



## The Evergreen Girl

By Marston Mercer

VERY early about the middle of November a small girl appeared near the door of the Thomas cottage which bore the legend, "The Evergreen Shop."

Every year during the Christmas season Ruth Thomas made hundreds of evergreen wreaths, which she sold for Christmas decorations. This was why the people of Briery called her the evergreen girl.

The day before Christmas Ruth sat in her little shop finishing the last wreath she would make that season. "There!" she said, deftly twisting a sprig of bright red berries among the evergreen stems, "that finishes Helen Stanwood's order, and thank goodness it's done in time. Oh, dear!" she sighed, laying the wreath aside. "I do wish I could spend one Christmas time enjoying myself as others do. Why, there has not been anyone here over the holidays since I can remember, and I have not been to a Christmas party in years—not since the time I went over to Dolly Blair's with Dane."

A warm color suddenly glowed in the girl's cheeks and there was a soft light in her brown eyes as she thought of that memorable night.

Dane Stanwood had taken her to that party. Once during the evening he caught her as she was standing under the mistletoe bough, and the sudden roar of a high-power automobile broke in upon Ruth's musings, and she looked out in time to see a long blue roadster flash past the gate.

The car belonged to Dane Stanwood. Shortly after the Christmas party at Dolly Blair's Dane had gone West to become a mining engineer. He had written a few lines to Ruth and then the letters had stopped coming, and she had not heard from him for nearly four years. Then, just a month ago,



"The Girl I Expect to Marry is Here," he had suddenly appeared in Briery with the blue racing car. Soon it was rumored that he had made a fortune in the mines.

The second week after his return Stanwood bought the old Blair mansion and gave the information that he intended to move into his new home before Christmas. Next he announced that preparations were under way for a party which he was giving Christmas eve.

The evergreen girl had been surprised and a little bit hurt, because Dane had not even called. She had thought it strange, too, at first, that she did not receive an invitation to the party, for she knew nearly every one in Briery was going.

But when Ruth was told the party was to be given in honor of Stanwood's fiancée, she understood why she had not been invited.

"That is why Helen Stanwood didn't mention the party when she ordered these wreaths," Ruth thought, as she began tying them together. "Of course, I would not go anyway now. My, but they will have to hurry if they hang all these wreaths before eight o'clock."

The evergreen girl was so busy getting the Stanwood order ready that she did not notice that the blue roadster had returned and stopped by the gate. Neither did she observe the broad-shouldered young man who was striding up the path.

"There!" Helen now, after the wreaths, Ruth thought, and she ran to the door. Dane was standing in the porch.

"Why, Dane!" she exclaimed, drawing back in confusion. "How you startled me. I thought it was your sister, and—"

"Helen has gone to Balford to meet a friend who is to spend the holidays with us," said the young man, "so she sent me after the wreaths." He smiled down at the girl. "This is the evergreen shop, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Ruth, forcing a smile in return.

"And you are the evergreen girl?"

"I believe they call me that," she answered.

"Well," said Stanwood, "I told me to be sure and fetch you back with me when I returned."

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"Back with you!" echoed Ruth. "Really! I—I can't go. There is so much to do here, and—"

"Booh!" laughed Dane. "Of course you will go back with me. Fact is you'll have to." He waved his hand as Ruth started to speak. "No excuses now, for I won't listen to 'em. You see," Stanwood went on, "I and my friend were supposed to help get things ready for the party tonight, but she telephoned just as I was leaving the house that the train on which her friend was to arrive is very late. She may not get back until nine o'clock, and the party begins at eight. I told her I could never get things ready in time for the decorating isn't half done. Then she happened to think of you, and I said right off that you would be just the one to help us out. You're not going to disappoint us, are you?" very anxiously.

"Well, perhaps I can go for a little while," said Ruth. "I do dearly love to trim that Christmas tree."

"Of course, I won't stay to the party," she thought as she hurried upstairs after a wrap, "so I won't see Dane's sweetheart, for of course she is the one Helen is to meet at the train. And I really ought to help Dane and his sister out, for they have been such good customers."

Dane ushered Ruth into the big double parlors of his new home, where the Christmas tree had been placed. "Do you suppose," he asked, pointing to a small pile of evergreen at one end of the room, "we'll be able to hang all these wreaths and then decorate the tree before eight o'clock?"

The evergreen girl gave a merry little laugh. "I am sure we can if we work fast," she answered. "I am used to this work, you know, and with your help it won't take long."

"How long have you been the evergreen girl?" Dane asked, as he and Ruth were trimming a chandelier.

"This is my third season," Ruth replied. "I found that there was a big demand for wreaths and hural trimmings during the Christmas holidays, so three years ago I opened an evergreen shop. I love to do this kind of work, and although the season is a short one, my little shop pays well."

