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THAT BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS
BY **FRANK H. SWEET**

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It was the night before Christmas—and stormy.

"Squash, squash!" went the wheels of the carriage in the mud.

"Whew-ew-ew" whistled the wind. And it blew Peter's hat out into the middle of the road.

"Whoa!" yelled Peter and climbed down from his high seat.

The princess poked her head out of the window. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"My hat blew off," Peter told her, and the wheel is stuck in the mud, miss."

"Oh, Peter, Peter!" the princess chided. "You must get that wheel out of the mud at once."

"Which is easier said than done," Peter grumbled. "It's that dark I can't see my hand before me."

"There's a light back there among the trees," the princess informed him. "Perhaps you could get some one to help you."

"I'll go and see, miss, if you ain't afraid to stay alone," said Peter, after



"DID YOU EVER SMELL ANYTHING SO GOOD?" SHE ASKED.

some effort succeeding in quieting the plunging horses.

"I am dreadfully afraid," she admitted shiveringly, "but I suppose you will have to go."

"The night before Christmas, when all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,

While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.

"But our stockings weren't hung yet, and we weren't in bed," said Jenny.

nurse a sick neighbor, and she won't be home until morning."

So Peter went back to the carriage and reported to the princess.

"I shall freeze out here," said the princess. "I will go up to the house and sit by the fire while you look for some one to help you with the carriage."

She climbed out of the carriage, and with Peter in the lead she plodded through the woods, and the wind blew her long coat this way and that, and at last, wet and panting, she came to the little house.

And once more Peter knocked, and once more Jenny came to the window. Then she flung the door wide open, and so tall was the princess that she had to stoop to enter it. It was a dingy little room, and there was a dumpy black stove in the corner, with a bubbling iron pot that gave forth a most appetizing odor.

"Oh, oh, how nice and warm it is!" said the princess as she held out her hands to the fire.

In all their lives the little girls had never beheld such a wonderful person, for the princess wore a long red cloak and a black velvet hat, with a waving plume, and her muff was big and round and soft, and she had a scarf of the same soft fur about her neck. Her hair was pale gold, and she had the bluest eyes and the reddest lips, and her smile was so sweet and tender that Jenny ran right up to her and cried, "Oh, I am so glad that you came!"

Jessie from her little chair echoed her sister's words. But she did not run for there was a tiny crutch beside Jessie's chair in the square window.

"And I am glad to be here," said the princess, whose quick eyes were taken in the details of the shabby room. "It's so nice and warm and cozy."

"Isn't it?" said Jenny happily. "And we are getting ready for tomorrow."

On a small round table beside Jessie's chair was a tiny cedar bush, and Jessie's fingers had been busy with bits of gold and blue and scarlet paper.

"We are going to pop some popcorn," Jenny explained, "and string it and hang it on the tree."

"Oh, may I help?" the princess asked. "I haven't popped any corn since I was a little girl."

Jessie clasped her thin little hands. "I think it would be the loveliest thing in the world," she said, "if you would stay."

"Peter is going to find some one to help with the carriage, and I will stay until he comes back."

And when Peter had gone the princess slipped off the long red cloak, and underneath it she wore a shining silken gown, and around her neck was a collar of pearls.

"And now if you will lend me an apron," she said, "we will pop the corn."

But Jessie and Jenny were gazing at her speechless.

"Oh, you must be a fairy princess!" gasped little Jessie at last.

The beautiful lady laughed joyously. "Peter calls me the princess," she said. "He has lived with me ever since I was a little girl. But really I am just an everyday young woman and am going to spend Christmas with some friends in the next town."

She dismissed the subject with a wave of her hand.

"And now to our popcorn," she said. Jenny brought a green gingham apron, and the princess tied the apron on, making a big butterfly bow of the strings in the back, and then she danced over to the dumpy little stove and peeped into the bubbling pot.

"Did you ever smell anything so good?" she asked. "I am as hungry as a bear."

The little girls laughed joyously. "It's bean soup," Jenny said, "and we are going to have it for supper, with some little dumplings in it. I was afraid it wasn't nice enough for you."

"Nice enough!" the delighted lady exclaimed. "I think bean soup and little dumplings are—um—um!" And she flung out her hands expressively.

"I thought," Jessie remarked faintly, "that fairy princesses only ate honey and dew."

"Which shows that I am not a true princess," said the beautiful lady, "for honey and dew would never satisfy me."

Jenny got out three little blue bowls and set them on a table that was spread with a coarse but spotless cloth. There were a crusty loaf and clover sweet butter, and last and best of all there were the bean soup and the bobbing little dumplings served together in an old mulberry tureen.

