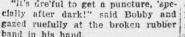


Christmas Made Them Partners.

FOR LOVE OF HIS LITTLE CHILD. THIS FATHER GAVE ALL AND GAINED ALL.

By MAY ELLIS NICHOLLS.



On the floor at his side was a dishad only grown-up eyes, it might have polished surface of the table. dooked to him like a cigar box mounted on four little wheels, three of them she got bound round with rubber bands and the fourth, as Bobby had mournfully declared, minus its "rubber tire."

Santa Claus, isn't it, and it's for me?"

The eager little hands were out.

his fect. Receiving no reply, he ran coveted treasure they were struck to the door through whose crack a side and a voice that Bobby would ray of light shone. "Mother, please never have known for Father's, shoutlight the gas, I've got a blowout."

With the opening of the kitchen door a flood of light, an appetizing here anyway?" odor and Comfort all entered together. Comfort had flushed cheeks and tender eyes. She wore a white apron over a blue muslin dress exactly the shade of her eyes; her sleeves, rolled above

"Why you blessed darling! All in the dark, are you?" She lighted the other turned Bobby gently but firmly gas and with the light the room sprang into definite lines, like a deflat: a cheap, ornate, built-in side- I hope. Run along now, that's a man!' board, a yellow-oak dining table, four chairs and a divan that could be used for a bed, made up the furniture.

held up the rubber band and pointed the kitchen. to the little bandless wheel.

The mother's serene eyes suddenly saddened. "Cars, cars, cars, always cars! Put up your play, Bobby, and

do some examples. er's tone that the child felt though he did not understand. He reluctantly That's—what—" choking back the question of how many two's make "hurts my feelings so. He isn't workfour. After his mother had returned ing! He's just playing. He's playing to her dinner-getting he tied the over the fourth wheel: it broke shorter than before. Once more he tried but with the same result.

If I had only a big rubber!" he

He tried to fasten it with a string but the rubber was rotten and he threw it down with tears in his big gray eyes. "The mean old thing!" he

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, a

look of determination on his face.
"I've a great mind—" he said and put his hand on the knob of the hall door. For a full minute he stood deliberating, then he turned the knob, walked slowly the length of the dark hall and paused outside another door.

For weeks Bobby had been forbidden to enter that room. "Father is at work and must not be bothered," was the law laid down to him every morning and never repealed. Each morning after breakfast that room swallowed Father. Sometimes he came out ed Father. Sometimes he came out "How hot your near is, ucar, for lunch, sometimes Bobby did not Mother said, raising his chin to look see him again till the next day. When he did come out, he seemed to be you feel sick in any way?" looking at something far away and hardly spoke to Mother or Bobby. Yet he was not angry with them. Oh, no! When he did see them, he cuddled and kissed them as if he had been away for a long time and only the other day, when the auto-truck was out of order, he got right down on his hands and knees and fixed it quicker-quickerwhy, quicker than Bobby could think about it. Mother could cure bad cuts and black-and-blue spots by kissing them and could make wonderful things to eat but she did not seem to know wee bit about automobiles, and sometimes Bobby thought she acted as if she did not want to know. Why, Bobby himself knew more about autos than Mother did!

For five long minutes he listened outside the forbidden door. Well might he pause: it was the first time in the six years of his short life that he had ever deliberately disobeyed those who had authority over him. But his mind was made up. He was going to face Father as man to man, and, no matter what resulted from it, ask him to fix the truck.

He opened the door noiselessly and entered the room. For a moment the glare of light almost dazzled him, for it was as light as six flaring gas jets could make it. Blinking, he advanced on tip-toe. At a table in the middle of the room sat Father-tall, slim, his mop of black hair thrown back, his dark eyes fixed on something he held in his hand and was adjusting with a tiny tool. At last he put the thing

It's a New Year, dears, And a good year, Still better years shall be. For the heart of man goes for-

ward meet the days, the holy days Brotherhood. all and all as one the whole world's

cially after dark!" said Bobby and longer Bobby stood motionless in turned, gazed ruefully at the broken rubber sheer amazement. Then he jumped "Yes, and capered and fairly squealed with is only a cold," she replied absently.

delight. The thing was a tiny auto- Then she burst out.

