

Boys and Girls

Warren's "Bestest Christmas."

This little lad Warren always was the dearest, most loving, little rascal that ever you saw, going around with his blue and dancing eyes and face so sweet and "smiley" (as Mark said) that folks smiled back in spite of themselves when they looked at him.

When he was just a wee boy, he would say, after using every pet name he could think of:

"Oh, Muvver! I wish there were more sweet names so I could call them to you."

So you may guess his heart was brimful of love and his head fairly running over with plans for Christmas presents for everyone he loved. He didn't have much money and the little he did have he earned and saved till every penny was precious as gold, as he figured out just what he could buy for each one.

It took a lot of courage, too, to go out in the hot sun and pick blackberries when Chester Bell was going fishing and taking his lunch along, and wanted him to go too "just awfully," and to run indoors cheerfully and pare potatoes the moment mamma called, and to go errands when he had to stop work on "the dandiest snow house you ever saw," but he did it, and all through the twelve long months he polished papa's shoes, wiped dishes, cleaned vegetables, dressed the twins and did everything he could possibly think of to have more to slip into his bank, which he always opened two days before Christmas.

This year he was unusually gleeful and went around with his eyes shining like stars and a smile so broad that one of his friends nick-named him "The-laugh-a-lot boy," and the reason for all his joy was that he had five dollars and thirty-seven cents, and "some besides," for, as he confided to mamma when they were having their good-night cuddling time:

"You see when I keep 'count of how much I put in my bank, sometimes I call a dime five cents so I'll be s'prised when I open it."

So the dear little chap had every penny counted out for each one, and his list all made out, and the "s'prise" pennies were to buy a present for somebody who wouldn't have "a single bit for Christmas."

Well, here it was the twenty-third of December and the bank was opened, and the "s'prise" counted up to eighty-five cents, and Warren had stood on his head and nearly broken his mamma's ribs with a bear hug in his delight, when a knock at the back door sent him scurrying to open it. There stood a big boy, as tall as papa, but with a boyish face, so cold and pinched and hungry-looking it would have made your heart ache. When he asked for something to eat, Warren would have given him a good deal more than half of his own dinner rather than have him go away.

Now you can guess pretty well what sort of a mamma Warren had, a face so like a sweet, wild rose, that Warren's big brother always called her "You-pretty mamma-you," and then laughed to see the dimples come in her cheeks; one of those mammas that can cure a pained finger by the way she says "Oh!" and drive away a headache or a heartache by just snuggling you close in her arms. Well, this same sweet mamma was just the least bit afraid of tramps, and this great, tall boy, with his rough looks and a sort of fierce way about him, wasn't exactly the sort she would have invited to eat at her table. But something about his eyes made her think of her own manly face, and she didn't mean to say a long "No!"

While he was eating, Warren, who was sitting at the table with everyone, told her all about his Christmas plans, and how he had saved his money, and how he had the very nicest present of all

was to be "for mamma," and suddenly asked:

"What are you going to give your mamma?"

That was too much for the Big Boy tramp, and his eyes filled with tears. Then Warren patted his hand and questioned in a voice full of sympathy: "Haven't you any mamma? Has she gone to heaven?"

And the Big Boy just put his head on the table and cried and cried as if his heart would break. When he could speak he told Warren all about it—the dear mother at home who was so sad because she didn't know where her boy was, and how he had run away from home six years ago, and been a bad, bad boy, and had done things that would break her heart if she knew, and how he would give anything in the world, if he had it, to see her again, until Warren's eyes were full, too, feeling so sorry for the poor mamma and her poor boy.