It was perfectly wonderful to see the princess in her shining gown at

the head of the table, and little lame Jessie said: "You were just sent to us for Christmas. Why, it's just like—"

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In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

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"It was too early for that," said the



princess, "but let's go on with the rhyme, just for fun. I see you know it all through, so you mustn't mind my changing it a little:

"When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter

Jenny sprang from her chair to see what was the matter.

Away to the window she flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

When what to her wondering eyes should appear

But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer!

"Oh, no; I forgot! I mean—"

"When what to her wondering eyes should appear

But a carriage stuck in the mud right out here

And a little old driver, so lively and quick

You must have thought Peter was dear old St. Nick."

The children laughed gleefully, and Jenny said: "We would have thought that, only we aren't going to hang up our stockings this Christmas at all, Jessie and I aren't going to get any presents, for mother hasn't been well, and she couldn't get any sewing. But she said we could make our Christmas merry, and we were to pretend that we had been to the big stores in the city and had bought things for the tree and dolls and everything."

"That's a lovely way," said the princess gently, and she laid her hand, with its flashing rings, over Jessie's thin ones.

"And we are going to pretend," Jessie said, "that our chicken is turkey."



"QUIETLY, QUIETLY, PETER," WARNED THE PRINCESS.

But we won't have to pretend about the mince pie, for mother has made a lovely one."

"I wish I could help you eat the chicken," said the princess wistfully, "and I should like to meet your mother. I know she is lovely. And I haven't any mother, you know."

"Oh!" said the little girls, round eyed with sympathy. And then the princess told them that all her life she had lived in a big, lonely house and she had always yearned for a cozy home and for a sister.

After supper they popped the corn, and just as they finished in came Peter.

"I can't find any one to help, miss," he announced, "and it's snowing. I'll have to unhitch the horses and go

Storm Wrought Havoc on New England Coast

The Tide Was the Highest Since 1851, and Hundreds of Centers on Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Flooded.

Boston, Dec. 26.—Grim winter swept into New England today on the wings of a Northeast storm with such terrible force as to cause great damage, much inconvenience, not a little suffering and a few deaths. The gale drove a tide into Massachusetts Bay which nearly equalled that of the famous storm of 1851. A heavy wet snow prostrated all wires throughout the Southern sections, railroad trains were stalled, and three persons lost their

lives in Everett and Chelsea by the sudden rise of the tide.

The big tide was the feature of the storm. Coming on full moon the gale rolled a wave along the coast which, in some places, reached a height of over fourteen feet above low water mark, only being exceeded by that which swept the coast at the time Minots Light was swept in April 1851.

In this city the tide went across Atlantic Avenue on the waterfront filling hundreds of cellars and causing

back to town and get something to take you over in."

"No," the princess demurred as she stood in the middle of the room with a heaped up dish of snowy kernels in her hand. "No, Peter, I'm going to stay here all night."

Peter stared, and the little girls cried, "Oh, will you?"

And the princess said: "I really will. And, Peter, you can bring up the steamer trunk and my bag."

"Won't your friends expect you, miss?" Peter inquired, as if awaiting orders.

"I will send a note by you," was the calm response. And as the man went out she followed him and shut the door behind her. "Oh, Peter, Peter!" she whispered confidentially. "I am going to give them such a Christmas!"

"The little girls, miss?"

"Yes. They are so sweet and brave! And I have the presents in my trunk that I was going to carry to the other children. But they will have so much that they won't miss them, and I shall spend my Christmas in a plain little house, but it will be a joyful house, Peter."

"Yes, miss," Peter agreed understandingly.

"I wish we had a big tree," said the princess regretfully.

"Well, leave that to me, miss," Peter told her eagerly. "You just get them little things to sleep early, and I'll be here with a tree."

"Oh, Peter, Peter—Santa Claus!" exclaimed the princess gleefully. "It will be the nicest Christmas that I have had since I was a wee bit of a girl."

So Peter went away, and the princess, with her eyes shining like stars, danced back into the room and said, "Oh, let's play mariners!"

Jessie and Jenny had never heard of such a game, but the princess told them that she was a ship on the high seas and that they were to tell from her cargo what country she hailed from.

"I carry tea," she began. "Where do I hail from?"

"China," guessed Jenny.

"No."

"Japan," cried Jessie, with her little face glowing.

"No."

Then the little girls pondered. "It might be India," ventured Jenny, but the princess shook her head. Then Jessie cried, "It's Ceylon!" And that was right.