Again a house. abled auto-truck, loaded down with mobile, only a few inches high but per-Christmas packages—at least that was feet in every part and it ran like mad, row is Christmas? Christmas! and we what Bobby saw. Of course if one first this way and then that over the

"Oh, gee, Father Gee whiz, can't little chap?" he go?" Bobby's little bedy fairly "Not a th

"Mother!" he called, scrambling to stretched, but before they reached the ed at him:

"Don't you dare touch that, Child! Why did your mother let you come

"Mother didn't let me; I came, Bobby protested, ready to defend a look of pained surprise. Mother even in his extremity.

The surprise and suspense in the pitiful little face brought Robert Norher elbows, displayed her shapely ton to a realization of himself. With one hand he swept the marvellous little car from the table and with the

"Father cannot talk with you now, veloping negative. It was the ordin- Son; he's busy. One of these days ary dining room of the ordinary city you shall have all the cars you want, Bobby stopped in the passage, his small frame shaking with the sobs of a very small boy. He felt stunned and "See my puncture, mother?" Bobby humiliated and desolate. He crept into

> "Father wouldn't mend my tire." he sobbed.

For once his gentle mother turned on him almost flercely as his father o some examples." had done. "Bobby! You don't mean You bothered Father?"

obeyed. His mind was not on the ache that seemed to fill his throat, with the cunningest little touring car broken ruber band and stretched it you ever saw in your life and he wouldn't let me touch it."

Mother held out her arms and se-

cure in the privacy of the kitchen, Bobby ran into them. It was all such a puzzle. Father playing with toys in the parlor, Mother getting their dinner in the kitchen, when Father used to go to business every day, Nora used to get dinner, and Mother used to sew and read and play with him. And the worst of it was Father did not seem to enjoy his play and sometimes he thought Mother did not like to get the dinner-anyway she had looked 'orry enough when a man came wit.

per and she had counted money an old pocketbook and given it to him. And another time a man came and there didn't seem to be enough money in the pocketbook, and he said something cross and went away. It was a comfort to lie still, cuddled against her soft shoulder, for all at once he felt tired and sleepy and knew that his head was aching dreadfully.

"Only when I swallow."

Mother carried him to the light. "I will give you your supper right way, Dear, and put you to bed. You have played too hard to-day." "I've got to hang up my stockings,

Mother," Bobby reminded her reproachfully.

"Of course, you may hang them be fore you go to bed." "I don't want any supper, Mumsie;

and you may hang up my stockings. I only want one thing anyway and wrote Santa Claus about that."

"And what was that, Dearie?" "A touring car-a real one like the one we saw in the window of the big toy store. It has an engine and gears, and a dif'rential. You remember!" Yes, she remembered. Two weeks

ago she had taken Bobby to see the wonderful display at the largest toy shop in the city and he had had eyes for only one thing, this little car, a marvellously intricate miniature of a grown-up's expensive plaything-the kind of toy this extravagant age provides for its pampered darlings.

'Mother! You think Santa Claus will bring me a little car like that, don't you?" he questioned wistfully. "That was all I asked-no candy, nor guns, nor anything. Some way if he doesn't bring me the car I shall think Richie Davis knows.

"Knows what, Darling?"

Nothing; only Richie is nine and he says there isn't any Santa Claus." The mother slipped off his clothes, gave some simple home remedies, tucked her son into bed and turned out the light. Then she hastily put the frugal dinner on the table and

called her husband. He sat down with the far-away look that Bobby had so resented. He was pale and the purple shadows under his eyes made them look larger and darker than they really were. He seemed hardly to know where he was till a hoarse cough sent the mother hurrying to Bobby's room,

'Anything the matter with Bobby'

"it's dre'ful to get a puncture, 'spe- down on the table and for a moment he questioned anxiously when she re-

"Yes, he is feverish, but I hope it

"Robert, do you know that to-morhave nothing for Bobby!"

