached as she said it.

"Don't, don't, dear," entreated the doctor. "Those things hurt too much from you! Can't you love me, Paula? Please see how infinitely I worship you."

"Why didn't you say that before?" Paula whispered unsteadily. "You said esteem, and what girl in her right senses desires esteem when she's yearning for love?"

"And I'm yearning for a kiss; we'll soon be at your home, but I can't wait until then!" exclaimed the doctor happily.