CHRISTMAS AT THE BALLINGER'S.

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

From the New York Independent.

A gay family of children were Mr. Ballinger's; although it should be explained that they were none of them actually and positively his; they were the children of his wife by her former marriage, and she was now dead; and so, as they seemed to belong to nobody else and nobody belonged to them, and there were nothing and nobody to take care of them, why, Mr. Ballinger claimed them as his with much the same courage and spirit as that with which he had claimed their mother and her family of six some years ago, moved far more by pity than by love. Some people even thought the six children were all he had claimed the mother for. It was certainly all that he acquired with her, except the privilege of paying nurses' and doctors' and druggists' and undertakers' bills, and of sitting down afterward with —no, not with a sense of relief—but with much more contentment than he thought belonged of right to a bereaved widower, with children clambering over him like bees over a honeycomb, no more conscious, either of their bereavement or contentment, than he was.

How should they be conscious of it? They had hardly seen their mother in the two years of her Ballinger existence. She had been a nervous invalid, one of those that wear out almost all affection with whims and exactions; and she was for the greater part of the time shut up in her room, where the children were not allowed to come more than once a week, and the husband scarcely oftener; and then with such tiptoeing and hushing and aweing in general, and darkened windows and cold draughts and smell of drugs in particular, that they dreaded it as they did working out a new example, and galloped and gambolled down stairs afterward like colts out of harness. They had felt the prevailing gloom of the house for a short period; but, so seldom seeing the invalid, they did not precisely, so to say, miss her. What they did miss was the doctor's creaking boots, the whispering of the wearisome nurses that helped out the head nurse, Mrs. Burrage, who evidently thought poorly of children; the smell of medicines, the anxious faces, and the suppression of all cheer and of their own voices and heels in especial. Nor may I say that they enjoyed the funeral; for that would be most unnatural. But it was really quite a period of excitement; and black was becoming to Pauline and Em, and Johnny had new shoes that squeaked like a fiddle and made him quite a man of importance, and the others quarreled a little over their respective crapes, and Fanny felt badly at the last moment and had to borrow Katey's handkerchief, and Tom lost his place in the procession—a stray urchin who stood gaping at the gate being lifted and swung into the mourning coach, and Tom finding himself at the end trudging on afoot, his friendless condition receiving pity from the baker's boy, who was rattling along in his cart.

If Tom's share of the day's exercises wound up with a good thrashing at the hands of Mr. Burrage, did he not deserve it? And if he prostrated himself and blubbered loudly that he was an orphan, and this was what a fellow might expect who had a stepfather, was anybody going to contradict him? Certainly not Katey, her handkerchief again being called into requisition there, she and Tom usually sharing all things, even to their misdoings. No, Tom, at any rate, did not enjoy the funeral, except for that very brief moment when the baker's cart rattled by the procession and Tom waved his hat over his head, as, in passing, he caught sight of Katey and Fanny and Johnny, in their slow coach. The only extenuation of Tom's conduct which Mr. Ballinger could find was that he hardly knew his mother any, and did not know death at all. But it was Tom who, a week after, going berrying with other boys, left them, climbed fences, and went a half mile out of his way to heap an armful of wild azalias, where she lay, and it was Katey whom he found sitting there with her lap full of ox-eyed daisies.

"She loved pretty things," said Katey. At least I guess she did. So I'm weaving her a daisy chain. She had lots of pretty dresses. She never wore them. She'll never want them now."

"Do you suppose she has wings?" asked Tom.

"Of course she has!" answered Katey, indignant at the doubt. "Angels always do."

And the more they grew to look upon her in the angelic light, the less they regarded her as human; and she became, with the lapse of days, only a beautiful abstraction; and, never having been any check upon their boisterous misbehavings when alive, the poor lady became only an encouragement to them when dead; the argument that they had no mother, and that it was a shame to add anything to the unhappiness of motherless children; and it was hard enough to be orphans, any way, without being punished for it, and all the rest, excusing them from admonition and reprobation, until things reached a pass where nothing but the rod would answer.