And after that Jessie brought a cargo of oranges from Florida and Jenny

brought a cargo of rugs from Persia, and there were cargoes of spices and of coal and of coffee and of fish and of grain and of lumber, and the princess finished triumphantly by carrying a cargo of oysters from the Chesapeake bay.

"One more," begged Jessie.

"I carry a cargo of castles," said the sparkling princess. "Where do I hail from?"

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an estimated damage of over \$1,000,000.

In Everett, Cornus Harkin, and his wife were caught in their beds and overwhelmed by the flood, while an infant lost its life in Chelsea under similar circumstances. In many places along the coast, persons were taken from their homes in boats, hundreds of summer cottages were undermined, bulkheads were destroyed, and persons living some distance from the coast found themselves looking over the ocean.

and at last the princess said:

"That wasn't a fair one, really, for my castles are castles in Spain."

Then, with Jessie in her arms, she told them of her own castle building, and when she had finished she said, "And so your mother shall have all of my sewing, and that will keep her busy until spring."

"Oh, you are going to be married and live happy ever after!" sighed Jessie rapturously. "It's just what a fairy princess should do."

"And what you should do," said the princess, looking at the clock, "is to go to bed, bed, bed, so that you can wake up early in the morning."

She tucked them in and came back later in a fascinating pink kimono, with her hair in a thick yellow braid, and she kissed them both. But it was little lame Jessie that she kissed last. And then she went away like a glaucous vision, and the little girls sank into slumber.

In the next room the princess opened the door cautiously, and there was Peter with snow all over him, and his arms were full of holly and mistletoe, and a great tree was propped against the doorpost.

"Quietly, quietly, Peter," warned the princess, and Peter tiptoed in and set the tree up in the corner, and its top reached to the ceiling.

The princess opened the steamer trunk and took out two white Teddy bears, one with a flaring blue bow and the other with a flaring pink one, and then she took out a green and a yellow and a red and a blue fairy book and a beautiful square basket of candy, tied with holly ribbon, and then, from the very bottom of the trunk she drew string after string of shining little silver bells, fastened on red and pale green ribbons.

"I was going to get up a cotillon for the children at the other house," the princess explained to Peter, "but these little folks need it so much more."

"The little bells went 'tinkle, tinkle,'" as Peter hung them, and Jessie,

"You poor little thing!" cried the little mother to the tall princess, and the beautiful lady put her head down on the other's shabby shoulder and wept, because in spite of her riches she had been very, very lonely in her big house.

And after Peter had gone they talked until midnight of Jessie and Jenny, and then they concocted great plans about the pretty things that the little mother was to make for the princess.

And in the morning Jessie and Jenny, waking in the early dawn, saw sitting on the footboard of the bed two Teddy bears, one with a flaring pink bow and one with a flaring blue bow, and the Teddy bears held out their arms sanely and gazed at the happy little girls with twinkling eyes.

"Oo-oh!" cried the little girls, who had never seen a Teddy bear before. And that was the beginning of the most wonderful day of their lives, for all day the tree went 'tinkle, tinkle,' as they foraged in its branches for bonbons. And the chicken dinner was a delicious success. And in the afternoon they all took a ride in the princess' sleigh, with Peter driving on the box, and when at last he set them down on their own humble doorstep, and lifted little Jessie in his arms the princess smiled at them radiantly from under her plummy hat.

"Remember, Peter will come for you every Saturday, and you are to stay at my house all day," she said.

"Oh, yes!" Jenny sighed, with rapture.

"And you are to come to my wedding in the spring—all of you," said the princess gayly.

"And see the prince!" said Jessie over Peter's shoulder.

"And you are going to let me share a third of your mother?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" from both of the little girls.

"Then you shall share a third of Peter," the princess called back as the smiling coachman drove her away through the glistening snow.

"YOU ARE THE LITTLE MOTHER," SAID THE PRINCESS.

dreaming in her little bed, heard the sound and thought it a part of her dream.

And while Peter and the princess trimmed and whispered and laughed some one rattled the doorknob.

Peter opened the door, and there stood a white faced, shivering little woman.

"Oh, what has happened to my little girls?" she panted. "I saw the light, and it is so late." Then as she beheld the golden haired vision in pink and the gay tree and Peter in his trim livery she gasped, "Why, I believe it is fairies!" And she sat down very suddenly in Jessie's chair.

"You are the little mother," said the princess as she knelt beside her and put her arms around her and told her how she came to be there, and when she had finished she said simply, "And

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