"Have we really nothing for the

"Not a thing and no money! No turkey, no greens, no tree. Nothing to make a real Christmas. Oh, Robert, give up the invention. Many men have tried just as hard as you and god, Mammon! She hastily slipped on

"But someone has to do it," he protested. "It is the inventors who make the world move." "And their wives and children who

have to suffer!" she flashed.

This was the first time she had

"Have you no faith in me, Dear?" arm about his neck.

hope, oh, how I do hope for your sake, you will succeed. If I had not had with the little car. His head was restfaith, do you think I should have consented to give up our home? Would I have used up our snug little nest- agement. egg? But it is used up, Robert, every

"Never mind, Little Wife, we'll pull through some way and another Christ-

bews on the table, her chin cupped in her palms.

Ann Norton was the kind of w

the Old Masters visioned when they painted the Virgin Mother. Her large shapely hands were vibrant with service, her deep bosom was a haven of rest, her clear steady eyes were beacon lights. She was not an imaginative woman. As a little girl she had not been a lover of fairy tales and now she was not able to enter into her husband's dreams. Had she been able to do so she might have had more sympathy with him, but might not have been as patient as she had been She coveted his heart's desire for her big boy" as she playfully called her husband, just as she desired the ex ensive little car for Bobbby, because she loved him and it hurt her to have

Again a hoarse cough sent her hurrying to Bobby's room, and as she looked fearfully at the delicate flushed face, her motherhood revelted.

Bobby should have a Christmas! He should not be robbed of his rightful inheritance of childhood for some inher coat and hat and ran down the long flights of stairs to the street

She returned an hour later, loaded with bundles and followed by a boy who carried a market basket and a small tree. Piling all the things on the spoken so and he flushed and gave her at her husband's door, and, after waiting in vain for an answer, turned the knob softly and went in. Once across She left her chair and slipped one the threshold, she was attempted to retreat without making her presence ing on his arm and his whole attitude told of utter weariness and discour-

money."

"It isn't for myself I mind. You was carefully kept, it bore the unmishow that, Robert. I have you and takable marks of rough work. Her He stared at her, how Bobby, what more could I want? But plain gold wedding ring hung loose



HERE WE ARE AGAIN!

you to wait until eternity for your in- instant, then started to his feet. vention. You want it here and now. What do you think Bobby said to me

to-night? "Something that floored you, I'll

Like a burst of sunshine in a dark day was the smile that lighted the father's sombre eyes.

"He said he should not believe there was any Santa Claus, if he did not get a little touring car with an engine and gears and a dif'rential: What is a diferential, Robert?"

The father laughed aloud. "Wants a car with a differential, does he? The young rascal knows more about cars now than half the chausfeurs do. Well, I'must get back to my work." But he still sat, looking into space, his brows knit, his teeth

set on his under lip.
"I know it is absolutely simple," he said at last; "just a trick that a child could do. I am always on the verge of getting it, and to-night, Ann, just before Bobby interrupted me, I was sure I had it at last. I seemed to see it slowly coming out before me just as mountain. peaks rise out of a fog, and I held my breath-one moment more-one single step-and-and then Bobby spoke and it was gone. That was the reason I was so hard on the poor little beggar. For a moment I could have knocked him down, I was so furious. But I'll make it up to him and to you, too, Annie."

She smiled and kissed him in silence. After he had gone back to his work she still sat listlessly, her el-



Bobby can't wait till next year for his upon it and its guard was gone. The Christmas. It is exactly like asking man looked still more puzzled for an

"Your ring-Dear-?"