Poor Mr. Ballinger! What a time he had of it! How could he tell what to do with Pauline and Em, seen by the neighbors decked out in their mother's best dresses, and looking over their shoulders to see the trains sweep the gravel-walks; Fanny found taking a bundle of her mother's old love-letters to school for the declectation of the girls; Johnny caught rummaging her drawers, his pockets full of her great garnet and amber and carnelian beads, which he wished to use as marbels of the inferior nature played with by orphans, and stoutly claimed the right to do, as they were his own mother's; and Katey and Tom staying away from school whenever they liked, and averring that their mother told them they might, before she went to Heaven. Indeed Katey and Tom, as well as Johnny, took on a great many airs toward those children who were so unfortunate as to have mothers yet alive, quite pluming themselves, as it were, on the fact of their mother's angelic plumage; and so insisted to the cook upon a diet of angel's cake and other superior dainties, so insisted to the housemaid that, if their mother was an angel, then they must be treated as angels, too, and so insisted to Mrs. Burrage, who remained as housekeeper, that they should only wash their hands and faces when they pleased, that they should roll their hoops in the hall and spin their tops on the tablecloth, and bring home to dinner Teddy O'Flanigan and Paddy McGuire—those questionable little beings of the back alley—whenever it suited their convenience, that the cook and housemaid left without warning, and Mrs. Burrage, pouring out the story of her woes, concluded by saying:

"I must say, if it's me that says it, that there's nothing short of a revolution from Heaven will oblege me to stay here, Mr. Ballinger, sir, one day after my next month's up, unless you lets me take a switch to them outrageous brats, sir!"

Of course Mr. Ballinger preferred keeping the switch as a permanent possession in his own hands, and Mrs. Burrage took her departure in high dudgeon, being assisted out of the house by the whole six, with a clatter of tin pans and iron spoons and fishhorn that was as maddening to her as disgraceful to them. And everybody said those neglected Ballinger children were going to the dogs as fast as Mr. Ballinger's silly good-nature would carry them.

Mr. Ballinger's despair as he inspected his desolated kitchen, and, with both hands plunged in his hair, wondered what on earth he was to do, was somewhat pathetic. It even moved these little sprites; and Pauline volunteered to make some biscuits, out of which she left both the salt and the soda, so that they tasted like bitter dough mixed with lemonade; and Em offered to attend to the beds, but found herself unable to resist the temptation of doubling the sheets so as to make "apple-pie" of them, and render it impossible to get between them, and of slipping a pinch of snuff and pepper under the pillow of Johnny, her twin brother and her collaborator in the bed-making business; and Fanny offered to wash the dishes, and succeeded in breaking a whole tray full; and they all declared it was the loveliest way to live—just a picnic!—and begged their father never to have another cook or second girl in the house, and made such general rout and total ruin in one day that the father, seized with an inspiration, slapped his hat on and rushed to the telegraph office and begged their Cousin Margery—their mother's Cousin Margery—to resign her place as assistant in the grammar school of a distant town, and come to them for good and all, and, except for the helpless old charwoman's efforts, such general pandemonium reigned until she came that he went to the station to receive her, feeling that he should hail her as one sent by Providence.

Mr. Ballinger had heard his wife speak of her Cousin Margery as the impersonation of neatness, discretion, amiability, aptitude, industry, and every virtue—one of those women who can bring order out of chaos and accomplish all sorts of domestic revolutions while other people are getting on their shoes.' He expected a rather stately and somewhat portly matron of middle age, with spectacles and frizette; and you may picture his surprise when a slender, graceful, altogether lovely-looking young woman, of some twenty-five summers, but who, he hardly thought, could have seen eighteen of them, tripped from the cars in the November twilight, glanced about her with a pair of shining brown eyes, and, while a rosy color mounted her cheek, inquired, in the sweetest voice in the world, if Mr. Ballinger's carriage was there.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Ballinger to himself, mentally tearing his hair. "What have I done? This makes seven of them! I have only added another to the number. Seven troubles instead of six. Now it is Pauline and Em, Johnny, and Fanny, and Tom, and Katey, and Margery."

And he drove on in silence and perplexity a little way. Then he took off his hat and rubbed his hair up straight all over his head and put on his hat again, and had decided to make the best of it.

"Well, Margery," he said, "I am glad you have come. But I don't know that I haven't made a mistake in supposing you can direct the affairs of my house and my six little spirits of misrule."

"Are they spirits of misrule?" she answered. "I thought perhaps they were full of life."

"Full of"— began Mr. Ballinger, but stopped in time.

"That is so much better than if they were moping and pining. And a house is so happy with lively children in it. I have been looking forward to it ever since I had your telegram. I lead such a lonely life. Oh! I think we shall enjoy it all immensely."