The evergreen girl might have added that, more than this, the rush of work just at Christmas time helped her to forget the dull ache in her heart which was always so hard to bear during the holidays. She said nothing of this, though, but asked, instead:

"Tell me, Dane, how you have spent Christmas while you have been away. Have you been where there was much merry-making?"

"For the past three years," said Stanwood, "I've celebrated Christmas by working from dawn till dark. This is the first enjoyable Christmas eve I have known since I left Briery."

"It has been a very pleasant evening for me, too," said Ruth, "and I have enjoyed it ever so much. Now we'll trim the Christmas tree, and then

you can take me home and get back in time for the party."

At half-past seven Dane surveyed the big double parlors with satisfaction. With the help of the evergreen girl he had finished the decorations and everything was in readiness for the guests.

"The rooms look at Dolly Blair's Christmas tree—even the mistletoe bough," said Dane. "Don't you remember how that one hung right over our heads, as this one does now?"

The evergreen girl was silent. "Had you forgotten, Ruth?" he persisted.

"No," softly, "I had not forgotten."

"You never thought I had forgotten, did you, dear?"

"But you never wrote, Dane."

"Because for a long time I was miles from a railroad or post office and could not send any mail. But I've thought of that night, though, and all these years I've been planning to have a Christmas party as much like that one as I could, only this one tonight will be for you."

"But isn't the friend who is coming with Helen your fiancée?" faltered Ruth.

"Not exactly," laughed Dane. "That friend is Harry North, Helen's fiancé. The girl I expect to marry is here, now, and, by Jove! I've caught her again standing under the mistletoe bough."

### When Christmas Sings.

It is a song,  
It is a smile,  
It is that long  
Dream "Afterwhile,"  
That season sweet  
When we rise  
Our hearts to meet  
The splendid skies  
With love and faith  
Of better things—  
When Christmas sings,  
When Christmas sings!

### The Greatest Quality.

The Christmas message tells us of God's fatherhood. It is no cold heart that waits us when we turn to gratitude and prayer. God has always loved us; he loves us still. Every true Christmas thought and gift is an expression of that divine love which has made our own love possible. Every claim upon our mercy and our generosity is a call to become like Christ. All the enduring qualities of the human spirit were present at the manger: "But the greatest of these is love."

### One Advantage.

"What does it profit a man to have a million dollars if nobody wishes him a happy New Year?"  
"Of course, he's rather to be pitied, but he is certainly in a position to consume more champagne on New Year's eve than the man who has no money and whose friends are as poor as himself."

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## A Stitch in Time

THERE is a homely old proverb which tells us that "a stitch in time saves nine."

If the man who said it first had been thinking of health, he would probably have said that a stitch in time saves nine hundred and ninety-nine, so important is it to repair those first tissues that become impaired by ill-health.

This is no new doctrine. It is as old as man. Unfortunately to paraphrase another proverb, we too frequently put off until to-morrow what we ought to do to-day.

Failing to repair the first tissues that need repair, allowing the malady to continue unchecked, other tissues become impaired, for all parts of the body are sympathetic.

The trouble spreads. And—then comes the rent. Nervous disorders may show themselves in various ways, such as sleeplessness, headaches, neuralgic pains, nervous prostration and exhaustion, while later developments take the form of paralysis, locomotor ataxia, or some form of helplessness.

Strangely enough—all these symptoms are preventable, if that stitch had been taken in time. It is here that Dr. Chase's

Nerve Food becomes important. We do not say that it is the only means of preventing the rent, but we do say that many years of experience have proved its value as a repairer of wasted nerve tissues that have become weakened by overwork, anxiety, or other causes.

When we say that the value of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food has been proved we are speaking by the book. We might, at considerable length, tell you why Dr. Chase's Nerve Food will make that stitch if taken in time and prevent the rent, but we have always proceeded upon the idea that people are more interested in knowing what has been done in cases similar to their own.

Mrs. W. T. Abbott, 536 Paterson street, Peterboro', Ont., writes: "My system was in a run-down condition, and I was troubled with nervousness and sleeplessness. For some time also I had been bothered with neuralgia, and although I tried many remedies, it was without success. Upon the advice of a friend I commenced using Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, and soon found that my neuralgia was cured, and I have not been troubled with it since. I also find that now I can eat and sleep well, and I give full credit for this great benefit to Dr. Chase's Nerve Food. I might also mention that I had lost considerable weight, but after using the Nerve Food I gained back the flesh I had lost."

You can obtain Dr. Chase's Nerve Food from any dealer at 50 cents a box, six for \$2.75, or from Edwin J. B. & Co. Ltd., Toronto.