But soon a bright idea popped into

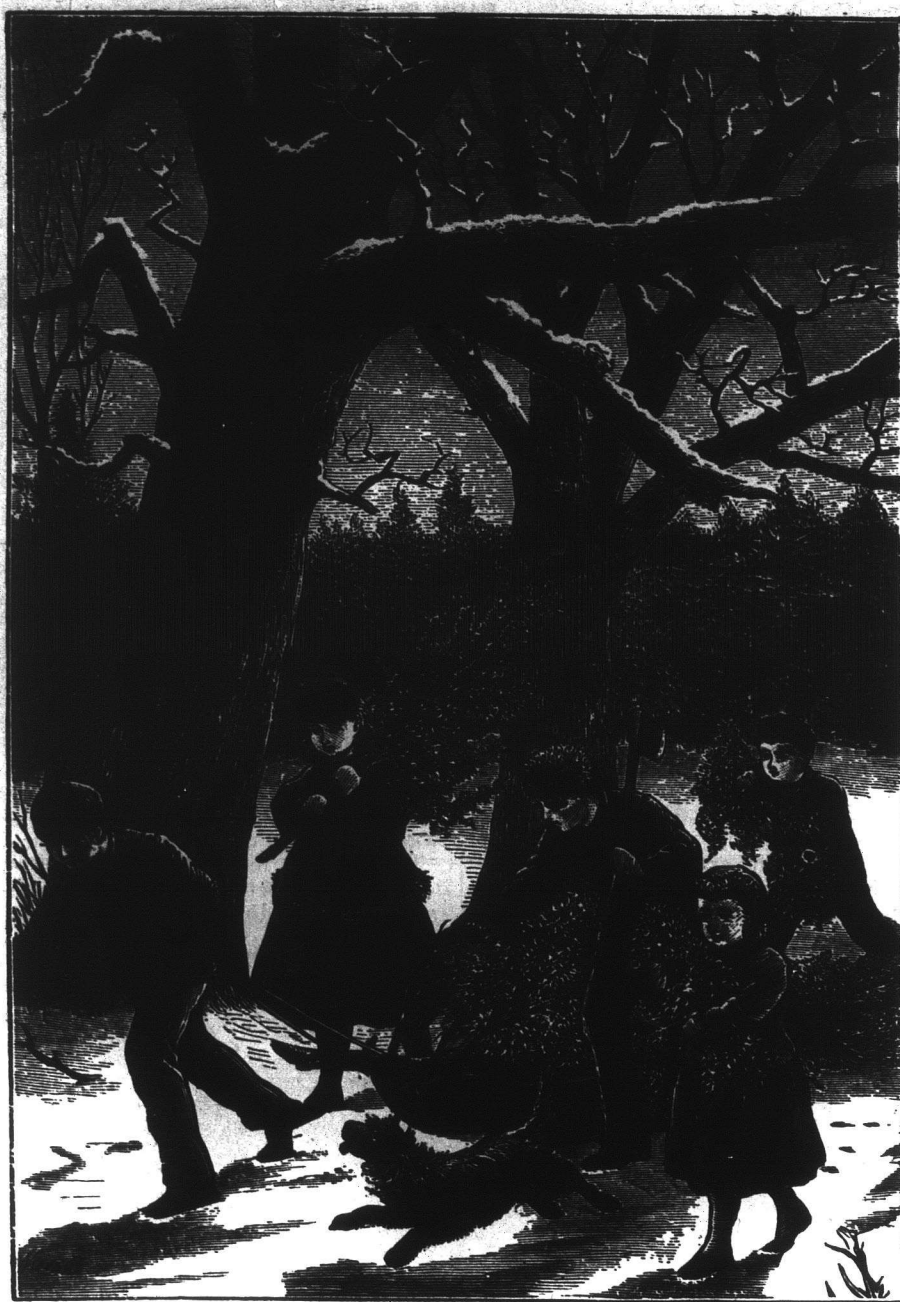
he told her the pitiful story of the Big Boy and his mother, and how he wanted to give him his precious Christmas money to go back home, "and if he goes right away quick don't you think he could get there in time for her Christmas present, mamma?"

Mamma thought maybe he could; and after a long talk with Big Boy it was finally settled, and Warren's store of pennies and nickels and dimes was changed into a ticket which took him back to the old home and the mother-love waiting for him all those years.

That night, after his, "Now I lay me," and mamma's last kiss, Warren said, bravely choking back a little sob:

"Anyhow, mamma, I think this will be the bestest Christmas I ever had 'cause I'm pretty sure it's what Jesus would have done," and mamma said, "I think so too, darling," and tucked him in, with the lovelight in her eyes brighter than ever.

And now just hold your breath while



PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS.

his curly head and he smiled up at him an eager:

"Why don't you go home and give her yourself for a Christmas present? I'm most sure she'd like that heaps better'n anything else."

"I can't. I haven't any money nor any decent clothes, and no one will give me any chance to earn any, and besides, I'm too bad to go home."

To all of which Warren insisted, "Mammas always love their boys no matter how bad they are, and she'd just love you hard'n ever before, if you'd go back, even if you don't look very nice."

And then the beautifullest thought came to him as he asked with a little tremble in his voice:

"Big Boy, how much does it cost to go to your mamma?"

"Five dollars and ninety cents," was the answer in as hopeless a tone as if it were five thousand instead.

Then what do you think? That Warren boy slipped into the sitting room and put both arms around mamma's neck and held her tight, while

I tell you how the very last mail brought a little box which held a shining twenty-dollar gold piece and a note from Big Boy's mother thanking the little boy for helping Big Boy to give his mother the dearest Christmas present she ever had in all her life.

When Warren found out he could buy his presents after all he gave the biggest hurrah you ever heard from any seven-year-old boy and the last thing he said that night was a sleepy whisper which only the sand-man heard—"This is the very bestest Christmas I ever had."

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A Rich Boy.

"Oh, my!" said Ben; "I wish I was rich and could have things like some of the boys that go to our school."

"I say, Ben," said his father, turning around quickly. "How much will you take for your legs?"

"For my legs?" said Ben in surprise.

"Yes! What do you use them for?"

"Why, I run and jump and play ball, and, oh, everything."

"That's so," said the father. "You wouldn't take \$10,000 for them, would you?"

"No sir."

"And your arms—I guess you wouldn't take \$10,000 for them, would you?"

"No, sir."

"Nor your good health?"

"No, sir."

"Your hearing and your sense of taste are better than \$5,000 apiece, at the very least; don't you think so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your eyes now. How would you like to have \$50,000 and be blind the rest of your life?"

"I wouldn't like it at all."

"Think a moment, Ben; \$50,000 is a lot of money. Are you very sure you wouldn't sell them for that much?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, they are worth that much, at least. Let's see now," his father went on, figuring on a sheet of paper—"legs ten thousand, arms ten, voice ten, hearing five, taste five, good health ten, and eyes fifty—that makes a hundred. You are worth \$100,000, at the very lowest figures, my boy. Now run and play, jump, throw your ball, laugh and hear your playmates laugh, too; look with those fifty-thousand-dollar eyes at the beautiful things about you, and come home with your usual appetite for dinner, and think now and then how rich you really are."

It was a lesson that Ben never forgot, and since that day every time he sees a cripple or a blind man he thinks how many things he has to be thankful for. And it has helped to make him contented.

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