And so, to his amazement, he did. A day or two of shaping out, and then the most punctual of cooks sent in the most savory of breakfasts, the neatest of housemaids went about the place, and there was the cleanest damask and most glittering silver, the whitest beds, the brightest fires, ever seen in that house; there was no dust, no litter or confusion to be found; there was no noise anywhere for six hours; and then the inevitable noise was subdued almost to music, the children's things were in the children's rooms, the school-going was as regular as the clock-ticking, and, with Sunday school and its good behavior tickets and church and mission meeting, where, sooth to say, Pauline and Em had classes, and the long walk with Cousin Margery afterward, Sunday, instead of being a horror became a day of joy. If the girls tore their dresses now, there they were in the morning by the bedside so neatly darned that they must needs try to learn to darn as neatly themselves; and they could come home now with a skirt ripped half off the waist without expecting a box on the ear or a lengthened reproach that was worse, or the deprivation of a week's goodies. If the boys went in swimming, they dared to be seen before their heads were dry. Nobody was always shouting after them about their muddy shoes; for the most attractive red morocco slippers were waiting for them the minute they closed the doors; and Tom found his hated knickerbockers replaced one morning by long, grown-up or grown-drown trousers, without any fussing on his part; and the day Johnny thought he was dying, after a cigarette, and gave all his toys and kites and stilts to Tom—the whole world having become dust and ashes and smoke — he found, on Tom's refusal to surrender the property when he recovered, duplicates of everything provided for him by the watchful Cousin Margery. And at last, before they really knew it, the children were respecting each other's rights, and home had become so delightful a place that they had no desire to spend their spare time in the back alley, but were vying with each other to see who could add the most to its pleasantness.

"It really seems, Tom, said Katey, over the pile of nuts they were gathering one day when a year of this agreeable life had passed, "as if children were of some consequence, since Cousin Margery came."

TO BE CONTINUED.

"I Feel So Well."

—"I want to thank you for telling me of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription," writes a lady to her friend. "For a long time I was unfit to attend to the work of my household. I kept about, but I felt thoroughly miserable. I had terrible backaches, and bearing-down sensations across me and was quite weak and discouraged. I sent and got some of the medicine after receiving your letter, and it has cured me. I hardly know myself. I feel so well."

While Keene was playing Richard III. in Little Rock—just as he called for a horse, a man from Washington county said to his companion: "Come on, Ab, an' les' go." "Wait a minit, Sam. The clown has called for a hoss, an' I reckon the show's goin' to begin."—Arkansas Traveler.

—For throat and lung difficulties, Ayer's Cherry Pectoral, when seasonably taken, is a certain specific.

Master—"John, how is this? This letter must have arrived a week ago, and you have only just given it to me!" Valet—"But, monsieur, it only makes an appointment for to-morrow, and I did not think it necessary to hand it to you before!"

—The great demand for a pleasant, safe and reliable antidote for all affections of the throat and lungs is fully met with in Bickle's Anti Consumptive Syrup. It is a purely Vegetable Compound, and acts promptly and magically in subduing all coughs, colds, bronchitis, inflammation of the lungs, etc. It is so palatable that a child will not refuse it, and is put at a price that will not exclude the poor from its benefits.

Ether is said to be growing very fashionable as a stimulant. When a toper is given his choice between ether and whisky we suppose he says:

"How happy could I be with ether
Were t'other dear charm away."

Railroad Men Heard From.

—Mr. J. C. Smith, car inspector, C. P. R., Galt, writes: "Send me one dollar's worth of 'Hallamore's Expectorant.' I cannot get along without it." Mr. Jas. Fry, conductor, Northern railway, residing at 118 Farley avenue, Toronto, says: "'Hallamore's Expectorant' is an excellent mixture, it gave me immediate relief." xod.

AYER'S Sarsaparilla

Is a highly concentrated extract of Sarsaparilla and other blood-purifying roots, combined with Iodide of Potassium and Iron, and is the safest, most reliable, and most economical blood-purifier that can be used. It invariably expels all blood poisons from the system, enriches and renews the blood, and restores its vitalizing power. It is the best known remedy for Scrofula and all Scrofulous Complaints, Erysipelas, Eczema, Ringworm, Blotches, Sores, Boils, Tumors, and Eruptions of the Skin, as also for all disorders caused by a thin and impoverished, or corrupted, condition of the blood, such as Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Rheumatic Gout, General Debility, and Scrofulous Catarrh.

Inflammatory Rheumatism Cured.

"AYER'S SARSAPARILLA has cured me of the Inflammatory Rheumatism, with which I have suffered for many years. W. H. MOORE."

Durham, Ia., March 2, 1882.

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—You are allowed a free trial of thirty days of the use of Dr. Dye's Celebrated Voltaic Belt with Electric Suspensory Appliances, for the speedy relief and permanent cure of nervous debility, loss of vitality and manhood, and all kindred troubles. Also, for many other diseases. Complete restoration to health, vigor and manhood guaranteed. No risk is incurred. Illustrated pamphlet, with full information, terms, etc., mailed free by addressing Voltaic Belt Co., Marshall, Mich. 135

An inveterate punster who was recently hanged (mark) observed facetiously, as the noose was being adjusted, that although he had a great many friends, it was lucky that none of them were in accord with him.

