

Children's Department

A Christmas Dream.

BY HAL OWEN.

Dear little Perry Winkle was all tired out on Christmas Eve. He had had a very busy day getting ready for Santa Claus. In the first place he had been down town with his mamma, to visit the wonderful stores. He had seen lots and lots of beautiful things, but he did not have a chance to enjoy anything very much, so many other people, large and small, had hustled him and jostled him, and said, "Look out, little boy." "Oh, excuse me." "Stand aside, please." "Don't touch." "Oh, let me see." "Whata nuisance children are!" This last remark had been too much for him; he turned to mamma, and with overflowing eyes begged to go home. Mamma was not quite through, however, and kept consulting her list, going from store to store, from counter to counter, till his head was all in a whirl.

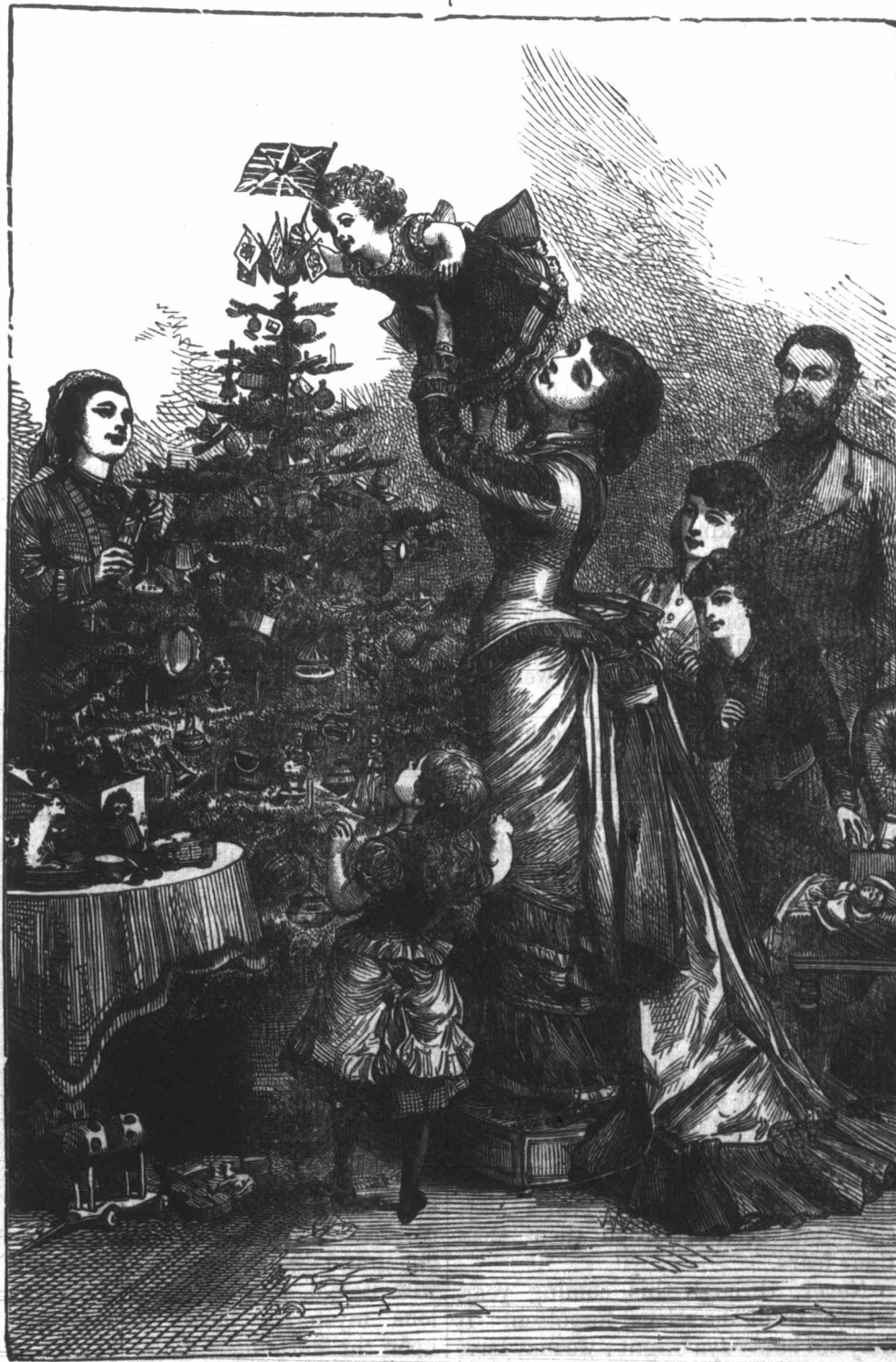
Finally, taking pity on him, mamma put him into the carriage and sent him home alone with the packages, promising to follow with papa as soon as she could. He felt quite grand, and enjoyed the ride very much, though he did want dreadfully to look into some of the packages. When he reached home nurse Lena met him at the door, and helped bring in all the funny bundles, large and small, and they piled them under the stairs.

Then he had a good lunch by the library table, as the dining-room was mysteriously closed, there being a suspicion of a big Christmas tree out there. All sorts of delicious smells drifted in from the kitchen, where a great deal of chopping and beating, stirring, boiling and baking was going on. There was to be a big Christmas dinner, with the grandmas, all the uncles, aunts and cousins to help eat it. Oh, what fun it would be, and he knew there would be a big Christmas tree somewhere during the day. Above all, he was going to hang up his stocking, when he went to bed, and he meant to wake up ever so early to see whether Santa Claus had really, truly filled it.

