

The costume was exceedingly simple, but a connoisseur would not have been deceived thereby as to its real value.

Before her on the table lay a costly trifle, a gift which had been presented to her a few days before by the dames of a benevolent society of the city. It was in the shape of a pendant, and its heart was a cluster of pearls which gleamed softly from their bed of tender, moss-green satin. After toying with it several moments, as if to try its effect against the lace of her dress, she replaced it in its box and restored it to the top drawer of the dressing-table.

Presently lifting her head with that curious instinct which warns us that a living presence is near, Miss Jane encountered the round, wondering eyes of the street urchin, whose presence in her office had so perturbed her thoughts. At sight of the lady in her gorgeous array, standing in the centre of the softly lighted room, with the red glow of the grate flickering over her wonderful hair and dress, he clasped his little blue hands in an ecstasy of joy.

"Oh, my last angel! My very last angel of all! Now I have found you! I knew you lived in this house."

It was as if a beautiful dream, long cherished, was coming true. The child's eyes were wonderful as he drank her in, their owner evidently making no connection between the brusque, strictly-tailored woman of business in the outer office, and the dream-lady with the shimmering lights in her hair. "I'd like to sing you a piece," said the child, confidently, as he sidled a little nearer the glowing grate.

Again speech failed the caustic tongue of Miss Jane. She sank into an armchair, and the child stood bravely up on the hearth-rug and put his hands behind his back.

"Christmas time has come again,
Christmas bells are ringing;
Let us join the holy songs
Angels now are singing."

HE took the final run with considerable spirit now, because he was warmer. It was a very true little soprano voice that carried the carol along to its close. Miss Jane listened willingly, though she was beginning to know the words by heart.

The last lines were particularly appealing:

"Soon before our Father's face,
Tuneful praises bringing,
We shall walk in heavenly grace,
Ever gladly singing."

The child's aspect was so ethereal, it seemed he might reach that happy state very soon. It needed but a change of garments to convert him into an angel for the heavenly choir that are ever before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple.

"Child, what is your name?" asked the lady, more stirred by the visitor on her hearth-rug than she cared to show in her crisp tones.

"Boysie," he answered.

The pet name confirmed Miss Jane's mental conviction that the child had at some former time been loved and cared for.

"Is your mother living?"

For answer the child advanced his hands and his feet, the former quite guiltless of wrappings, the latter showing bare and blue through holes in the toes of his ungainly footwear. The present state of his clothing was sufficient proof of his motherless condition.

"My right size in shoes is number tens, felt-lined," he announced, with a touch of pride.

"And why did you sing for me, Boysie?"

Miss Jane's ear had caught the sound of her taxicab drawing up at the curbing below. She rose as she spoke and drew on her gloves.

"For pennies!" The boy hung his head as he replied.

Something forced Miss Jane's hand into her purse, though it was against all her principles to thus foster the spirit of begging. Perhaps she was in a hurry and took the easiest way to get rid of her persistent visitor. She told herself she might better throw the coin away, she felt so confident that some older person was instigating the boy.

"Come! I must go now. Here is something—ah, I knew it! I knew it!"

Down the long, shadowy hall something fled at the click of the door-knob. The dignified family who occupied the suite opposite never hastened so; the middle-aged gentleman from the floor above never measured such a stride. There was something crouching and sneaky in the retreating figure.

"Some of your crowd!" Miss Jane exclaimed, wrathfully. "A father, or a brother, ready to take the money out of your hand and fling it over the

counter of the corner saloon. Get along there, you little fraud! It's the same story with all of your kind."

THE child whimpered as he dodged her uplifted arm. She scarcely marked the course he took, as she nervously turned the key in the locks of both hall doors. When she reached the street the disturber of her peace was out of sight.

The sudden transit from the red-and-gold room to the blue-grey night was startling. Overhead the arch of sapphire was set with myriads of diamonds, whose hard, white points of light seemed to diffuse cold rather than warmth. A dash of grey indicated the street and a streak of lighter grey the curbing. At the corner the street-lamp, like the stars, seemed to intensify the cold by rendering visible the swirls of snow drifting down from the roofs.

Miss Hallowell gathered her furs about her closely as the chauffeur opened the door of the taxicab.

"Drive rapidly!" she commanded.

The machine backed and swerved; and as the

A DREAM

BY H. McK. PEASE.

AS I stood alone on a still summer night,
With everything sleeping around me,
I looked at the stars in the heavens so
bright

And was caught by the wonder, and power, and
might

Of the "Force" that had planned so vast a scheme,
Till the earth seemed dead, and life a dream
Of a strange world passing before me.

A world that seemed filled with a deadly fear,—
A terror that gripped and tore me,
For the stars went out and the dawn was near,
But a dawn of mists and a day so drear,
That my heart stood still and I cried aloud,
Then hid me away all trembling and cowed
At the things that passed before me.

Then I knew that in some pre-historic age
I'd wakened; and all around me
Were creatures of horror, who'd come to assuage
Their thirst at the lake—Oh, God! how they rage.
I knew I'd been hiding for thousands of years,
Hiding and running,—a weak thing of fears,
In terror of all around me.