—Holloway's Corn Cure is the medicine to remove all kinds of corns and warts, and only costs the small sum of twenty-five cents.

It is a curious fact that rich relatives are apt to be distant ones. We always thought they were rather "near."

Corner King and Widmer Streets.

—Mr Fred Hurst, butcher, King street west, who frequently suffers from cough, says: "I always resort to 'Hallamore's Expectorant,' which invariably proves itself an infallible remedy. I have much pleasure in recommending it to all troubled with coughs, bronchitis, etc. xed.

It is proposed to establish in California a colony of 240 families from Alsace. If the plan is carried out there is little doubt that the colonists will follow the example of the Californians and Alsace the Chinamen.

—There are so many cough medicines in the market that it is sometimes difficult to tell which to buy; but if we had a cough, a cold or any affliction of the throat or lungs, we would try Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup. Those who have used it think it is far ahead of all other prepaations recommended for such complaints. The little folks like it, as it is as pleasant as syrup.

Dr. Wilhelm Schmoele affirms, "He who eats lemons in sufficient abundance need never die." The difficulty is, you will observe, that no man ever lived long enough to eat them in sufficient abundance to live forever.

A Cure for Drunkenness.

—Opium, morphine and kindred habits. Valuable treatise sent free. The medicine may be given in a cup of tea or coffee, and without the knowledge of the person taking it, if so desired. Send two 3c. stamps for full particulars and testimonials of those who have been cured. Address M. V, Luban, agency, 47 Wellington street east, Toronto, Canada. ed

Advertising doesn't always pay. A Louisville manufacturer recently advertised for a "good hand." That night, at a social party, he got a hand which cost him $785 cash and his note for $1,000 more.

—The people of this country have spoken. They declare by their patronage of Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil, that they believe it to be an article of genuine merit, adapted to the cure of rheumatism, as well as relieves the pains of fractures and dislocations, external injuries, corns, bunions, piles, and other maladies.

A drummer who has been in South Florida for the past week says that the beef in that section is so tough as to render it almost impossible to even stick a fork in the gravy.

—There is nothing equal to Mother Graves' Worm Exterminator for destroying worms. No article of its kind has given such satisfaction.

—Your felt hat, though crushed and dinged can beblocked while you wait to look as finished as ever, at Smith's, the manufacturer of the featherweight silk and pullover wire brim, unbreakable, self-conforming hats, 122 Yonge street, ed-x

An Italian astronomer has discovered that Mars is peopled with intelligent beings. This should afford an opportunity for some one to say that that's where Mars has the bulge on the earth.

—Ayer's Sarsaparilla will make the blood pure, rich, warm and vitalizing. Sold by all druggists.

Dio Lewis says hot water will cure every complaint. It certainly helps a rum punch in cold weather, and may stop some complaints in that direction.

—If you feel languid and bilious, try Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, and you will find it one of the best preparations for such complaints. Mr. S. B. Maginn, Ethel, used Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, and cured a severe bilious sick headache which troubled him for a long time.

Well Merited!

—Mr. J. H. Jackson, the well-known hair dresser says: "Hallamore's Expectorant is undoubtedly the best cough mixture in the market. I have used it for years with the most prompt and beneficial results, and always keep some by me in case of sudden colds." All druggists keep it. xed.

"We railroaders have to go, as well as others," said a Bloomfield branch brakeman, on learning of the sudden death of Vanderbilt.

Burdock BLOOD BITTERS.

WILL CURE OR RELIEVE.

BILIOUSNESS, DYSPEPSIA, INDIGESTION, JAUNDICE, ERYSIPELAS, SALT RHEUM, HEARTBURN, HEADACHE, DIZZINESS, DROPSY, FLUTTERING OF THE HEART, ACIDITY OF THE STOMACH, DRYNESS OF THE SKIN,

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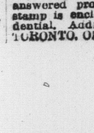

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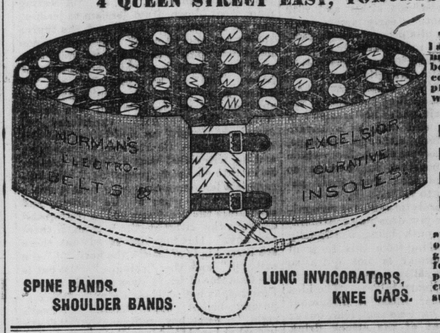

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