"It has turned into red and green and yellow balls and a turkey, and a starting up, "Santa! Please, Santa! Christmas tree." Then, as he still looked dazed, she gave him a hysterilet me play with his." laughed, "don't you understand yet? I pawned

ring!" His tone con pressed more constern had she confessed to pet She laughed

"It's only page get it back again I I ever have money it, what is it after all but a stone. A very precious stone to me, because it has always been a symbol of our love for each other but not half so precious as our other jewel—our living little son. Come along; let us trim the tree. Leave your work for one night and

come.' The tree was small but perfect and when they had finished it shone like pillar of fire. Ann Norton smiled happily as the last tinsel threads were spun like dew-starred cobwebs from branch to branch, where already hung the glittering red and green and yel-

low balls. "How complete it is!" her husband said, stepping back to get the full effect, "and so little to do with You are a wonder, Little Woman He drew her to him and tenderly kissed

her lips. She had made up her mind to ask a certain thing of him but after this caress her courage almost failed her. She knew she must ask at once or she should never do t at all. She spoke hurriedly.

"Complete, Robert! Look again." He gazed, squinting a liftle, as if actually dazzled by the glitter. don't see that more any reasonable kiddie could ask."

"But the little car. I may as well confess all. I had made up my mind buy that car for him, if it took all the money I had, but I bought the other things first, and when I went for the car, what do you think was the price of it? One hundred dollars!

I had less than fifty." The mar gave a whistle. "It did The Lad's Gift to His Lord.

Two shepherds and a shepherd lad Came running from afar To greet the little new-born One Whose herald was a star.

But empty were their toil-worn hands, And on the stable floor The Wise Men knelt with precious gifts

The Saviour to adore.

"Oh, take my cloak," one shepherd cried,

"Twill keep the Babe from cold." "And take my staff," the other said,
"Twill guide Him o'er the wold." The shepherd lad looked sadly down;

No gift at all had he, But only on his breast a lamb He cherished tenderly. So young it was, so dear it was-The dearest of the flock-For days he had been guarding it, Close wrapped within his smock.

He took the little, clinging thing
And laid it by the Child,
And all the place with glory shone—
For le! Lord Jesus smiled.

was ever in any toy shop, one with series and a rubber tire and a 'dif'renget tires and gears and a dif'rential. tial.' Bobby had set his whole child- I'm to glad I-I-I'm afraid I'm going egg? But it is used up, Robert, every penny of it. There isn't enough left ert; come and help me trim the tree." set your man's heart on your great

"The one you were 'playing with'

when Bobby found you."
Then he understood. His wife was which he was trying to perfect his wonderful invention-to his child as a Christmas plaything. The blood surged purple to the roots of his hair. This then was the measure of her faith in his power. He looked as a man right look who has just been told he has a mortal disease.

"You want me to give Bobby my

She did not real; at once. She saw she had wounded him beyond belief. The mother-love and the wife-love struggled within her. "Never rind, Dearest," she said at last. "Believe me, I did not dream you cared like that." Then she reached out her hand to him. "Come, let's have a look at

As they leaned above his bed, Bobby opened his eyes and gazed about him with a startled look.

"How are you, my man?" Father

asked gently. The wide dark eyes stared at him with no sign of recognition. "Don't this hill the little car was speeding, you know Father, dear?" his mother As it reached the beginning of the questioned with mingled love and

terror in her croming voice. "Father is playing with the little car," drowsily inswered Bobby, Then it with unwinking eyes, perspiration

Yes, he will," broke in his father and hastened from the room to get from part. At last he drew a long, the cherished model, but before could return the boy had dropped into a restless sleen

Bobby's stocking had been hung beside the tree and now Father stuffed the model into the top of it. "I want him to see it the first thing in the morning," he said.

The mother watched him with briming eyes. Usually the most self-controlled of women, she could not trust kerself to speak.

