

Their Hearts' Desire

stupidly before him, his eyes fixed on a well-filled stocking suspended in mid-air. And that gradually became the shining nucleus round which the warmth and joy and cheer took definite form and spelled him "Christmas." That was it, it was Christmas day!

A radiant welcome shone in John's face, but the recognition produced no impetuous hurrah, no customary war dance. A mystic hush subdued the commoner joys into a harmonious background for the awe-inspiring presence of the one, supreme: the mother that he longed for, wrote for, dreamed of, prayed for—she was first. And now his confidence in her nearness, real and tangible, intensified a hundredfold the previous superlatives of his childish thought, till maternal grace suffused the world.

Rising to his feet, with sanguine air John's eager eyes explored the utmost corners of the room. Twice they served him in a futile search, and then something