He was sitting up in papa's big arm chair with mamma's pretty pillow behind him, thinking over all these things, and watching the crackling and flashing of the cozy open fire, when slowly a little whiff of smoke took form and voice, and Santa Claus himself was in the room. He passed his soft, chubby hand over Perry Winkle's little tired head, and nestled it on the pillow, saying, as if to himself, for no one else was to be seen: "There, now I'm going to do a bit of advance work here, for I have such a rush of things to attend to to-night. I know how this little chap had his heart pricked to-day by hearing children called a nuisance. Big people ought to be more careful about what they say to the little ones. They ought to be ashamed to ever hurt their tender feelings! Children a nuisance, indeed! What would Christmas be without them? Why there wouldn't be any Christmas. The day itself, the birthday of the Holy Christ-Child, is dedicated to all children, to their supreme, universal happiness, and through children only is the day blessed to grown-up people. If people can forget or ignore this, they must be pretty well dried up, and have forgotten that they were ever anything but old sticks. I won't put a thing in

their stockings. I believe I will even whisk off the stockings, and give them to some needy person. Hold on, no, I will do better than that. I will take these people on Christmas Day where they shall see and hear happy children rejoicing and singing carols. In this way I will make them feel that children are a blessing, and their hearts will glow, and they will be glad to help and share the blessings. That's what I will do, but bless me, I must get to work. Come, helpers, one and all, come when you hear me call."

All at once in a misty whirl, shadows took shapes, and there was a hustle, rustle and bustle. Soon a beautiful Christmas tree appeared, telling by its sweet fragrance of the dear wild-wood home, with all its pleasant memories.



THE "CHRISTMAS TREE."

The air was full of dainty figures, nimbly helping on the work in every direction. Many of these tiny people were old and well-known friends, who came trooping from Perry Winkle's books, in their special corner of papa's bookcase.

Animals, fancy boxes, candies and fruits, and all manner of tempting things, too numerous to mention, hung suspended from the tree. Everybody knows how indescribable it all is.

Little Jack Horner and Tommy Tucker came flitting over Perry's head bearing a big plum pudding, stuck full of currants and raisins all over, and a branch of holly on top.

"Clear the way," they cried. "We got here first, the pudding was so light."

"Where's the sauce?" called Santa Claus.

"The Three Wise Men of Gotham have got it in their bowl."

"And the Christmas goose?"

"Old mother herself is bringing that, flying along on the fattest of the flock. She said that after everybody had had all they could eat of it, there would be enough goose oil to cure all the coughs, colds, and croup this winter. The rest of the procession is coming in good style. The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, all have their arms full, the Queen of tarts is hurrying after them, and Jack and Jill are coming with the water, and they are trying to be very careful to look where they are going this time, instead of looking at each other. Sim-

will give each one a present. I am arranging this dish of fruit, cakes and flags especially for them. When he has generously passed them you see he will be well rewarded in discovering below a stunning box of real tools, everything in it, from nails to a plane, and this alone is worth everything else to this boy. He will give these strings of popcorn to the little children, too. How they will laugh!" and here old Santa chuckled and wiped from his starry eyes some diamond drops which he popped into a little velvet box, and marked for mamma.

For papa there was another little case, and there were bundles of all sorts for everybody. Such a lot of things for the grandmas. There was even a package for Carlo, which looked like a collar with a jingle bell. Like magic all these things seemed to arrange themselves. When everything was in order, Santa Claus surveyed it all with evident satisfaction, saying:

"There, now, Perry Winkle, I've done so much for you and your cousins I want you all to help me in every way to-morrow to spread the 'Christmas joy. Be a good boy—Hullo there!"

A rousing kiss, right in the middle of his forehead, made Perry Winkle jump from his chair, to find papa and mamma laughing (at his confusion at being found asleep).

The firelight shadows were flickering on the wall and lurking in the corners, but they all danced off as the lamp was lighted, and not a trace of the dream could he find about the room.

Mr. Grampus, an old friend of the family, had come in for a visit, and the supper party were having a lively time, when Perry, who had been very quiet for a long while, suddenly exclaimed,

"Mr. Grampus, did you ever say children were a nuisance? 'Cause if you did, you'd better look out, for Santa Claus is going to snatch your stockings, and make you go barefoot to the Mission school."

Everyone laughed, but Perry looked very sober, for Santa Claus had said so himself, and it must be truly so. When mamma asked him how he knew, he gave such a clear story of his vivid dream that they were all interested, and Mr. Grampus said,

"Well, I must save the soles of my feet anyway, and I'll take it all back, if I ever said so. Children are not a nuisance, so much for their blessing besides"—and he tossed over a gold-piece.

"This is not all for me? I must share it, as Santa Claus told me to do with everything," said Perry, earnestly.

When mamma came down stairs, having helped Perry hang his stocking, she said,

"I never saw anything take such hold on a child as that dream. He is possessed with a spirit of giving and doing that makes me ashamed. I have been so busy with my own circle, I confess I have given very little attention to the poor, and now he says we must do something. What shall it be?"

"I feel inspired to action also," said Mr. Grampus, and papa said he was ready for anything, while others who were present begged to be allowed to help in the work and fun.

Mr. Grampus said he knew several persons who were liable to lose their stockings that night if he didn't warn them, so while the others made the plans, he started out on missionary work, which so surprised his friends

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