"After all, it is best that way," he added hoarsely. "I could not have given it up for anything but love. Tomorrow I will enjoy Christmas with you and Bobby; the day after I will start out to hunt a fob." "Oh, Robert, you don't

have given up? "I must. Bobby will treak the model the first day—you have no idea now delicate it is, Annie. Well, it will be the breaking of my idol and

never was a dearer little lad than

Ann Norton had intended to keep vigil by her son's bed during the entire night, but as the hours wore on his troubled must be ceased, his sleep because the peaceful and the weary must be compared too. She the weary s soft cool cheek was awa his eager, "Oh, Santa Clans has The first rays pressed on the fleecy window ledge I of the sound of sweet boy es were caroling:

this blessed morn Sing, oh, Jesus Christ to day is born.
Father rolled Bobby up in his blanket and carried him, blanket and all, into the adjoining room. The boy gave one hurried glance in the direction of his stocking, wriggled from the en-tangling folds and rushed to selze his treasure. In the silence that follow-ed, Father and Mother looked at such

small tree. Piling all the things on the dining room table, she knocked softly at her liusband's door, and, after waiting in vain for an answer, turned the knob softly and went in. Once across were content, her liusband went in. Once across one with a sign of supreme content, her live in the line of the l cess."
reached out his hand and tenderly, "If," his wife repeated. "But, Rob almost reverently, took the little car "I have faith in you, Dearest, and I known. Robert Norton sat at the and more the audacity of the request ed and hid his face on his father's ert," she hurried now, realizing more and lifted it to his lips. Then he turn-

"Oh, there is a Santa Claus, there

to cry. The happy day sped on. All the For answer she held her left hand effore his eyes. The finger nails were wealth or life itself he with the little car. Father pointed out all the complicated mechanisms. mas, God willing, there will be enough money to gratify your every wish."

To answer she held her left hand linght be: what would success to the finger nails were wealth or life itself be without our the tiny machine and Bobby looked darling boy? Robert, will you not give and listened and marveled. He could not be separated from it even for a He stared at her, honestly ignerant of her meaning. "My little car? I the sacred ordinance of turkey and have no little car." cranberry sauce was observed, and now, while Mother washed the dishes, he lay on his stomach, chin in hand, with eyes riveted on his treasure. He asking him, seriously asking him, to was enjoying to the full one of the give his working model—the model on rarest experiences in life—the posseswas enjoying to the full one of the sion of his heart's desire.

Father stood at the window, gazing moodily at the merry crowds in the streets far below. He was trying to reconcile himself to the inevitable, to accept cheerfully if he could, and at least bravely as he must, what the New Year held for him. Suddenly his trained ear caught a new sound fro the little car-a peculiar buzz follow by a brief interval of silence, and th a second slightly different sound. whirled and crossed to where Bob

lay. "That sound! What makes sound?'

"What sound?" Bobby asked placid-Father flung himself down on floor by Bobby and gazed with str ing eyes, every muscle tense, at the gyrating model. Bobby had set up part of an old toy train outfit, a miniature hill with a roadway winding up and down around it, and up and down this hill the little car was speeding. ascent there came the momentary pause and then the change of sound as it began to climb. The man watch starting on his forehead. eral breathless minutes he snatched the model from the track and stare at it as if his gaze could melt it part

sobbing breath. "I see it at last," he whispered, " ee it at last!"

Bobby scrambled to his feet the coked at Father with troubled eyes. What could he have done to the precious car? He had never seem Father look like that before.

"That's it! Good heavens, of course that's it! Blockhead, not to have seen that hefore!" He caught Bobby up in his arms. "Let's find Mother!" he shouted.

"What have you two boys been doing?" Mother asked, before she caught a glimpse of Father's face. Then she turned pale. She who was indeed one with him, understood. "Oh, Robert!" she cried and his joy reflected through her face and voice

They found each other's arms and Bobby put his arms around both their necks and bound them close together. "Just to think, Annie," Father said at last, "It was Bobby's running the little car would down the hills that filled the me on the scent. If I had

finance at me on the seent. If I had not given it to him I should be purshing over it yet."

"I am so thankful. Dearest," she said, the happy tears slistening in her tender eyes. Then the sadded mischlevously. "It is a great combination." wondered what

"It was alw that he kney Christmas we alive possessed to May that be true and all of ust"—