

The Gold-Satin Wrap and the Coal Heap



STORIETTES

ONCE upon a time, and not so very long ago, there was a kindergarten in, we suppose, New York—or it may have been Winnipeg—where the kiddies were suddenly set to work on a bright idea for Christmas.

"A new game, children," said the teacher.

"Oh, let's play it! What is it?"

"Stuffing stockings, children. Christmas stockings."

"O—o—oh! Who's it for?"

"Hush, and I'll tell you—"

And the story was all about little French children who for three years haven't had a Christmas, and since the advance of the British getting the Germans out, have been let back into the part of the world that is ruled by the spirit of Christmas. The idea was to send these children, as many as possible, each a well-crammed Christmas stocking. The game was for the kindergarten kiddies to stuff the stockings. Which, as you see, they did with more joy than any other game in the lot. We have only one fault to find with the photograph—which does not contain the picture of Santa Claus handing out the dolls, the candy and the nuts. Which, of course, in this case wouldn't have done at all, because for weeks now the children had been hoarding up their own pennies, just to give Santa Claus a lift.

II.

AND only a few blocks away from that school there was a strange feminine creature whom the Lord intended to be really and truly human and good and sensible. And so, perhaps, she was. But she had to make a living in a very strange way. Here she is doing it. What a strange gown she wears! How like a beautiful bat against the wall she looks! And if you could just see the colors in this gold and purple satin and metal brocade evening wrap you would ask where is the Queen of Sheba that is to wear it? Oh, she will be along. Somebody is going to wear this gold and satin wrap. It will cost her hundreds of dollars, but then, she has loads of



BY PICTORICUS

dollars; her husband made it in munitions; she has to wear such things because she belongs to the smart set who always believe that fine feathers make fine birds. The girl who has it on doesn't own it. Oh no, it would take many months of her wages in the modiste's establishment in pay for such a garment. So she goes on trying it on, just to show Milady from Fifth Avenue or Riverside Drive how it will look. She was at the kindergarten once; the same kindergarten where the children stuffed the stockings for the French kiddies.

So that's the second chapter.

III.

AND the next is all about the little Canadian lads who didn't go to kindergartens and never saw a gold and satin gown or they would have gone into delirium tremens. They are thrifty little gatherers who a few weeks ago understood from what their fathers read in the newspaper with the funny black marks on it that most folks in town couldn't read, that coal would be hard to get this winter. So they played truant from school—not a kindergarten—to go bagging for coal. Where did they go? Trust them. They knew that any railway track is just decorated with little bits of coal that nobody owns now and nobody would be bothered picking up except little boys whose fathers and mothers read funny black-marked newspapers. Day after day, bag after bag, they gathered the coal. Oh, it's all burned now, or the boys would have been cold in bed long ago. Till the snow comes they can get more, if they go far enough.

IV.

BUT if these little boys only knew it, there's a much better place than railway tracks to get coal. There is a man who drives a big cart along certain streets every day. People say he is the ash-man. But the other day somebody asked him—when he came to the ash-cans shown in the photograph—"Say, are you an ash-man or a coal-dealer?" And he said it was a shame that some people wasted their coal that way.