

beautiful plan; we were talking about it this morning. She told me how you would stay at home to get the Christmas dinner ready so's't I shouldn't find out that they had ready-made turkey and pudding out of a box. I liked her better for saying it right out. Showed she hadn't caught it from the furniture yet to pretend to be something that she wan't! I guess you and she will be kind of good for one t'other.

'Pay me!—oh, yes, you can pay me when you're a great singer if you're a mind to. But don't you never let me hear you sing hifalutin' pieces! And don't you never forget, either, how to get a good dinner. I don't want to have any hand in spoiling a good cook, even to make a great singer. I don't know as I should have wanted to help you if I hadn't found out that you could sing and cook, too!'

Polly rushed into the kitchen and waltzed Angenette around to keep from making a scene, with joyful tears. Aunt Adeline did let a tear splash upon the stork she was embroidering upon a belated Christmas screen—because things were turning out so beautifully.

Polly sobered suddenly to a sense of scorching gravy. But it was no misfortune that she was obliged to make more, for one could not have any confidence in Angenette's gravy. Angenette said she couldn't, herself.

But the Christmas dinner was a great success. There had been one mishap. Angenette had let the water boil out of the pot and the pudding had stuck to the bottom and burned a little. But they served Uncle Elias from the top of the pudding, and he never knew that anything had happened to it.

A Christmas Conscience.

(J. L. Harbour, in the 'Youth's Companion'.)

All the neighbors thought it strange when Bertram Dodge, after the death of his widowed mother, announced his intention to remain at the old home place with his little sister Helen, who was but five years old.

'We shall manage very well together,' Bert had said concerning the offer of some distant relatives to adopt Helen.

'It was mother's wish and it is my wish that Helen and I should not be separated. I may be standing in her light by not allowing her to go into a fine, luxurious home, but I can give her more real affection than they can give her, and she shall not suffer for want of food or clothing. They would want to change her name if she went to them, and that I could not have. No, we'll stay together, won't we, little sister?' He stooped and kissed the blue-eyed, flaxen-haired little girl as he spoke.

Old Mrs. Hooper, to whom he had been talking, said, 'I don't know but you are right, Bert; and there's one good thing, you know more about cooking and house-keeping than many girls know. Having to help your mother so much, especially when she was bedfast all those last ten weeks, has been a good thing for you. You've got a real woman's faculty for doing things.'

This was true, although dishwashing and cooking and sweeping and kindred du-

ties were as repugnant to Bert Dodge as they would be to any boy; but poverty had obliged him to do these things, and he had done them cheerfully and well.

The house was a tiny red and white one in the suburbs of a small New England town. There was only one dwelling very near it, and that was just across the road—a tiny wooden building where lived the Widow Hawes and her seven noisy, rollicking children, whose boisterous fun did not disturb their warm-hearted, easy-going mother in the least.

It was a mystery to her neighbors how she ever found room for so many children in such a tiny box of a house. When they said as much to her she laughed her loud, cheery laugh, and said:

'There isn't much room in my house, but there's room enough in my heart.'

Bert's determination to remain at the old house and to keep Helen with him was partly due to the fact that Mrs. Hawes had encouraged him to do so.

'I'll help you all I can,' she said, 'and Helen can come over and play with my little Susie and Maggie and the others



'HE SEEMED SO ANXIOUS TO HAVE A DOLL.'

when you have to be away at work. She won't be any trouble or in the least in the way.'

Bert was thus able to accept any temporary employment he could find. He was a robust boy of seventeen and willing to work. It was not easy to find employment in a small town like Horton, and simple as his wants and Helen's were, he did not find it easy to supply them, and there were the debts caused by his mother's long sickness and funeral to be paid.

'If I could only get steady work somewhere I should be all right,' Bert often said to the Widow Hawes.

'Oh, you will, before long,' she always returned, cheerfully. 'One who is as willing to work as you are is always in demand, sooner or later.'

But there had been no demand for Bert in any permanent position when the long and cold New England winter had fairly set in, and occasional work became more difficult to find.

Helen and Bert were eating their very frugal breakfast one cold and snowy morning in December, when Helen said, 'What you s'pose Santa Claus will bring me Christmas, Bertie?'

The question startled Bert a little, for he had that very moment been thinking

of Christmas, and of his inability to buy a quarter of the things he wanted to get for Helen.

'I don't know, dearie,' he said.

'Oh, Bertie!' she exclaimed, with a startled look, 'you don't suppose I'll not get anything in my stocking!'

'Oh, you shall have something, little one.'

'What, Bertie?'

'What do you want most?'

'A big, big doll with really and truly hair, and eyes that will open and shut! And if it could speak when you squeeze it I'd like it better! And if it had on a really truly hat! And shoes—Oh, Bertie, I'd want it to have shoes most of anything! The kind that would come off and on! And a little muff to put its hands in! Oh, Bertie, if I could have a dolly like that I wouldn't want anything else! You s'pose I could?'

'We'll see about it.'

'I've got two cents to send to Santa Clause for it. Would it cost more than that?'

'Oh, yes; much more.'

'I want it awfully,' she said, with a sweet seriousness that clinched Bert's resolve.

Ten minutes later a knock came at the door. When Bert opened it he found Jason Woods outside.

'Haven't time to come in,' he said. 'Got anything to do now, Bert?'

'No, sir; I haven't.'

'Want a job?'

'Yes; very much.'

'Well, I can give you two or three weeks' work down at my sawmill. Joe Hill, who has been helping me, fell and broke his arm yesterday, and I must have some one to help me get out a lot of lumber I've contracted for. Do you want the place?'

'Yes, I should be glad of it.'

'All right. Come down to the mill right away and I'll set you to work. We ought to be there now.'

Bert did not wait to wash the breakfast dishes. He wrapped Helen up warmly, and carried her over to Mrs. Hawes's for the day, and half an hour later was at work with Jason Woods.

It was hard, cold work in the old sawmill, and Jason Woods was a hard taskmaster, but Bert bore the faultfinding in silence, and did his utmost to please. He kept steadily in mind the thought of the happy Christmas he should be able to give Helen as the result of his labor. The doll, he planned, should go into her stocking, and he would get her some little toys for the tree they were going to have at Mrs. Hawes's.

He had promised Helen that the doll should surely come. His work at the sawmill would be finished two days before Christmas, and he had planned to walk seven miles to Hillsboro, a much larger town than Horton, where he was sure that he could find just such a doll as Helen had described.

Jason Woods owed Bert twenty dollars when the time for which he had been hired was up, but when the last day and the last hour's work was done Jason was not ready to pay.

'Well, Bert,' he said, 'I'll say for ye that you've done your work first-rate, and I'll hire you again if I need any one. I owe you twenty dollars, don't I?'

'Yes, sir.'