I watched the years as they rolled away,
Peoples and Nations before me;
Nations that rose and fell in a day,
When some greater power enforced their sway,
Or they in their turn were ground to dust,
O'ercome by ignorance, pride and lust,—
Awake! ye peoples around me.

I stood alone on a still summer morn,
With all things waking around me,
I thought of my dream and my spirit was torn:
Then a flush in the East—a new day was born!
A day of such beauty and peace and light,
That I knew that the scheme of things was right
And "Love" made all things around me.

light from its two great eyes flashed on the sidewalk, there was revealed to the woman within two figures crouching on a stone step a couple of doors from her own building.

"Boysie!" she exclaimed, shuddering. "And that other one! Why don't they go somewhere? Surely in this prosperous city there is no need for them to roam the streets in this fashion. They exasperate me!"

For all her furs Miss Hallowell was shivering. With her eyes closed she could see those little, purplish toes peeping out between slits of old leather; and their coldness was her coldness.

THE larger of the two wanderers—who was little more than a child himself—followed her every movement with a look of intense hatred. But Boysie appeared to be intent on something far removed from earthly things. His blue eyes were fixed on a point somewhere among the remotest stars, and his whole expression was a wistful question. God was somewhere above that high and silent arch of blue, but where were his Christmas angels, those beings supposed to diffuse blessing and goodwill over the earth at the festal season? She, whom, for some fancy of his own, he had

designated as "his last angel," had failed him. Boysie's outlook on life was one of utter despondency, as if he had just discovered that the last of that beautiful order of beings had died out.

"Christmas time has come again,
Christmas bells are ringing—"

As Miss Hallowell repeated the words she wondered what pleasure Christmas had ever brought to Boysie that he sang of it so enthusiastically. Bah! What was Christmas anyway but a big farce, a time when people wheedled things out of you, and no one could be surprised with a gift, their only surprise being when the gift was not as large as they anticipated.

"I don't think I—I can talk to-night," she said, unsteadily, as she was met in the reception-room by the chairman. "I feel quite upset."

The chairman looked at her dubiously. Certainly he had never known Miss Hallowell to be afflicted with "nerves."

"Very cold—very cold night, indeed!" For Miss Jane was shivering visibly. "You will be all right when you get warm."

"Perhaps," she replied, and made a masterful effort to think clearly and continuously on the subject in hand.

"It is no use!" she exclaimed, in agitation. "I must do something first. Send Jimmy to me."

Almost immediately the boy in question stood before her. He was a favourite with Miss Hallowell, high in her confidence and thoroughly trusted.

"Jimmy," she instructed, hurriedly, "take this key and unlock the doors of my rooms. Then go, find two people sitting on a step a couple of doors away. Tell them to go in and warm themselves. Tell them to get so hot that they glow all over. No, no questions necessary. I do not even know their names. Only, Jimmy, isn't it a bitter night for little bare fingers—and toes?"

Jimmy took the keys hesitatingly, but hurried away, as it was part of his creed to obey his Miss Jane.

"I am ready now," she reported, tranquilly, as the chairman again came into the room. "It is because I am no longer a walking lie," she added to herself.

It cut her to the heart that she should have failed in so small a thing. She had only been called upon to warm a baby's feet. And she had been found wanting—she who had said so much, so very much, about the strangers of the city whom no person had taken in.

MISS HALLOWELL'S talk was given in a very chastened spirit that evening. A pathos ran through it hitherto unknown to the speaker, who convinced by a cold and brilliant logic rather than by an excited imagination. This time she mentioned little children's bare feet running over frosty pavements in a language as vivid as if she saw them before her eyes, and the appeal pierced straight to the hearts of her audience. Before she had only aimed to increase her own glory by defeating her opponents, she, a woman, carrying through reforms single-handed. To-night Miss Jane Hallowell was a nonentity. Her subject had engulfed her.

Not until she sat down did a remembrance of the pearl pendant flash through her mind. She had thought when she instructed Jimmy to throw open her door that there was very little to attract a dishonest person. The furniture and fixtures were solid and heavy; no money was left exposed to view; all other jewels were locked in the office safe. But the pendant, representing many, many dollars, lay in an open box in a top drawer—and the newspapers had described it the night before!

Wings could not have carried her home fast enough. Again her mind swung like a pendulum to the opposite extreme. Why had she acted so foolishly? Ah, it was the little blue toes had made her do it, and if her whole house was sacked she would still be comfortable in the knowledge that her fire had warmed them.

The door of the living-room stood slightly ajar. The crimson glow of the grate threw a circle of ruddy cheer over immediate objects, chasing the soft-shooped shadows far into the corners. As Miss Jane advanced into the ring of light she was made aware that two figures crouched against her davenport, and at the warm end near the fire she recognized Boysie's feet. The rest of the outline was vague, the two figures thrown so closely together that she could not distinguish one from the other. It was as if the older boy had thrown himself across the body of the little one.

"Why do you sit so?" demanded Miss Jane.

No response.

"Did Boysie get his feet warm?"

(Concluded on page 30.)